

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 31 May 2002

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## ABSENCE OF Mr SPEAKER

**The Clerk** announced the absence of Mr Speaker.

**Mr Deputy-Speaker (Mr John Charles Price)** took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

**Mr Deputy-Speaker** offered the Prayer.

## GREYHOUND RACING BILL

### HARNESS RACING BILL

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

### Second Reading

**Mr AMERY** (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Corrective Services), on behalf of the Mr Face [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

The object of the bills is to repeal the Greyhound Racing Authority Act and the Harness Racing New South Wales Act and to provide for the restructure of the Greyhound Racing Authority and Harness Racing New South Wales so as to separate the commercial and regulatory activities and give greater emphasis to the autonomous commercial management of the harness and greyhound racing industries. The harness and greyhound racing industries are each to have their own commercial board to exercise the strategic and commercial governance of the relevant code. Each commercial board is to be independent of Government and will not represent the Crown. That is the basis on which the Thoroughbred Racing Board was established, and is consistent with government racing policy to give greater autonomy to the minor codes of racing in relation to commercial decision making.

The pivotal features of the new structures are that the commercial boards are to be separate and independent bodies in their own right, and that they will each have an independent chairperson. The two commercial boards will largely follow the structure of the commercial component of the existing boards except that each board is to have an additional member who would be the independent chairperson, and the greyhound industry commercial board is to have a further additional member to provide individual representation to the National Coursing Association and the Greyhound Breeders Owners and Trainers Association. The independent chairperson of each commercial board is to be a person with appropriate high-level business skills. That person is to be selected by other members of the commercial board after a recruitment process conducted by external consultants, much in the same manner as the recruitment process for the chair of the Thoroughbred Racing Board.

Each bill provides that the independent chair cannot be a member of a committee of a race club, including in the 12 months prior to selection. If a member of a race club or a club employee, that person must suspend their membership or terminate their employment, prior to appointment. Such protection against a conflict of interest is further strengthened by the provision in each bill which places a duty on each member of a commercial board to act in the public interest and the interests of the relevant racing code, as a whole. This is to overcome the issue of members acting narrowly in the interests of the body that nominated the member. In addition, the existing informal arrangements by which board members sign confidentiality deeds upon appointment have been formalised by the provision in each bill which makes it an offence to disclose information acquired in the exercise of official responsibilities, except if it is for official purposes.

The bills also provide, if the commercial board so wishes, for the same person to serve as the independent chair and the chief executive officer. This provides significant flexibility for the purpose of containing costs, a matter which I will expand upon shortly. Other members of each commercial board are to be

representative of industry and participant groups along the same lines as the status quo. That is, representation from clubs and industry participants. Both bills also require the relevant commercial board to seek the Minister's approval for borrowings of more than \$1 million, or some other amount which may be prescribed. This measure is on the basis of an individual loan, or of an aggregate amount over a year. This is a safety valve measure to ensure that the new commercial boards act prudently.

Each commercial board is to be responsible for such matters as registration of race clubs, strategic development and business governance, distribution of TAB Ltd payments in accordance with the Racing Distribution Agreement, allocation of race dates, and developing and reviewing policy in relation to breeding and grading or handicapping of racing animals. The main elements of the bills reflect the wishes of the majority of industry stakeholders who made submissions to a recent review. That review, which I asked my department to conduct, was in relation to the composition and activities of the boards of Harness Racing New South Wales and the Greyhound Racing Authority, and whether the present structure of Harness Racing New South Wales and the Greyhound Racing Authority boards is appropriate and effective.

The dual board structure recognises the priority of reform for commercial reasons. There is also a revamp of the functions of the two regulatory boards. The bills contain provisions which strengthen the requirements in relation to codes of conduct and the disclosure of pecuniary interests by board members. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has provided advice in relation to these matters. The bills propose important reforms on the regulatory side. At least one person of each of the three-member regulatory boards must have legal qualifications, and the other two must have experience in one or more of the following areas—management or administration, regulatory or policing, or veterinary qualifications—and have a working knowledge of the racing and wagering industry.

In addition, in keeping with protecting against conflicts of interest, the following persons are not eligible to serve on the regulatory boards: a person who is, or was, in the previous 12 months, a member of a committee of a racing club; a member or employee of a racing club; a person licensed by one of the controlling bodies; or a person with a financial interest in a racing animal. Each regulatory board is to be responsible for such matters as registration of racing animals and licensed persons, administration of the relevant rules of racing—except with some qualifications regarding commercial matters, ensuring the integrity of racing and associated wagering, drug testing, and records management necessary to support such integrity functions.

The bills contain a number of other associated requirements. They are mostly of a transitional, consequential or start-up nature, and are necessary to facilitate the process of structured change management and ensure that there is continuity of regulatory and commercial functions during the transition period. An important aspect of that restructure process is the need to ensure that all staff of the existing two boards are consulted about the changes. Accordingly, the department has established a consultative framework which involves the staff, the Public Service Association, the Public Sector Management Office and the management of the two controlling bodies. Such an approach enables full discussion of any issues of concern relating to staff employment and entitlements.

All staff entitlements are protected by the bills. All existing staff are to be transferred to the new regulatory boards, thus preserving all public sector entitlements. Staff whose functions are transferred to a commercial board will, if they wish, be given preference for an equivalent position with a commercial board. Such preference will be available for 12 months. Staff taking up such preference will be eligible for a special termination payment in recognition of the loss of public sector conditions of service. They will also be protected from being made redundant in the transferred position for 12 months. Staff whose functions are transferred will not be compelled to transfer, nor will there be forced redundancies. The usual public sector redeployment arrangements will apply to the regulatory boards, which will remain as statutory authorities.

The second stage of the restructure proposal involves examining the possibility of amalgamating the two new regulatory boards, that is, the Harness Racing Authority and the Greyhound Racing Authority. The Government's decision to restructure the present control and regulation arrangements for the harness and greyhound racing industries indicates that such action must be preceded by a feasibility study which is to report back to Cabinet. Such a feasibility study will closely scrutinise the possibility of efficiencies to be gained from economies of scale and the benefits in terms of staff recruitment, training and career development. However, amalgamation will not be at the expense of the integrity of racing regulation. If savings can be made, their benefit will be applied to the racing industry by, for example, increasing prize money.

This restructure proposal represents a significant and major reform for the harness racing and greyhound racing industries. This will provide them with the opportunity of securing a viable future on their

own merits, and in accordance with their own business and strategic acumen. The separate and independent commercial boards will be able to focus exclusively on the day-to-day business arrangements, and also on strategic decision-making to secure the future of the industry. Both the commercial and regulatory functions will be reinvigorated and prepared for the challenges of the future.

The present reform is another of the many commercial reforms and achievements that the Minister for Gaming and Racing has introduced in his time as the Minister responsible for racing. In 1996 it was the establishment of the Thoroughbred Racing Board. That board is comprised of appointees that provide for industry-wide representation, and an appropriate mix of commercial and regulatory experience. In 1997 it was the privatisation of the Totalizator Agency Board [TAB]. Each year since privatisation, the TAB has increased its payments to the racing industry. In the 1997-98 financial year it was \$142 million. That has increased in the 2000-01 year to \$183 million. These increases are the lifeblood of the New South Wales racing industry. Without such increases our racing industry would not be able to compete and its viability and future would be in doubt.

In 1998 there was the first phase of the restructuring of Harness Racing New South Wales and the Greyhound Racing Authority. That initial change provided for greater industry representation on the boards of the controlling bodies, and the undertaking that there would be an evaluation of that new structure at the end of the three-year term of each board. That evaluation has resulted in the proposal at hand. In 1998 and 1999 it was the reform and update of the antiquated Gaming and Betting Act 1912, including the introduction of the offence for a person in New South Wales to bet with an overseas wagering operator on Australian racing events. Such legislation minimises the threat from wagering operators outside New South Wales who seek to free ride on this State's racing industry. These operators are happy to exploit our racing and poach our racing revenues without contributing to the cost.

It is with some urgency that the Minister for Gaming and Racing led the debate regarding the practice by some jurisdictions of the licensing onshore of such large overseas wagering operators who contribute little to the racing industry. The Minister's intention is to prevent the opportunistic scavenging of our racing industry revenues, and therefore the destruction of many racing industry and country-based jobs. The Minister has also met recently with other racing Ministers to discuss the best means by which to address these issues nationally and in a measured way. Other important reforms have included the review of the adequacy of sexual harassment policies, procedures and practices in the New South Wales racing industry. Consequently, the three controlling bodies have been directed to implement best practice policy and procedures. This has been recognised as such by other States and Territories and adopted as a national model.

Significant tax reform for bookmakers is another measure. First, in 2000, sports bookmakers received a reduction in taxes on certain sports bet types, and just recently the Minister announced that the 1 per cent State turnover tax on racing bets was abolished. Another reform is the introduction of a responsible wagering program which requires race clubs and TAB outlets to adopt gambling harm minimisation measures. The measures put forward in this proposal are to enable, as mentioned earlier, the reinvigoration of the management and regulation of the harness and greyhound racing industries to ensure their future viability. However, the opportunities provided by the Government will work only if professional and capable people are nominated to serve on the commercial boards. Gone are the days when it was sufficient to nominate a person merely on the basis that he is a good bloke and once owned a good horse or greyhound.

In the present environment, it is imperative to the survival of the harness and greyhound racing industries, which are facing increasing competition for the leisure and gambling dollar, that appointments are made on ability and merit. It is essential that professional persons of the highest calibre with business acumen and experience are appointed to the new commercial boards. It is essential that, once appointed, the members of the new commercial boards each select an independent chairperson and chief executive with skills at a similarly high level. I am therefore very pleased to be able to introduce the present proposal, as part of a long list of reforms designed to modernise and bring commercial reform to the governance of the racing industry in this State. It is with those comments, made as I said earlier on behalf of the Minister for Gaming and Racing, that I commend the bills to the House.

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

#### **THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL**

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

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr STEWART** (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary), on behalf of Mr Debus [10.16 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The enactment of the Threatened Species Conservation Act in 1995 was a milestone for biodiversity conservation in New South Wales. Prior to this landmark legislation, threatened species protection was confined to endangered fauna and focused on licensing rather than longer-term protection and recovery strategies. Forward-planning mechanisms, such as threat abatement and recovery planning, had no legislative force and were not pursued in a strategic manner. Lack of integration with the State's environmental planning and development control systems were also considered to be a major weakness of the threatened species conservation process.

The Carr Government's Threatened Species Conservation Act was therefore a major step forward in regulatory reform, streamlining procedures and integrating threatened species conservation with the mainstream planning and development control system. When the Act was introduced it was agreed that a review should be conducted within 18 months to determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remained valid and whether the provisions of the legislation remained appropriate for securing those objectives. The parliamentary joint select committee which was established to review the Threatened Species Conservation Act tabled its findings in December 1997.

The committee found that the policy objectives of the Act were valid, both in terms of biodiversity conservation and ecologically sustainable development. The committee also endorsed the strategic approach that the National Parks and Wildlife Service was taking in implementing its responsibilities under the Act. Since the committee reported, the Commonwealth Government has also overhauled its threatened species laws, enacting the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, which commenced operation in late 2000. The bill before the House therefore responds to the Parliamentary Committee recommendations and ensures that the New South Wales Act is consistent with the relevant Commonwealth Act.

Before I turn to the substantive provisions in the bill, let me respond to an issue that I expect will be raised in the debate. It has been alleged that the Threatened Species Conservation Act and the processes it sets up are impeding, and in some cases preventing, sensible development proposals from being approved. This is not so. The evidence does not support such a proposition. More than 100,000 development applications are submitted to councils every year. That means that since the Threatened Species Conservation Act commenced, there have been around 700,000 development applications. Of these, only a very small proportion require any more than a preliminary assessment due to the likely presence of threatened species on the affected land.

I am advised that only 212 development applications required the Director-General of National Parks and Wildlife to issue director-general's requirements for species impact statements. Of these, only 45 required formal concurrence by National Parks and all but five of those were granted. And of those five, three were subsequently approved with amendments—that is out of 700,000 development applications. This proves that the consultative approach adopted by National Parks is working very well. Almost every concurrence request is approved, but, importantly, only after the proponent has modified the development to ensure that threatened species are properly protected. That is the focus of this bill. This is ecologically sustainable development in action.

The joint select committee made special mention of the service's positive efforts to ensure that threatened species issues are considered as early as possible in the project planning process so that potential impacts on threatened species can be dealt with and resolved at that stage. The committee did, however, recommend a number of amendments to the Act to clarify and strengthen the legislation in certain areas. These amendments are contained in the bill that is before the House today. A new listing category is to be created to allow the Scientific Committee to list vulnerable ecological communities. Importantly, listing in this category will not trigger threatened species assessment or approval processes under the Threatened Species Conservation Act or the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act; it will improve long-term prospects for retention and alert the community to the declining status of certain communities before they become endangered.

Provision may also be made for vulnerable ecological communities in environmental planning instruments. This means that the likely impacts of a development on a vulnerable ecological community can be taken into account at the development application stage. The eligibility criteria for listing an ecological community as vulnerable will mirror the criteria for vulnerable species. Communities will be eligible for listing if, in the opinion of the Scientific Committee, they are likely to become endangered in New South Wales unless the circumstances and factors threatening their survival cease to operate. Minor amendments to the criteria for listing threatened species will ensure, amongst other things, that isolated populations of limited conservation value are not listed. Most importantly, the amendments will resolve the vexed jurisdictional question as to which agency should be responsible for a species which spends part of its life cycle in water.

Under the new arrangements, the Ministers responsible for the administration of the Threatened Species Conservation Act and the Fisheries Management Act will decide whether aquatic plants or invertebrates should be dealt with under the threatened species legislation or the Fisheries Management Act. The bill also contains new provisions governing the listing of threatening processes. In future, the chair of the Scientific Committee will be able to refer a nomination of a key threatening process to the Fisheries Scientific Committee if the threatening process to which the nomination relates is likely to have an impact on both terrestrial and aquatic environments. If both chairs agree, the nomination will be treated as a nomination under both Acts. Fisheries and National Parks will also be given the ability to prepare joint threat-abatement plans in these circumstances.

To strengthen processes already in place for nominating additions to the threatened species schedules, the bill commits the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Scientific Committee to producing nomination guidelines in consultation with relevant agencies. The draft guidelines will also be the subject of broad community consultation before being finally adopted. Members of the community will be able to participate throughout this process. The opportunity has also been taken to streamline a number of procedural issues relating to the Scientific Committee listing process.

Accordingly, the bill gives the Scientific Committee the power to amend scientific names to reflect changes in the classification of species; to amend nominations, with the agreement of the nominee, if new information comes to light; and to request any additional information it may need to make a listing decision. In addition, the committee will no longer be required to publish detailed reasons for its determinations as a matter of course. However, the committee must publicise the fact that copies of the final determination and the reasons for it are to be made available to members of the public, free of charge, on the National Parks and Wildlife Service web site, from designated NPWS contact officers, and from specified service offices.

As recommended by the parliamentary joint select committee, the bill makes provision for the preparation of multispecies recovery plans and threat-abatement plans. The bill also allows the Director-General of National Parks and Wildlife and the Director of Fisheries to make joint threat-abatement plans and joint recovery plans if this is the most appropriate way of addressing complex threats or co-ordinating recovery actions. The National Parks and Wildlife Service will have the discretion to prepare threat-abatement plans for processes impacting on non-threatened species, populations and ecological communities should it wish to do so.

For the first time the Director-General of National Parks and Wildlife will be required to have regard to the special role that indigenous people can play in the making of recovery plans and threat-abatement plans. Consultation with Aboriginal communities will be undertaken to ensure that the social, cultural and economic consequences of plan making are taken into account. In addition, the National Parks and Wildlife Service will be required to report on the implementation of its recovery planning and threat-abatement planning programs in its annual report.

At present there are two separate licensing regimes, one under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the other under the Threatened Species Conservation Act, for undertaking scientific research or carrying out conservation activities in relation to threatened species. Activities affecting threatened plants and invertebrates and endangered populations and endangered ecological communities currently require licensing under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Activities relating to threatened fauna are licensed under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, as are activities that affect protected fauna and protected native plants.

The bill will streamline licensing procedures by allowing for the issuing of a single licence for scientific, educational and conservation activities, including flora and fauna surveys, affecting protected and threatened plants and fauna species, endangered populations and endangered ecological communities. To encourage the take-up of conservation agreements with private land-holders and government agencies, exemptions from licensing will be introduced when actions are carried out in accordance with approved joint management agreements and voluntary conservation agreements. These exemptions will not affect any requirements to obtain consents or approvals under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

Significantly, the bill also makes it clear that threatened species may be picked or taken by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes if a licence has been issued for this purpose or the action is carried out in accordance with an approved property management plan. Evidence to the parliamentary joint select committee was unanimous in its view that the existing eight-part check list of factors that have to be taken into account when determining whether an action is likely to have a significant effect on threatened species is difficult to apply in its present form. It was also pointed out that the test is not readily applicable to endangered ecological communities. Following extensive consultation with State and local government agencies, industry and environment groups, the Government is proposing that the test be clarified and simplified, or made user friendly.

The new test, which will involve amendments to the Fisheries Management Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, brings the scale of assessment down to the local level, reflecting the fact that long-term loss of biodiversity arises primarily from the accumulation of losses and depletions at a local level. That is welcome news for local government in particular. Strathfield council has in its current jurisdiction Cox's Creek reserve, which is located in the middle of the Belfield and Strathfield area—a highly developed area that requires special attention. This sort of application will enable Strathfield council, which has worked hard to ensure the preservation of Cox's Creek reserve—to formulate more effective proposals.

The formulation also imposes a clearer and more comprehensive test for endangered ecological communities and the assessment of impact on habitat. Anyone applying the test will now also need to refer to any relevant threat-abatement plans and recovery plans. While the test is considerably clearer than the previous version, comprehensive guidelines will be prepared to further assist with the process of interpretation. The guidelines will be drafted in conjunction with key agencies and will be placed on public exhibition to allow all interested parties to comment. Prior to their adoption, the guidelines will require the concurrence of the Minister for Planning. Parallel provisions have also been included under the Fisheries Management Act.

The planning legislation will also be amended to make it clear that where the impact of an action is on threatened species or critical habitat only, a full environmental impact statement is not required, just a species impact statement. As pointed out by the joint select committee, the lack of savings provisions can cause difficulties for consent and determining authorities. Currently, authorities must consider the schedules as they stand—both when a development application is submitted and when making a decision. Should a species, population or ecological community be listed the day before a decision is made, the consent or determining authority must consider these additional matters, regardless of the assessment already undertaken. This situation also applies to the licensing of actions under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

Amendments will be made to introduce savings provisions which will have the effect of freezing the list for vulnerable species for a period of 12 months from the time a valid application is lodged. However, to ensure maximum protection for those species which face the highest risk of extinction, the savings provisions will not apply to endangered species, endangered populations, endangered ecological communities or provisional or emergency listings. The amendments contained in the bill will enhance the biodiversity conservation objectives of the Threatened Species Conservation Act and safeguard the independence of the Scientific Committee. I commend the bill to the House.

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

#### **GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

##### **Eleventh Day's Debate**

**Debate resumed from 29 May.**

**Mr GLACHAN** (Albury) [10.32 a.m.]: I cannot help but think how fortunate we are to have as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales a person with the outstanding qualities of Her Excellency Marie Bashir, AC. It is also most appropriate in this year of the centenary of women's suffrage in this State and the Commonwealth that Her Excellency is our Governor. I join with other honourable members in congratulating her on the admirable way in which she discharges her duties. In her Speech the Governor paid tribute to the firefighters who did so much for our community during the devastating fires of recent memory. Today I want to highlight the efforts of the dedicated volunteers from my electorate who gave up their time to help others in need.

In her Speech the Governor outlined the Government's program. She said the Government would relocate jobs from the city to country New South Wales and she listed the government department positions that would be moved over the next three years. I was not surprised to learn that all of those jobs are to go to electorates held by Government members. Unfortunately, there is nothing in this program for the electorate of Albury. There are no jobs for us. Another interesting point is that all the electorates to which the jobs will be relocated are considered by the Government to be marginal seats.

In Education the Government has promised to spend \$1.7 billion on school capital works. I will be interested to see how much of that money is spent in the Albury electorate. James Fallon High School in Albury has been asking for a multipurpose hall for a number of years, but nothing has happened. The needs of this fine

school are ignored year after year. In Health the Government has promised \$107 million to improve mental health services. It is about time that more money was allocated to services for those suffering from mental illness. Statistics show that one in five people will suffer from some form of mental illness at some time in their lives.

My office receives numerous complaints each week about mental health issues. The policy to keep sufferers of mental illness in the community with support sounds fine, but it fails repeatedly because mentally ill people do not receive the support they so badly need. Some people suffering from mental health problems can maintain themselves in the community, but many others should be in full-time care for their sake and for the sake of the community. Far too many mentally ill people are far from properly supported. They cause enormous problems for themselves and for everyone with whom they come in contact. They become a problem for their neighbours, for their families, for themselves and finally for the police.

In my electorate there is to be a form of integration and co-operation between the health services in Albury and those across the border in Wodonga. In my view this measure should be taken further and the two hospitals, Albury Base Hospital and Wodonga District Hospital, should become one hospital with two campuses, one on each side of the border. There is to be one management team, which will ensure that each hospital provides the services it is best able to provide. In theory, there will then be no duplication of services across the border.

This plan, it is hoped, will give us the best service for the lowest cost and will rationalise the cross-border delivery of health services. I strongly support these moves. However, I believe that these measures should go further and that we should have our own cross-border health area. Such a service would manage the hospitals in Albury and surrounding region, Wodonga and north-eastern Victoria. I hope such a move will happen one day and will be financed on a shared basis between New South Wales and Victoria. My electorate desperately needs to be removed from the Greater Murray Area Health Service. This area health service manages too vast an area, stretching from Albury to Temora, and it administers three base hospitals—Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith—each competing with the others for scarce services.

Further on health, my electorate is still waiting patiently for the multipurpose health service at Henty, and Albury needs a new ambulance station. The current station was built in 1934 in the main street. It is a long way from the new hospital at East Albury. We need an ambulance station on the hospital site. The establishment of a new ambulance station would not cost a great deal of money. An amount of \$3 million to \$5 million would do the job nicely. Waiting lists at Albury Base Hospital continue to grow. On 15 March, 1,197 people were waiting for surgery, and 386 of them had been waiting for more than 12 months. When we compare those figures to figures in previous years, in March 1995 only 371 people were waiting for surgery and in March 1999, 640 people were on the waiting list. In just three years, from 1999 to the present, the number of people on the surgery waiting list has doubled.

