

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 21 June 2002

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

BILLS RETURNED

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

Olympic Co-ordination Authority Dissolution Bill

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council with amendments:

Sporting Venues Management Bill
Western Lands Amendment Bill

Consideration of amendments deferred.

APPROPRIATION BILL

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL

GENERAL GOVERNMENT LIABILITY MANAGEMENT FUND BILL

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (TRADEABLE EMISSION SCHEMES FUND) BILL

PUBLIC FINANCE AND AUDIT AMENDMENT (BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL REPORTING) BILL

STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET) BILL

Second Reading

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Take-note Debate

Debate resumed from 19 June.

Mr BROWN (Kiama) [10.01 a.m.]: I support the budget handed down by the Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, because it focuses primarily on education and health. The budget also provides for the many areas in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven that require funding. The budget is economically sound; unlike the Federal budget which gives the country an undeserved deficit, our State budget gives a surplus and lower taxes. The budget gives us a surplus but does not attack the unemployed or the disabled. In fact, our budget is progressive and will help those in the community who need help the most.

This year the budget allocates an extra \$1.6 billion for better services and lower taxes in accordance with the Government's debt reduction strategy. That is the right strategy and does not leave debt for future generations and governments to grapple with. When Labor won office in 1995 the State debt was \$12 billion or 7.3 per cent of State gross product. That debt has now been reduced by \$7 billion to only 2 per cent of State gross product. That is a sensible financial management. Unlike the Greiner and Fahey Governments, the Carr Government does not use a credit card; rather it pays its way each and every year and puts some money away each year for the future.

The Treasurer spoke of his budget as getting ahead. He stated that New South Wales and Tasmania are the only Governments in Australia that have budgeted a surplus on all three measures of cash, net lending result, and operating result. Perhaps the Federal Government could take a leaf out of our book on financial management. The cash result measures how much the year's operations have added to or reduced debt. The net lending result is the measure for the general government sector, showing us how much the year's operations have contributed to an increase or decrease in net financial liabilities. The operating result—that is, the Government's profit or loss—shows us whether the year's operations have added to or reduced our net worth.

Throughout the area I represent, and throughout the State, I am heartened to see that this Labor Government will provide the biggest ever investment by any State Government in new schools, new hospitals, new roads and public transport, and other public works and investments. Education is the best way to ensure that there is a level playing field. Giving people the opportunity to learn skills to help them in life is essential for social justice. Education is, and always needs to be, the cornerstone of a Labor budget. There could be no greater investment in our community than to invest in our people. This budget delivers on education in striking contrast to the budget of the Federal Liberals and Nationals.

The State's numeracy and literacy plan has served the community well. Last year New South Wales was given the enviable title of having students with the highest literacy levels in any jurisdiction in the developed world. That is a credit not only to the Government but also very much to the dedicated teachers and diligent students. Credit must also be given to the many volunteers who come into our schools and help the kids learn to read. Reading is seen as fun and that contributes to its success. I invited the Premier to Minnamurra Public School to see his policy in action. It was a great day. The kids were devouring their books and excited to read to the Premier. This budget allocates nearly \$500 million over four years to further expand the Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

I highlight that the budget allocates \$88.5 million over four years for initiatives to enhance the quality of teachers and to ensure an adequate supply of teachers in key learning areas. Also \$40 million has been allocated over the next four years for targeted assistance to schools with special problems. We are all aware of the increasing role of technology in our society. Last year's initiative of e-learning accounts for staff and students in schools and TAFE has been very well received by the teachers and students in the Kiama electorate. The additional \$82 million over the next four years is also warmly welcome. This is sound policy.

Because more students are using the Internet the current capacity of many schools to process large volumes of work is decreasing. The Government has allocated \$157 million over the next four years for the necessary upgrade of the bandwidth in schools and TAFE colleges. The Kiama electorate is growing and needs more schools with modern facilities. Teachers deserve a safe and comfortable place to work and students need a safe and comfortable place to learn. In the Kiama electorate there are three main capital works projects for Flinders public, Kiama high and Shoalhaven Heads schools. The budget has allocated \$2 million towards the \$5.7 million construction of the new Flinders Public School.

When that school is completed, expected to be early next year, the local community will have access to the most up-to-date educational resources and facilities. Also, the overcrowding at Shellharbour Public School should be well alleviated. The new school will be equipped with classrooms and special programs spaces, which will be built to the most modern design specification. It will also have a covered outdoor learning area and a communal hall, which will allow for a range of activities including dance, drama and assembly. My old school, Kiama high, has been allocated \$3.65 million towards the \$4.5 million upgrade of stage one.

That upgrade will provide a new classroom block, built to the most modern standards, and a refurbished administrative facility with car parking. The community of Shoalhaven Heads also deserves credit for their work and dedication in lobbying for funds to have their school rebuilt. The Minister for Education and Training has advised me that there will be a stage one upgrade, which will commence with \$600,000 allocated in this year's budget. Planning for the project is expected to commence in term three this year. In addition, concept planning for the remainder of the upgrade at Shoalhaven Heads will commence at the same time. I particularly dedicate thanks to the Shoalhaven Heads Parents and Citizens Association, Robin Flack and Alan Voysey of the Shoalhaven Heads Progress Association, former principal, Bill Hodgson, and new principal, David Hogg, as well as many others in the Shoalhaven Heads community who have assisted in getting funds for the school. This commitment to Shoalhaven Heads has been long awaited. The students, staff and community have earned that commitment.

Health is very important to the people of the Illawarra. The area is growing, and health services are much needed. I commend the Government for allocating \$265 million to the Illawarra Area Health Service,

which represents an increase of \$18.7 million or 7.6 per cent on last year's budget. In addition, \$34 million has been allocated for capital works. I am confident that this record funding will mean an increase in health services for patients and families in the Illawarra. Since the previous Liberal-National Government closed Kiama hospital, the nearest emergency departments for the Kiama township are either Shoalhaven or Shellharbour hospitals. However, both of these hospitals have needed upgrading for some time. I am pleased that the Carr Government has allocated \$500,000 to begin the \$5 million upgrade and expansion of the Shellharbour hospital emergency department, which will increase its capacity from 12 to 20 beds.

It is pleasing to see that the Carr Government has recognised the need for major hospital upgrading and rebuilding in our area. Significant funding, \$32.1 million out of a total of \$109.3 million, has been allocated to carry out works at Wollongong Hospital and Shoalhaven Hospital. Stage two works at Wollongong Hospital will include the demolition and replacement of Hickman House to provide an obstetrics ward, a neonatal intensive care unit, cardiology and gastroenterology medical wards, a day surgery ambulatory care unit, academic teaching facilities, a new psychiatric inpatient unit, upgrade of facade to the existing block and more car parking facilities. The strategy for Shoalhaven Hospital will provide a new emergency department, medical imaging department, day surgery, day procedures and ambulatory care units, surgical and maternity ward upgrades, relocation of the paediatric ward, upgrade of the kitchen, medical records, admission, pharmacy, and allied health, a mortuary and parking facilities.

However, bricks and mortar are not the only requirements. Money for services must be maintained and increased. The New South Wales Government has led the nation on the insurance crisis. Health is no different. The budget provides \$30 million to indemnify all New South Wales doctors for their public work in public hospitals during the coming year. Throughout the Illawarra extra money has been allocated for oncology, cardiology and medical officer staffing, \$2.4 million; improved service delivery in emergency at Shoalhaven and Shellharbour hospitals, \$536,000; two more intensive care unit beds at Wollongong Hospital, \$1.6 million; improved neurosurgical services at Wollongong Hospital, \$730,000; more cataract operations at Shoalhaven Hospital, \$550,000; and increased joint replacement operations at Wollongong and Shoalhaven hospitals, \$980,000; increased haemodialysis services, \$490,000; and two extra intensive care unit beds and extra senior medical coverage at Shoalhaven Hospital, \$470,000.

After the Howard Government abolished funding for dental care, many of my constituents have had problems with their teeth. Mr Knowles deserves recognition for providing some State funding for these people. This year the budget will provide an additional \$16 million for dental health services to provide an additional 85,000 services per year. This will mean an additional 4,000 dental services for older people, and new services in rural areas. Although younger families are moving into the Kiama electorate, especially in the Shellharbour area, we still have a significant population of older people. These constituents will be comforted to know that there will be a 40 per cent increase in funding for podiatry services, which will provide an additional 55,000 services per year for older people in our State. A healthy and educated population results in a better society. Unlike the Howard-Costello budget, the Carr Government is focusing on the basics of health and education.