We now have a difficult dispute with anaesthetists and the Government cannot seem to negotiate a contract with them. This dispute has thrown Albury Base Hospital into absolute chaos. Surgery has virtually been suspended—no surgery is being performed at the hospital—and the intensive care unit has been closed. I have been told that the only paediatric surgeon practising in New South Wales outside the metropolitan areas is considering leaving the Albury area because she cannot do the work she needs to do for children at Albury Base Hospital. This is a serious situation. I sincerely hope that something is done very soon about this matter because the loss of this doctor would present extreme difficulties for my constituents. As a result of a dispute between the Department of Health and anaesthetists at Albury Base Hospital, patients with life-threatening conditions are being transferred from that hospital—a first-class hospital with a number of excellent anaesthetists and fine surgeons who are unable to do the work they want to do—to Wagga Wagga, Wangaratta and Melbourne.

I recently heard of a patient, whose life was in danger, having to be transferred by air ambulance to Melbourne for an operation that could have been carried out at Albury Base Hospital had the anaesthetists been available and able to work there. The transfer cost something like \$5,000. So money is being wasted and people's lives are being put at risk. Recently a serious bus accident occurred just outside Albury. Even though the anaesthetists were in dispute with the Department of Health, to their credit they worked tirelessly to deal with the trauma and problems of the people involved in that accident. I commend the anaesthetists for that: it demonstrates their genuine concern for their patients. It is disappointing that the Department of Health cannot come to an arrangement with the anaesthetists about their salaries and working conditions.

Law and order issues are an ever-increasing problem in Albury and surrounding areas, as well as everywhere else in the State. In January this year Mr Ross Kimbull was stabbed in Dean Street, the main street

of Albury, and he died soon afterwards at the Albury Base Hospital. Mr Kimbull had been out with his family and friends celebrating his sister-in-law's thirtieth birthday. They left the Globe Hotel in Albury at 3.30 a.m. As they were getting into a taxi, someone insulted one of the women in the party. Mr Kimbull then became involved in a fight with a person on the street, this quickly developed into a brawl between something like 20 people, and unfortunately Mr Kimbull was stabbed and later died. I am pleased to inform the House that just two days ago police arrested a man for the murder of Mr Kimbull. They also charged that man with the murder of another man who was shot in Albury only a week or so ago.

Everyone was outraged by this tragic murder. Subsequently the local newspaper, the *Border Mail*, ran a series of stories about dangerous behaviour in the main street of Albury. The local television channel filmed teenagers arguing, and pushing and shoving one another in Dean Street in the early hours of the morning. The footage also showed children as young as seven or eight watching this behaviour—and this was in the early hours of the morning in the main street of Albury. More recently, in the early hours of the morning a young member of a family that owns a motel in Albury was attacked outside the motel by a vicious mob of up to 20 young men, who seriously beat and assaulted him. They had been thrown out of a nearby hotel at 12.30 a.m. I am very concerned about these matters. Firstly, clubs and hotels should not sell alcohol to people who are obviously intoxicated. Secondly, I believe we need more police to ensure that these sorts of incidents do not occur.

I am very pleased that the Minister for Gaming and Racing was able to visit Albury recently and speak with people in the liquor industry. He suggested to them that a trial should be instituted to prevent people taking liquor off premises after 10 p.m., and to prevent people entering licensed premises after 1.00 a.m. I strongly support such a measure, as does the Mayor of Albury and many people in the liquor industry. On behalf of the Albury community I congratulate the Minister on the stand he is taking on this matter and I thank him for instituting these measures, which will result in a much safer environment for the people I represent.

Law and order is not just an issue in Albury. Not too long ago my colleague the honourable member for Wagga Wagga and I attended a meeting at Henty Bowling Club, which was also attended by people from as far afield as Wagga Wagga—from Walla Walla, Culcairn, Henty, Lockhart, The Rock and Yerong Creek. These people were concerned about theft and vandalism in their areas. They were not complaining about the police—in fact, they very much appreciate the work the police officers assigned to their areas do on their behalf—but they were complaining about the lack of police in their areas.

The problem is that because of the shortage of police, they are not always available in smaller communities. They are often called to duty in Albury and Wagga Wagga because there is a shortage of police in those major cities. Often they are not able to attend to the matters in their own towns because they are on leave, off sick, on courses, or otherwise unavailable for a variety of reasons. The Minister for Police will say that police stations such as Albury are at full strength. In theory that may be so, but at any given time police are simply not available to be rostered for duty. Some are on maternity leave, some are sick, some are on courses, some are on annual leave, and at any given time a percentage of them are not available.

There is a dangerous shortage of police in this State. It is estimated that between 700 and 800 police officers are off on sick leave or for other reasons. Many of these officers will never return to work in a police station, and they should be discharged and given their superannuation entitlements, which is what many of them want. But, unfortunately, they are kept on the payroll, at great expense, just to keep the numbers up. I have had police officers complain to me about this. They say they are paid a high salary, particularly those in senior positions, and they really should be retired and on superannuation, but they are kept on the pay-roll just to keep the numbers up. Unfortunately for the community, police are resigning faster than they can be replaced. It is a very serious matter that should be addressed by the Government. People in country areas feel they are unsafe. They are anxious to have more police and, particularly, to have more police back on the beat. People felt much safer when there were police walking the beat. Nothing gives people a greater sense of security than seeing police in uniform out on the streets.

Like most other electorates, my electorate of Albury has a list of roadworks that need to be done but they seem to be constantly postponed. For 35 years there have been arguments about the deviation of the Hume Highway at Albury. It just seems to go on and on, and I have spoken about it in this place on many occasions. People have argued for an internal deviation of the highway through the city, or an external deviation. But it goes on and on, seemingly endlessly. Some time ago the former Federal Minister, Mark Vaile, announced in Albury that he would build an internal deviation of the road. That was the preferred option of people who understand anything at all about traffic and road construction.



However, just before the Federal election, the present Federal Minister, John Anderson, announced in Albury that he would build two roads, a single-lane internal boulevard with a second river crossing, and a single-lane external road. Some people cynically thought that the Minister had adopted this position in an attempt to please everyone and advance the cause of his party's Federal candidate. I would not suggest that myself, but many people did. Unfortunately, his trying to please everyone did not please anyone at all; no-one was happy with what the Minister suggested. We are now stuck with a decision that seems to be totally intolerable and from which we can never escape. There seemed to be a view that they could build a single-lane national highway and then an internal boulevard, neither of which would solve any of our problems.

Subsequently, Minister Anderson had to moderate his plan, and said he would build a four-lane internal road. Unfortunately, without discussing it with either of the New South Wales or Victorian governments, he committed those governments to contributing \$35 million to the program. Understandably, the New South Wales and Victorian governments were not happy about this. Interestingly, people who understand road construction suggest that the cost of building the proposed four-lane internal road is double the Minister's figure. So the whole thing is a mess. Had Mark Vaile's plan gone ahead, the road he proposed would have been built by now and that would have done away with a number of dangerous level crossings in Albury.

However, that did not happen and, sadly, a person was killed recently on the Fallon Street level crossing in Albury when his truck was hit by an XPT. That sad loss of life could have been avoided if a sensible solution to the road problem had been adopted. No-one knows when the roadworks will begin. At the present rate it could be another 35 years, so I guess we just have to be patient in Albury and hope that someone is kind enough to provide boom gates at the railway crossings to prevent further accidents. Accidents will always be a possibility until proper roadworks are undertaken, but in the meantime boom gates would be of assistance.

Again, I congratulate Her Excellency and thank her for the work she is doing on behalf of the people of New South Wales, particularly those in the Albury electorate, who have a great admiration for her. We know her background well because she grew up in Narrandera. Her family had a retail business in Narrandera and it would have been a difficult life for her had she remained in Narrandera. However, she managed to come to Sydney and became a student at Sydney Girls High School, where she gained outstanding academic qualifications. She made a great contribution to the community even before she became Governor. I first became aware of her when she was associated with the women's college at the University of Sydney because she was very kind to my eldest daughter, who was a senior student there. She helped her considerably and gave her the incentive to pursue her own career. I congratulate Her Excellency and I am pleased to have been able to speak in the Address-in-Reply debate.

**Mr HUNTER** (Lake Macquarie) [10.51 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak in reply to the Address of the Governor at the opening of State Parliament earlier this year. It was quite a comprehensive and wide-ranging Address and it clearly outlined the Government's agenda for the final 12 months of its current term in office. I would like to quote from the beginning of the Governor's Speech to the assembled members. She said:

Members of Parliament,

It is with a great sense of honour that I address you on the occasion of the opening of the third session of the Fifty-Second Parliament.

I thank all of you for your support and encouragement since my swearing-in as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales in March last year.

This is the first New South Wales parliamentary speech video-streamed live on the Internet.

I welcome the increased access this brings to our political system, and greet all those who are watching or listening ...

Honourable Members, in this new session the Government will present to Parliament a substantial program of legislation.

This program will advance the Government's key objectives of modernising the State's infrastructure, promoting investment and jobs, creating safer communities, world-class schools and hospitals, and protecting our unique environment.

May I first speak about the Christmas-New Year bushfires.

My heartfelt sympathy is with all those who suffered losses during this crisis, and I commend with great appreciation the generous fundraising efforts of the community.

Our deepest thanks go to the fire fighters and all those who provided aid and support.

I applaud the vigilance of Commissioner Koperberg and the other public sector chief executives who led us through the crisis.

I also thank the members of the guard of honour who greeted us today.

They represent each and every one of those splendid personnel who saved countless lives and properties, and brought relief and comfort to hundreds of families.

The ideals of the International Year of Volunteers could have had no finer expression than in the efforts of these authentic Australian heroes.

I wholeheartedly agree with those comments by the Governor. Certainly in the electorate of Lake Macquarie I have some very dedicated emergency service volunteers, not only in the Rural Fire Service but also in the State Emergency Service and, of course, in addition to this, our retained and permanent firefighters. I am pleased that the State Government has recognised the need for improved firefighting facilities in the Lake Macquarie electorate and across Lake Macquarie city. In September last year I represented the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Bob Debus, in opening a \$1.26 million state-of-the-art fire station at Toronto. This new facility replaced a very old, dilapidated fire station that was located in a very inaccessible part of the town. The new station has been built at the entrance of the town, on the corner of Ridge Road and Main Road 217. This station provides the very best facilities, which our dedicated firefighters deserve.

In addition, the Minister saw fit to appoint the first permanent firefighters for the western side of Lake Macquarie. We now have four permanent firefighters working Monday to Friday during the daytime at the station. They are assisted by the 18 retained firefighters, who have manned the station for some time. This provides the people of Toronto and surrounding areas with round-the-clock protection and that is welcomed by the local community. The State Government is not only looking after the community of Toronto; in the last few budgets, money has been allocated for the construction of a fire station at Wangi Wangi. That station is to be constructed over the next 12 months at a cost of \$1.2 million. Last year money was allocated in the budget for the planning of a new multimillion-dollar fire station at West Wallsend. I look forward with interest to the budget next Tuesday. I hope that it contains the final instalment of funding to enable construction to proceed on the West Wallsend fire station.

The State Government has also spent \$2.54 million on improved equipment for the city's volunteer firefighters, including six tankers and a utility vehicle. I am certainly supportive of the great work that our Rural Fire Service volunteers do in Lake Macquarie. It would be remiss of me not to mention the great work undertaken by State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers in the Lake Macquarie area, particularly the Chief Controller, Daryl Marshall. I am working with Daryl in an effort to gain additional resources for SES volunteers, not only in Lake Macquarie but across the State. They volunteer their time and risk their lives to save our lives and property and they deserve additional funding. I look forward to next week's budget to see how the Government is responding to representations, not only from myself but from other Hunter Labor members on this issue. In her Address the Governor spoke of an educated community. She said:

Honourable Members,

The Government's key priorities in education are to maintain the highest standards of achievement in our schools, and to value and support our teachers.

Spending on education has been increased to a record level of \$7.6 billion in 2001-2002.

More than \$1.7 billion will be invested in school capital works, upgrades and maintenance over the next four years.

An additional \$70 million has recently been provided to fund priority building and security upgrades in schools across the State between now and the end of June.

In February I was pleased to announce funding for a number of local schools in my electorate. Arcadia Vale Public School has received \$16,200 for cabling installation, Biraban Public School received a joint funding allocation of \$1,613 for cabling, and Blackalls Public School received joint funding of \$5,574 for a covered outdoor learning area [COLA]. I am pleased to be attending that school this coming Monday to celebrate the opening of the new COLA. Boolaroo Public School received \$45,600 for painting, Booragul Public School received \$5,000 for telephone system replacement, and Coal Point Public School received \$40,000 for painting and \$5,000 for telephone system replacement.

The Fennell Bay Public School also had telephone replacement at a cost of \$5,000. Morisset High School received \$110,000 for security fencing, in addition to \$70,000 to \$80,000 allocated to the school in the previous 12 months for security fencing. Also at Morisset High School \$18,000 has been allocated to replace a tractor, and at Morisset Public School \$90,000 was spent on security fencing. They are worthy additions to the education system in Lake Macquarie, and are projects that the local schools have been lobbying the Government for, through me.

Over the past six months or so I have been raising in the House a number of issues relating to education. I brought to the attention of the Minister for Education and Training in particular the needs of a number of schools in my electorate. I point out today that the Booragul Public School, which has received funding for some minor improvements, is again looking for a library replacement and I hope something will be coming forward in next week's budget for that. It is also looking for funding for the installation of a staff car park. At the moment the area outside the school is very congested when students are arriving at and leaving school. Moving 15 or so staff vehicles off the street into a staff car park would certainly improve safety adjacent to the school. I ask the Minister to look carefully at this.

On behalf of Dora Creek Public School I have been pushing for assistance with the rearrangement of demountables on the site, and I have also been supporting the school in its bid to see funding allocated over the coming years to acquire additional land, as the current school site is congested, for the construction of a new school. Wangi Wangi Public School parents and citizens association has brought to my attention a number of issues there. One is security, and there is a need for a new administration block and library. Arcadia Vale Public School needs a new administration building and new classrooms. I hope that over the coming 12 months the Minister for Education and Training will be able to assist those worthy schools.

I raise the issue of overcrowding of the Morisset High School assembly hall. Morisset High School has some very good facilities but as student numbers increase we have to plan for the future to see how those facilities can be improved. There is also a need at Toronto High School for some further improvement to facilities. The Carr Labor Government has spent in excess of \$6 million at that school but we could be looking forward to giving performing arts assistance to the school. I recently visited West Wallsend High School and met with the principal, staff, school council and student leadership. I toured the school and looked at a number of issues of concern there. Again I take the opportunity to raise in the debate in reply to the Governor's Address the needs of West Wallsend High School.

Lake Macquarie High School, a very fine high school located close to the northern end of Lake Macquarie, needs a new multipurpose hall, and I ask the Minister to look very carefully at that. I have invited the Minister for Education and Training to visit the Lake Macquarie electorate. I am looking forward to him giving me a date for that visit, and I intend to take him to visit the schools I have mentioned today and highlight their needs. The Governor continued in her remarks about education:

The Government's sustained focus on literacy over the past seven years has seen New South Wales achieve the best literacy results in Australia, and some of the best in the world.

The Government will continue to focus its literacy strategy in the areas of spelling, writing and reading.

This year, 2,000 teachers in more than 600 schools will be involved in literacy and numeracy initiatives for students in the vital transition period of Year 5 to Year 8.

The Government will also expand its *Count Me in Too* and *Counting On* numeracy strategies to another 274 primary and 41 secondary schools respectively during 2002.

This year, special attention will be devoted to ensuring that students with behavioural problems receive the help they need, allowing other students to pursue their studies.

This builds on the Government's \$46 million package announced last year, which is providing 11 new special schools, 17 tutorial centres and 46 specialist staff to help children with disruptive behaviour.

Lake Macquarie has not been left out in that regard. Working with the local community I have been able to bring to the attention of the former Minister for Education and Training and the current Minister for Education and Training the need for a special school for children with disruptive behaviour in the Lake Macquarie electorate. Towards the end of last year the former Minister made the announcement that Lake Macquarie would gain additional funding for that school. The site selected was the former Wakefield Public School site, located in the small rural village of Wakefield. The initiative will provide great opportunities to support students by putting the site to a use for which it is excellently suited. The former Wakefield Public School was burnt down in 1993.

A new facility was then built by the Department of School Education, with design and input from the University of Newcastle and financial support from community groups such as the Wakefield Progress Association and the Variety Club. The two-building complex was designed to provide camp accommodation for students with disabilities, respite for their parents and a conference venue for the community. Unfortunately, it had never been fully utilised and all the parties previously involved are now delighted that it is going to be put to a permanent use. That alternative school has only recently opened and I visited it just the other day. The number of students attending is slowly increasing. It has a very dedicated teaching staff looking after the students, whom

we hope to reintegrate into the main school system. I congratulate the Government on that worthy initiative in the Lake Macquarie electorate. The Governor went on to talk further about education, saying:

Our society rightly values teachers, and this year the Government will implement a range of strategies to enhance the standing of the teaching profession.

Already the Government is providing 300 scholarships worth \$3 million in subject areas such as Technological and Applied Studies, Mathematics, Science and English to address teacher shortages.

These teachers will go to areas of need such as Western and South-Western Sydney and country New South Wales.

The Government has provided 90,000 computers to our public schools, with another 25,000 to be provided by the end of June 2003.

The Government, in partnership with the private sector, intends to continue and expand the *e-summer school* program piloted this summer.

In the pilot, 300 students in 18 areas spent two weeks receiving high quality training in all aspects of computers and IT.

Fifty percent of these summer schools took place in country New South Wales, and 17 percent of the students were from an indigenous background.

When I visit schools in the Lake Macquarie electorate I am very impressed to see students using the computers that have been provided by the Government. It is new, modern technology that our young students appreciate. I commend the Government for its initiatives in this area. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Governor went on to talk about healthier communities, saying:

Better health care is a major priority for the Government, with recurrent funding at a record \$8 billion this year.

The Menadue and Sinclair Reports have mapped out a fairer funding system to correct historic inequities between regions and to allow area health services to plan on a three-year basis.

As part of the largest capital works program in the State's history, new hospitals and facilities are near completion at Royal Prince Alfred, St Vincent's, Illawarra, Camden and Campbelltown.

During 2002, major works will commence at Shoalhaven, Gosford and Wyong Hospitals.

The Hunter region has not missed out on funding through the Government's three-year rolling funding plan. The Hunter strategy has been developed and major improvements are being made to John Hunter Hospital, Belmont District Hospital and health facilities throughout the area. During the Carr Government's term in office \$5 million has been expended on the construction of the Toronto Polyclinic, which provides valuable community health services to the western side of Lake Macquarie and a much-needed and long-awaited after-hours medical service. The polyclinic offers rehabilitation services and ambulatory care, including dental services, diabetic education, antenatal care, Aboriginal health services and Australian hearing services. The facility was opened in September 1998, and I thank the former Minister for Health, the honourable member for Marrickville, for the great assistance he offered to the people of Lake Macquarie—particularly those on the western side of the lake—in providing that much-needed health facility.

Another community health facility is soon to be constructed in the southern portion of my electorate. Lake Macquarie City Council has joined with the State Government to build the Morisset Multipurpose Centre. I recently attended a sod-turning ceremony with my Federal colleague, the honourable member for Charlton, Kelly Hoare, and the Mayor of Lake Macquarie City, Councillor John Kilpatrick. This \$2.2 million facility will serve the needs of people in the Lake Macquarie area. The State Government is contributing about \$800,000 for the inclusion of home and community care facilities and community health facilities. The multipurpose centre will also offer accommodation to local doctors to provide an after-hours medical service, which people in the southern reaches of the Lake Macquarie region have been requesting for some time. I look forward to the opening of that facility in April next year. Commenting further on health, the Governor said:

The Government has a \$20 million a year plan to recruit and retain nursing staff through strategies such as scholarships for rural students and re-training to attract former nurses back to the profession.

The Government is halfway through a three year, \$107 million program to significantly increase mental health services across the State.

This plan includes 700 additional staff and 150 new acute care beds, 90 of which will be located in rural areas.

On the subject of mental health, I take this opportunity to commend the good work of Kaiyu Clubhouse, which operates out of the Argenton Community Hall in the northern part of my electorate. Both the honourable member for Wallsend—who is in the chair—and I strongly support the clubhouse's work, and this week we again lobbied the Minister for Health to secure additional funding for that organisation. We expect the clubhouse to operate for many more years and provide great after-care service for people who have suffered from mental illness. Morisset hospital is also located in my electorate, and the Minister for Health has assured me that it will remain open. It plays a vital role in the Hunter mental health strategy, and I commend the dedicated mental health staff at Morisset hospital for their great work. That facility is certainly a great community asset. The Governor went on to talk about safer communities, and said:

Honourable members,

This session you will be asked to consider a number of bills to enhance community safety, crime prevention and law enforcement.

Among these will be legislation to remove the presumption in favour of bail for repeat offenders.

The Government will also introduce legislation to consolidate general police powers into a single Act of Parliament.

I am pleased to see that the latest crop of graduates from the Goulburn police academy has produced six probationary constables for the Lake Macquarie area command. Two of them will work out of the Toronto station and the other four will work out of Belmont station. We will be looking for more police in future for the Lake Macquarie patrol, which is one of the largest patrols in the State. With a perimeter of 175 kilometres, Lake Macquarie is four times the size of Sydney Harbour. The Lake Macquarie patrol serves both sides of the lake and it is very difficult for police to respond quickly to incidents. We do not have the luxury of a bridge across the lake so we certainly need additional police to improve response times. The Governor continued:

This year, the Government will support legislation that sets out general sentencing principles.

These principles would, for example, require courts to take into account the personal circumstances of victims such as their age or any disability.

In January, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released a report showing that courts are sending more offenders to prison and are also imposing longer sentences.

This, combined with higher arrest rates and changes to the *Bail Act*, has had a significant impact on the prison population.

The Government is, therefore, constructing a new 350-bed prison at Kempsey and a new 200-bed women's prison at South Windsor. Planning is also underway for a new 350-bed prison in the State's Central West.

The Government is entering the fourth year of its comprehensive Drug Summit *Plan of Action*.

This year, the Government will create 70 rehabilitation beds, bringing the State's total to 685. These new beds will provide capacity to treat an additional 280 people a year.

In addition, the Government will spend \$8 million to expand methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone treatment.

The Government will also expand the *Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment* program, which uses the justice system to divert drug offenders into treatment.

So far, more than 100 offenders have completed treatment.

The Government will bring forward legislation to extend the Adult Drug Court trial for a limited period and to improve its effectiveness.

This year, the Government will develop a treatment and prevention strategy for drugs such as cocaine, ecstasy and amphetamines.

The Governor continued:

Honourable members,

Crime prevention is not an issue for police alone.

Local community involvement and cross-agency cooperation are important components of any crime prevention strategy.

The Government's place management program brings together resources across the public and community sectors to respond to problems of crime.

This approach addresses causes of crime such as lack of educational opportunities, drug and alcohol dependency, family breakdown, poor public amenities and lack of activities for young people.