Roads and transport is a major issue for regional communities throughout New South Wales. Workers need safe, reliable and swift transport to and from work. Business and freight also need safer and faster vital transport links. That is why we need better roads, trains and buses. Since the people of New South Wales chose Labor in 1995 as the preferred government, then re-elected it in 1999, the Carr Government has increased funding by around 50 per cent to \$5.2 billion compared with what the former Liberal-National Party spent. The Illawarra region has seen much of that money, and it will see more. Last year, for instance, the rail electrification to Kiama was completed. Fewer people now need to change trains, and the new electric trains are more reliable. However, much of the rolling stock is getting old. We need trains that are quieter and more comfortable. I welcome the allocation of \$186 million for the purchase of an additional 141 millennium train rail cars and 41 new outer-suburban cars. I will have to lobby to get some of those trains on the Illawarra line.

As part of the Carr Government's ongoing program to improve facilities and increase passenger comfort in the region, \$2.4 million has been allocated for work on the new rail station at Oak Flats, which will commence soon, and \$2.5 million has been allocated for the bus rail interchange. The Government will also complete the \$1.6 million Easy Access upgrade program for Kiama station. Many commuters in the region are interested in the allocation of \$1 million to investigate the Sydney to Wollongong rail upgrade aimed at improving travel times between the two cities. Although I am a big supporter of public transport and I would like to see more people use it, I will focus my efforts on making our roads safer. Far too many people die and are injured on our roads each year. One of my main election promises was that work would start on the North Kiama bypass during this term. Mr Scully has ensured that the people of the Illawarra and the South Coast are well provided for with much of the funding coming earlier than promised.

This year's budget again ensures adequate funding to keep the bypass construction to plan. Some \$36 million has been allocated to the local area for roads, with \$30 million dedicated to the North Kiama bypass. When the project is completed the North Kiama bypass will cost around \$150 million. The local community is concerned that the Federal Government has broken its promise to provide \$17 million in 2003 and a further \$17 million in 2004. The Federal budget now promises that the first instalment will be received in 2004 and the remaining \$17 million will arrive in 2005-06, well after the expected completion of the North Kiama bypass. The Prime Minister's broken promise may delay the construction of the bypass for about one year. That is not good enough. We in the Illawarra deserve better than what has been delivered. We want only what was promised. People in the Illawarra know that it is only Labor that delivers for them. That is why, when I seek re-election, I will promise to work out a funding structure to ensure that the bypass is not delayed due to the Federal Government's broken promise. As the *Illawarra Mercury* said, "No Funding means No Credibility".

I turn now to promises that will not be broken. The Carr Government has allocated \$500,000 towards planning work for improvements to the Princes Highway from Oak Flats to Dunmore, \$300,000 to finalise the Princes Highway interchange with the new Lake Entrance Road and \$150,000 for pedestrian traffic signals on the Princes Highway at Oak Flats. The budget also includes \$4.1 million for important maintenance work, including more than \$1 million to commence widening of the bridges over Macquarie Rivulet and Yellow Rock Creek on the Illawarra Highway. These bridge widening works are financed in part by the increased toll on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which was announced in December last year to accelerate maintenance of the Roads and Traffic Authority's arterial road network. Councils in the Kiama electorate—Shellharbour, Kiama, Shoalhaven and Wingecarribee—will receive a total of \$3.2 million for maintenance of roads in their areas. I have spoken to representatives from each of these councils and they are happy that at least we will do the right thing by them. It is unfortunate that the Federal Government has broken its promise to the councils by reducing their Roads to Recovery funding.

Much is said in this State about law and order. Currently, the Opposition is trying to advance mandatory sentencing as an election issue. However, the Government has implemented many reforms to clean up the police force as well as give it more powers to help make our communities safer without making this a police State. It is a fine balance, and one that needs to be properly considered. Simplistic, populist statements will not reduce crime or assist to put criminals behind bars, nor will they provide adequate support for victims of crime. The Liberal-National Party might well heed these sentiments. The Carr Government is committed to reducing crime. The former Liberal-National Party Government opposed a motion to set up a royal commission to investigate police corruption. The Carr Government won office in 1995 and implemented most of the recommendations of Commissioner Wood.

Since 1995 the Carr Government has increased the police budget every year. This budget is no exception. It is the eighth record police budget, receiving an additional \$153 million and bringing its total allocation to \$1.8 billion. This is an increase of 62 per cent on the last Liberal-National budget, or \$671 million in dollar terms. There are many aspects of this budget that my constituents would welcome, including an allocation of \$8 million to recruit and train more police for front-line duties; \$12.1 million for the final stage of the administration civilianisation program, which will release another 350 police for work on the beat; an allocation of \$6 million to improve DNA testing, the Integrated Ballistic Identification System and the Livescan Fingerprint database; and \$6 million for upgrades of the NSW Police radio network.

I am pleased that \$40 million has been allocated over the next four years for community solutions and crime prevention initiatives, to provide innovative responses to economic, social and crime problems in local communities. These improvements should all support the plans of the new commissioner, Ken Moroney, for a high-impact, high-visibility force. I was alarmed to hear that our State's prison population of 7,800 is larger than that of many of the towns I represent. I agree with the Treasurer that this is not an aspect of our society that we should celebrate, but it clearly shows that our police are catching, and locking up, more criminals than ever before.

Although my speech is about the New South Wales budget, I point out that more Federal funds are required to protect our coastline from the illegal importation of drugs and weapons. It is crazy for us to invest so many resources into cleaning up our streets when only four out of every 1,000 containers entering Australia are searched by Federal customs. Although the difficulties facing our police should not be underestimated, neither should their success. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Over the past year the Standing Committee on Public Works has held an inquiry into the ways in which different State departments are reducing greenhouse gases, as instructed by the Premier. We have also seen

which departments have taken up the \$20 million offered by Treasury to assist them in purchasing capital to reduce their power intake. I have found the inquiry fascinating. At last year's National conference in Canberra, our committee reported on our efforts and found that many of the other States, and the Commonwealth, were interested in following our lead. To further the work in this area, the Carr Government is introducing enforceable greenhouse benchmarks on electricity retailers. The Government's plans will reduce greenhouse emissions by giving green energy a larger share of the market and reducing the rate of growth in demand for electricity. We are still the greenest government in Australia, and I am glad the Government wants to maintain this title. All of us have an obligation to pass to the next generation a better place in which to live.

The Kiama electorate is about to see the completion of the sewage treatment plant at Gerringong-Gerroa. At present sewage is seeping into many of the gutters, and also into the ocean, and the plant will address that problem. I also look forward to announcing this year an environmental impact statement for the establishment of a sewage treatment plant at Jamberoo. We will continue to ensure that as much of that effluent as possible is able to be reused in the local area. An allocation of \$23 million has been provided for the Government's six-year \$195 million salinity plant, and work will begin, in partnership with the Federal Government, on the seven-year reforestation program, worth up to \$100 million. An allocation of \$15 million has also been provided to save the Snowy River from terminal degradation.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has always received much attention with regard to funding from the Carr Government. This year is no exception. The service will receive a record \$334 million to protect the State's natural and cultural heritage. Further, once laws are made to protect our environment, they need to be enforced. The Environment Protection Authority will receive \$178 million to crack down on pollution, and reduce air and noise emissions and other activities that harm our environment. Illegal dumping and littering is still a big problem in the community. My constituents will welcome the \$45 million allocated to reduce waste and fight against further illegal dumping.

We are seeing the work force change year after year. We will probably not see a more rapidly changing work force than that of the Illawarra. A major challenge for the Government is to keep up with those changes by educating our work force and attracting more investment in our State. As the Treasurer said, "Part of getting ahead is making use of the best tools and techniques." It also means "seizing opportunities".

I applaud the Government's \$530 million investment in information technology, which will be spent this year mostly in schools, TAFE colleges, and hospitals and police facilities. With regard to biotechnology, I was interested to learn that Australia produces 2.7 per cent of global medical research, despite the fact that it has just over 0.3 per cent of the world's population. The biotechnology industry in New South Wales is growing by 20 per cent a year. Last year the Carr Government released its five-year, \$64 million Bio First plan to make the industry stronger, more competitive and more export focused. It is pleasing that this commitment has been maintained in the budget.

None of us enjoys paying taxes. However, we would dislike a community without services even more. Taxation is the price we pay for civilisation, and I was pleased to hear that the Carr Government is determined to make sure that it is not too high a price. This is the fifth successive budget that has reduced tax. It ensures that a total of \$1.4 billion a year will be put back into taxpayers' pockets. An issue that concerns many people in the area I represent is that we are continuing to subsidise Queensland. That is why I was interested to hear that, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Government's revenue per person is the third lowest of all States and Territories.