In March 2001, the Government developed a coordinated plan to assist the Cabramatta community to deal with drug and crime problems.

A key element of the Cabramatta Strategy is *Families First*, the Government's \$82 million integrated early intervention plan to support families with young children.

*Families First* currently operates in 11 areas across NSW, including the North Coast, Central West, Hunter, Central Coast, Southern Highlands and Western and South-Western Sydney.

The program supports 50,000 babies and their parents each year through antenatal care, home-based health care, supported playgroups and school-based family centres to prepare children for school.

Benefits from the program include improved child and maternal health, better functioning families and a reduction in the conditions that lead to child abuse, juvenile crime and substance abuse.

*Families First* is supported by 445 volunteers. A further 67 volunteers are in training and will commence home visits this year.

I am pleased to say that the Families First initiative is up and running in the Hunter, especially in my electorate. Some \$75,000 will be allocated per annum, with an additional \$10,000 in establishment costs, to the Migrant Resource Centre of Newcastle and Hunter for the provision of a family service for culturally and linguistically diverse families in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. In addition, some \$68,000 per annum and establishment costs of \$10,000 have gone to Wesley Mission for the provision of a family service in west Lake Macquarie. That will certainly assist parents with young children in the electorate of Lake Macquarie, and I thank the Minister for Community Services for granting those funds to the Lake Macquarie electorate.

As I said, the Governor's Address was wide-ranging. She touched on the subject of the environment. As I detailed extensively in Parliament yesterday, recently the Premier visited Lake Macquarie and announced that the State Government will commit a further \$3.9 million to the clean-up of Lake Macquarie. That is on top of some \$7.7 million that the Government has already allocated to the clean-up of the lake over the past three years. Some excellent work has been done not only by local volunteer community groups but also by the Lake Macquarie clean-up co-ordinator, Jeff Jansson, and the project management committee, in tandem with Lake Macquarie council. I congratulate them on the great work that has been done.

Over the term of the Carr Labor Government we have seen the Lake Macquarie State Recreation Area created, protecting valuable foreshore bushland around the lake. We have seen the creation of the Watagan National Park in the Watagan mountain range to the west of the electorate. We have seen the Belmont wetlands area protected, with the Government purchasing from BHP that land and a large amount of land in my electorate at West Wallsend. I commend the Governor's Address to the House. It is with great pleasure that I have responded to her opening Address to Parliament, and I look forward to presenting these speeches to the Governor in the near future. [*Time expired.*]

**Dr KERNOHAN** (Camden) [11.21 a.m.]: I speak in reply to the Governor's Speech. Unfortunately, I found only one mention of the Camden electorate in the Speech, that is, the presence of a new Camden hospital. Although the refurbished Camden hospital opened for business last year, because of the lack of obstetricians and anaesthetists the brand-new maternity ward is not functioning. The lack of such specialities, particularly anaesthetists, is widespread in country New South Wales. But bear in mind that Camden is now less than one hour's drive from the centre of Sydney via the M5. Something must be done to solve this problem, even if it means extra payments to anaesthetists and obstetricians to get them to work in public hospitals outside the Sydney suburbs. What is the point of building new hospitals if we cannot get doctors to work in them?

While speaking on health matters, despite many letters of request to the Minister for Health Warragamba and Silverdale still do not have a full-time general practitioner practice, nor a second officer stationed at the ambulance station. Recently, too, Bringelly lost its general practitioner. It is ridiculous that we cannot get a medical service in the Camden electorate so close to Sydney. There was no mention of the tremendous population growth in the Camden electorate and the many problems associated with it, nor means of solving these problems. On 2 April there were 53,234 voters in my electorate, which is 15.9 per cent more than the electorate quota. Over the past 12 months 53 new residents were arriving on average each week in the Camden local government area [LGA] alone. This figure will increase in the future, and the Carr Government is neither making provisions for our new arrivals nor looking after those already there.

Moreover, the Government proposes to bring even more people into the electorate with new urban release areas. There are 180 hectares at Elderslie with a potential of 2,000 lots, 370 hectares at Spring Farm with a potential of 3,000 lots, and on 380 hectares at Menangle park there is anticipated to be 3,200 lots, giving a total of 8,200 lots already on the urban release program in the process of being planned. At an average of three

people per home, this will mean 25,000 extra people within the next few years. The effect of run-off from the proposed Menangle development on Nepean River water quality is causing great concern to local residents. The Carr Government has also announced a 15-year development program, which includes investigation of 540 hectares known as Stage 2 at Harrington Park to produce 1,000 lots and 9,000 hectares at Bringelly to produce 30,000 lots. Thus a further 40,000 lots are proposed for the Camden electorate, which equates to more than 100,000 people.

This is very disturbing to the longer-term residents of the Camden electorate who chose to live in the area because of its general rural atmosphere and amenity. The lot sizes proposed for these new developments generally range from between 250 square metres and 1,000 square metres. However, the Elderslie infill proposes terrace-type townhouses on 180 square metre lots—a fact never suggested during community consultations. Is this commensurate with the amenity of the existing development at Camden? What about the so-called rural atmosphere, not forgetting of course the amount of agricultural produce that will be lost forever because of such development? Apart from other agricultural activities, within the proposed area are 80 market gardens producing fresh vegetables and flowers for the Sydney market.

The people of Camden and I are particularly angry at the Government concerning the yellow blob in its latest announcement indicating the proposed Bringelly complex. This has confused and worried many locals, particularly land-holders in the Leppington, Catherine Field and Rossmore five-acre areas and other rural areas. Any trainee town planner knows the difficulty of purchasing blocks from a number of landowners, the cost of sewerage and the difficulty in determining road patterns because of existing dwellings and roads in five-acre areas. Other people have been angered by the fact that this blob covers the Scenic Protection Area, which has a 40-hectare minimum lot size and is considered a lung for the area, as are Mount Annan Botanic Gardens, both forming a major division between the urban sprawl of Campbelltown and Camden local government areas.

Why is the Carr Government not being honest and saying that any future urban development in the Bringelly area will be on large broad acre greenfield sites that exist under relatively few ownerships? In other words, it is a rehash of the South Creek Valley proposal. In September 1989 then Premier Nick Greiner announced the South Creek Valley release proposal, which was planned to spread over 16,500 hectares used for farming. It included the development of Oran Park comprising 12,000 to 15,000 land lots and a larger city proposal proposing 52,000 to 62,000 dwellings. In January 1991 the South Creek Valley draft regional environment study [RES] was developed and exhibited. I was the mayor of Camden until September 1991 and a member of the section 22 committee involved in planning South Creek Valley.

The draft RES, which was exhibited in January 1991, recommended reducing the density by 12,000 to 15,000 homes, with air and water quality issues, together with mineral resources, being cited as reasons. In May 1991 findings of air and water quality studies were reported, and Camden Council sought reassessment of the South Creek Valley development in light of air pollution findings. These air quality reports showed that further development in the Camden area would raise serious issues of concern relating to the health and wellbeing of residents. In October 1991 the South Creek RES and a draft regional environment plan [REP] were exhibited, but in November 1992 the Greiner Government adopted the compact city approach and the REP was deferred.

Nothing has changed since 1992, except that air pollution has got worse in this area because of the ever-increasing population in Sydney, which is a major contributing factor, together with the ever-increasing local population plus their motor vehicles needed for transport because of the very poor public transport available. Apart from these future proposals for growth, there is continuous building of new homes on existing zoned sites at Narellan Vale, Mount Annan, Currans Hill and Harrington Park, while Bradcorp has just commenced a development of 600 dwellings adjoining Camden LGA at its southern boundary with Wollondilly shire. Being in Wollondilly, these homes are never counted as part of Camden's population, but every one of these residents will use the roads and facilities of the Camden electorate for their everyday activities. The Minister for Housing, Andrew Refshauge, in a press release on the Bringelly development dated 5 December, said:

Under our 15 year blueprint this land will be planned for and developed in an entirely new way. Using a common sense approach, our plan paves the way for roads, public transport, health services and schools to be delivered at the same time as the new housing land. The mistakes of the previous government will not be repeated and the residents of these new suburbs will not be short changed.

How can the Carr Government blame the previous Government for not providing infrastructure for our area when its "Action for Transport 2010" proposal totally ignored the presence of Macarthur and its needs? I have

pointed out to the Government for the past eight years—the whole of its term in office—the lack of public transport and the overloaded roads in the Camden electorate. What about the extra 10,000 proposed lots that are not in the Bringelly area? Our roads have not coped for years. Only last August the Government acknowledged that the Camden Valley Way, the Northern Road and Narellan Road are not coping. On 25 June 2001 and 22 April this year I spoke in this House about the need to replace the two large roundabouts on Narellan Road, which are 1,100 metres apart, with traffic lights. The residents of Mount Annan, Narellan Vale and Currans Hill are finding it extremely difficult to exit their housing estates onto Narellan Road during peak hour, but nothing has been done.

The traffic is gridlocked between the two roundabouts back to Camden By-pass during the morning peak hour. The construction of a set of traffic lights—against the wishes of Camden Council—only 300 metres east of the Mount Annan Gardens roundabout will only exacerbate this situation. Moreover, the bottleneck at Narellan caused by traffic on Narellan Road, Camden Valley Way and Northern Road must be resolved. Nothing has been indicated by releases or decisions that something is going to be done about this intersection. I have called on the Carr Government many times to ease the problems of the Northern Road and Camden Valley Way by putting in passing lanes as an interim measure prior to duplication of each of these major roads. As yet the only response has been an upgrade of Narellan Road between Harrington Park and Oran Park, which will not reduce driver frustration on the majority of its length.

How can the Government blame anybody but itself when, like previous governments, it is making little effort to solve long-term existing problems caused by its plans? The people of the Camden electorate laugh when they talk about public transport, because they are served by only private buses—and not very many of them. The buses take tortuous routes through all the new suburbs. It takes at least twice the time to travel from Camden to Campbelltown by bus than it does by private vehicle. Currently no express buses run along the major roads. Such services would improve the situation. The only way to solve the problem is to replace the two roundabouts on Narellan Road with traffic lights and to upgrade the road so that there are three lanes of traffic each way, including a dedicated bus lane.

Taxis are non-existent in Camden at night and on the weekends. The Department of Transport has given five taxi plates to Premier Cabs to serve the area, but they are metropolitan and are used mainly in Campbelltown and Sydney rather than in Camden. I call on the Government to take these plates away from the Sydney contractors and to tender the service to locals. The plates should be restricted for use within Camden and its surrounding areas. More than 20 years ago, with a restricted plate system and a population of much less than 20,000 people, we had a very efficient taxi service. If I remember correctly, six locally owned taxis in Camden made a living at that time. With a current population of almost 50,000 surely a properly run taxi service would provide a living for at least three, if not five, local taxi drivers.

If people need to travel to the Sydney central business district by public transport, they have the electrified Macarthur line rail service. Camden residents use Macarthur, Campbelltown and Leumeah stations. Because of the length of time taken by buses, and the fact that most people do not live near bus routes, many people drive their cars to these stations and leave them in unsupervised car parks during the day. These commuters consider themselves lucky when they come back each evening and find their vehicles still there—the average rate of car theft in the Campbelltown local area command is 3.5 per day. I call on the Minister for Transport to provide supervised commuter car parks for which weekly ticket holders could pay a small surcharge to ensure that their vehicles were safe on their return from work.

Although it is called the Macarthur line, not all trains on that timetable run to Macarthur. On numerous occasions they are terminated at Campbelltown and people have to find their own transport to Macarthur to pick up their cars. I doubt that this situation will improve with the proposed new timetable, which was due to be introduced in April but has been deferred supposedly because of a lack of train drivers. Not only is the lack of train drivers causing the deferral, but the timetable is unsuitable for most of the passengers. Surely a train service, which is a public service, should benefit, not inconvenience, its users. On 14 January I wrote to the Minister for Transport on behalf of the commuters of the Macarthur area concerning this proposed timetable. I asked that nine inefficiencies of the proposed timetable be investigated. As yet I have received no answer.

These inefficiencies include commuters from Campbelltown to the city having their travelling times increased by 13 minutes each trip—an increase of 26 minutes a day or 2 hours 15 minutes a week, the Campbelltown services having 15 six-carriage trains in peak times instead of the current eight-carriage trains, and one less train each morning and evening. By the time the morning peak hour services arrive at Ingleburn from Campbelltown there is standing room only to the city. Why should the people of Macarthur have to put up



with services such as this? It is not right. I feel sorry for Macarthur residents who work at the Sydney airport, because the first train from Campbelltown to Sydney via the airport will leave at 5.24 a.m. Could this be another reason why people do not use the airport station?

Other problems face current residents and they need to be resolved before new residents come to live in the area. The obnoxious odour from Jacks Gully Waste Disposal site that often permeates Mount Annan must be controlled. Camden police are working under extremely difficult conditions in their heritage-listed Camden police station. The saga of a new police station at Narellan—often reported by me in this House—has not been resolved. As the heritage-listed Camden Courthouse is too small, the obvious answer is to build a state-of-the-art police station/courthouse complex on the old Camden High School site, which is owned by the Government. Surely commonsense will prevail and this will occur as soon as the site contamination from the old Camden gasworks is rectified. Warragamba has a police station and residence but no 24-hour police service, despite numerous representations made by me on behalf of the Warragamba/Silverdale residents. It is a well-known fact that it will take at least 20 minutes for a police car to reach Warragamba/Silverdale from the Penrith area. Therefore, it is open slather for hoodlums and any criminal activities in this area.

Before the new developments of Elderslie and Spring Farm are commenced, provision must be made for a second major east-west route from Camden to the M5. A large local road should run through the Elderslie infill—either through or over the Camden by-pass—to join a major arterial road through the Spring Farm development, passing Jacks Gully to Menangle Road. Rapid bus routes must be planned on these roads to give easy access to railway stations. Access from this road to the M5 must be planned now so that Federal funding is available for the on/off ramps as soon as it is constructed. Electrification of the Macarthur line to Menangle will serve new and old residents with rail transport to the city. Camden Council has publicly stated that it will not rezone its new urban release areas until the transport issues are resolved.

I hope that the council will hold firm to its statement, otherwise road traffic will be impossible and utter chaos will reign. These changes will also serve the ever-increasing population of Wollondilly Shire. The widening of the Macarthur bridge over the Nepean River must be considered a future option. The creation of the Western Sydney Orbital will be a great boon to Western Sydney, but bottlenecks will occur at the southern end unless Camden Valley Way is concurrently doubled in size. It is already at capacity at peak hours and traffic is expected to increase by 18 per cent when the orbital opens. Similarly, as the capacity of the M5 is already exceeded during peak hours, it will also need to be upgraded to six lanes to handle the traffic flows on the orbital and the proposed development in the area.

Finally, as we have not had a major flood since 1988, everybody seems to have forgotten about the Camden district floods. It will be interesting to see what happens next time the area floods. I foresee traffic coming to a complete standstill, with gridlocks everywhere. The other forgotten element in the Government's proposal for growth in my electorate is the spectre of an airport at Badgerys Creek that still lies over the area. Until a firm decision is made on this issue nothing should be done with the proposed Bringelly development that abuts the site of the proposed airport. Although the Governor did not mention Camden very much in her Speech, she has visited my electorate on many occasions. I have been proud to host her on those occasions and I have enjoyed them very much. I thank her for her graciousness and friendliness when she visits our area. I wish her many future successes and enjoyment of her position.

**Mr WEST** (Campbelltown) [11.41 a.m.]: I congratulate the Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, on her Speech to Parliament and on her leadership as one of the custodians of the State. Since becoming Governor she and her husband have been regular visitors to communities across the State, and on two occasions in the past year in an official capacity at Campbelltown. I know that Professor Bashir has been a long-time friend and advocate of the Campbelltown community, and I look forward to more of her visits. In her Speech to Parliament the Governor drew attention to the fact that she was being televised on the Internet—information technology [IT] opening up democracy in New South Wales, especially to younger people. I want to quickly say hello to my son, Lachlan, who is listening through the Internet at home. The use of that technology is a good beginning to ensure that our children are equipped for the changes as a result of the information revolution.

Many years ago Toffler suggested that the rate of change was increasing, something that is often taken for granted now. The key to ensuring that our children are equipped for this whirlwind of change is education: education welded to a sense of community and commitment to their fellow man—qualities that the Labor Government is helping to build upon. The old expression, "Give a man a fish you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" holds its meaning today. We owe our children, regardless of their background, good schools and excellent teachers. The Government is committed to ensuring that our children

get this start, not just in schools but in TAFE, in holiday programs and from resources provided on the Internet. During the summer holidays students from a number of Campbelltown high schools took part in the Premier's IT summer school at Campbelltown TAFE. Supported by the Government and Microsoft, the students set about designing a web site. In the process they learnt about system design, teamwork, corporations, got a sneak preview at the Xbox and had a lot of fun. The students would not stay away, even when they were sick.

Keeping up with this technology, let alone its myriad uses, presents challenges for education. The Government is meeting this challenge not only by connecting every school to the Internet but also by broadbanding our schools, which will provide faster access to the resources of the Internet and the opportunities for alternative learning styles that this brings. We are also working to improve the physical state of schools. Recently the Government shared increased revenues with the school community by investing an additional \$70 million to fund priority building and security upgrades at schools. That included more than \$1.2 million at Campbelltown schools, such as Leumeah High School and Campbelltown Performing Arts High School. That money—a welcome addition—accelerated a number of projects and helped improve safety.

The Government is working to further improve literacy and numeracy levels, above the world-class results set by our students through programs such as Reading Recovery. School is not always easy for some, especially students with behavioural problems. These students need special assistance to ensure that they get back on track and allow other students to continue in their studies. Last year I was pleased to open the Lomandra school, which was named after a local native plant for which, incidentally, the Campbelltown Aboriginal community had many uses. The school provides intensive assistance to children with behavioural difficulties and builds a sense of confidence in them. At the opening I spoke with students and their families, who were impressed with the difference the school was making to their lives. When students are ready, they progress to other schools or onto training or further education provided by TAFE. I want to congratulate the dedicated group of teachers who lead that school in their important work.

The Governor expressed her sympathy for the victims of, and thanks to those who assisted in, the recent bushfires. I too want to place on record my thanks to those who dug deep, lost sleep and shared their time with the communities affected by the fires. In particular, I thank Lido and John from the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service for leading their teams through this crisis, and to the local businesses that provided food, drink and support. It is often only through times of crisis that we realise what a great community we have in New South Wales.

Health is one of the most important indicators of how we are doing as a community. The way we look after those who are sick and injured is a measure of our compassion as a society. In New South Wales we have set about a major upgrade of our health facilities, delivering our communities the world-class health facilities they deserve. Campbelltown is a beneficiary of this commitment with a major upgrade of Campbelltown and Camden hospitals, bringing more health care to a local setting—cancer services, dialysis, separate paediatric emergency, and improved and increased number of operating theatres.

The Governor saw improvements that are going on at Campbelltown ahead of schedule when she officially opened the Healing of the Mind Adolescent Health Facility. That facility will assist young people at a time when mental illness is often first diagnosed, in a safe and friendly environment. I thank the Governor for her continuing commitment to mental health. Of course, it is the staff that make a hospital become a place of healing and not just a building. Campbelltown has assembled a dedicated group of doctors, nurses and assistants that help make a hospital stay as pleasant as possible. Indeed I cannot fault the friendliness and commitment of the staff at the birth of either of my children, and I want to thank the nurses especially for their assistance and gentle reminders. It is amazing what one forgets in only two years between the birth of two children. That is why I am pleased that the Government has invested \$20 million a year to recruit and retain nursing staff through programs such as retraining to attract former nurses back into the profession. I was also pleased that the Minister for Health and I were able to present so many long service awards to staff of the Macarthur Health Service in recognition of their valuable contributions.

We all want safer communities. Recently I spoke in this Chamber about legislation foreshadowed by the Governor that removes the presumption in favour of bail for repeat offenders. This is yet another example of the Government's commitment to work toward safer communities, building on knife laws, drug house legislation and other amendments already enacted. Campbelltown is well served by its hard-working police men and women. I know that the Minister for Police, Michael Costa, was impressed by them on a recent visit to Campbelltown and the efforts they put into working with communities. Safety is something that we all want to work toward, and it is good to see that consultations between councils and police on new estates are now occurring, helping to prevent some of the poor designs that allow crime to flourish. Sometimes, however, the hard work of residents and police is not enough to overcome serious design flaws in street layouts.

That is why the Minister for Planning, Andrew Refshauge, has announced that the Minto housing estate will be redesigned and redeveloped in co-operation with the private sector and residents. This redevelopment will eliminate the back-to-front homes, dark alleyways, lack of natural light, bad drainage and poor privacy that are features of this estate. The project will pull down the badly designed and deteriorating housing and replace it with a mix of private and public housing. It will not only provide quality housing but it will also reduce the stigma that many people are subjected to by living in public housing. At the same time it will create around 500 jobs for Campbelltown in the first stage alone.

Sometimes families need a bit of a hand. It is not always easy learning how to look after children. That is why the Government has established the Families First Program running in Campbelltown and other areas. The program provides support to families through antenatal care, home-based health care, supported play groups, and school-based family centres to prepare children for school. Not only does the program assist with health outcomes; it helps to reduce conditions that can lead to violence and abuse. An essential part of Families First is the volunteers. I was lucky enough to join with Minister Faye Lo Po' to thank some of these women for their efforts at a pamper day put on by the Benevolent Society in Campbelltown. I would further like to express in this House a thank you to these women for the effort they put into assisting other families. I am pleased to see that, through the Primary Connect Program, Campbelltown will also be home to a trial of mentoring, homework support, parental education and sport for young people with drug and alcohol problems or at risk of developing such problems.

Of course, families in Campbelltown have welcomed the completion of the M5 East, which makes journeys to the city safe and faster. Built and completed ahead of time by the New South Wales Government, this road is opening up opportunities for jobs in our area. The Premier also announced on the weekend that construction was under way to remove the last set of lights on the M5 at Moorebank. Removal of the lights will mean that the journey to and from the city will be even faster. Of course, it is not just the big projects that make a difference. Locally, Appin Road is being resurfaced near Bradbury and St Helens Park to make this important link safer. And a rest area is being built further along for heavy vehicle drivers, encouraging them to stop, revive and survive.

Similarly, work is under way to improve parking at Leumeah railway station, in a joint project between Campbelltown Council and the State Government. After a few delays the car park is expected to be completed towards the end of this year. It will be welcomed by commuters. The Governor listed the Government's key objectives of modernising the State's infrastructure, promoting investment and jobs, creating safer communities and world-class schools and hospitals, and projecting our unique environment. I am pleased to report that the New South Wales Government is well on its way to meeting these commitments, using the weight of history and tradition in this nation's first Parliament to propel us forward.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Mills):** I welcome to the gallery school captains, mainly from the metropolitan area, who are visiting the Parliament today. I trust they will enjoy their visit to the Parliament.

**Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [11.55 a.m.]:** I join with other members in congratulating the Governor on her appointment as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales. The students in the gallery may have the opportunity to meet the Governor during their activities today, or at least to visit Government House, which I think is the normal practice. I welcome them to the Parliament. Whilst they may not see a lot of activity today, I hope they will appreciate the opportunity to see the Parliament in session. I am sure some of the people in the upper and lower galleries will have the opportunity to sit in this Chamber at some point in the future. It is an interesting and enjoyable experience. In some respects the content of the Governor's Speech did not cover some issues that should be Government priorities. Of course, it is the Governor's role to reflect the Government's agenda. There are some oversights and some areas in which the Government has failed to recognise its responsibilities. I will touch on a couple of issues that relate to my electorate and an issue that I believe is significant to our future as a State. I will also refer to the environmental and planning areas, which are my portfolio responsibilities.

I refer first to the Roseville rail line and the impact of planning and development at Lindfield. As of last year it was planned that the Parramatta to Chatswood rail line—it is now the Parramatta to Epping rail line—would pass under a number of residences in Roseville. The Minister for Transport still has not recognised the severe impact on the residents and their homes. The tunnel will be so shallow that there will be an inevitable significant impact on the resale value of the homes. Once tunnel construction is under way and when trains are operating in the tunnel some of these residents will be obliged to move, and they will lose substantially on their investments.

It is clearly unfair, improper and—without substantial argument—immoral for a government to act in this way. Somewhat sneakily, in the Parramatta rail link legislation the Government took away the right of these people to claim just-terms compensation that would otherwise have been available to them. I call on the Government today to recognise that it has robbed these people. It has stolen the land beneath their homes and seriously devalued their homes because it knows that politically it can afford to turn a blind eye. I argue very strongly that this is not about politics; it is about being morally correct, fair and reasonable. But that is not the way the Government has acted in this case.

Roseville and Lindfield have been substantially impacted by overdevelopment. I state clearly that the Opposition and I, as an individual member and as shadow Minister for Planning, on coming to government, will immediately repeal State environmental planning policy [SEPP] 5. Ongoing ad hoc development projects throughout the Ku-ring-gai municipality in particular are unacceptable. They are destroying the environmental and historic character of many streets and suburbs of the municipality. Under a Coalition government those developments will stop. There is a need for housing diversity, but not at the expense of destroying the very features that attract people to live in those areas.

In the Forestville area of the Warringah part of the electorate, traffic congestion is an enormous and still worsening problem. We need an extra transport link to the northern beaches. I commit firmly to the concept of a tunnel to connect Wakehurst Parkway and the Burnt Bridge Creek deviation to the Warringah Freeway at Cammeray. Only that type of transport connection infrastructure has the capacity to carry buses and cars, alleviate road congestion and facilitate more public transport patronage. That is the only way to alleviate traffic congestion on the northern beaches and substantially improve the quality of life of residents. It would reduce the level of emissions from slow-moving traffic in areas like Military Road and Ourimbah Road, Mosman and Warringah Road in the Forestville area. That solution ought to be promoted.

I believe the northern beaches community accepts a toll as a necessary aspect of that project, provided that that solution is delivered. Traffic congestion on Spit Road and feeder roads, on Warringah Road, Forest Way and Wakehurst Parkway has worsened to the extent that it is no longer tolerable. We must have a moratorium on rezoning and unacceptable development on the northern beaches. Until New South Wales has a government that will provide extra transport infrastructure to link this area with the State road network, there should be a moratorium on rezonings, inappropriate developments and particularly SEPP 5 developments.

We cannot allow develop of this type at its present rate, not only because of the traffic congestion it causes but also because of the cost to people's time and the impact on the environment. It is obvious that the current Government has no intention of addressing these problems. Clearly, it has no plan to prioritise construction of an extra transport link. Therefore it will be left to a Coalition government to deliver that link. I commit firmly to ensuring that delivery. I make that commitment not only to my constituents but also to the broader northern beaches community.

Another matter symptomatic of the mismanagement of the Government and its arrogant attitude towards the community on a range of matters is the proposed charcoal plant at Mogo on the South Coast. That project affects the whole of the New South Wales community. The Government has ridden roughshod over the local community despite the significant adverse environmental consequences of the project. That is despite the fact that the planning process is supposed to be dealt with completely independently of the proponent. In this instance the planning process has been compromised. This proposal has been driven by the Premier's office and the Treasury's office. I will elaborate on a number of matters to demonstrate that point. The planning process on this proposal is not in keeping with the form of government that the Governor and citizens of this State would advocate.

As has been demonstrated in the House this week, the Minister for Forestry has misled the public and the Parliament on this issue. In September last year a question was placed on notice in the upper House. That question was answered on 23 October by the Minister for Forests, who quite clearly said that tree poisoning had ceased. Tree poisoning in our native forests had been going on for a period of time last year. The Premier's office, State Forests and the Treasurer's office recognised the sensitivity of the proposed charcoal plant at Mogo and realised that public knowledge of that tree poisoning could have stopped the project in its tracks.

Internal e-mails show that when the Minister said, less candidly than he ought to have, that the poisoning had stopped in the South Coast area, he did not disclose that poisoning was continuing further down the coast in the Eden region. The reality is that if the Minister had been forthright about the poisoning and the public had known in October that the poisoning was ongoing—a matter directly relevant to the charcoal plant

and the supply of timber to that plant—the uproar would have been such that the charcoal plant proposal would have been stopped dead in its tracks. That is literally what a senior officer in State Forests said to the Chief Executive Officer of State Forests, Mr Bob Smith, and to Virginia Knox of the Treasurer's office. That officer said:

I formally wrote to Dodds—

the officer who had carriage of the poisoning program—

to encourage him to stop the poisoning program as it had the potential to stop the charcoal plant in its tracks and by definition the smelter project.

There is no doubt that the South Coast community is outraged that the Government and Premier Bob Carr have ridden roughshod over the community's concerns and environmental issues. There is no doubt that if the community had known that the poisoning was to continue until at least December last year they would have railed against this project even more angrily than they did, making it untenable for the charcoal plant proposal to proceed and ultimately be approved to be established at Mogo.

A number of questions about the charcoal plant need to be answered by the Government. They relate to the whole of the poisoning program and the way in which the Premier's office, the Treasurer's office and State Forests have driven the project. There are questions also about the extent of the financial liability to be borne by taxpayers. Yesterday's *Canberra Times* carried an article demonstrating that taxpayers could be exposed to a cost of \$1 million in carbon credits due to the charcoal to be burnt creating carbon dioxide and adding to greenhouse gases. Under United Nations agreements and State obligations—to which I am advised, and as the article points out, the Premier himself has committed—the cost for offsetting carbon credits for the burning of the charcoal over the next 20 years would be \$1 billion.

Clearly, there are other subsidies for State development and other matters relating to the overall silicon project. There are often some forms of subsidies accompanying projects, and that principle is not to be criticised, although the extent of those subsidies should be made known to the public. However, if there is to be an additional \$1 billion subsidy—a bill of \$50 million a year for the next 20 years that taxpayers—that should have been divulged before the development was approved. It is time the Premier came clean. He needs to clear the air on what will be the taxpayer's liability for the State's carbon credits obligations in respect of the charcoal plant, whether that liability has been factored into the proposal, and whether the taxpayers of the State will have to pick up that direct cost of the charcoal plant.

The third main issue I want to deal with is the development process. In April the Minister for Planning approved the charcoal plant proposal. He did so supposedly, as is and as should be his obligation, in an impartial manner. Yet it is clear that he, as the consent authority and as a member of the Government, saw, in a whole-of-government sense, that the Government, the Premier and others were determined to deliver approval for the plant. The Minister was completely compromised, as was Planning NSW, in that process.

Before the approval was granted the Premier clearly stated in public, during a visit to the South Coast, that the plant would go ahead. That left the Minister for Planning in an impossible position. Planning NSW and the Minister had no option but to approve the plant. In a memorandum to the Premier relating to the timber supply agreement that was signed between State Forests and Australian Silicon Ltd, the proponent of the charcoal plant, John Dermody, the Executive Director of the Development Projects Unit of the Premier's Department, referred to political sensitivity surrounding the signing of that agreement.

Australian Silicon Ltd was pushing to have the timber supply agreement signed because it would effectively commit the Government in real terms to the plant and ensure the supply of timber in the area. Concerns were expressed in both the Premier's Department and Planning NSW as to the extent to which the signing of the agreement would compromise the planning process. Australian Silicon Ltd was determined to get the timber supply agreement through. The company was pushing for it in December and it was ultimately signed in early February. However, planning approval was not granted until April. The memorandum from John Dermody to the Premier stated:

Ideally, NSW Government agencies would prefer that both documents—

that is the wood supply agreement and the heads of agreement for the plantation—

were not signed/announced until Minister Refshauge has finally determined the current development application/EIS process for the charcoal plant (expected in early March) to avoid any suggestion that the Minister's decision is being influenced by other Government actions.

Planning NSW tried to assess the development proposal for a charcoal plant independently and objectively. Clearly, the Premier's Department and other government agencies recognised that the Minister and Planning NSW would be compromised if the timber supply agreement and the plantations heads of agreement were signed before the development application for the charcoal plant was approved. Notwithstanding that, the Government moved ahead and signed the agreement. In his memorandum John Dermody further advised:

Planning NSW would strongly prefer that any signing/announcement be delayed until after Minister Refshauge determines the DA/EIS process to avoid any potential criticism.

He recommended:

That the Premier not be involved in this process to avoid any claim by potential appellants or critics that the Premier has sought to influence Minister Refshauge's determination in this matter or that Minister Refshauge (in a whole of Government sense) supports the agreement and has, therefore, predetermined the DA/EIS process.

It is clear that the Premier was aware of public comment and knew that the signing of the timber supply agreement by State Forests would compromise the Minister for Planning and Planning NSW. The department raised strong objections, but they were ignored. The whole planning process for the approval of a charcoal plant at Mogo was compromised. That community had been treated with contempt. Those who have genuine concerns have been ignored and the whole process has been a farce. The memorandum indicates that the agencies involved were aware of the compromise but were determined to go ahead because their riding instructions were to get the Charcoal plant at approved and to ensure that the silicon smelter went ahead so that the Government could enjoy the resulting political benefits in the Central West, particularly in the Bathurst electorate. A number of issues relating to the charcoal plant have not been properly addressed. The Opposition has clearly recorded its support for that silicon smelter. However, the Opposition believes that the charcoal plant should not be at Mogo but at some other more appropriate place: Bombala is the optimal location. The residents of the South Coast deserve some answers; they deserve more support than they have been getting from the Carr Government.

**Mr D. L. PAGE** (Ballina) [12.15 p.m.]: I was pleased to be in attendance at the opening of the third session of the Fifty-second Parliament by Her Excellency Professor Bashir, AC, on 26 February this year. Having had the honour and pleasure of hosting a visit to my electorate by Her Excellency and Sir Nicholas Shehadie late last year, which was a wonderful success and much appreciated by all those who came into contact with them, I express publicly my admiration for those two marvellous people. As the Governor pointed out in her Speech, this year is the centenary of women's suffrage in both the Commonwealth and New South Wales parliaments, something of which we can be justifiably proud.

The Governor also offered her heartfelt sympathy to those who suffered loss during the bushfires, and I join with her in expressing sympathy to them. I commend the wonderful efforts of our firefighters and also those who provided aid and support, as well as those who raised funds to help the affected communities. The Governor, in outlining the Government's program, talked about a wide range of issues including rural and regional communities, education, health, safer communities, crime prevention, roads and transport, sustainable communities, and the environment, particularly salinity.

As shadow Minister for Land and Water Conservation, and shadow Minister for Forestry, I will direct the major part of my contribution to sustainable communities, natural resource management and the pressing issue of salinity. Unfortunately, under the Government a disjointed and unco-ordinated approach has developed to natural resource management in New South Wales. That is impacting directly on the delivery of sustainable communities. For example, there are 72 committees beavering away in isolation from one another trying to develop a plan for a particular aspect of natural resource management.

In many respects the committees are doing good work. However, there are far too many committees. Some are working on water plans, some on vegetation management plans, some on catchment plans, some on catchment blueprints, some on coastline management plans and, of course, there are already land and water management plans in the major irrigation districts. My point is that none of those plans are truly integrated and many lack compatibility with other plans. In most cases the boundaries for the plans are not consistent. For example, catchment plans are based on catchments, whereas in most cases the vegetation management plans are based on bio-regions.

The regulatory top-down approach we have seen taken by the Government can achieve only so much. For long-term success the community has to back the plans and must feel a sense of ownership, even pride, in those plans. Unfortunately, that is not the case. If there are to be sustainable communities, particularly in regional areas, we must have a much clearer and more integrated framework for natural resource management

than we have under the Carr Government. Unfortunately, in many cases those plans or draft plans do not have broad community support. There is no sense of community ownership and the once trusting relationship between government and landowner has disappeared.

In addition to the demonstrable failure at meaningful community consultation, the Carr Government's approach to natural resource management is prescriptive and overregulatory, with insufficient attention being paid to education and incentives. That is a major concern because sustainable management of our natural resources is directly linked to the long-term sustainability of our communities. Despite that fundamental connection and in the light of the size and importance of the problems we face, ecologically sustainable development unfortunately is marginal to the main political game and is often sidelined as a secondary issue. That has to change.

We desperately require new knowledge systems that are holistic, cross-disciplinary, participatory, with higher levels of professionalism in both their generation and application. A single problem focus will almost inevitably fail, yielding a poor environmental return for our investment. Another problem is that programs are not monitored for effectiveness, nor are they properly evaluated. We should not confuse activity in natural resource management with effectiveness. Far too much money is being consumed in process and not enough by on-ground projects. We are not getting anywhere near an adequate return for our investment in natural resource management. In fact, we do not even know what those returns are.

Recently I attended a Getting It Right conference in Adelaide. I was shocked to hear Commissioner Neil Byron from the Productivity Commission state that in Australia, at both the Commonwealth and State levels, between \$4 billion and \$15 billion is being spent on the environment. He pointed out that we do not even know what is being spent on the environment, let alone if it is effective. If we do not even know what we are spending, it is hard to know whether we are getting a return on our investment. Some improvements are occurring, but the challenges are huge. In New South Wales there is no established framework to deal with the significant change which will be necessary to meet the challenge. Fundamental issues like who pays, how much and under what circumstances have not been addressed.

Given that past government policies are responsible for where we find ourselves, it is unreasonable to expect land-holders to bear the full financial burden of funding the necessary changes. This is why the concept of property rights and responsibilities is central to moving forward in natural resource management. Land-holders have a duty of care for their land and a responsibility to hand it on to the next generation in better shape than they found it. However, where action is required in the broader public interest—for example, if water entitlements need to be reduced in the public interest—the public as a whole should pay. If we are going to have reform in natural resource management, we must provide a workable framework within which change can occur in an equitable manner. In this respect, it seems to me that the creation of property rights and responsibilities is crucial. At the same time, a significant source of funding over the long term is required to underpin that property right and ensure sustainable outcomes are met. It is also necessary to ensure that any necessary adjustment packages are properly funded.

Institutional arrangements also need attention. The States have the constitutional responsibility for natural resource management, but the Commonwealth collects most of the money. The States are worried about property rights because of the possible cost to them, so New South Wales and other States are sluggish in embracing the concept. I make the point to the New South Wales Government that if its economic and social studies were carried out properly, it would know the cost of property rights. I also point out that national competition payments to the States are very substantial as a result of the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] agreements on resource management reform. I note from information provided by the House of Representatives that in 2001-02, New South Wales will receive \$241 million in national competition payments, \$246 million in 2002-03, \$252 million in 2003-04, and \$258 million in 2004-05.

Almost \$1 billion is being paid by the Commonwealth Government to the New South Wales State Government, which receives the largest portion of national competition payments of all the States. That \$1 billion will be paid to the New South Wales Government over the next four years to facilitate the COAG reform proposals, including water management reform among other natural resource management reforms. I make the point that if the States are seeking revenue to underpin a property right, \$1 billion is not a bad place to start. I am not suggesting necessarily that that total amount should be spent on natural resource management reform, but some of it certainly could be. The New South Wales Government has an obligation to use part of the national competition payments to underpin property rights.

The GST revenue which is being disbursed to the States is a source of revenue that has not previously been available to the States, and for that reason the New South Wales Government should be examining

property rights more closely now than has been the case previously. As I said earlier, properly carried out social and economic studies would inform this Government of the impact of the creation of property rights and the likely extent of compensation. Property rights involve more than compensation, but measurement of the social impact of new rights will provide some idea of the costs associated with reform, implementation and an adjustment package. Unfortunately, because social and economic impact statements have not been undertaken in detail, the Government is hesitant to introduce a comprehensive regime of property rights and is afraid of the costs. There is an obvious connection between a lack of research and the non-existence of fundamental rights.

Earlier I mentioned the complex and disjointed approach to natural resource management characterised by numerous committees considering various statutes, and I believe the time is ripe to look at consolidating and replacing most of the current legislation on natural resource management with a single statute which would have ecologically sustainable development at its heart. Importantly, the implementation of it would be decentralised to the regions through regional resource management plans being developed through genuine local input. I acknowledge that the plans would consolidate much of the work that has already been done: I am not suggesting that the baby should be thrown out with the bathwater. I merely suggest that instead of separate legislation relating to native vegetation, water resource management and other natural resources management, a consolidation should take place as soon as possible so that management can be undertaken for the whole of a region or catchment.

If people comply with resource management plans, they should not need to go anywhere near a consent authority. Provided that development of resource management plans is undertaken in close and meaningful consultation with local communities, local council authorities and other stakeholders, a simple model with less complexity and inconsistency than the present one would result. I am strongly in favour of rationalising and simplifying the framework of natural resource management because it creates a greater sense of ownership among those most directly affected. The major policy failing of the Carr Labor Government has been that people most directly affected by resource management decisions have not derived any sense of ownership or involvement in the process of formulating resource management plans.

While the process I have outlined is appropriate for the longer term, in the meantime various changes need to be made to existing legislation. Various vegetation, water and catchment management committees should be required to increase rural and primary producer representation. The right to vote, should a vote be required, should be removed from agency personnel. In other words, the bureaucrats should be on tap, not on top, in providing technical advice, but community representatives only should have the right to vote. There should also be a requirement for all community members to live in the region to which the relevant plan applies. People should not fly in from Sydney for the day, make important community decisions and then immediately fly out.

Sustainable forestry operations on privately owned land need to be the subject of a separate code of practice similar to the Tasmanian code. These and other changes will need to be made at the legislative level. However, by far the most important challenge will be to change the relationship between government and landholder from one of distrust under this Labor Government to one characterised by a meaningful partnership between the custodians of our natural resources, the landowners on the one hand, and the Government on the other. Native vegetation is significant in New South Wales because 87 per cent of it is grown on either private or leasehold land. Adoption by landowners of the native vegetation management regime is vital for its existence and future enhancement. Landowners are important stakeholders, and the success of the regime is dependent upon landowners being convinced that they are a vital part of the process.

The Governor stated in her Speech that the Carr Government would be creating more national parks. Whilst no official announcements have yet been made, I have it on good authority that about a dozen State forests in the upper and lower north-eastern areas of New South Wales are earmarked to be converted to national parks. That proposal is a major breach of the regional forest agreements [RFAs]. Those agreements, which took almost a decade to negotiate, set aside resources for the timber industry on the one hand and reserved large new areas exclusively for conservation purposes on the other.

The RFAs, which were signed off in 1998 and were agreed to by this Parliament, are not even four years into their 20-year time frame. These proposals, which represent a major breach of faith by the Carr Government to all those who put their energy and faith into the RFA process, directly attack the integrity of the RFAs. Soon after the ink has dried on agreements that were negotiated, at some pain, by all parties, the Government is proposing to change the agreements to enable at least a dozen State forests, set aside specifically for the timber industry in the upper and lower north-eastern areas of Australia, to be converted to national parks purely and simply for political reasons—to try to attract Green preferences.



Salinity is obviously a big issue in all areas of this State. I am a member of the Select Committee on Salinity, which recently released its excellent report. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of the committee's terms of reference dealt mainly with local government. The committee recommended that State governments should be prepared to provide more support for local government in relation to natural resource management. Local government could be an important player in the management of our natural resources. However, it needs support from the State Government—which, although it has said it would fund half the cost of developing coastal protection plans, has not made any commitment to assist in the implementation of those plans.

I am concerned that the outcome of that will be local government providing the community with an affordable rather than an optimum plan. Local government might provide us with an optimum plan if it knew that the State Government had a strong financial commitment to support such a plan. The pressing issue of public liability insurance remains a grass roots problem in my electorate, as it does in most electorates. I, like other honourable members, have received numerous complaints about the skyrocketing costs of public liability insurance and the unavailability of that insurance for many community and other groups. Unfortunately, the Carr Government's response to this problem has been sluggish. This issue has been around for two or three years.

The Government's Civil Liability Bill will go some way towards solving that problem. The Government should take on board an issue that has been raised in debate: not treating people equally before the law. The Government's legislation might help to alleviate some of the problems, but I do not think it will solve them all. I would be surprised if there were any significant reductions in premiums. The Premier said that there would be a 12 per cent reduction in premiums but we have seen increases of up to 2,000 per cent. As I said earlier, the Government's legislation will not make much difference for a lot of people. I am concerned that the insurance industry will be making \$150 million from these increased premiums, which is most unfair. Insurance companies must be much more transparent. We, as a community, must be able to determine from where premiums are being collected and on what they are being spent.

The Alstonville bypass has been a major issue in my electorate for some time. Vehicle numbers averaging 15,000 or 16,000 a day on the Bruxner Highway are travelling through this small village of Alstonville. Over 2,000 children attend three schools that are located close to the highway, which is causing a lot of conflict between pedestrians and passing vehicles. The community and I have lobbied the Government on that issue, and I have spoken in this House on a number of occasions about it. The Minister, who recently visited my electorate, acknowledged the need for this bypass and said that the major obstacle was funding. The Federal Government allocated \$12 million towards the project, which is likely to cost \$36 million. I hope that next week the Treasurer will announce that the Government is prepared to commit funding towards the Alstonville bypass project.

The Byron bypass—another issue that has not been resolved for years—is expected to cost about \$1.6 million or \$1.7 million. Byron council does not have funds to commence that project, which is regarded as a local project, so nothing has happened. I am pleased that the Coalition's new roads policy makes a reference to tourist roads. Under that policy Byron council will be able to access funds from the State Government—something that it cannot do at present. Some of the older schools in my electorate—schools such as Ballina and Lennox Head primary schools—need new multipurpose centres. Byron primary school needs a larger school hall. Older schools in my electorate should be upgraded to bring them up to speed with newer schools in the area. I hope that the Government will allocate funding for Ballina and Lennox Head primary schools in this year's State budget.