New South Wales accounts for 34 per cent of the nation's population and contributes 36 per cent of Commonwealth taxation, yet it receives only 32 per cent of all Commonwealth grants to the States. In dollar terms, we subsidise other States by some \$2.3 billion, which is enough to slash the stamp duty of all States by half. Due to good economic management, we can help try to attract jobs for apprentices by abolishing payroll tax on their wages. I also welcome the halving of stamp duty on all general insurance, including public liability insurance, from 10 per cent to five per cent. This now gives New South Wales the lowest stamp duty rates in Australia by a long shot.

This will be the last budget debate in which I will participate before I seek re-election. Overall, Labor has continually produced a budget that has helped the people I represent, and I have been happy to support these budget bills for the past three years. There are still many things that more money would fix. There are also many things that simply throwing money at will not fix. No budget can meet every need or every demand. But we can keep trying to improve people's standards of living. When Chifley spoke of the light on the hill, I think this is

what he meant. I support the budget because it is socially responsive and financially responsible. I look forward to returning to this place next year and speaking on a similarly styled budget.

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai) [10.28 a.m.]: The current governmental arrangements—arrangements cemented in the annual State and Federal budget processes—work against individuals in this State, and across the nation, exercising their full democratic rights. Rather than address the usual electorate-specific issues affected by the budget—important though they are to people's lives—instead I intend to advocate reforms that would replace politicians with people at the centre of our political system, a goal that, while improving the budget process and the delivery of publicly provided services at the Federal and State level across Australia, would also improve the operation of, outcomes produced by, and participation in, our democratic system.

Before I am interrupted and it is suggested that I am straying from the legislation, I wish to point to some of the features of the State budget. The budget papers detail that in 2002-03 total State expenditure will be \$32.3 billion and revenue will amount to \$33.6 billion. Closer examination reveals that about \$15 billion of that revenue is derived from the Commonwealth—\$9.8 billion in general-purpose payments, that is, unspecified allocation from income tax and GST revenue, and \$5.2 billion in specific-purpose grants. The budget papers are filled with positive statements about various aspects of State expenditure. Examination of many of those areas highlights just how entwined Commonwealth and State revenues are. When the Transport Minister claims credit for further upgrades to the Pacific Highway, the reality is that he is largely announcing Federally funded projects for which his Federal colleague will also seek to claim credit.

The operation of Medicare and the Commonwealth Government's injection of \$2.2 billion into State health services makes it nigh on impossible to assess Federal or State health priorities. The dishonest, divisive and diversionary debate about State school education and the funding of non-government schools that is engaged in by the Carr Government, the teachers' union and parents and citizens association has obscured actual accountabilities in education. The sad and shameful on-going debate about the Social and Community Services [SACS] award increases—and the real likelihood that some of the least well-off in our community are being used as pawns in a political tug-of-war—is regrettably a symptom of a system that rewards obfuscation and principally benefits those who make up State and Federal Executives.

It is my contention that the evolution of Federal-State relations in this nation over the past 101 years has stripped political power from individuals and shifted the balance between those for whom we govern and those who govern. I am not arguing that the system is broken. Australia and its component States have been remarkably successful. Our peoples have achieved significantly over the last century and we can expect more of the same in the decades ahead. Nor am I arguing that our current taxation system is flawed, or for a reintroduction of State-based income taxes—which is something I regard as anathema. While I would like to see reductions in many State taxes and the abolition of many that work against investment and employment, I support our current Federal income and indirect taxation systems. Instead, my point is that over the last century the original Federal-State balance has shifted away from that proposed by our founding fathers and, as a consequence, Australians are less able to hold to account those who govern at national and State levels.

If people do not know whom to hold to account for problems and failures, they cannot really exercise their democratic rights. If they can be confused about who is responsible for a program, how can they hold the relevant Minister or Government to account? I do not accept arguments that the most pressing constitutional reforms needed in this country are a move towards a republic, the need for a four-year Federal term of government, and greater recognition of and a boost to the powers exercised by local government. This country and its people desperately need reform, but reform to rebalance the powers of Federal and State governments. Without such reform, voters—whether in Federal or State elections—are less able to hold politicians accountable, more people are alienated from the political process, and Australian democracy is weakened.

Over recent decades Australia's Federal compact has been turned on its head. During the last Federal election campaign, candidates for election to the Australian Parliament promised their voters better public schools, more police on local streets, improvements to city and country hospitals and an end to unsightly overdevelopment which plagues many suburbs, including my own electorate of Ku-ring-gai. It did not seem to matter that each was an area of State government responsibility. I feel able to confidently predict that during the March 2003 State election campaign our incumbent Government will seek to offload blame for failing State services onto the shoulders of the Howard Federal Government. We see this tactic foreshadowed in urgency debate after urgency debate in this Chamber. I do not suggest this is a new occurrence; it is simply one regularly practiced by State governments at election times, to the detriment of our citizenry.

One hundred and one years ago our founding fathers were at pains to clearly identify the responsibilities of the new Federal Government. Colonial parliaments, including this one, debated the draft

Constitution Act, in which those powers were spelt out. In two referenda, the voters were asked to, and finally did, approve the transfer of specific powers from the colonies to the national Parliament. It was a compact based upon a clear delineation of responsibilities. It was simple enough to ensure that all who held the franchise—those who had a right to vote in Federal and State elections—knew which level of government was responsible for what and could hold the relevant politicians accountable. During the second half of the last century, national governments sought to increase their influence, usually by using their superior tax revenues which resulted from the national Government's decision to assume income-taxing powers during the Second World War. The influence and power of national governments increased in areas where technology had produced advances and where the Australian Constitution was silent, or in areas that those who drafted the Constitution had specifically left as the responsibility of the States.

Whatever the practical outcome of this aggrandisement—and there is much we should be grateful for in areas such as Internet communications technology [ICT]—at a political level it introduced a new national sport: the Australian political blame game, a variation of the *Weakest Link* in which politicians and not the people dictate the terms. Relying upon a new confusion about what level of government is actually responsible for areas such as health, education, and transport, successive Federal and State Ministers, spanning all parties, quickly embraced this sure-fire way to pass off policy failures and problems with service delivery. Unfortunately for the body politic, the only winners of the "blame game" are politicians.

Ministers may be the front-line combatants, but all who serve in parliaments like this are beneficiaries, whether knowingly or not, whether intentionally or otherwise. The more often the game is played, the greater the confusion among voters about who should be held accountable for failing public schools, hospitals, and road or rail systems. Yet many politicians in this country continue to wonder aloud about the increasing alienation of so many Australians, especially and regrettably the young, from our political system. I believe it is time we ended this deceit.

If there is to be constitutional reform it should be about restoring clarity and accountability to our Federal compact. One hundred and one years after Federation we need fundamental reform to the way we are governed if that ideal is to be realised. We do not need to change the face on the pediment; but the jerry-built additions that have been appended to our Federal framework need overhauling. Australians need constitutional reform to ensure they again become masters of their national and State destinies. Unless a voter can assess whether a Federal or State government is responsible, how can the principles that underscore our system of responsible government apply? How can "one vote, one value" apply if the person exercising the vote is unequally matched against those who exercise the levers of power in national and State governments?

Business needs reform to eliminate the costs and frustrations that result from duplication and dual regulation in Australia's current governmental processes. Sydney and New South Wales do not just compete with other States for business: we are up against other cities and States in this region of the world. So too is Australia competing in our globalised world. If we are to protect our standards of living and maintain employment we must reduce the cost of doing business; and the reform of government, eliminating duplication and unnecessary regulation, will help.

Instead of a bipartisan chorus on window-dressing the operation of Federal Parliament through the adoption of a four-year term for the House of Representatives, Australians deserve a commitment to an open and full debate on rebalancing our Federal system, the urgent identification of constitutional remedies and their submission, by way of referenda, to the people of Australia. Then and only then will voters at State or national elections be sure that every three or four years they really will get the government they deserve.

We need to consider whether State governments should have sole responsibility in areas such as schools, health and transport and whether, conversely, the Federal Government should similarly have sole responsibility for areas such as industrial relations. The Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon. Tony Abbott, made that point to the Ku-ring-gai business breakfast this year. I wholeheartedly support him on that. There are many problems these appropriation bills fail to address. They will have significant impact upon individuals and communities across the cities, towns and villages of New South Wales. But none are as fundamental to our wellbeing, prosperity and future as a restoration of the ideals upon which this nation was established.