**Ms MEGARRITY** (Menai) [12.35 p.m.]: It is indeed a pleasure to respond to the Speech of the Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, on opening the third session of the Fifty-second Parliament. Professor Bashir thanked us for our support and encouragement since her swearing in as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales just over a year ago. I believe that every member of this House—and this view has certainly been supported by everything I have heard in debate today—would commend her on the grace, compassion and diligence that she has shown in her term thus far.

In her Speech Her Excellency commented on the strong New South Wales economy, without which, of course, many of the programs outlined in her Speech could not be delivered. It is the same careful fiscal management that delivered our Olympics, paid for in full, and this in contrast to the economies of so many other countries that were left with bills years after hosting the event. Professor Bashir highlighted the achievements and future intentions of the Carr Government in a number of policy areas. The people of New South Wales recognise that this Government is not found wanting with regard to policy development.

One of the boldest initiatives of this Government, and this was referred to by the Governor, was the Drug Summit. It was my honour to attend that event shortly after my election to this Parliament. Her Excellency referred to the fact that the Government is entering the fourth year of its comprehensive Drug Summit plan of action. Honourable members will recall that it was agreed at the Drug Summit that there was no single simple solution to the problems of drug addiction. This scourge on our society not only hurts individuals and families who are directly involved, it can also have a serious impact on the whole community, causing crime and antisocial behaviour. The plan of action covering education, prevention, treatment and enforcement, outlines more than 400 projects that are backed by funding.

Significantly, the plan focuses on local solutions for local problems by helping communities solve drug problems through community drug action teams [CDATs]; responding to local needs such as educating people through community forums or promoting drug and alcohol services; making sure all local services are working together to tackle the drug problem; and cracking down on drug-related crime and antisocial behaviour. Real progress on the problems associated with drug addiction will mean safer communities—another issue that was referred to in the Governor's Speech. I wholeheartedly agree with the following statement of Her Excellency:

Crime prevention is not an issue for police alone.

Local community involvement and cross-agency cooperation are important components of any crime prevention strategy.

In my electorate of Menai we are fortunate to be part of the new high-profile trial of a community based policing initiative known as the Police Accountability Community Team [PACT]. When the Minister for Police, the Hon. Michael Costa, visited the Menai area with me on Wednesday 6 March 2002, he saw first-hand the operation of our local police and he spoke to concerned local residents. He was impressed with the spirit of co-operation and commitment in our community to genuinely and openly deal with local crime issues. The first PACT meeting, which related to the Sutherland part of my electorate, was held last Monday. The honourable member for Heathcote and the honourable member for Miranda were also in attendance at that meeting. The PACT will assess police responses to crime hot spots, as defined by police intelligence, and problem areas which have been raised by the community. In order to track community perceptions of crime, the local community will be surveyed on a regular basis. I believe that we have a unique opportunity to lead the way with new approaches to crime prevention.

My electorate was also pleased with the announcement in February by the Premier and the Minister for Police that an additional training facility would be established at the University of Western Sydney at the Hawkesbury campus at Richmond. An extra 800 police, in addition to the 1,504 recruits already in training, will begin training at that facility this year. On 1 July a new policing structure will improve front-line policing by ensuring that local area commands are the focal point of service for police in the community. Residents of the suburbs of Menai should be able to feel safe in their homes and on the streets. The Carr Government is taking the fight to criminals and making our streets safer by initiatives such as no bail for repeat offenders, new offences and tougher penalties, stronger police powers and better equipment.

The Carr Government has given police new equipment, including Glock pistols, capsicum spray and extendable batons. The New South Wales Police Service is rapidly embracing state-of-the art technology, such as DNA analysis, livescan digital fingerprinting, mobile data terminals and digital ballistics. As has been pointed out, the Government will introduce legislation to consolidate several police powers into a single Act of Parliament. In addition to remarks on safer communities, Her Excellency spoke about sustainable communities. She said:

Protecting our environment and responding to the greenhouse threat are major priorities for the Government.

The Carr Government should be very proud of its record on environmental matters at the macro and micro levels. Over the past few years, the Government has made landmark reforms to create more national parks, to promote energy conservation and renewable energy, to protect threatened species and to improve air and water. Some of these initiatives include: more than \$3 billion earmarked to upgrade Sydney's sewage treatment plants and improve inland rivers; \$182 million given to farmers and the community to manage our water resources; \$80 million spent on the highly successful urban stormwater program to reduce stormwater pollution; a \$6 million clean air fund to tackle neighbourhood pollution, such as that produced by wood heaters; and more than \$5 million allocated to the cleaner production program to help small and medium-size businesses reduce pollution.

The Government has created more than 240 new national parks and nature reserves, more than doubled the area of declared wilderness in New South Wales and, significantly, obtained the listing of the Blue Mountains as a World Heritage area. I know that listing is particularly welcomed by the Attorney General, and

the Minister for the Environment, who represents the Blue Mountains electorate. In our last two terms the Government has reformed virtually all of the State's environment legislation, giving New South Wales some of the most effective environmental laws in the country and one of the best pollution control systems. At Lucas Heights in my electorate, in the past few weeks the Government has transferred ownership of 123.5 hectares of land, which supports threatened species and shale forest, to Sutherland Shire Council. This land will be retained for conservation by the council. The land at the old tip site, now called Lucas Heights 1, is part of a long-term redevelopment project between the council and the Government.

Waste Service New South Wales is contributing \$17.3 million over 10 years to Sutherland Shire Council to fund the construction of a range of facilities on the filled waste site at Lucas Heights 1. These facilities include six general playing fields, a hockey field, netball and tennis courts, cricket nets and an eagerly awaited golf driving range, golf course and associated amenities. Waste Service New South Wales is planning to develop passive recreational facilities on completed areas of landfill at Lucas Heights 2. Native plants produced at the Lucas Heights Waste Management Centre seedling nursery are used to revegetate areas around completed parts of the landfill at Lucas Heights 1, Lucas Heights 2 and in the conservation area. The nursery produces 75 different species of seeds native to the region and enables Waste Service New South Wales to produce tube stock according to need.

During spring and summer, seeds from trees on the Waste Management Centre and from surrounding bushland areas are collected, identified, dried, cleaned and packaged by experienced horticulturalists. The nursery works closely with the Menai branch of the Society for Growing Australian Native Plants, whose volunteers come to the nursery every month to propagate tube stock. Members of the society and the Sydney Wildflower Nursery at Heathcote have been helping to distribute the plants. The nursery has also instructed the Gandangarra Local Aboriginal Land Council in seed collection and propagation so that they can grow many of the bush tucker plants and restore the area that Waste Service has leased to them for their cultural centre. The Carr Government has made the protection of the Woronora and Georges rivers, which surround my electorate, a priority. The Government has received a report from the Healthy Rivers Commission and implemented initiatives such as the Georges River Foreshore Improvement program.

This concentration on the quality of our rivers is in sharp contrast to the Federal Government's announcement that it intends to sell three kilometres of foreshore land along the banks of the Georges River. That land has been put into the hands of PricewaterhouseCoopers, accountants, in preparation for its sale. Our community strongly objects to the sale of that land, not only because of the loss of bushland, which forms the lungs of our part of Western Sydney, but because of the impact on the water quality. As I have said previously in the House, whilst the State Government is doing everything it can to protect Georges River, the Federal Government is determined to destroy it by one means or another. Our community will fight the Federal Government's proposal, and I know that the Minister for Planning and the Minister for the Environment support our community in its fight.

On environmental issues Her Excellency said that the Government will introduce legislation to amend the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to clarify the role of private certifiers and improve the regime for issuing construction certificates. I and other members in this place, including the honourable member for Miranda, my neighbouring electorate colleague, have had the interesting experience of being part of the Joint Select Committee on the Quality of Buildings, which is inquiring into this issue. As the Governor said, our work has proved to be a huge task. The committee intends to report to the Parliament in July on the outcome of its inquiry. Significant changes will be necessary to the current operations so that the sad and heart-wrenching stories we have heard about the impact of poor building quality on local communities will not be repeated in the future.

One of the policy areas touched on by the Governor which has great significance for my electorate is transport and roads. Her Excellency outlined a range of significant transport projects that are occurring across the State. In particular, the Governor said that construction will commence this year on the Liverpool to Parramatta bus-only transitway and on stage one of the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link. Later this year the Government will introduce the first of the 135 new rail carriages that are on order or under construction. In my electorate, with the determined and persistent assistance of the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads, the Government has made a number of significant roads and transport achievements, and more achievements are forthcoming. All honourable members would be aware of the benefits and overwhelming community acceptance of the M5 East roadway. This \$794 million project has made life much better for many people.

I recently surveyed my community about their feelings on this project. Honourable members may be amused to hear that one of the comments on the survey was, "If Carl Scully died tomorrow he would go straight

to heaven." Fortunately, that prediction has not been put to the test, otherwise the projects he has initiated may not have survived. That comment sums up the feelings of many people in my community about that particular project. My electorate has also been successful in obtaining crossing supervisors at local schools, including Illawong Public School and Bangor Public School.

Only today I learnt of our success in achieving a crossing supervisor for Padstow Heights Public School. On a much larger scale, but no less important, the Government's four-lane \$47 million Woronora Bridge project has changed the day-to-day lives of the people in my electorate, particularly in the Sutherland area. Just this week revised designs for the Bangor bypass have been completed. I have previously spoken in the House about this project. I hope that the revised designs will be accepted by my community so that we can begin construction of this project before the end of this year and complete the east-west link by the end of 2004. I know that my community eagerly awaits those road improvements.

In the Liverpool part of my electorate, this week work commenced on the Moorebank Avenue M5 overpass, a \$31 million project. I am told that when the project is completed people will be able to travel from North Sydney to Canberra without encountering a set of traffic lights. Indeed, it has been suggested that people will be able to travel from North Sydney to the Victorian border without encountering a set of traffic lights. However, I flag that there are pedestrian crossing signals at Holbrook, which is 66 kilometres north of Albury. The overpass will be of great benefit to the community. The \$8 million Holsworthy railway station commuter car park and bus interchange has almost been completed and will be very well received by my community. It will certainly complement the \$10 million upgrade of Heathcote Road in the vicinity of that railway station.

In her Speech Her Excellency referred to record funding for education of \$7.6 billion in 2001-02. She correctly noted that our society rightly values teachers. Like many honourable members of this House, I am extremely fortunate to have excellent teachers in my electorate. They are shiny examples of the best that public education has to offer. For example, one of the teachers at Bangor primary school was recognised in awards issued recently by the Minister for Education and Training. She is but one of many teachers who are doing a great job, day after day, with one of the most valuable assets in our community, that is, our young people.

The newest school in my electorate is Wattlegrove primary school, a \$5.2 million project. The school has already attracted a large number of enrolments. Stage one of Alford's Point primary school has been completed. The project was a significant election commitment by the Government. The allocation of \$70 million in funding for priority building and security upgrades was well received in my electorate. Many schools will now be able to achieve projects that have been needed for some time. Those projects will then be off the books and other projects can be considered in the next round of funding.

In addition to quality teachers, one of the things the schools of my electorate have in common is an active and supportive local community. The local parents and friends associations, as well as the wider community, are always at the forefront of any fundraising activities that are needed to support the schools of my electorate. That sort of community effort and involvement was evidenced during the Christmas bushfires, which, fortunately, did not come too far into my electorate. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

As other members have said, it was astounding that during the Christmas bushfires members of the community visited local fire stations and anonymously and generously left food, drink and other items of comfort, in recognition of the tremendous work that was being done by the firefighters. It was heartwarming to see such support for those people. The bush fire fighters stood shoulder to shoulder with the professional firefighters, putting their lives on the line and doing their very best to deal with the terrible crisis.

The bushfire brigades in my electorate are located at Illawong, Menai, Woronora and Sandy Point. Firefighters are some of the best people one could hope to meet. They certainly have a very good sense of humour, which I am sure comes in handy for them on many occasions. The Illawong bushfire brigade is about to move into new premises. The land was provided by the State Government and the station is being built by Sutherland Shire Council. To assist these brigades and other firefighting services in the Sutherland shire, the Carr Government has allocated funding boosts over the past two years. The services of the men and women who volunteer to assist those bushfire brigades are examples of the efforts of my community to provide assistance whenever it is called upon. Not surprisingly, the brigades mostly comprise men, but there are also some women who get in there and work shoulder to shoulder with the men in such times of emergency.

Since I have been the member for Menai I have noted that many women in my electorate play vital roles in our community on a day-to-day basis. As this is the centenary of women's suffrage, as Her Excellency

noted, I would like to highlight the activities of three organisations and the people involved in them. The Sutherland Shire Older Women's Wellness Centre, which is based in Sutherland, is aimed at reducing social isolation among older women through a range of activities designed by and for older women in a friendly and supportive environment. The wellness project is based on the Older Women's Network model of wellness, which is a holistic approach to improving and maintaining health and coping with illness.

I have had the pleasure of attending some of the sessions run by the Older Women's Network. It is truly inspirational to see a reduction in the isolation and loneliness that the women have told me about. It is a very worthy activity in our community. I also highlight Menai District Neighbour Aid, which won the Premier's Community Service Award. This part-time service for the frail aged and people with disabilities and their carers is a wonderful asset to the Menai part of my community. The co-ordinator of the group, Ann Iacovella, does a sterling job. Although Anne is officially a part-time worker, she volunteers countless hours of her own time.

I also highlight the Sutherland Shire Learning Difficulties Support Group, which is a voluntary part-time support group operating from the Multipurpose Centre for the Disabled in Flora Street, Sutherland. One of the aims of the group is to provide information and support to parents of children with learning difficulties, and to adults experiencing these difficulties. The group's president, Kathy Stait, does a wonderful job and volunteers many hours of her own time. Indeed, Kathy was given special recognition in the 2001 International Year of Volunteers.

This is the first opportunity I have had to note the establishment of the Moorebank district evening VIEW club. As honourable members would be aware, "VIEW" stands for "voice, interest, and education of women". It is terrific to see that group starting up in the Liverpool part of my electorate. It joins other successful groups in my electorate. The group provides an opportunity for women to get together, learn more about a whole range of topics, and achieve things for their local community and the Smith Family, which VIEW clubs support.

As the Governor said, the centenary of women's suffrage is a significant anniversary in the political history of our nation and State. A sense of history is also evident in the fact that the first female Governor of New South Wales opened the third session of this Parliament. I join all honourable members in commending the work of the New South Wales Governor and her husband for everything they are doing for our State. I hope they are enjoying their role and find it personally rewarding. I commend the Governor's Speech to the House.

*[Madam Acting-Speaker (Mrs Beamer) left the chair at 12.59 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

**Mr CAMPBELL** (Keira) [2.15 p.m.]: Like many other members of this House I considered it a privilege to be present in the other place to hear Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, deliver her Speech on the opening of the third session of the Fifty-second Parliament. I extend congratulations to Professor Bashir on her appointment as the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales. The appointment of a female to this office is a wonderful demonstration of equality in our society and of the fact that our society has capable women who are able to offer leadership and encouragement.

In her Speech the Governor, speaking on behalf of her Ministers, set out a clear record of achievement and sound direction for the strong governance of New South Wales. I certainly endorse Professor Bashir's acknowledgment of the volunteers, in particular the volunteer firefighters, who battled so valiantly against last summer's bushfires. The Governor set out a strong agenda on the Carr Government's support for regional New South Wales. As the representative of a community in a regional centre, I acknowledge the support of the Carr Government in the Illawarra. I contrast the support given to the Illawarra by this Government with the dilemmas faced under the former Coalition Government in the late 1980s and early 1990s, particularly with regard to health.

My colleague the honourable member for Heathcote, who is at the table, will remember the battles as the former Coalition Government tried to close Bulli and Coledale hospitals. He will recall marching down the street with me and attending public meetings protesting against those proposals. He will recall also that the former Coalition Government closed Kiama Hospital and ceased work on stage one of reconstruction of Wollongong Hospital, the clinical services block. Indeed, for the entire time that the Coalition was in government the site was just a big, black hole.

Under the Carr Labor Government the Wollongong clinical services block has been completed and the new renal unit was recently opened by the Minister for Health, the Hon. Craig Knowles, at a cost of

\$3.2 million. A second linear accelerator has been provided under the governance of Labor. Hickman House is under reconstruction at Wollongong Hospital at a cost of \$81 million. Capital expenditure of approximately \$130 million is being spent on current projects. Under this Government Bulli Hospital has been saved, although I acknowledge the need for more capital investment and I am working with the area health service and the Minister in that regard. I am pleased to announce that Coledale Hospital is no longer under threat of closure and that \$3.75 million is being spent on upgrading that facility. This Government has also reopened Kiama Hospital. The maternity ward at Shellharbour Hospital, which was previously under threat of closure, has also been saved by this Government. The Carr Labor Government has a strong record on health.

Jobs are important to the region as our economy continues to undergo structural change. The Government has allocated \$10 million to the Illawarra Advantage Fund, which has supported firms such as Socotherm and Nortel Networks. Socotherm coats pipes and invests in traditional blue-collar engineering jobs in the region. Nortel Networks, which is located on the campus of the University of Wollongong, is a high-tech research and development firm, an arm of telecommunications. The Illawarra Advantage Fund has provided funds to Contact Centre Strategy, a program to encourage investment in call centres and employment in white-collar jobs as part of the new economy.

At the last election the Government promised to relocate the Superannuation Administration Authority to Wollongong. That authority, which is now trading as Pillar, manages the superannuation affairs of the New South Wales public sector. To date 300 personnel have been transferred from the Sydney central business district to Wollongong, which has involved an investment of \$18 million. The Government has also provided strong financial support to the coal industry. It has provided subsidies to ensure that the coal terminal at Port Kembla continues to be viable.

Recently the Government has shown a commitment to high-tech jobs with the Premier's announcement of a \$24 million investment in the innovation campus as part of the University of Wollongong, on the site of Brandon Park adjacent to the science centre. The Government has also supported the region in the area of recreational infrastructure. Approximately \$20 million has been injected into the Wollongong Entertainment Centre and \$6 million into WIN Stadium, with \$4 million being levered through the WIN Corporation to construct the northern grandstand. This year the WIN Corporation celebrates 40 years of television broadcasting to the Wollongong area. I congratulate that local business, which has its national headquarters in our region.

In this area of recreational infrastructure the Government has provided \$2 million to the University of Wollongong for the science centre and planetarium. In health, in jobs, in recreational infrastructure—before one comes to the Department of Sport and Recreation capital assistance grants in the Keira electorate for things like the Corrimal tennis courts, Shamrocks rugby union, Thirroul Rugby League Football Club, Tarrawanna Soccer Club, the Wollongong Croquet Club and the grandstand at the Wollongong athletic track—the Government has added strength to our community. It puts to bed the myth that we hear all too often in the area I represent that Labor members are lazy, that Labor members do not deliver, and that Labor governments are not interested in supporting safe Labor areas. The support that is demonstrated in the comments I have just made, and in many things on the ground, clearly show that the Carr Labor Government has delivered in all those areas, and in other areas that I will refer to.

The Government has firmly supported public education in the region, and rightly so. Work was recently completed on a \$13 million building trades building at Wollongong TAFE campus. Last week the Minister for Education and Training announced at Corrimal Primary School a \$1.4 million upgrade to consolidate a split site at that school. I attended that school longer ago than I care to remember, in my infants and primary days. The Government has spent \$574,000 at Corrimal High School—the high school that I attended—to provide a lift to the second storey of a very big building, making the whole school accessible to disabled students, particularly those who use wheelchairs. One such young student has benefited greatly and is very proud that he is now able to move around the school more freely as a result of that work.

Work is under way at Wollongong High School to provide a dedicated performing arts teaching space at a cost of \$500,000. It will be a huge change for students and teachers to learn and teach dance out of a purpose-built space rather than the old metalwork room. The students and teachers are quite delighted with that expenditure. The recent schoolyard blitz resulted in the allocation of \$712,000 to a range of projects in schools in the Keira electorate. The Government has worked very closely with teachers on numeracy and literacy issues, and we have a great record for assisting our young people.

The Governor in her Speech noted the e-summer school initiative, which was a partnership between the private sector and TAFE. I attended the Illawarra Institute of TAFE, in company with the institute director,

Barry Peddle, to see the presentation to these students. The initiative was aimed at students from a disadvantaged background. They were from some of the lower socioeconomic suburbs in our area. It was particularly pleasing to see the excitement and delight of those young people as they graduated and received certificates of attainment for their involvement in this program and to hear the positive comments.

Because of its geographic nature the area I represent is impacted upon by storms and flood. Honourable members will recall that in 1998 there was a major storm in the area. The Government has provided funding of \$8.77 million for restoration work to public infrastructure. In the past couple of years it has allocated \$1.4 million for mitigation, retention basins, studies and voluntary purchase of flood-affected properties. The Government is strongly committed to that area. I am delighted to be able to work with the community and the Government on these projects. There is much more to do.

Under the heading "Safer communities" the Governor set out the Government's agenda to reform the Bail Act. That legislation is progressing through Parliament, so the commitment as outlined by the Governor is being met. That bill is aimed at recidivist offenders and is likely to result in 800 repeat offenders being taken off our streets. On the issue of community safety, I take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Police on listening to my parliamentary colleagues and the community about the Water Police service at Port Kembla. We welcome last week's announcement that a new Water Police boat will be stationed at Port Kembla and that four new, enthusiastic officers are to operate it.

I note also the Governor's outline of the Government's commitment to address the scourge of illicit drug use. This commitment and success will be a hallmark of this term of Parliament and of this Government. I challenge the Opposition to be a little more supportive of government programs such as community drug action schemes, the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment Program and the Kings Cross safe injecting room trial. All these programs will demonstrate, in the fullness of time, that they were sound and right policy initiatives.

The Governor, in her Speech, spent a deal of time referring to the Government's emphasis on the environment through sustainable communities. I want to focus on the \$200 million waste-water strategy for the Illawarra as an example of this commitment to the environment. It will mean the closing of two primary treatment plants, one at Bellambi in the Keira electorate and one at Port Kembla in the adjoining electorate of Wollongong. The Wollongong treatment plant will be upgraded from a secondary treatment plant to a tertiary treatment plant, and will result in an increase in industry reuse of treated effluent. That will also lead to a reduction in the use of fresh water by industry. In any sense of the word, this is a strong environmental project. Effluent that would formerly have been only primary treated and pumped into the ocean will be reused by industry. As a consequence, industry will not be taking fresh water from Sydney's drinking supply, from the dams at the back of the escarpment. This is a tremendous environmental project, which will cost about \$200 million. Another positive outcome is the closure of the quasi-industrial site at Bellambi Headland, which will be returned to public space. I have little doubt that the community supports that outcome.