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [10.40 a.m.]: The 2002-03 State Budget is good news for the people of Miranda, for the people of the shire, and for the people of New South Wales. Tax cuts, expenditure increases and debt reduction, together with a modest budget surplus, reflect the Carr Government's sound economic

management of the State. On the revenue side the Government is reducing payroll tax to 6 per cent and halving State stamp duty on all general insurance, including public liability insurance. That will give New South Wales the lowest insurance stamp duty rates in Australia. Together with the abolition of the bank accounts debits tax from 1 January, that means there will be more in household budgets right across the State. Abolition of payroll tax on apprentices' wages will provide an incentive for small businesses to take on apprentices, and that is to be applauded.

The stimulus to the New South Wales economy from the budget is not confined to tax cuts. The budget provides increases in expenditure across all major categories. Spending on Health and hospitals is up by \$554 million, to \$8.9 billion this financial year, and spending on Police is up \$153 million to \$1.8 billion. Spending on Education totals \$8.1 billion, up \$494 million on last year's budget allocation. Spending on Community, Ageing and Disability Services is also up \$90 million to \$1.9 billion. This year the State Government will spend around \$5.2 billion on Roads and Transport, an increase of 50 per cent since Labor took over from the Liberal Government in 1995. We all see the benefits of this increase in expenditure in magnificent projects in the Sutherland shire, such as the Woronora Bridge.

The environment is important to the people of the shire. Government projects that improve our environment have been completed in the shire. They include the \$90 million Cronulla tertiary sewage treatment plant, which will provide cleaner shire beaches. Surf club presidents, like Sean McKirdy from Wanda surf club, tell me that since the Cronulla sewage treatment plant has been completed, record numbers of nippers have been wanting to join surf clubs. The Government has also spent \$11.5 million attacking the problems of sewage overflows into the beautiful Georges River and Port Hacking. In this budget the National Parks and Wildlife Service will receive a record \$334 million to protect the State's natural and cultural heritage. The Environment Protection Authority will receive \$178 million to crack down on polluters and to reduce air and noise emissions, and for other activities. Nearly \$45 million will be spent to reduce waste and continue the fight against illegal dumping and littering. New South Wales leads the nation in tackling greenhouse emissions and introducing enforceable greenhouse benchmarks on electricity retailers.

Expenditure is up in this budget, with the Treasurer announcing a \$26 billion, four-year program for new public works investments. No previous government has ever undertaken a public works program of this magnitude. It represents an increase of \$5.4 billion, or 26 per cent, on the \$20.7 billion spent in the past four years, which included all of the expenditure on Olympic venues and infrastructure. In 2002-03 alone the total State asset acquisition program will be \$6.4 billion, sustaining approximately 96,000 direct and indirect jobs. That is a wonderful achievement in anybody's language. Against these tax cuts and expenditure increases the budget produces a modest \$168 million surplus. Seven successive budget surpluses is something no New South Wales government has ever achieved. The State Treasurer is to be congratulated on this. At the same time as the State Government has produced these seven successive surpluses, net debt has fallen by \$7 billion. The Carr Government is not burdening future generations with State debt.

I turn now to specific features of the budget that concern the Sutherland shire and my electorate of Miranda. In Health, \$31 million is to be spent on the ongoing \$82.5 million redevelopment of our precious Sutherland hospital. To date the accident and emergency ward, a day surgery ward, and a day respite service for frail-aged and dementia patients have been completed. Recently I attended the tree-topping ceremony that marks the upper limit or the roof of the main ward block and clinical services building on The Kingsway at Caringbah. Nurses and other hospital staff are anxiously looking forward to the completion of the Sutherland hospital redevelopment.

The budget allocated \$1.3 million to complete the \$1.5 million hall and amenities at Oyster Bay Public School. This is something that the principal of Oyster Bay Public School, Mr David Wilson, the students and the Oyster Bay community have been looking forward to for some considerable time. As their local member, I am pleased to be able to deliver this important project to them in my first term of Parliament. The hall will be used for dance, drama, indoor sports and school assemblies, and community groups will also be able to use it. The new hall will add to the more than \$100,000 worth of improvements at Oyster Bay Public School over the past three years, including a covered outdoor learning area, toilet upgrades, clerical office extensions, phone upgrades, and two wombat crossings.

Schools have not been the only beneficiaries from the budget; local colleges of TAFE, particularly Gympie TAFE, have also benefited. Recently, with the director of the TAFE, Mr Peter Roberts, the head teacher of carpentry, Mr Chris Beatus, and a number of apprentices, I had the pleasure of visiting the new carpentry and joinery facilities that have just been completed at Gympie TAFE. The facilities are first class. They provide for

400 students every semester. They are welcome additions to the facilities at Gymea TAFE. The budget extends the program of enhancements and upgrades at Gymea TAFE with a \$1.25 million beauty therapy facility and training facilities for hairdressing. That is being supported by local businesses and local apprentices. Again, they are welcomed by my community.

The budget provides \$5.5 million towards the \$7.1 million upgrade of the Miranda fiveways. The Miranda fiveways featured recently on *A Current Affair*, with an expert driver driving around it indicating the problems at roundabouts. Miranda fiveways, particularly, has been regarded as the number one black spot in the State for minor accidents. Following community consultation, a \$50,000 traffic study and letters from the community that formed part of the consultation process, the community decided to replace Miranda fiveways with traffic lights. The result will be reduced delays and improved safety for all road users, including cyclists, motorists and pedestrians. That work is due to be completed in December this year. It is a complex process. There will be certain delays but the community knows that and accepts it, and we are looking forward to the completion of the project.

The budget also provides \$1.4 million to complete the \$4 million right-hand turn facility at the intersection of Acacia Road and the Princes Highway, Kirrawee. This is another facility long awaited by my community. It will allow traffic crossing the new, brilliant \$47 million Woronora Bridge to avoid going through the back streets of Sutherland and Loftus. It will enable traffic coming across from the west to turn right and proceed down the Princess Highway. It is welcome news. As well as providing a right-hand turn, it will also upgrade the left-hand turn facility from the Princes Highway heading south. Another dangerous intersection in my electorate, where I continually see young mothers with prams and seniors having difficulty crossing, is at Kiora Road and Karimbla Road, Miranda, just south of Miranda Fair. The roundabout there is often the scene of accidents and its upgrade with traffic lights will make a significant difference to the people of my electorate.

This adds to a program of upgrading and improving road safety over the past three years in my electorate. There were at least four other dangerous traffic spots throughout the electorate that have been addressed by the installation of traffic and pedestrian signals following community concerns. They include Sylvania Road and the Kingsway, Miranda; the Gymea shopping centre; Port Hacking Road, Sylvania, near the Frank Vickery Village, providing a crossing for the 400 senior citizens who reside in the village; and Hotham Road and the Kingsway, Gymea, the scene of very serious accidents in my electorate. They are completed, and I look forward to the completion of the traffic lights at Kiora Road and Karimbla Road, Miranda.

Road safety around schools is also important in my electorate and this budget extends the program being undertaken by the Government. It has provided \$80,000 for wombat crossings at Kirrawee High School, Sylvania High School and Grays Point Public School. There are safety concerns for students at each of those locations, before and after school, for the 1,200 students at Kirrawee High School, the 700 at Sylvania High School, and some 300 at Grays Point Public School. The population of each of those schools is growing, under the excellent leadership of their respective principals, Mr Jim Richardson at Kirrawee High School, Mr Chris Byrne at Sylvania High School, and Sue McAuliffe at Grays Point Public School. The need to upgrade the facilities for road safety is apparent and I am pleased that the Government has responded to community concerns. They add to upgrades of facilities and wombat crossings in previous budgets to Como, Yowie Bay, Sylvania Heights, Jannali East and Kirrawee Public schools, as well as safety fencing at Port Hacking High School and Miranda Public School.

The budget also allocates approximately \$1 million to the shire council to improve local roads. An interesting allocation is \$50,000 to investigate and design a new bridge over Oyster Creek. The existing old bridge is of a box-culvert design and for years residents along Buderim Avenue, Kareela, along the Oyster Creek have been concerned about it. In 1998 the council decided that the land along the creek would possibly be the subject of a 100-year flood and included a notice to that effect on section 149 certificates held by landowners. That caused them considerable concern because it seemed to have the effect of lowering their property values.

The box-culvert design of the bridge, in fact, stops the water leaving the upper reaches of the creek at low tide with the effect that the bed of the river is being raised and becoming shallower, and the possibility of flooding is therefore increased. A new, modern, well-designed bridge will alleviate that problem. I take this opportunity to recognise and acknowledge the hard work of Mr Gary Kedward and Mr Lance King of the Oyster Creek Community Group for raising this important issue with me. I congratulate the Minister on responding to the concerns of 28 residents who live along Oyster Creek.

Rail and transport have also been winners for the people in my electorate of Miranda. Recently the Minister for Transport announced \$1.4 million funding for the investigation and design of the full duplication of

the Cronulla to Sutherland rail line. The full duplication of that line, when combined with the Government's commitment of a turn-back facility at Bondi Junction, will mean more trains in peak hour, increased reliability, less crowding, and a more comfortable journey. The budget also allocates \$3.1 million for the Easy Access upgrade of Miranda railway station to include the installation of a lift, making the station more accessible and safer for our seniors, those with disabilities, and parents with young children.

Constituents have often told me that similar funds should be allocated to other stations along the line, but Miranda station has one million more passengers a year than other stations along the line, such as Gymea and Kirrawee. While Miranda station has a ramp, it does not meet Australian design standards and it is very difficult for people in wheelchairs to use. Improvements are needed at Gymea and Kirrawee railway stations. I have made strong representations to the Minister to upgrade access to Gymea. I anticipate that with the duplication of the line in the next term of government, Kirrawee station will be upgraded and included on the Easy Access program.

At Jannali railway station more than \$200,000 will be spent upgrading platform number two. That adds to a total of approximately \$1.25 million worth of improvements already made there. Those improvements include weather shelters, the reconstruction of a platform, parking facilities, and lighting. Further, I asked the Minister to install two extra entrances to allow easy access for people with disabilities and seniors, and they have been installed. That will mean a shorter walk from the car park and easier access to trains, and a more comfortable journey for them. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The budget also provides \$100,000 to upgrade the Kirrawee car park, often referred to by residents as the "Kirrawee dust bowl". That was part of a subdivision in 1967, and the car park is used by commuters as well as shoppers. It is not tarred or paved, so there is an enormous accumulation of dust. On windy days people living in nearby Fauna Place have dust all over their clothes lines and in their houses. It has been reported that on wet days commuters and shoppers take off their shoes and socks to walk through the mud to get to their cars. This has long been an outstanding matter of concern to the residents of Fauna Place and the shoppers and shopkeepers of Kirrawee. I am pleased that the Minister has seen fit to upgrade the car park and to match \$100,000 provided by the council. I particularly acknowledge the work of Mr Leon Francis, Mrs Merlene Edwards, Mr Stephen Isles and Mrs Dawn Isles, Leanne Cahill, Stephanie Rigby and Mrs Judy King, who have actively sought my assistance obtaining funding for this very important project.

The budget provides \$226,000 to upgrade the Cronulla police station. Previously, the Government provided funding to assist the council with the installation of closed-circuit television cameras which are assisting in tackling crime in the Miranda Local Area Command. The upgrade of the Cronulla police station adds to the previous upgrade of additional accommodation provided to the Miranda police station. I have made strong representations to the Minister for Police to provide additional accommodation for officers at Miranda, and I hope he will do so. We expect to house more police at Miranda police station.

The Miranda Local Area Command is trialling a project called a Police Accountability Community Team [PACT], under the leadership of Superintendent Reg Mahoney. This is the first such project across the State. The project involves community representatives, that is, the honourable member for Cronulla, the mayor, shopkeepers, residents and myself sitting down and talking about crime problems in our area, and making the police accountable. A similar PACT has also begun in the Sutherland Local Area Command under the leadership of Superintendent Henry Karpik. In Sutherland the community representatives are the honourable member for Heathcote, the honourable member for Menai, myself, the mayor and business representatives. The project is seen by the community as a positive approach, seeking local solutions to local problems. I take this opportunity to commend and thank the police in both local area commands for a magnificent effort. Indeed, the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* of 23 May this year reported:

Crime incidents in the area from Cronulla to Miranda dropped last summer as police adopted a more in-your-face approach ...

Malicious damage offences dropped 21 per cent; assaults, 10pc; break and enters, 8.6pc; stolen vehicles, 13pc; robberies, 8pc; and stealing, 10pc.

Those impressive figures are a tribute to the dedication and commitment of our front-line police who are out there every day doing a magnificent job. In the budget some \$8 million has been allocated to recruit and train more front-line police, \$6 million to improve DNA testing and the Livescan database, and \$2 million to implement the Phototrac project. Kirrawee is a very special place in the shire. About two years ago it suffered when the only bank branch, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia branch, closed after 40 years. That caused a lot of concern to the community. Senior citizens were going to their doctors in a distressed state, worried about their savings, mortgage documents, wills, land titles and so on.

Kirrawee is on the way back. I encouraged the shopkeepers to form a chamber of commerce, which they have done. It is an extremely active chamber of commerce. It held a Kirrawee street fair, which attracted people from across the shire. It has sold the centre; people are coming back in droves. One government project undertaken in Kirrawee is the Kirrawee Living Centre project. That project involves bringing the community together to create a vision for the whole of the Kirrawee precinct. It is creating a vision for the brick pit, which is currently owned by Sydney Water, the shopping centre, the railway and the surrounding industrial areas. It is a grassroots process involving input from the community, State Government planning, local council, State Rail and, as I said, the community, both businesspeople and private citizens.

Over the past 18 months the Government has spent some \$250,000 on the Kirrawee Living Centre project. A reference group and a history group have been established. We have had a life writing project for seniors, documenting their lives and their recollections of the local area. We have had workshops for local children, a family fair day, an organised visit to Sydney Water's brick pit site to educate people about the history, and open days at an established shopfront in the main street showcasing the history and achievements of the shire. On the evening of Monday 24 June we will hold a public meeting to look at our future together. The community is involved from the ground up in this project. The project is welcomed by my community. I thank the Minister for Planning for his interest and involvement in the project. This is about getting something for the site that the community wants, rather than something that somebody wants in the community to make profits. This budget is welcomed by my community, by the people of Miranda and by people across the shire. Tax cuts, expenditure increases, reduction in debt and the seventh budget surplus make this a budget of which the State Government can be proud.

Mrs HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.05 a.m.]: Today I respond to the eighth Labor budget. I speak on behalf of the residents of the Hornsby electorate, and will describe the way in which the budget impacts on them. To begin, I shall reflect on the period leading up to the Egan 2002 budget announcements. In the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech at the opening of the Fifty-second Parliament, a plea was made to this Labor Government to make more funding available to the Hornsby electorate. Some money did come our way, but much more could have been provided. At that time I said that Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital needed rebuilding. The people of Hornsby were crying out for their hospital to be rebuilt and the services to be not only assured for the future but also improved. Surrounding communities that similarly rely on the hospital likewise expressed concern.

Further, I asked whether there was money in the budget for sewerage connection for Cowan, Brooklyn, Dangar Island and the industrial area of Mt Kuring-gai. The 2002 parliamentary report into the aquaculture of the Hawkesbury River made a firm recommendation that Brooklyn and Dangar Island should be connected to the sewer to protect this sensitive area. Currently raw sewage is flowing into the Hawkesbury, and I said this must stop. Public schools were also in dire need of capital works funding to upgrade toilet facilities, improve fencing, add necessary infrastructure and fix leaking classrooms. Berowra Public School was waiting for a management plan to be produced so that it would know whether it was in line for a new hall. Of course, a hall on a plan has no guaranteed funding attached to it unless the Treasurer says so.

The community is aware of what it requires to maintain and improve services and facilities for its people—all ages and all levels of need. Some announcements have been made, but there has been priority list after priority list with no tangible sign that moneys will actually be spent in specific areas. I fast forward to the present. The 2002 Egan budget general principles see a funding source built on massive revenues. The Treasurer has benefited from the outstanding financial management of the Federal Liberal-National Government. He has also benefited from a high tax State and a steady flow of revenue through the current property boom. In essence, this budget would be in deficit were it not for unexpected and unbudgeted tax windfalls.

The provision of sound education for our children is one of the most important gifts we can provide to prepare our youth for the challenges of the future. The residents of Hornsby care a great deal about education; they care about class sizes and adequate maintenance of school buildings. They want school facilities that reflect that we live in 2002 and contribute towards guaranteeing that our children gain maximum benefit from their classes. Schools in the Hornsby electorate have largely been left off the list in the Carr Government's 2002 budget, when they are crying out for work to be done on buildings and other infrastructure. Berowra Public School is still waiting for the completion of the master plan for the future development of the buildings in the school grounds. It appears now that either the plan has very few changes for the school, or when it is produced there will be no funding for a desperately needed hall.