Transport is important in every electorate throughout the State. The Governor spent a deal of time stating the Government's commitment in this area, which is set out in "Action for Transport 2010". Roads and rail are the key transport issues in the Illawarra, particularly in my electorate. The northern distributor project has been on the agenda for longer than I have been alive. Several stages have been built and an environmental impact statement [EIS] is being prepared for the next stage, following considerable community consultation. It was interesting to hear some hardened Roads and Traffic Authority engineers say that that community involvement has delivered a better project. That is an important point that is not often made by engineers in any field.

The Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads visited Thirroul last Monday to announce expenditure of \$1 million on the next stage of planning for the high-speed rail link. This proposal involves the construction of a tunnel between Thirroul and Waterfall that will reduce by 20 minutes the train journey between Sydney and Wollongong. When this project is finished by 2010 the 5,000 people who commute by train every day will be delighted with that saving, which will give them more time to spend with their families. Access to Thirroul railway station must be improved, and the Government has a strong program to complete such work. We must complete the EIS and planning for the northern distributor and then build it. The Bulli Pass-Lawrence Hargrave Road intersection must be upgraded quickly as an important safety measure.

In the three years that I have been in this place I have become aware of the emphasis that the Government and the RTA place on road safety, particularly pedestrian safety around schools. I hope that measures such as 40 kilometres-an-hour school zones and an increased number of school crossing supervisors

are in place right across the State. These safety improvements were made at the local level in line with State government policy. Pedestrian safety has improved at every government school and almost every Catholic school in my electorate, and I was pleased to be involved in that initiative.

The Governor also spoke in her Speech about having a fairer community. She mentioned several consumer issues and outlined proposed legislation designed to make our community fairer. As Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on the Quality of Buildings, I am enjoying the challenge of working with other members of Parliament—I note that another committee member, the honourable member for Hornsby, is in the Chamber—to balance some difficult issues and formulate policy that will allow builders to get on with the task of earning a living while ensuring that consumers receive a quality product. I am confident that in July we will table a report whose recommendations will deliver a fairer community.

I return to my initial remarks. New South Wales is fortunate to have in a leadership role a woman with as much experience and compassion as Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir. I congratulate her on her appointment and thank her for the leadership she shows our community as she goes about her work. I acknowledge the Speech she made on 26 February in opening Parliament—to which honourable members are responding in this debate—which outlined the strategy that her Government will pursue during this session of Parliament. Members of Parliament have a responsibility to support and encourage that work and to ensure that our constituents receive a fair share of State resources.

**Mrs HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [2.35 p.m.]: In speaking in the Address-In-Reply debate in response to the Governor's Speech delivered at the opening of the third session of the Fifty-second Parliament at the end of February this year, I acknowledge the woman who is the thirty-seventh Governor of New South Wales as a compassionate person with great insight into the needs of the people of this great State. That occasion was my first day here as a member of Parliament, and was therefore significant as an important way in which to commence my parliamentary career. As the sixth member for Hornsby and the sixty-sixth female elected to the New South Wales Parliament, I also acknowledge the important roles played by women in areas of significant decision-making. It is noteworthy that this year is the centenary of women's suffrage both in New South Wales and the Commonwealth.

I know the depth of the woman who is our Governor, so I was surprised when her Speech did not contain the substance I had expected. It lacked the calibre and the relevance that I am used to hearing from Her Excellency Professor Bashir, AC, despite the detailed account of Labor Government policies. The electorate of Hornsby has been neglected for a long time and cannot altogether identify with the wonderful announcements of projects and policies designed to improve the life of people in New South Wales. I said recently that hosing a desert with a little water does not make a big difference to the terrain: it largely looks the same as before. My electorate is in a similar situation: it has received some funding but not enough to meet the diverse needs of its residents.

I was very fortunate to meet Her Excellency at the Moree Croc Eisteddfod Festival in September last year. Some honourable members may be unsure what a Croc Eisteddfod is. Every year on one site in New South Wales—I believe a similar festival could be held in the south of the State—a team puts together a two-day event to promote awareness of the importance of increasing the understanding of predominantly Aboriginal culture and belief in the future for our children. It is appropriate that I mention this festival during Reconciliation Week. The theme for the two days was "Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture". At the festival I met great Australians such as Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, members of the Sydney Swifts, arts and other cultural groups, and many committed teachers, parents and individuals who were present to share their skills, knowledge and enthusiasm.

I travelled to the far north of New South Wales as the Executive Director of the Australian Podiatry Association, New South Wales branch, with an accompanying podiatrist, and together we set up a stall in the health tent. I do not believe I have ever worked so hard as I did during the time we were in Moree on 11 and 12 September, which, sadly, are significant dates for another reason. There were various stands and activities for the children—kindergarten to year 12—and each day we had a different group of students every 45 minutes. Our challenge was to occupy diverse age groups with information and activities, so we decided to hold a painting/decorating competition. The students who entered the competition traced their hands or feet, and the result was hundreds of artworks adorned with glitter, texta, paint, stickers and crayon stuck to the wall of the tent to dry.

It was into this atmosphere that Her Excellency walked while touring the huge sports fields where the eisteddfod was taking place. She was very interested in every aspect of the event and stopped to talk to each



stallholder. The Podiatry Association had not previously travelled to Moree for this event and it was comforting to know that the New South Wales Governor thought enough of the aims of the Croc Eisteddfod to travel such a long distance also. Sadly, I did not see many parliamentarians visiting the stalls—with the notable exception of the honourable member for Wakehurst. There was much to learn and see in Moree over those two days.

As the member for Hornsby newly elected in the by-election of 23 February this year, I am determined to be accessible and cognisant of my electors' every need. I know that the Governor shares this sentiment. I operate an open-door policy and I am very happy to meet with constituents and take up issues on their behalf. I know that my job is twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, but even that is not enough time to do what I would like to do. I have lived in the Hornsby electorate for more than 17 years—for some families in the area this is a drop in the ocean—and understand the people who make up the diverse communities of Hornsby. As I said in my inaugural speech, the electorate contains villages, medium-density to high-density areas, small business and light industry. There is also a very imposing bushland, and many people work hard to preserve its pristine nature and deal with harm that could mar its beauty. Each of these people have their own needs, and I am seeking to discover what these needs are by meeting as many people as possible in a variety of spheres.

In the south of the electorate are the suburbs of Westleigh and Thornleigh. I have spent a great deal of time speaking to residents, and the main area of concern is the Duffy Avenue bridge and the fact that it is still in the same condition as it was at the time of the 1999 State election—a two-lane blockage to entry and exit between Pennant Hills Road and Duffy Avenue. This is despite the Labor candidate's 1999 election promise to provide \$600,000 towards its widening. Many housing developments later, the residents are even more distressed about the conditions they endure during peak hour every day, and have the added fear that in a bushfire they will be trapped in an inferno. I live on the edge of a valley and I can identify with these concerns.

The Governor's Speech highlighted the tireless work of the people who fought the bushfires last Christmas. The Governor recognised the contributions of paid and volunteer workers to prevent the loss of life and as much loss of property as was possible, given the serious nature of the catastrophe. I live on the edge of a valley in Mount Colah, and I do not believe that valley was adequately back-burnt and prepared for a possible bushfire. The suburb of Normanhurst is divided by Pennant Hills Road. This situation is once more at the forefront of residents' concerns because of the recent news that the Western Sydney Orbital, when it ends at the M2, will require a connection with the F3. The Federal Government is currently funding a review of the matter, and a number of options are being considered. The answer does not lie in a new above-ground road connection, nor in the widening of Pennant Hills Road.

Having been involved in discussions in 1996-97 about the Western Sydney Orbital, I know that the residents will not tolerate any change to Pennant Hills Road unless it results in a lessening of the traffic burden. The answer, as I see it, is the construction of a tunnel. I wait with anticipation for the consultants' suggestions. There is a small area of Wahroonga in my electorate, and Wahroonga is within the Ku-ring-gai Council area. A number of heritage areas need to be preserved, and I look forward to meeting with the people who live there. Waitara has a few concerns largely associated with its station and parking nearby. It also has issues associated with increased density; there is a great deal of unit development in the suburb. Hornsby, with neighbouring Hornsby Heights, is an ever-growing central business district with ensuing problems, including lack of adequate parking at Hornsby station and the need to rejuvenate the west side of Hornsby.

The new Westfield development on the east side, while a great boon to the area, has taken some casualties. I invited the Hon. Michael Gallacher, MLC, to meet business owners on the west side of Hornsby, and they spoke of this matter. Mount Errington, which is another area of concern, is the name of a Federation home on a hill on the western side of the central business district. The name "Mount Errington" now reflects the precinct of Federation homes in the area. Indeed, Mount Errington is the name of one home in the area. The threat of development has reared its head, and many residents are afraid that the local character will be lost if certain projects are allowed to proceed. I am seeking the help of the Minister for Planning on the issue so that the area will remain a splendid example of the architecture of the Federation period.

Studio ARTES is situated in Hornsby. I have spoken about this group in a private member's statement. Wendy Escott and Sue Byatt, who lead the team, do a great job with disabled young people over 18 years. They are in desperate need of new premises. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the time for new premises has long passed. They have two small rooms for a great number of young people and do fantastic work in creating artworks, as well as learning workplace skills. The people of Asquith are suffering from having too few trains travelling north from Hornsby. They are concerned about the new timetable, when it finally comes, as well as the old timetable. The 3.22 p.m. train travelling north to Gosford has only four carriages. Students are often unable to board the train, and they are very late home if they have to go to Hornsby to catch a train that will stop at their station.

Shopkeepers along the highway at Asquith have reported policing issues to me. They do not feel that they have a connection to the local police station at Hornsby, and they would like to see an increase in community policing. They see many things as they attend to business in their shops, and unfortunately they do not feel that they have anyone to whom they can report those things. My residence is in Mount Colah, which is a beautiful area, and I am concerned about the danger associated with driving from that area onto the Pacific Highway. There needs to be some form of traffic management from suburban streets onto the highway. It is sad to think that someone may have to be killed before anything will be done about it. Mount Kuring-gai is the next suburb as one travels north in the electorate. I will be attending a Community Access Program there tomorrow and will be talking to local residents for two hours.

I am undertaking extensive consultation in the electorate, and I am adding daily to the issues held important by the community. In Mount Kuring-gai the noise from the F3 and the still inadequate noise reduction measures will be of concern—I already know what people will say to me—as will the sewerage system needs at the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate. In relation to sewage treatment, I acknowledge that the two sewage treatment plants located in Hornsby and Hornsby Heights have recently been upgraded, but still more needs to be done.

Berowra, Berowra Heights and Berowra Waters are special villages further north in the electorate. In these areas there is great concern about police presence and the shopfront police station there. There is concern about an increase in crime. Recently a video shop was robbed at gunpoint, and that sent shivers down the spine of the community. Local residents are concerned about parking and other issues associated with the development of Berowra Waters. They fear they will be severely disadvantaged if increased development is allowed to proceed.

For many years concern has been expressed about the health of Berowra Creek. This concern has been heightened by the removal of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust. Residents consider that the replacement of the vital functions of that entity is much needed in the area. The trust did wonderful work towards preserving the health of the creek. There is a wonderful sense of volunteerism in that area and, indeed, throughout the electorate. Recently I was invited to visit Berowra Creek with the Berowra Waters bushfire brigade to see the problems they face when they are trying to manage a fire or other emergency. That brigade needs a new station and new boating facilities because of the age of the current vessels they are using. Kerrie and Sean McCardle live in Berowra and recently in this place I spoke about the fantastic mental health work they do.

The number one issue that Cowan residents raise with me is sewerage. They feel like poor relatives when it comes to sewerage. There has been a lot of focus on Brooklyn and Dangar Island, but the residents of Cowan want their homes connected to the sewerage system. All the residents who came to see me at a recent consultation spoke about that. The school in Cowan is a fantastic little school. The staff work very hard, with a lot of parent involvement. However, the parent body is concerned that the kindergarten to year 2 class has 34 students. Apparently the kindergarten class sits alone until recess, but from recess until the end of the day it joins years 1 and 2, with one teacher.

Schools are a most important consideration, and I acknowledge the excellent work of our outstanding teachers. I love to meet with teachers and students, and I have met every school group that has visited Parliament House. Parents, volunteers and teachers working together with children produce some amazing work. I want to report on a Mad Hatter's tea party that was held at Normanhurst Primary School, where adults and children alike dressed up in *Alice in Wonderland* costumes and had a lot of fun while raising money for cancer research and treatment. To illustrate the atmosphere in the electorate, a mother from another school drove by and saw the pack-of-cards outfits worn by the participants and asked to borrow them for a school play later in the year. When I speak with the school representatives, many teachers and parents express concern about class sizes and the condition of buildings, and they report inadequate facilities.

Berowra Primary School is waiting for the release of a management plan and it is hoped that that plan will include a new, much needed school hall. Of course, the school will then need the funds to build the hall, but at the moment that is not assured. Minister Watkins announced an extra \$70 million for schools in January this year. Because of a communication breakdown it has taken until now to send this information to the electorate office. Considering the age of many of the schools and the heritage nature of others, the \$730,000 is not enough to upgrade to the level expected for 2002, let alone provide added features. I refer to the list of extra school funding. Some schools now have new telephone systems and asphalt, but many schools have other more pressing needs.

Brooklyn is the jewel of the Hawkesbury. The more I get to know Brooklyn the more I love it. It is a place of tourism, oyster leases, local restaurants and businesses. However, the Brooklyn shopfront police station has been the focus of a great deal of distress. At a recent policing forum it was very obvious that the residents want police to be more a part of the community. Even though the police patrol these remote places, residents want more police visibility. Many residents have given up reporting minor crimes because nothing is ever done about them and nothing changes.

Recently my family and I spent a weekend at Brooklyn and we enjoyed Mother's Day at the Marina. Dangar Island is a unique place with a unique history. I now know much more about the significance of all areas in the electorate, including the history and development of Hornsby and its surrounds. Henry Parkes attended the opening of Brooklyn bridge in 1889 and he made one of his first Federation speeches there. An issue I am following in relation to Dangar Island is sewerage and the health of the Hawkesbury. Hopefully we may be able to resolve that sooner rather than later. Residents of Brooklyn and Dangar Island also need a community hall because they have nowhere to meet. All attempts to find a meeting place have been unsuccessful. I look forward to spending a weekend very soon on beautiful Dangar Island, where I will be able to enjoy its attributes. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

Waterways issues such as moorings, boating rules and dredging in the northern part of my electorate, as well as at places like Milsons Passage and Bar Island, need to be considered. The history of Bar Island includes memories of Henry Kendall. It is important that this island, with its historic gravesites, be preserved and upgraded and that its heritage value receives stronger recognition.

I could not make this speech without mentioning Hornsby hospital, which is at the epicentre of the communities that it serves. Hornsby hospital should serve the needs of the entire population, young and old. However, the buildings are very much below standard. The hospital is suffering a staff freeze and operating theatre cuts. There is an urgent need to re-build the hospital, starting with the accident and emergency and maternity units. I have not heard any announcement about the starting date for that work, other than expressions of hope by residents and hospital staff that that will take place. Her Excellency stated in her Address that better health care is a major priority for the Government. I do not see that translating into fact at Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital. I hope that funding is increased in the short term to enable the services to continue and improve. Many of my constituents who see the hospital's needs as a first priority tell me about service cuts and lengthened waiting times for surgery or other appointments.

I am pleased to inform the House that I have been welcomed by many in the electorate and have had honours bestowed upon me by being made an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Berowra and patron of the Hornsby Police and Community Youth Club [PCYC]. I mention again that the current President of Berowra Rotary, Keith Carson, and his team excelled in the preparation of the celebration of their twenty-fifth anniversary event. I am proud to be part of an organisation with a basic core of hard work and community involvement. I am very concerned about youth issues in the area, so being asked to be the patron of the PCYC is a tremendous honour. I have met with representatives of Fusion and discussed the youth needs of the area as they see it. Steve Wade does a fantastic job in his management—with a devoted team that includes his wife—of Jacks Island Cafe, which is a youth drop-in place that offers activities, spiritual help and real solutions to some of the problems faced by our young people. I also should mention Max Bolton, senior captain of Muogamarra Rural Fire Brigade, who works many weekends with cadets and teaches them safety and use of weapons.

I also meet regularly with members of the Hornsby Shire Council and we discuss a vast number of issues, from suitability of developments and youth needs to the many roles of council in the shire. I want to work closely with council as a team to address the needs of the community. It is essential that the three levels of government work seamlessly so that the community is well served. I am willing to listen to any problems raised by constituents and to work with the relevant body in an attempt to solve the matter. I have joined the Hornsby Historical Society and the Dangar Island Historical Society because I firmly believe that in order to know where we should be going, we need to know from where we came. We also need adequate finances to meet the needs of the community, and I look forward to the 2002 State budget. The people of the electorate of Hornsby take note of other areas and compare what they each have. There are specific immediate needs that must be met and I hope the budget reflects these needs.

I am enjoying my role tremendously. In addition to my electorate and regular parliamentary activities I am a member of the Committee on Children and Young People and the Joint Select Committee on the Quality of Buildings, which was referred to by the honourable member for Keira. I once more acknowledge the contribution of the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, and note that

she is truly a Governor of the people and for the people. She has a connection to the communities of this State that all can identify with. My background and experience and my intrinsic love of people allows me to say that I too am able to relate to the variety of people who make up the electorate of Hornsby.

The Governor cares about my constituents, as I do, and is able to empathise with their everyday dilemmas as well as rejoice in their successes. I would be honoured to have her visit my electorate and I know that my constituents would welcome her. They have much to show her. We have achievements that we can be proud of and people who can walk with their head held high in any company. I have mentioned specific individuals, but there are many others who work tirelessly and give their time and effort to others. Such is their selfless attitude. I am sure that I have not met them all and I look forward to doing so. Needless to say they share the same qualities as the Governor and this is reflected in the quality of life in Hornsby. I commend this Address-in-Reply to the House.

**Miss BURTON (Kogarah)** [2.57 p.m.]: It is a great honour to speak to the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech. I would like to congratulate her Excellency the Governor Professor Marie Bashir, AC. I am very proud to see such an accomplished woman take on this role and I wish her well in her duties. I am particularly honoured because I stood here three years ago as a newly elected member of Parliament outlining the Government's aims and objectives for the people of my electorate in Kogarah. Today, in keeping with the Governor's speech, I am pleased to report to the House that all those objectives have been met or are on their way to completion.

In the area of policing the Government has taken the fight to the criminals. It has provided police with the necessary laws and powers to be able to fight crime. It has given police stronger powers to break up gangs, to stop and search suspects, and to close down drug houses. It is now illegal to carry a knife without a reason. The Government has also given police new equipment, including Glock pistols, capicum spray and extendable batons. I am particularly pleased to announce that Kogarah police station has been completed. I looked at my first speech to the House after my maiden speech, in the Address-in-Reply, in which I referred to all of these initiatives. It gives me a great sense of pride and achievement to stand here as the local member and report on the completion or near completion of those initiatives.

The official opening on 20 April of the Kogarah police station was a fantastic day for the community. Approximately 500 people attended the opening, and there were balloons, a sausage sizzle, police stickers—I think they were looking for new recruits—and all sorts of things. Members of the community were able to look at the new facilities, including Livescan fingerprinting instead of the traditional ink on the fingers, and state-of-the-art technology throughout the police station. The police cars have computers linked to the station. I am a great believer in community policing, which is supported by the police as well as the police Minister. I believe that people want to communicate daily with the police and want their police out on the beat to fight or prevent crime and to make them feel safe.

Under new legislation to protect the community the Government has increased penalties for various crimes. The penalty for gang-rape has been increased to life imprisonment; recruiting children into gangs, seven years imprisonment; home invasion, 20 years imprisonment; drive-by shooting, 20 years imprisonment; malicious wounding, 10 years imprisonment; actual bodily harm, seven years imprisonment; drug pushing or selling drugs to children, 25 years imprisonment; using a gun to resist arrest, 15 years imprisonment; carrying an illegal firearm, 14 years imprisonment; and carjacking, 14 years imprisonment. The big win was a measure denying bail for repeat offenders that was introduced and passed recently in this House. The police report that, according to crime statistics, up to 80 per cent of crime is committed by repeat offenders who reoffend when on bail, usually because they have a drug addiction, no money or no job. The Government has ensured, through legislation, that repeat offenders who breach their bail conditions end up in gaol.

Members of the St George area command were over the moon about that legislation. Since 1995 the command has grown from only 88 police in a little tin-pot house to more than 200 police in their brand new facility in 2002. I congratulate Commander Paul Carey, Rudy Culkman and Greg Bamford, the crime manager and all the officers at the St George local area command on their dedication to their jobs and to the people of Kogarah. Everywhere I go in the Kogarah electorate people comment on the hardworking and dedicated police of the St George local area command. I also thank them for their assistance in helping the Government with important reforms to car-hoon legislation. Car-hoons are a big problem in the St George area. On weekends at Brighton-le-Sands in the Rockdale electorate between 500 and 1,000 cars do laps and show off their big boom box speakers. It is a terrible sight, and the quality of life for residents is greatly disturbed.

In 1997 the Government introduced the street racing legislation, which has led to many cars being confiscated. I am not talking about street racing in this instance, but about a bunch of so-called car enthusiasts

who want to use a public amenity to show off their cars, and that practice has to be stopped. After police move the car hooners from Brighton-le-Sands, they move to Cronulla, Bondi or Wollongong. The Government has been working closely with my local area command to develop ways to get them off the streets. We want people who leave their premises in a car that is illegally fitted with mufflers, stereos or other equipment to run the risk of losing their car, licence or both, but I suspect I will provide more information about that in a few weeks time.

I also acknowledge the no-tolerance approach to criminals by my local area command, which was noted by the commander during the opening of the Kogarah police station. If criminals fail to report on bail they are locked up straightaway, with no questions asked. A domestic violence offender is also locked up. This no-tolerance approach has greatly served my community and has ensured great team morale amongst the officers. I look forward to the great work of the police continuing and I also look forward to their help in designing and remodelling legislation—as we have done since being in government—to target and tackle problems in our society. I also look forward to working with the police when we start the community action teams in July.

I pay tribute to David Pearce, the chief executive officer of the marvellous St George Hospital, which is close to the community's heart. The community takes great pride in supporting the hospital, as evidenced by the amount of money raised by groups such as the Lamrock committee and the Knights of St George. Their fundraising activities provide special equipment for the hospital, and the community always digs deep into their pockets to assist. The community has raised almost \$2 million, which is absolutely phenomenal, to refurbish the top floor of the medical research unit. The Calvary hospital redevelopment cost approximately \$22 million, \$15 million of which was provided by the Government, and the community raised the remaining \$7 million. That is an amazing amount of money to be raised from fetes, walkathons and dinners and shows the calibre of my community. I pay tribute to all the people who organise the events and those who support them.