The present hall is dilapidated and in dire need of replacement. Tar is falling out of the joins in the wall and the flooring is uneven. The school community fears paying out for repairs in the short term in case it loses

any consideration for funding for a new hall in the future. This reflects the thinking of the current Government, which has no inkling that there should be relief from some of the poor standards that the students, teachers and parents currently endure. Berowra Public School needs a new hall as soon as possible. Fortunately, Mount Colah Public School has had "work in progress" funding totalling \$3.2 million listed in the 2002-03 budget provisions, so planned improvements, including the addition of a hall, should go ahead.

However, I will keep an eye on progress because in my electorate it is a culture of believe it when you see it, and the residents have not seen a great deal of funding thus far. The Mount Colah Public School "work in progress" is at the development application stage, and I hope that the first sod of earth will be turned in the near future. It is disappointing that no capital work is set down for schools in my electorate other than that which I have already mentioned. I note that since the budget announcement the Minister for Education and Training has allocated additional funding for the makeover of only two schools in my electorate: Brooklyn primary school and Hornsby North primary school. A supposed welcome mat is to be put out for students, staff, parents and visitors. Brooklyn primary school has an allocation of \$15,000 and Hornsby North primary school has \$40,000.

Hornsby Girls High School, a building complex comprising largely heritage structures, has received no allocation of funding. The school's front fence is a major concern. Because of its heritage nature, the school is battling to improve its appearance while getting no help from the State Government. I call on the Minister for Education and Training to take a look at the fence that marks the school boundary facing Edgeworth David Avenue and reconsider allocating funding to Hornsby Girls High School for that purpose. The teachers want to better manage student movements from the school, and the heritage fence must have adequate gates in order to do the job. Hornsby Girls High School would also like to have the use of a local bus that could take students to sporting and musical events. Such a bus could be purchased and used by a number of schools in the surrounding area. At present teachers use their own vehicles to drive students to often distant venues.

Asquith Boys High School is another case in point. School buildings and their surrounds require a great deal of work. The school is perched on an odd-shaped parcel of land wedged between two very busy roads, which presents management challenges for staff trying to ensure that children enter and exit the school safely. The main entrance is by no means as attractive as it could be, and I believe it would more than qualify for some of the increased spending announced by the Minister for Education and Training. The fencing needs major attention and parents are trying desperately to improve pedestrian access to the school administration offices—there are no clearly defined pathways and the areas leading to the offices require more landscaping.

As I have said, few things are more important than our children's education, and with no budget allocations for schools with obvious needs many children will be disadvantaged. The budget did not address the problem of class sizes in my electorate, which is another area of immense concern for parents and teachers alike. Cowan Public School has a combined kindergarten, year 1 and year 2 class comprising 34 students, whose classroom is scarcely big enough to accommodate them. One teacher copes with 34 children at the same time in a very tight space. This is not an ideal situation, and extra funding is needed to change it. In order to stress the need for money to improve the overall quality of school buildings and to reduce class sizes that are too large, during the by-election campaign I attended a Teachers Federation meeting where, almost without exception, I heard reports of classrooms that leaked when it rained and class sizes that prevented adequate educational experiences for children. I listened intently to the comments made at the meeting. Perhaps the Carr Government has not listened. If this is true, it does so at its peril.

Residents of Westleigh and Thornleigh are almost at the end of their patience with regard to the proposed widening of the Duffy Avenue bridge. Many disgruntled people must cope with cars bumper to bumper every morning and afternoon during peak hour. In the 1999 State election The Labor candidate promised \$600,000 for widening the Duffy Avenue bridge. We have never seen this money. If those funds had been forthcoming, the local residents of Thornleigh and Westleigh would have their widened bridge by now. Goodwill should prevail and the Carr Government should decide to provide the \$600,000 for this significant project.

Hornsby shire council is trying to make up for the Carr Government's failure to honour the promise of one of its own election candidates. However, residents will have to wait many more months before the bridge can accommodate two eastbound traffic lanes and one westbound. The Coalition has promised to reimburse the council the \$600,000 that it was promised in 1999 if it is elected in 2003. I am looking forward to seeing that promise honoured next year. In the meantime, this Labor Government continues to fail the people of Thornleigh and Westleigh—and allow me to inform the House that they all know it. Local residents are putting up with ridiculous traffic congestion at peak hours and the housing developments that have gone ahead along Duffy

Avenue—more are planned for the area—make the situation worse. The surrounding roads cannot cope with any more traffic as people try to get to and from work and school using the Duffy Avenue bridge. The people of Westleigh and Thornleigh can thank the Premier for these gross delays and for neglecting to address the need to widen the bridge. Many local residents fear the onset of the bushfire season this year as they wonder how an evacuation would be possible on a road that is choked with peak hour traffic every day.

The Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, handed down the eighth budget of the Carr Government, with a proposed expenditure of \$46,788,617 for the electorate of Hornsby in 2002-03. This sum includes maintenance for roads and rail infrastructure, and transport grants and subsidies. In view of the appalling state of Department of Housing stock, it is encouraging to see \$847,000 allocated for asset management and for one accommodation unit to be situated in Berowra, at a proposed cost of \$180,000. One of the main issues about which local residents have approached me for assistance is problems with houses supposedly looked after by the Department of Housing. The Labor Government is not maintaining its—or, rather, our—housing stock and is condemning those who need to live in public housing to a sometimes nightmare existence.

Some \$10,000 has been allocated for new State Emergency Service computers, which are currently being installed, and work is planned for State forests. Money has been set aside for the Priority Sewerage Program and the continuing upgrade of sewage treatment plants. Work on roads and rail is to be advised. The biggest and most anticipated expenditure is \$16.4 million on Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital to rebuild a maternity unit, a paediatric unit and an accident and emergency unit over two years. Unfortunately, we will see only \$1.5 million to the end of the 2003 financial year. It has been stated that these units will be rebuilt over two years, with work to commence in 2003 and to be completed in 2005. I will ensure that this timetable is adhered to. It is hoped that the grand plan to rebuild Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital maternity, paediatric and accident and emergency units will come to fruition. Astute vigilance will be necessary to ensure that what is promised is delivered.

The 2002 New South Wales budget announcement of the provision of \$16.4 million for the rebuilding of these units was the result of much hard work and focus on the need to not only maintain the hospital but upgrade it. The community is 100 per cent behind the hospital. Until now the Carr Government has held the Hornsby electorate at arm's length and created an aura of fear that the hospital might not survive or that, if it did, its function would be very different. I have been totally committed to the fight to save and rebuild Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital. I worked to save it in 1996. As a local resident, I believe it must remain and be upgraded. I campaigned on this issue during the Hornsby by-election campaign and, since my election to Parliament in February this year, I have been extremely vocal about the hospital's place in our community. I am concerned that the 2002-03 funding is only \$1.5 million, and I will maintain a close watch on the project. The rebuilding work is proposed to commence next year with a completion date two years hence.

Without the hard work and persistent lobbying of the local community, hospital staff and me, we may not now have what I hope is a firm budget commitment to rebuild the maternity, paediatric and accident and emergency units at Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital. I look forward to working with those who will drive the redevelopment and I give an assurance that I will pursue other concerns regarding the hospital. These include the relocation of Neringah to the site, which will impact some services such as the relative accommodation site, the reduced number of nurses and other staffing matters. It will be wonderful to see the new buildings take shape and to finally walk into facilities that reflect the needs of the community that the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital serves. However, a shiny new building will not be enough without adequate staff to look after the patients, and nursing levels remain dangerously low. We have in this State lovely new hospitals—which in some cases are not so sound—that have failed to open or are not functioning to full capacity. The Carr Government has failed to act to improve conditions for nurses and other staff so that there is adequate personnel in hospitals to care for patients.

Consistent and determined lobbying and pressure from the New South Wales Coalition forced the 2002 budget promise of the \$16.4 million rebuild of the maternity, accident and emergency and paediatric units of the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital. The 2002 budget delivered by the Treasurer announced this funding as part of a \$504 million 2002-03 funding commitment for new health facilities. Since my election to this place I have remained committed to the rebuilding of Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital, realising that it is an essential health service. The community demands that it remain and be upgraded to meet current and future health needs. As I have repeatedly said, the New South Wales Coalition has had a firm conviction that this hospital must survive. The shadow Minister for Health, the honourable member for North Shore, has never wavered from the promise to retain and rebuild Hornsby hospital.

A few weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition travelled with the honourable member for North Shore to Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital to make a recommitment to rebuilding the hospital, to reflect community needs as well as the plain fact that this hospital should remain and be improved. The Minister for Health has bowed to pressure from the Coalition and the community to ensure that Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital is rebuilt. The commencement of construction will enable the provision of a new two-storey facility, site infrastructure and demolition of the existing buildings. I look forward to watching the fruits of many months of lobbying and insistence that Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital must be rebuilt. The community has spoken, and the will of the people who live in the Hornsby electorate will now see a new maternity unit, a new accident and emergency unit and a new paediatrics unit. Community needs have been recognised and public benefit has won the day. It is hoped that there will be sufficient staff to allow the new complex to operate as it should.

A recent incident in Brooklyn has shown that shopfront police stations are not acceptable alternatives to a reliable and visible presence of police in our communities. As reported in a Sunday newspaper, Hornsby police were called to an incident earlier in the year in which a man was allegedly wielding a machete whilst roaming the streets of Brooklyn, a suburb in the north of the Hornsby electorate. Calls were made to the Hornsby police station—the only place from which to receive assistance. However, there were more details that were not disclosed by the newspaper. Allegedly, some individuals were vandalising McKell Park and a man tried to stop them, using a machete. When police finally arrived at Brooklyn they had to search for both a group of young people and the man wielding the machete.

Brooklyn has a police station that is not occupied for much of the day—as has Berowra. In a remote community such as this, police intervention can take a while and the residents are not happy that they have to contact Hornsby police should an incident occur. I am not advocating that police should guard the police station building, but I do believe that local residents do not feel as safe in their environment as they should and they want police to be more visible and a true part of the community. It is imperative that the Brooklyn and Berowra police stations are returned to their fully staffed positions so that the community can feel safe and have issues dealt with promptly. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

It is too late to shut the gate when the horse has bolted, and justice cannot be done if police must travel from far afield to attend to local issues. People want to feel secure in their communities, but that is not the case at the moment. Phil Hickman, of the Ku-ring-gai Local Area Command, has appraised the situation and it appears that more police positions will be available in the near future, so I await that occurrence. Without a thorough review of State taxation, small business will continue to suffer. Not surprisingly, the Carr Government has resisted and continues to collect massive amounts of revenue from the property boom, stamp duty on insurance premiums and other taxation costs. In Hornsby, the west side of the central business district—separated by a rail line from the side that boasts the new Westfield complex—is struggling to stay afloat. Shortly I will meet with council officers and other stakeholders to come up with a plan for further infrastructure over the railway station that will more effectively contribute to the sustainability of businesses on the west side.

I return now to the issue about which I spoke a few days ago in this place. The area along both sides of Galston Road at Rofe Park should be kerbed and guttered to improve safety along this very dangerous thoroughfare. Galston Road has claimed a number of lives, and measures must be taken to ensure that both drivers and pedestrians are safer. Kerbing and guttering to be constructed on one side of Galston Road near Rofe Park should be extended along both sides of Galston Road immediately adjacent to the park to improve drainage. Residents are very concerned about this strip of road and would like to see improvements that will save lives in the future. Prevention is better than cure. No-one wants to see senseless loss of life that could be prevented by an extension of kerbing and guttering. It is essential that the Roads and Traffic Authority agree to the extension of the kerb and gutter along Galston Road so that people who drive past Rofe Park and utilise its facilities are made as safe as possible. I am hopeful that money has been allocated in this budget that can be diverted to make a very treacherous piece of road much safer not only for drivers but also for the long-suffering residents of Galston Road.

Berowra Waters Rural Fire Brigade is in desperate need of a new station. This is where some of the funding allocated to the Emergency Services portfolio should be going. One side of the existing station is sinking into the mud of Berowra Creek, leaving cracks and a potentially unsafe building. The crew that devotes many hours to maintaining the dwelling as well as the vessels and other equipment are in need of assistance from the State Government to fund a new station for the community. Berowra Waters Rural Fire Brigade has many challenges to conquer when called to protect life and property in the event of a catastrophe similar to the massive bushfires last Christmas. The brigade is essential to the management of fires, accidents or other emergencies and so requires adequate facilities.

At the moment sub-standard equipment places the fire service members, as well as those they seek to help, at some risk. Berowra Waters Rural Fire Brigade manages to provide adequate services when called upon in an emergency, but would have an easier time if facilities were up to scratch. Some of the money should also be used for a new canteen truck for the Muogamarra Volunteer Fire Brigade and other fire brigades in the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai council areas. I will be lobbying this Government to part with some of its revenue to provide what the shires desperately need—the ability to support firefighters and other emergency services personnel with sustenance during a crisis.

The 2002 budget announcement which provided an additional \$2 million for podiatry services is welcome, but it should have been more. The need for podiatry services across the State is not currently being met, and many hospitals offer podiatry care only to high-risk patients, such as those who have diabetes or peripheral vascular disease. As the previous executive director of the Australian Podiatry Association (NSW), I understand only too well the immense need for podiatry services, particularly to the elderly, but also to people of all ages in the community. The Podiatry Clinic at Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital is one such high-risk foot clinic and cannot cope with the demand because there are too few podiatrists.

The current staff freeze at Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital is yet another problem. I ask the Minister for Health: How many of those 40,000 extra metropolitan podiatry occasions of care are coming to Hornsby? It is vital for the improved health of the community to offer more podiatry services, particularly when patients cannot afford to access these services any other way. The Minister for Health must answer how the \$2 million will be spent. I have received information from constituents in the Hornsby area that podiatry services are becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain and that waiting times are steadily rising. With the number of senior citizens also steadily increasing, podiatry is one service we badly need.

The transfer of substantial earnings from Sydney Water Corporation to Treasury will prevent Bob Davis and other residents of Brooklyn and Dangar Island being connected to the sewer in the foreseeable future. It is distressing to hear of revelations that Treasury has received a huge increase in funds from Sydney Water Corporation instead of these dollars going towards providing the very basic need of adequate sewerage management to the people who need it. The Carr Government has taken more than \$1,360 million in revenue from Sydney Water since coming to power in 1995. Bob Davis, a long-time resident of Brooklyn, has many concerns about his experiences with the monthly council pump-out of septic tanks.

The area is inconvenienced when council trucks pump out septic tanks along stretches of road that are almost too narrow for cars. Mr Davis extends his alarm to those who allow raw sewage to spew untreated into the Hawkesbury River, while boats dump sewage directly from the vessels into this magnificent waterway. Mr Davis also asks an extremely relevant question: Why should the State Government allow wealthy boat owners to dump their sewage into the Hawkesbury while local residents on limited incomes are forced to pay crippling pump-out fees? Most people regard the Priority Sewerage Program as a joke and an ever-changing feast; announcement after announcement, but nothing is done in our area.

As I stated earlier, the parliamentary report of the inquiry into the health of the Hawkesbury River for fishing and oyster farming, which was released two years ago, stressed that a main recommendation would be to provide sewerage facilities to Brooklyn and Dangar Island. As long as the State Government raids Sydney Water Corporation to prop up Treasury, connection to the main sewer line will remain literally a pipedream for the long-suffering residents of Brooklyn and Dangar Island and the other areas that I mentioned.

Close scrutiny of the budget papers shows that in the five key areas—Health, Education and Training, Police, Transport and Corrective Services—less than \$330 million is being spent on major new projects in the next financial year. The people of New South Wales want a government that cares about the things they care about. This Government is not meeting the needs of its constituency—particularly in my area—as it should be. Parents want their children to be safe at school in a class that is not bursting at the seams and in a building that does not leak in wet weather. They want to know that when their families need to access health services, this can be done without the huge waiting lists that currently exist. Individuals want to feel secure in their communities knowing there will be fast police action when a threat arises, and that criminals will receive the correct sentences for their crimes. They want to trust those charged with decision making. The Coalition has policies that address the basic concerns of the people of New South Wales. We now need the opportunity to put the plan into action.

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Corrective Services) [11.30 a.m.]: The 2002-03 budget is the eighth budget of Treasurer Michael Egan. Members of this

House who may have been wondering how their electorates would fare from this year's budget would have left the Chamber, after hearing the Treasurer's speech, well satisfied that their representations regarding various capital projects in their electorates have been successful. Indeed, the speech of the honourable member for Hornsby contained a substantial list of capital expenditure in that electorate, demonstrating clearly that the Carr Government is not influenced by electoral boundaries and political voting trends when it comes to the allocation of much-needed services for New South Wales communities.

Mount Druitt—some would say a very strong Labor electorate—has done extremely well from this budget. In every election campaign my Liberal opponent will have said that Labor takes the Mount Druitt seat for granted, that its constituents have always voted for Labor candidates, and so on. The information I will give the House today will show that, even for an electorate that has returned a Labor member on every occasion since its formation back in the late 1960s—not only under the name of Mount Druitt but otherwise—Labor governments, past and present, have ensured that the trust that constituents have put in Labor has not been misplaced. The record clearly demonstrates that.