Three years ago in this Chamber I talked about a medical research centre being built for important medical research into life-threatening illnesses at a cost of \$10 million, and I am proud to say that has been completed. Mental health is a big issue in the St George and Sutherland shires. Recently an \$8.2 million, 30-bed facility for patients with mental illnesses, including a mother and baby unit, was built. A privately funded 580-space hospital car park project was recently completed. That is marvellous because volunteers now have free parking, which was an issue. The Pink Ladies are very dedicated to the St George Hospital. The honourable member for Heathcote, who has been there many times, nods his head: he knows how wonderful the hospital and the volunteers are.

Stage one of the much talked about day surgery unit has begun. That was a \$6.4 million election commitment. I have been unhappy with progress but the delay resulted from our lobbying for an extra \$1 million for an endoscopy unit for day surgery. With the endoscopy unit coming off the back of the theatre rooms there could be greater use of the theatres and more efficient surgery. Following the Sinclair-Menadue report the Government has sought to make the health system run as efficiently as possible. I thank the Minister for his support. The hospital really went to bat and we achieved the extra \$1 million. But it meant that the program had to be redesigned and new development applications had to be lodged. They are now with the council and are about to be approved.

Having security guards on trains after 7.00 p.m. is marvellous. Many people catch trains after working late. All the stations in my electorate now have high-intensity lighting and security cameras. Since 1995 Kogarah station has had a major upgrade. Since 1999 Allawah railway station has been upgraded with lift access, high-intensity lighting and security cameras. This complete redevelopment of the station involved \$4 million. This also was an election commitment. In accordance with another election commitment we have commenced the \$14 million upgrade of Rockdale station, a major commuter station. There will be a new station with lift access. We look forward to completion of the project at the end of this year.

The East Hills line has received \$85 million worth of improvements with the amplification and new track. This will enable better on-time running: if there is a problem on one station trains will not be delayed and will be able to go around the problem. New track was laid from Kingsgrove to Turrella. The commuter car park project at Kogarah provides for 350 24-hour free parking spaces, high-intensity lighting and security cameras. We will cut the ribbon for the first car to go into the car park at the beginning of July. The entire community—including some commuters from the shire—will be very excited about that. People will be able to park and then take the quick, 20-minute, ride into the city. This will be fantastic and it will get more cars off the streets in peak hours, which is another objective of the Government.

The Government has done many wonderful things in education, such as providing computers, getting kids on the Internet and now the introducing of broadbanding. In the true Australian egalitarian sense it will not

matter how much money you have, where you come from or what school you go to: you will have equal access to education and information. That is the objective of the State Government and the public education system. I pay tribute to Ken Olah, our district officer, and all the principals and teachers at my schools. I have had the privilege of forming a very close working relationship with all of them. I really appreciate their support and their dedication and commitment to public education and the students in Kogarah. During the last election campaign major commitments were made. Stage one of the Carlton Public School upgrade has been completed at a cost of \$ 1.74 million. A new library, lift and administration block were provided. The students have been using these facilities for about 12 months now. Work has begun on stage two, which involves \$1.5 million for a new school hall, a new canteen and a covered outdoor learning area. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Work at Carlton South Public School is already finished. There is a magnificent new school hall with polished floorboards and the acoustics are phenomenal. It is a state-of-the-art school hall with a covered outdoor learning area, which was badly needed. That \$1.3 million project has been completed and the kids are using it. I have been a little disappointed with the progress of the upgrade of Blakehurst Public School. Some residents opposed the redevelopment of the school but we are working through the issues. The development application has been lodged and some adjustments have been made. It is hoped that the Minister will be able to turn the first sod there in the next few months.

Another major election commitment was the M5 East. What a magnificent piece of road it is. The electorate of Kogarah suffered because of 65,000 to 85,000 traffic movements a day. Our roads were absolutely clogged. Trucks were bumper to bumper for miles, as far as the eye could see. I cannot exaggerate the situation. My major campaign commitment to the people of Kingsgrove and Bexley was the building of the tunnel so that trucks and cars could be removed from local roads. We have done that, and six months ahead of schedule. I congratulate the Minister, the Hon. Carl Scully, on his hard work and support for the people of the St George area. I know that other honourable members from the St George area will join me in praising his efforts. The Woronora bridge was built in the electorate of the honourable member for Menai. The Minister has more than responded to the needs of the community with the provision of commuter car parks, railway station upgrades and road improvements. Traffic problems and transport into the city were major issues in my electorate.

The M5 East, which was a \$794 million project, has reduced traffic congestion and journey times. Local roads are safer and quieter. Noise and air pollution have been reduced. I recently conducted a survey to find out what people thought of the M5 East and the response was overwhelming. There has been a huge improvement in quality of life. We have got our suburbs back. People who live in the electorate of Kogarah, as I do, are extremely grateful. Trying to get around the electorate before the M5 East was built was a nightmare. Bexley will benefit from a \$1 million main street improvement program for that beautiful little shopping strip. Before the M5 East was built Forest Road was a State road and all the trucks were booming up and down it. The shops became a bit dilapidated and people stopped shopping there. There was also competition from larger shopping centres at Rockdale and Hurstville. We are trying to regenerate the area. We have had many meetings to consult the community and local shopkeepers.

We are now working with the council. I think we are just about there, and hopefully that \$1 million upgrade will be completed in a few months. It will include extra trees, lighting, widening of footpaths, hopefully outdoor dining—but we are not too sure—a mid-block pedestrian crossing and so on. This upgrade has been designed by the community. I thank community members, particularly shopkeepers and the Bexley Chamber of Commerce, for their input. I thank residents who completed the survey. Their comments were greatly appreciated. Kingsland Road will not be closed, and Albion Street will remain a two-way thoroughfare.

Another major achievement for the electorate and a real tribute to the community relates to overdevelopment. The community and I have been fighting overdevelopment since my election. One of the main issues is abuse of State environmental planning policy [SEPP] 5. While some honourable members criticise SEPP 5, the Kogarah electorate has the most aged population in the country. Those people do not want to be forced out of the St George area because they cannot afford accommodation there. The intention of the policy is pure: it is to provide adaptable and affordable housing for those over the age of 55 years or people with a disability. The problem is that developers, as always, looked for planning loopholes and were abusing the legislation. The community worked through the efforts of the Terry Street Precinct Group, the Kogarah Bay Progress Association, the Connells Point Progress Association and other groups. I thank them all, including Robyn and Yvonne Amy, John Horder, Spiro Hatzistergos and Theo and Helen Spyraakis, for their hard work in helping me to organise the community to ensure that Kogarah council obtained an exemption from the provisions of SEPP 5.

I thank Kogarah Mayor Jim Taylor, councillors Michael Platt and Nick Katris, General Manager Gary Sawyer and planner Stephen Clement for producing a submission seeking exemption. Kogarah council was the

first to obtain an exemption. Though other councils have not yet even put in submissions, Kogarah council's submission has been submitted and approved. The council was exempted because it was able to show it was a responsible council able to provide adaptable housing without the State Government telling it how to do that. I thank all of those persons and groups. It was a great win for the community. I will continue to fight overdevelopment in my area at every turn. This is an important issue—the quality of life of my constituents is most important.

The St George area, in addition to having the most aged population in the State, is ethnically diverse. Consequently, it has strong and committed community groups assisting people from non-English-speaking backgrounds and the elderly. I will mention but a few of those groups. The first is the Chinese-Australian Services Society, which provides wonderful aged care facilities, services for those with disabilities and language barriers, as well as childcare facilities for the Chinese community in the area. I love going to the end-of-year dance festivals organised by Kogarah senior citizens. My thanks to Ken Cavanagh for his tireless work for the St George and Kogarah community. My thanks also to the Kogarah Seniors Computer Club, and in particular to Norma Thorburn for teaching our seniors how to use computers—although I am not sure I should because that will probably lead to them sending me pamphlets and organising more groups! But, seriously, I think it is a marvellous thing for our seniors. The Greek Orthodox parish community group Our Lady of the Myrtles works very hard to deliver aged care facilities to the community. I was able to provide them with a bus to chauffeur the elderly about. I hear that they are enjoying that and their many outings. That is great.

The Governor's Speech highlighted what this Government is all about—that is, building on our past achievements. It is about looking after the people of New South Wales, making sure they have good access to health care and education, making sure our economy remains strong, and providing jobs and a fair and equitable industrial system. I believe that the Government is achieving all those desirable aims. But there will always be more to do. I do not think governments ever get on top of it. It is always a challenge for government to meet the needs of the community, particularly one as diverse as that of New South Wales. I commend the Governor's Speech.

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

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

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

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

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the taking of private members' statements forthwith.

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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### **MITTAGONG PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Ms SEATON** (Southern Highlands) [3.27 p.m.]: I have on a previous occasion raised in the House the very important issue of the capital works needs of the Mittagong Public School. The long-awaited school library is now in use. The people of Mittagong Public School were promised a permanent library some 18 years before it was delivered, but everybody is now enjoying the use of this building, which was lobbied for very strongly. I commend members of the parents and citizens association for the work they have done over the years. However, parents are now setting their sights on the next generation of school needs. Over recent months I have met with the president of the parents and citizens association and the school council, Carol Firth, and other representatives of the school. I have worked with them as they develop their plans and vision for the school.

The parents and citizens association produced a comprehensive audit document, including a list of all of the physical assets of the school and their state of maintenance. I spoke about this in the House last year, and sent copies of the submission on major capital works and building upgrades for Mittagong Public School, prepared by the Mittagong Public School Council, to the Minister and requested his support to progress the plan. Yesterday the school was visited by two Department of Education and Training representatives from our region. Mrs Carol Firth showed them the school facilities and went through the submission with them so that they could see first-hand the issues that the school is concerned about.

They looked at possible locations for new classrooms and discussed the need for refurbishment of the old existing buildings, including the absence of wooden door frames that had been eaten out some time ago by white ants, an unfortunate feature of one of the older parts of the school. They discussed also the overall needs of the school. I understand parents were advised that the earliest opportunity to include this capital works plan in a future State budget is 2003-04. I understand that they also discussed other options for funding applications, which could include the making of submissions through the Demountable Replacement Program and other school building refurbishment programs.

The school has just signed off on \$20,000 for computer cabling upgrades to the demountable buildings. Sensibly, the school community wants to make sure that any plans it makes and any expenditure it commits now is compatible with future, permanent plans. I commend the community for that decision. The parents' representatives were pleased that the departmental officers were generally in agreement on the need for a master plan for the school. That ought to be the starting point for the future capital works needs for any school. Agreement has been reached on the way in which that plan should be developed.

Representatives of the Department of Education and Training will send their report to the Minister for consideration. I remind the House of some of the key features of the school's capital works proposal. First, the school council is currently raising funds and organising labour for the important covered outdoor learning area. School councils go to enormous efforts to raise funds for school facilities and expect to have that money matched at least dollar for dollar by the Government. It is important for them to have a master plan in which to locate the covered outdoor learning area so that whatever they now build is not in conflict with the long-term design and provision of permanent buildings.

The school council wants to refurbish block B, the old brick building that has white ant problems. The council wants to construct new, spacious, properly serviced and equipped permanent classrooms to bring the number of core classrooms up to enrolment levels. That would include two classrooms to replace those lost to the library, two to replace those lost for refurbishment of block B, and three additional classrooms to bring the total core classrooms to 16, up from the current 11. I remind the Minister that Mittagong is a growth area and many young families are moving in. We want to make sure that public education is an active choice for them and that school options will be available. It is important for us to do that to stop the flow of students to other forms of education. It is important that we have the facilities in place to attract families. The school community wants the wooden portable classrooms in blocks E and F to be removed eventually. I commend this submission to the House.

**Mr McMANUS** (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.32 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Southern Highlands for raising the concerns of the school community in her electorate, which she does regularly. I thank her also for acknowledging the work of the Labor Government and the Minister for Education and Training. The Minister is working feverishly to ensure the upgrade of public schools throughout New South Wales. The honourable member mentioned the money that has been made available for computer upgrades. All members would be aware of the work that the Government has carried out in the past couple of years to upgrade schools. The Minister is keen to ensure that the public school system receives the best possible upgrades that the Government can afford at any particular time. I am sure that the Minister will take action to ensure that those upgrades continue. Departmental representatives visited the Southern Highlands and were keen to find out what the problems were. That visit was a clear indication that the Government is serious about improving educational facilities.

#### **SUTHERLAND SHIRE JUNIOR SOCCER FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr COLLIER** (Miranda) [3.33 p.m.]: This year marks the golden anniversary of the Sutherland Shire Junior Soccer Football Association. Last Saturday my wife, Jeanette, and I attended the association's fiftieth anniversary dinner as guests of its president, Mr Jack Bird. I thank the association registrar, Mrs Shirley Yardley, and her team for their hard work in organising such an enjoyable and memorable evening. I congratulate the association on reaching a truly magnificent milestone that marks 50 years of successfully bringing the world game of soccer to the youth of the Sutherland shire.

I congratulate the association not only in my capacity as the local member but also in my capacity as its patron, a parent, a current registered soccer player and a resident of the shire. It is only fitting that I congratulate the association today, the opening day of the seventeenth soccer World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea. In celebrating the association's golden anniversary we in the shire recognise and acknowledge 50 years of growth, achievement and unselfish and unswerving commitment by the association and its member clubs to the teams, the players—young and old, male and female—and the community.



The association has grown in its 50 years and now comprises 25 clubs, 940 teams and more than 13,000 players. It is the largest junior soccer association in the Southern Hemisphere. Obviously running a growing organisation of this size successfully for 50 seasons has been, and will continue to be, a gigantic task. I congratulate and thank President Jack Bird and the executives of the association, past and present, on their continuing work and commitment. When one looks at the association's honour boards of office bearers and life members one sees many names. Some stand out, such as Mr Harrie Dening, OAM, deceased, who was president from 1973 to 2000, Jack Bird, Shirley Yardley, Bill McIlveen, J. Bryson, Tom Hill and Frank Goodbun.

All those named on the honour boards were volunteers who have unselfishly given their time and energy to the soccer community of the shire. There is obviously a great pool of junior soccer talent in the shire. This year the Olympic Sharks not only established themselves at Shark Park but also went on to win the National Soccer League. To its eternal credit the association has forged links with the Olympic Sharks. The fact that junior teams are winning their representative competitions—and, even more importantly, the connection between the association and the Olympic Sharks—provides a long sought after pathway for our junior soccer talent to play at the national, and perhaps international, level. Clearly our association is to be congratulated, along with the Olympic Sharks, on this great achievement, which bodes well for the future of soccer in the shire.

The association is made up of clubs. Two of the original founding clubs, the Kirrawee Kangaroos and the Miranda Magpies, are also celebrating their fiftieth anniversary this year. I am a patron of the Miranda Magpies and am pleased to say that I am again playing with that team this season after an absence of some 20 years. My only request to the association is that it has an over-50s competition so that I can keep up with the younger players. When I think of the association and its successes I think of the people—the volunteers at all levels, the referees, the coaches, the managers, the ground controllers and the mums and dads who mark the fields, put up the nets, cut the oranges and help out in the canteen.

I think of people such as Pas Chrisafulli, the President of the Miranda Magpies. Pas has played soccer for 40 years and coaches my team as well as a more successful ladies team. After all these years he is the first at the ground and often the last to leave—such is his commitment to the sport, the club and the community. His wife, Chris, plays goalkeeper and when she is not doing that she is serving in the Magpies canteen. It is people such as the Chrisafullis who demonstrate the fine volunteer spirit and commitment that makes soccer in the shire so successful from every viewpoint.

The association consists of people from all walks of life giving unselfishly of their time and energy to the players, the clubs, the sport and the community. Tonight as we turn on our television sets to watch the opening game of the seventeenth soccer World Cup we will watch stars from 32 countries vie for soccer glory and soccer immortality. But as we watch those stars we should not forget that they learnt the rules and began to develop their extraordinary skills and talents under the watchful eye of some unpaid club coach or unselfish volunteer or manager who belonged to some organisation like the Sutherland Shire Junior Soccer Football Association. While we have a way to go, I have no doubt that one day a soccer star from the shire will represent Australia in the Oceania division at the World Cup finals. That will be possible only because of an organisation called the Sutherland Shire Junior Soccer Football Association. I congratulate the association on its first 50 years and I wish it all the best for the next 50.

### **CAMDEN DISTRICT HOSPITAL REFURBISHMENT**

**Dr KERNOHAN** (Camden) [3.38 p.m.]: On Tuesday 28 May during question time the Premier stated in response to a question on construction faults at the new Camden District Hospital:

The Minister for Health informs me that the building is being rectified as part of a \$20 million program.

That is not good enough when the builders involved in the refurbishment of Camden District Hospital were the same builders involved in the construction of the \$7.6 million 70-bed nursing home facility at Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, which opened in 1998. Two years and four months after the hospital opened, I wrote to the New South Wales Ombudsman on behalf of staff and patients who feared a cover-up of the severity of faults which caused them to fear for their safety. I specifically asked the Ombudsman about water damage, the staff's fear of using light switches when it rained and reports that electricians would not go into the roof to fix electrical problems because of the wetness of the ceilings. Mr Ian McCallan-Jamieson, senior investigator from the New South Wales Ombudsman's Office, sent me a copy of letter to him dated 18 May 2001 from Ian Southwell, Chief Executive Officer of the South Western Sydney Area Health Service, on this matter. The letter stated:

It has been identified that the roof gutter size is less than specified, the roof gutter overflows were not provided as specified, leaf shields to gutters were not provided as specified and that seven down pipes were not provided as specified.

With respect to the quality of wiring in the roof space, reviews were undertaken. The letter also stated:

The outcome of these thorough investigations is that there is no safety risk to the occupants and some corrective actions have been undertaken ...

The arcing of the light switches have been the subject also of extensive review and has now been viewed as being caused by release of static electricity as built up within the staff members' bodies during normal working activities and released upon touching a good earthing point such as a light switch.

When referring to roof leaks at that time—two years and six months after occupation—the letter states that they "should be resolved in the near future". With respect to the arcing of light switches, the letter also states that the "matter is ongoing and not yet resolved". I understand the matters are resolved now, but I was worried to hear that the same construction company had been given the contract for the Camden District Hospital refurbishment. Unfortunately, at that time I made no comment and subsequently four Camden District Hospital staff members were injured, one badly, because the ramps were not constructed to Australian standards.

The people of Camden and the general public need answers to some questions. Why was the same company given the contract for Camden District Hospital's refurbishment when obvious cost-cutting measures and non-compliance with specifications caused problems at the nursing home at Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital that took over 2½ years to fix? Who was responsible for overseeing and inspecting these buildings to ensure that they were constructed to Australian design and construction standards? What was the exact role played by the Department of Public Works and Services in the construction of these buildings? What move has the Government made concerning accountability of those responsible for inspections and certification of those two buildings? It is not good enough when the construction of projects worth nearly \$20 million has resulted in substandard floors and ramps that have caused injuries to the staff. The matter should be investigated immediately. I eagerly await a response from the Minister for Health.

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.42 p.m.]: I am sure that the Minister for Health will take seriously the comments made by the honourable member for Camden and investigate the matters to which she has referred. Although I cannot be sure, the chances are that the contract for the work at the Camden District Hospital was well and truly signed, sealed and delivered before any investigation of the problems at the nursing home at Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital.

**Dr Kernohan:** Between 1998 and 2001?

**Mr MOSS:** The honourable member for Camden referred to a letter she received from the chief executive officer of the local area health service dated 18 May 2001. So only 12 months ago he wrote to the honourable member about the nursing home problems, and at that stage I dare say that work at the Camden District Hospital could well have been under way or at least the contracts would have already been signed. That may be the explanation for the two lots of defects and, in reality, they may have occurred through no fault at all of the Government. Notwithstanding that, I am sure the Minister for Health will take the comments made by the honourable member most seriously.

### CANTERBURY BULLDOGS LEAGUE CLUB REFURBISHMENT

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.43 p.m.]: I take this opportunity in the short time available to me to briefly sing the praises of the Canterbury Bulldogs. Last Monday night I attended the opening of stage one of the refurbishment of the Bulldogs League Club, which was formerly known as the Canterbury-Bankstown League Club. I was accompanied by my parliamentary colleagues the honourable member for Bankstown and the Minister for Public Works and Services. Stage one represents \$25 million worth of refurbishment, and I have to say that the accent of the proportions of the refurbishment is on gigantic. The floor area of the club is 1,650 square metres and the complex features a wall made of 800 square metres of glass. The front revolving door is five metres in diameter and the sandstone cladding of the portico covers 180 square metres.

The decorative features of the club's new building include \$250,000 worth of artwork. The new building incorporates a new gaming area and three new restaurants, one of which is a 400-seat bistro featuring state-of-the-art amenities for the delivery of fast service. The main feature of the refurbishment is the atrium,

which faces the club's entrance. The theme is water and rainforest. Overall the atrium covers 550 square metres. It is 16 metres high and 23 metres wide and displays 40 different plant species. Its dome, which weighs 21 tonnes, features an intricate pattern of steel and glass. The refurbishment represents a fantastic achievement even at stage one level. Future development plans of the club include hotel-style accommodation.

The redevelopment of the site has come about only as a result of the expert management of Canterbury Bulldogs League Club. I congratulate the club's President, Gary McIntyre, the General Manager, John Ballesty, and all the board's members on the stage one refurbishment. It should be noted that despite the Bulldogs League Club being in a region that is the home of many large clubs, it manages to thrive. The club's success is even more extraordinary when it is remembered that in addition to facilities for members, the club generously sponsors rugby league and basketball. Last year sporting grants totalled \$6,745,000, of which \$5,080,000 was utilised for the promotion of rugby league. No other leagues club does more to support young players than the Bulldogs. The club's tradition dates back to the 1960s, when Canterbury introduced a scholarship scheme for young players.

Currently support for young players includes live-in guesthouse accommodation to house young Bulldogs players who come from non-metropolitan areas. It is little wonder that the Bulldogs are leading the rugby league competition, despite having lost the first game. That is par for the course for Canterbury, which always begins poorly. The team drew the second game and then won the next eight games in a row. The success of the team must be shared with the club, which has provided sponsorship. The new licensed club is also a great venue for my constituents. Knowing the club's management structure, I am confident that the future stages of the redevelopment of the Canterbury Bulldogs League Club will be just as spectacular and successful as stage one.

#### **HORNSBY ELECTORATE PUBLIC HOUSING**

**Mrs HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [3.48 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an issue that I believe to be one of the most serious and difficult to manage in New South Wales: the availability and quality of public housing. Without doubt a sizeable number of constituents who come to see me have great concerns about this matter. Availability of public housing has reached crisis proportions in the Hornsby electorate, just as it has in many other areas. Some of my constituents have been on a waiting list for 10 years or more. Over this time they have had to make patchy arrangements, and many are at desperation point.

The Department of Housing has an office at Ryde that services most of my electorate. The region, which includes area D, extends from Cowan to West Ryde, Meadowbank, Putney, Hunters Hill and associated suburbs. There are 2,670 properties available and a waiting list of 3,000 people. Garrigal Housing Association Ltd is a community housing organisation in Hornsby. Its primary objective is to provide subsidised housing to those eligible under certain guidelines. After speaking with representatives from the Garrigal Housing Association I was made acutely aware that it is bogged down with requests, most of which it will never be able to satisfy. It is supposed to provide interim housing until such time as the circumstances of the people taking housing from this company improve, or they are allocated public housing.

The people who are fortunate enough to be provided with a Garrigal house have a property that is looked after and deal with people who treat them with respect by providing a home to be proud of. Those who require emergency and public housing are usually at a low ebb in their lives. What they really need is someone who cares about them. The Department of Housing appears to fall down in this regard. Due to the demand and the fact that people taking Garrigal housing do not move on to public housing, the organisation can only house a few people each year.

One of my constituents, Tina McGowan—a mother with four dependent children aged 10, seven, six and three—came to see me recently in a distressed state. She had been trying for many months to achieve a move from the Department of Housing home in which she was living in Mount Colah to another more suitable home—a house that was adequately maintained and a place where she could live in a safe and healthy environment with her children. The Mount Colah residence is in serious and urgent need of repair. I quote from one of Tina's letters to me:

Over the past two years, we have experienced serious flood damage and numerous other problems as a result... the smell of the property is not reasonable. It is disgusting and dull. The Department of Health has informed me that the air quality in the house would be poor. The smell of the property comes from the mouldy carpet, walls and ceilings in numerous areas throughout the home.

The letter continues in that vein. Tina told me that she was almost electrocuted because of water dripping through a light fitting. Tiles are falling off the walls in the shower recess. Kitchen cupboards are rotting and

smelly. Water leaks in the ceilings and unsafe extensions have caused Tina to have to move her bed into the lounge room. Furniture has had to be repositioned because of the same problem. Need I continue? A long list of problems with the dwelling have not been addressed despite frequent notification to the Department of Housing. Apart from the obvious dangers to the wellbeing of the occupants, this house is owned by the people of New South Wales and, as an investment, is far from being properly maintained.

Tina has taken photographs of the disgusting condition of the Department of Housing house that she and her children occupy. Tina is not alone in relation to the taking of photographic evidence of blatant neglect in maintaining State property at a reasonable level. A number of other constituents are also in possession of proof that the department is not doing its job. These people have tried to make the best of their circumstances. Some people have painted the outside of these homes, but they are defeated by problems that they need help to fix. The Department of Housing is alleged to have general inefficiencies causing 2,000 to 4,000 public housing properties to be vacant at any one time, resident behaviour problems and other inappropriate activities occurring with some of the occupants, and elderly people who are providing crisis care for some of the tenants, for example, the disabled or mentally ill, who do not receive services of which they are in need.

Tina called me the other day. She has given up on public housing and has moved herself and her four children in with her mother. The Department of Housing has let her down. The recent *Sydney Morning Herald* Wizard of Id cartoon sums up the current situation. The king says, "Here is your new house, peasant", to which the peasant replies, "All I see are trees." The king then responds, "There is some assembly required." I believe that the issues are clear.

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.53 p.m.]: If the honourable member were to check the budget papers she would find that this Government, in its last two budgets, drastically increased expenditure for the refurbishment and repair of public housing stock. I know that this is a never-ending problem, and one reason for that is that there is so much public housing. The vacancies to which the honourable member referred are as a result of the refurbishment of vacant properties that is occurring most of the time. The provision of public housing is a problem in every electorate. I believe that my electorate of Canterbury is more severely affected than any other electorate in this regard. If my constituents are not happy with the time that they have to wait, I try to encourage them—and sometimes they qualify—to move to other areas that are not of their choice. However, that is not always convenient for them. Most people prefer to wait for the area of their choice. Not enough housing stock is available to provide at once public housing to everyone who is eligible. People have to wait. This Government is doing more than any previous government did to build up housing stock in this State.

#### **ST PATRICKS COLLEGE CAMPBELLTOWN RECONCILIATION GARDEN**

**Mr WEST** (Campbelltown) [3.54 p.m.]: It is appropriate this week to congratulate St Patricks College, Campbelltown, on the steps that it has taken towards reconciliation. On Monday I had the pleasure of joining members of the school community in the dedication and launch of the reconciliation garden. Frances and Gavin, knowledge holders of the Tharawal people, spoke to us in the language of the Tharawal people about the importance of remembering and understanding. They gave traditional blessings, dispelling suggestions that the language and culture were dead. Dances from the school recorded the story of the lyrebird, the totem of the Tharawal people, created out of fire while saving the young and the old of the tribe on the way to sanctuary.

Sister Catherine, a former principal of the school, recounted that the lyrebird was the peacemaker, able to speak all languages and to bring understanding—a fitting figure for reconciliation. We moved to the garden where a former weed-infested agricultural lot has been transformed by the hard work and commitment of the staff and students of St Patricks into a setting of peace and tranquillity. The centre of the garden is a dam. Choking weeds and introduced fish such as carp have been removed. A small creek now trickles over rocks, while native fish grow in the reinvigorated dam. Encircling the dam are native plants drawn from the area—plants that are capable of many uses. Unfortunately, some of those uses have been lost with the passing of older members of the tribe. But together we can ensure that this cultural heritage is protected.

A path winds its way around the site, inviting one to stop and reflect on past events as one moves on one's journey—events such as the killing of Aborigines near Appin. After increasing friction between settlers and members of the Tharawal community, men gathered to hunt down members of the tribe, pursuing them to cliffs at Cataract Gorge where they were driven off for fear of capture. The garden also invites us to look to the future and to walk together. A ceremonial fire was lit from the fibres of stringy bark, themselves ignited from tiny coals. The fire contained ashes from many fires that in themselves were important steps towards reconciliation.

Now the ashes of St Patricks reconciliation garden form part of this journey. The site was blessed by Father Healy using a eucalypt dipped in holy water and the water of the dam. As the garden was declared officially open we were invited to warm our hands on the fire as a symbol of reconciliation. I would like to congratulate the school community, which was led by principal John Greene, on the steps that it is taking to walk towards reconciliation; for its commitment to do more than think about the future but to help to make it happen.

### SUTHERLAND SHIRE ROTARY BOWEL SCAN INITIATIVE

**Mr KERR** (Cronulla) [3.58 p.m.]: Today I refer to the 2002 Rotary bowel scan initiative. I refer, first, to the incidence of bowel cancer and to the mortality rate in New South Wales, which, of course, includes my electorate of Cronulla. Bowel cancer is the most common cancer in New South Wales. There are about 4,100 new cases of bowel cancer in New South Wales each year. Bowel cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death for male and females. There are about 1,600 deaths from bowel cancer each year. Using the 1999 figures, one in 18 males and one in 26 females will develop bowel cancer by the age of 75. The Rotary clubs of Sutherland shire undertook the bowel scan initiative. They did so with the assistance of many members of the community who helped to make this important community health initiative such a success. Approximately 4,000 bowel scan test kits were sold.

Unfortunately, only half of those were returned for testing. This is of concern, and one of the objectives is to encourage people to get into the habit of screening annually. Of those tested, 1.3 per cent had a positive result. That is regarded as a normal clinical result. All positive clients were notified immediately, as were their doctors. Hopefully, early medical diagnosis will avert many dangerous conditions which might otherwise go undetected until it is too late. Action is in hand, now that testing has been completed, to notify all negative result clients of their results. It is important to point out that to ensure the best protection, screening should be undertaken annually. Early detection of any abnormality is the best step towards a successful cure. The program is a good example of the community working together.

I would like to mention the assistance of a number of sectors of the community. Sutherland Shire Council staff were helpful in the mailing of the initial advertising leaflets with the January rate notices. Assistance with the handbills was also provided by Danna Vale, the Federal member for Hughes. All shire pharmacies co-operated in the selling of the kits. Hospital and laboratory staff assisted in the clinical and clerical import required to test and record results. Trainee students at Gympie TAFE established a database to assist with mailing, and business houses distributed leaflets. The *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*—a publication I referred to only yesterday with regard to its role in alerting the community to the public liability crisis—published an article on a happy survivor. That article was an influential piece of reading. I also thank the shire's medical fraternity for their encouragement and, last but not least, Rotary club members who distributed leaflets, resupplied pharmacies, collected the kits for analysis and worked in the hospital laboratory to open the kits ready for testing. It was a great community effort. Once again, it goes to show that there is not much wrong in the world that cannot be fixed with what is right in Sutherland Shire.

### NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

**Mrs PERRY** (Auburn) [4.02 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the outstanding effort made by Bankstown City Council in focusing on reconciliation issues at a local level with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Last night I had the privilege of attending a mayoral reception conducted by Bankstown council in recognition of National Reconciliation Week 2002, which commenced on 26 May and ends on 3 June. I congratulate Bankstown City Council on this initiative, particularly Mayor David Blake and councillors Helen Westwood and Richard McLaughlin, who have been instrumental in raising awareness among the local community of this issue and ensuring that council continues to work in partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, as it does with the community at large.

This year represents the tenth anniversary of the High Court's Mabo judgment and the seventh anniversary of National Reconciliation Week, which was initiated by the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1996. Since that time National Reconciliation Week has become a major event on the national calendar. It is fitting that Bankstown council should celebrate such a significant anniversary within the community. Present at the reception last night, whose continuing efforts in community building I acknowledge today, were Constance Nungulla McDonald, elder by proxy of the Bankstown Aboriginal community and true daughter of the Wunambel tribe of East Kimberley, Western Australia; Mr Fred Mullone, elder for Liverpool, representing the Gandangarra people; Maisy Cidor, an "older" citizen of the community; Trish Leverett, Bankstown council's Aboriginal advisory committee member; and other important guests.

The Liverpool land council takes in part of my electorate, particularly the southern areas. The original inhabitants of this land are the Dharawaal and Darug people. I acknowledge in the House today those original inhabitants. The mayoral reception was Bankstown council's gesture of reconciliation and the council's way of drawing community focus on this matter. It is important that our community continues to focus nationally on reconciliation. The objective of reconciliation is to create an understanding of the true history of Australia and the place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play in both the historical and contemporary Australian context. As Mayor Blake said last night, "We cannot rewrite history, but we can shape the future." How true that is! The mayor went on to say:

Reconciliation is a critical issue for Australia's identity and future. We will remain diminished as a nation until true reconciliation is achieved. We need to acknowledge the past and build a future together.

Learning about one another as histories, cultures and heritage is the first step in understanding and respecting each other.

Reconciliation is about working together. In my view, Bankstown council is doing its part in this process by moving forward and working with the local indigenous communities. The council has demonstrated its commitment to this process. It has carried an apology to the stolen generation, and it now permanently flies the Aboriginal flag. The council has also established the Aboriginal Advisory Committee to assist council with planning for the needs of our indigenous community and to offer council advice on issues that are important for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The advisory council, though in its infancy—it is 12 months old—has already made important contributions to policy and planning decisions of Bankstown council.

Currently, the advisory committee is in the throes of preparations for a week of events organised by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Day of Observance Committee [NAIDOC]. I commend Bankstown council on its decision in the past to fund NAIDOC week celebrations, and in continuing to do so. It is clear that Bankstown council is committed to recognising and celebrating these important events on both the national and indigenous calendars. It is encouraging that local councils such as Bankstown council are committed to principles of reconciliation, including improving relationships with our indigenous community by working together, valuing cultures and sharing history. Once again I thank councillors Helen Westwood, Richard McLaughlin and David Blake, and the other Australian Labor Party councillors who will have together been the driving force behind the council's commitment at the local level.

### COFFS HARBOUR ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr FRASER** (Coffs Harbour) [4.07 p.m.]: At times I must sound like a broken record in this House when I speak on health issues within the Coffs Harbour electorate. Earlier this week I spoke about the outflow of \$33 million from the Coffs Harbour electorate going to Sydney. Between \$10 million and \$15 million of that amount is the result of surgery that cannot be performed in Coffs Harbour. Today I want to raise two issues relevant to this outflow. Today I spoke with Mr Michael Gosbell and Mr William Freudenstein, who contacted my office. They both have had members of their families sent to Sydney for operations that cannot be performed in Coffs Harbour. Mr Gosbell's wife, Kathleen, travelled to Westmead Hospital for an operation to remove a tumour on her thyroid.

Mr and Mrs Gosbell have an 18-year-old son who is disabled. Mr Gosbell had to take time off work, find someone to look after his son and travel with his wife to Sydney. When they got to Westmead Hospital they were told the operation could not be done. As Mr Gosbell said, the decision not to operate was obviously due to lack of funding because a bed was available and surgeons were there to perform the operation. That happened only this week. Mrs Gosbell had to travel back to Coffs Harbour and is waiting on advice whether the operation can be done prior to 9 July. I know that thyroid cancer is not usually fatal. But Mrs Gosbell, who has a tumour on her thyroid, arranged for her disabled son to be looked after, her husband took time off work and she and her husband travelled from Coffs Harbour to Sydney so she could have the operation. It is unacceptable that the operation was cancelled.

I also highlight the case of Mr Freudenstein and his 26-year-old daughter, Melinda, who has six tumours on her spine and urgently needs an operation. The operation has been scheduled at Royal North Shore Hospital on two occasions. On both occasions Melinda and her mother have travelled to Sydney, once by car at a cost of more than \$100 in petrol plus accommodation, and once by coach at a cost of about \$140 plus accommodation. On both occasions Melinda was denied the operation because the hospital did not have enough beds or surgeons. According to Mr Freudenstein, there were beds available at the hospital. It would appear that a lack of funding has meant that this young lady has been denied the operation she urgently needs.

Under the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, people who travel to Sydney for scheduled medical procedures are not reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses unless the procedure is carried out. So the costs incurred by Mr Freudenstein and Mr Gosbell and their families will not be reimbursed under that scheme. That is a very poor state of affairs. Earlier today I raised the matter with the Parliamentary Secretary, and I hoped that he would be in the Chamber to respond to the matters raised in my contribution.

I ask the Minister for Health to urgently investigate the cases of Kathleen Gosbell and Melinda Freudenstein and ensure that they are able to have their operations in Sydney as soon as possible. It is simply unacceptable that these people, who live 500 or 600 kilometres away from Sydney, have to suffer stress because they cannot have their operations. We all know that stress is the worst thing for tumours of any kind. Kathleen and Melinda are waiting for a phone call telling them to come down to Sydney for their operations. The worrying thing is that they could get the phone call, then travel to Westmead Hospital or Royal North Shore Hospital, only to be sent home again. I ask the Minister to provide a guarantee that these people will have their operations in the very near future.

**Mr MOSS** (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.12 p.m.]: I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health, whom the honourable member for Coffs Harbour said he spoke to about the issue, will draw the Minister's attention to the matter. Certainly people who live in country areas need to be guaranteed, before leaving home, that they will be attended to when they arrive in Sydney. I am sure that aspect will be addressed. Operations may have to be delayed, but people should not have to travel for no reason. I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary will take the matter up with the Minister for Health.

### WOY WOY LITTLE THEATRE

**Ms ANDREWS** (Peats) [4.13 p.m.]: I wish to pay tribute to an amateur theatrical group that has been operating on the Woy Woy Peninsula for more than 40 years. Woy Woy and District Musical and Dramatic Society was established in 1961 by 20 members determined to bring live entertainment to the peninsula. The society's first production was *Rookery Nook*, presented in the Umina Progress Hall in 1962. In 1972 the society changed its name to Woy Woy Little Theatre and has since concentrated on straight plays, with the occasional music hall shows, comedies, farces and children's plays. It is one of the oldest theatre groups on the Central Coast. Over the years many local residents have contributed enormously to this theatre, the most notable being Patricia Gilroy, who is a foundation member. In the past Pat has served as president and secretary at various times and today is still a very active member.

Well-known Channel 9 newsreader Ian Ross was an inaugural member. Barbara Hickey, the current president, became involved just 10 months after the theatre's formation. Barbara has also served as secretary and was for many years the theatre's treasurer. John Hickey, Barbara's husband, has served as president and is currently the vice-president, while John and Barbara's daughter, Sharon, is secretary. Nola and Barrie McKeowen have been active, longstanding members and both have held various positions in the theatre. Barrie is the production manager and effects designer. Dr Penny Dilworth has been involved with the theatre for 14 years and at various times has served as president, secretary and treasurer.

Alan and Hilda Bird, who originally hail from the United Kingdom, have been members for approximately 12 years. Both have contributed much to the theatre over that period as they are both extremely innovative and make wonderful stage props. Until his recent death Spike Milligan was the theatre's patron. Spike's mother, Flo Milligan, who was a well-known resident of Woy Woy, would represent Spike on opening nights. Mrs Milligan would bring along a bottle of champagne, courtesy of Spike, to celebrate the occasion with the actors and supporting crew. Desmond Milligan, Spike's brother, has accepted the invitation to be the new patron of the Woy Woy Little Theatre.

In 1999 a grant of \$30,000 was awarded to the Woy Woy Little Theatre to assist in the construction of a new 120-seat theatre. This grant came from the State Government's 2000 Cultural Grants Program administered by the new Ministry for the Arts, which comes under the portfolio of the Premier, the Hon. Bob Carr. Gosford City Council committed funds totalling \$1.5 million as part of its building strategies plan for the new theatre. I congratulate Gosford City Council on its commitment to this worthwhile community project. The Peninsula Community Centre and Theatre were officially opened on 6 April by the Mayor of Gosford City Council, Councillor Robert Bell.

The Woy Woy Little Theatre staged a special performance in its first permanent home for a number of special guests on 22 February. I was fortunate to be one of those guests and I was delighted with the

presentation of *I Ought to be in the Pictures*, a very entertaining play by well-known United States playwright Neil Simon. More recently, the theatre staged an Australian play, *Secret Bridesmaids' Business*, by Elizabeth Coleman. Over the past 15 or 16 years the Woy Woy Little Theatre operated out of Woy Woy Public School. While the theatre company appreciated the co-operation of successive school principals in being able to access the school's hall, there is nothing like theatre having its own home. Through the years since 1961 the Woy Woy Little Theatre has received unswerving and loyal support from its many patrons. These patrons have supported it through thick and thin.

The Woy Woy Little Theatre, in its new home, is now playing to record crowds. It is very supportive and encouraging of young actors and is currently making a concerted effort to attract actors in the 18 to 30 age group. The theatre intends to stage a children's play at the end of the year as a way of introducing live theatre to the very young. Members of the group do a wonderful job in bringing live theatre to the community at a very reasonable cost. The theatre company has an excellent reputation, not only on the Woy Woy Peninsula but right throughout the Central Coast region and beyond. I take much pleasure in congratulating everyone associated with the Woy Woy Little Theatre on their past achievements and I wish them every success for the future.

### TRIBUTE TO Mr MICHAEL DRYSDALE

**Mr O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai) [4.18 p.m.]: In any organisation there are those who fulfil roles that are more public than others. Whether it be the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition or the Premier, we all know that the performances of those people are built upon the activities of those who work in this place, the ministries of government and the office of the Leader of the Opposition. I wish to acknowledge Michael Drysdale, who has worked for Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council for the past 25 years. Although Michael has been out of the limelight over those years, nevertheless he is a gem and has been crucial in ensuring that Ku-ring-gai council operates efficiently. I am happy to place on record my view that, by and large, Ku-ring-gai council does operate relatively efficiently.

Michael Drysdale has worked for Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council since 1977. He has had many titles: mayoral driver, ordinance inspector, administrative inquiry officer and cleaner team leader, to name a few. Over the time that Michael has worked for Ku-ring-gai council there have been 10 mayors. They have extended from Richard Lennon, who was mayor when Michael joined the council in 1977, to Howard Vains, Brian Taylor, Steven Klinger, Ron Yeates, Peter Derwent, the late Richard Geddes, David Dobbin, Tony Hall, and the current mayor, Laura Bennett. Among Michael's unofficial titles during this period were troubleshooter and jack of all trades. Michael is a man who knows where everything is and has a wonderful memory for corporate history.

Over the 25 years that Michael has worked for Ku-ring-gai council he has seen local government changed significantly. He started as a driver in what was then the health department of council and progressed through ordinance inspector to become mayoral driver. Ku-ring-gai no longer has a mayoral driver but it was a feature of Ku-ring-gai council. Although Michael was not involved, mayoral drivers, like ministerial drivers, certainly know where the bodies are buried and where the secrets lie. Michael was not the driver when a former mayor of Ku-ring-gai, who had to travel interstate to a local government association conference, was picked up from his home by his driver early in the morning. He was asleep when the driver arrived and had to rush to get dressed in order to catch the plane. As the Ku-ring-gai mayoral car was travelling over the Sydney Harbour Bridge the mayor suddenly realised he had forgotten his teeth. The driver had to do a U-turn on the bridge, drive him home to get his teeth and rush him to the airport. On that occasion the mayoral driver, like ministerial drivers, proved his usefulness by ensuring that the mayor was able to catch his plane.

Michael, in his capacity as jack of all trades, played an important role in contributing to the smooth running of functions and events for Ku-ring-gai council. During the 1980s and 1990s, in particular, council hosted many receptions for people such as Dame Joan Sutherland. Indeed, when Nick Greiner, who was then the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai, became Premier a reception was hosted for him. Michael is still an important part of the monthly citizenship ceremonies and other annual mayoral functions. Like other councils, Ku-ring-gai council holds many major community events, including Australia Day events. Michael and his family have been major contributors to these events. Michael's family—his wife, Joy, and children, Victoria, Rachel and Daniel—give their time voluntarily, with the money from their contribution going to charity. Michael and Joy also cater for the after-concert parties to thank performers for their voluntary contributions.

Another major event in which Michael was involved is Cycle for a Kid who Can't. This event raises money for the Sydney Children's Hospital and would not have been successful without Michael and his family. He was noted as being the "collector of donated goods, the cooker of sausages and the solver of problems". The



Drysdale family always staffed a rest stop at the Wahroonga to Gosford ride. Michael Drysdale has been a Ku-ring-gai resident for all of those 25 years. For some of that time he was a resident in some of the old council properties. For instance, I know that at one stage he lived in the house situated in Roseville Park, which is no longer occupied. As a resident, he has a special love of the area, which induces him to go well beyond the call of duty as a simple council employee for his community. As an example, Michael received an award for his exceptional efforts on behalf of his community following the violent storm that hit Ku-ring-gai in January 1991.

The words that are used to describe Michael are "honest, loyal and hardworking". Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council will be a different place when he retires. However, Michael deserves his retirement. He has been hardworking, and has worked well for the ratepayers of Ku-ring-gai. We wish him well. He is building a house in Wattle Flat near Sofala and will continue with his hobby of panning for gold, hoping he will strike it rich. Certainly, he will have more time to spend with the family he loves so much. It is not often we acknowledge in this place the battlers and the ordinary people in our lives. On this occasion I sincerely congratulate Michael Drysdale on his contribution to the council and wish him well in his retirement.

**Private members' statements noted.**

**The House adjourned at 4.23 p.m.**

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