Today I am pleased to be able to say—perhaps boast—that this is a good budget for Western Sydney. It certainly is a good budget for the region and for country areas, and it is a good budget for my electorate. I will mention a number of items against the background of budget speeches of my predecessors through the years, and in particular the electorate's capital stock. When I say capital stock, I mean the major projects initiated and completed by Labor governments. I shall outline briefly some of the items in that comprehensive list of capital stock in the Mount Druitt electorate. They include the current police station and the Roads and Traffic Authority office, both of which are in the vicinity of 20 years old. The TAFE college, which was commenced in the 1970s, has had a number of extensions over the years. The railway line has been the subject of various projects, including quadruplication of the rail line under the Wran Government. Construction of the Mount Druitt Hospital and the building of the bridge at Rooty Hill are just two more examples of those major capital projects in the Mount Druitt electorate that have all been undertaken and funded by Labor governments—the Wran Government, the Unsworth Government and now the Carr Government.

In my speech on the budget today I will mention further additions to that list of capital stock in the Mount Druitt electorate—still more projects funded by a Labor Government. That capital stock includes a court complex, a new transport terminal, new access facilities for the Mount Druitt railway station, a new drag strip that I will give more details about shortly, and upgrading of Department of Housing stock in Bidwill, Shalvey and other parts of Mount Druitt. Those projects will add to the capital stock that has been proudly built over many years by successive Labor governments. In correspondence the Treasurer advised me that capital expenditure within the Mount Druitt electorate—including the major projects that I have mentioned and expenditure in the electorate by government agencies—for the financial year 2002-03 totals an incredible \$128,765,700. In anyone's thinking, that is quite impressive. I emphasise the benefits of the budget for Western Sydney. The Government has allocated about \$5.7 billion in various programs, grants and initiatives in Western Sydney for the upcoming financial year. Even from those few introductory comments it can be seen that this is a good budget for the whole of New South Wales and an extremely good budget for western areas of Sydney.

I made passing reference to what I consider to be one of the major Mount Druitt electorate projects. I refer, of course, to the new court complex. That the Carr Government has listened to Mount Druitt residents and community leaders is demonstrated in its announcement of a fully functioning Local Court complex to be built in the Mount Druitt area. The complex will include two courts and separate waiting rooms for disputing parties. This year's budget allocates about three-quarters of a million dollars for the planning and site selection processes. Of course, we all look forward to the day when the first sod is turned to start that project in earnest. Community groups have been telling me that too much police time is spent in court movements to and from Blacktown and Penrith courts. I might point out that the Blacktown court also has been extended by the addition of a courtroom. Unfortunately, this area has one of the highest levels of reports of domestic violence.

The need for and location of a courthouse is the reason that many community groups, WashHouse and many others, along with local police, have strongly lobbied my office. Parties to court matters, including victims and their relatives, often have to travel unacceptably long distances—sometimes on the same train as perpetrators of crimes such as domestic violence—to attend court. This has deterred many people from not only reporting domestic violence incidents but following complaints through to their conclusion in the Local Court. I believe the court complex will help resolve many such concerns. Hopefully, it will encourage more and more people not only to report incidents such as domestic violence but, more importantly, to take advantage of the many programs administered by courts, and follow up the charges to their finality in court should that be necessary. This budget allocation to build the new court complex in the heart of Mount Druitt will solve many

of these problems. As the local member for Mount Druitt, I am extremely pleased that the State Labor Government has been able to deliver on this important project.

The Treasurer and the Minister for Education and Training have highlighted a number of initiatives in the incredibly increased budget for capital works in the portfolio of Education and Training. Schools and other educational institutions in my electorate have been very important issues for the many years that I have represented the electorate. Mount Druitt will benefit from the State Government's record \$8.1 billion Education and Training budget, including a \$300 million capital works program. More than \$18 million will be spent on ongoing work in the Mount Druitt electorate. The major upgrades of the Chifley College's Bidwill and Mount Druitt campuses will continue. Of course, high schools are becoming part of the Chifley College. Those will be feeder campuses for the college.

When the \$16.05 million stage one and stage two work is completed at Chifley College's new senior campus, students and staff will be provided with new science, visual arts, food technology, woodwork and metal technology units and state-of-the-art classroom, administration, library and gymnasium facilities. The college has been part of a long-running local campaign for a senior high school in Mount Druitt since the 1980s. The opening of the college will mark the end of that protracted community campaign. I congratulate the Carr Government, not only on having the facility constructed in my electorate but also on expanding the availability of senior high schools right throughout the public education system. The \$1 million upgrade of the Bidwill campus involves the refurbishment of the visual arts unit, the metal technology unit and the computer learning unit.

Students and teachers will also benefit from the construction of a new covered outdoor workshop, a performance unit and a staff study. An amount of \$971,000 has been allocated in the budget to upgrade the Mount Druitt campus of Chifley College, formerly the Mount Druitt High School. The upgrade includes the extension of the library—an issue raised many times over many years—and the refurbishment of science laboratories, toilets, the industrial arts area, and the deputy principal's office. This comes on top of the announcement in February that 20 local schools would benefit from the Carr's Government's announcement of an extra \$1,611,048 for repairs and refurbishment. Since February, I understand that what has been described as a schoolyard blitz has resulted in improvements, including painting, telephone system replacement, security, floor coverings, roofing and toilet upgrades. These improvements are being made to a number of schools that were built during the 1960s and early 1970s. Owing to the passage of time, the need for increased maintenance has been addressed by this great budget response from the Government, which I am pleased to acknowledge.

Earlier I mentioned that Labor governments down through the ages have made quite a substantial investment in transport facilities in the Mount Druitt electorate, particularly in recent upgrades to railway stations and rail track. Against that background, I am pleased to note that the 2002-03 budget has provided \$10.9 million in transport expenditure for my electorate. The sum of \$5 million has been allocated in this year's budget out of a total of \$10.5 million for a transport interchange to be constructed at Mount Druitt station. As I indicated during my contribution to the Address-in-Reply debate, Blacktown City Council has been remarkably reluctant to progress this project, despite the project being one of the major State Government projects in my electorate. The Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads has agreed to some changes, but if the council persists with its tactics of delay and frustration of the project I will take action to have it taken out of the hands of the council under the Government's planning legislation. Hopefully, matters will not reach that stage.

The Government has not simply closed its ears to the feedback from the council on the project, and certainly wishes to ensure that all the necessary facilities are provided through the project. However, if council demands blow out the budget and place the project at risk, that will not be tolerated. In conjunction with the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Planning I will be working to ensure that the project is completed to avoid Mount Druitt commuters suffering delays and frustration because the local council wants to play politics. The project has been delayed for many months already, and lengthy delays will not be tolerated in the months ahead. In addition to the transport interchange, \$3 million has been allocated to complete the installation of easy access facilities for rail travellers at Mount Druitt. A number of members of Parliament who participated in the budget debate also referred to similar allocations for access facilities in their electorates.

This budget item represents the Labor Government's strategy of improving access to facilities to all members of the community, particularly elderly people and people with disabilities who require lifts or ramps because stairs present them with a difficulty. These allocations will improve commuter access to railway stations right across the rail passenger transport system. The sum of \$80,000 will be spent on the maintenance of station and passenger facilities at Mount Druitt. Overall, the transport budgetary allocation increased by

\$145 million to \$2.286 billion. An allocation has been made of \$850,000 for youth justice conferencing services for St Marys, Campbelltown, Blacktown and Fairfield. This program aims to provide the courts with alternatives to detention. After-school youth services in Mount Druitt, Penrith and Bankstown will be funded to \$620,000 in the forthcoming financial year.

My electorate still has one of the larger public housing estates. Because access to public housing and maintenance of public housing accommodation accounts for most of the telephone calls received by staff at my electorate office, any increase in public housing allocations will have a major impact on my electorate. The Housing portfolio delivers the goods for the Mount Druitt electorate, and \$3.5 million has been allocated for funding new homes and improving government-subsidised housing. For example, this year's allocation will be used to build 20 new homes and modernise existing homes for people in the Mount Druitt electorate. Eight of those houses will be in Mount Druitt and another 12 will be located in Rooty Hill. This year \$44.1 million is being spent in the Western Sydney region of the Department of Housing. The Carr Government will also spend \$600,000 on initiatives in Mount Druitt housing estates to reduce crime, increase personal safety and improve access to services for tenants. I acknowledge the comments made earlier this week by the Minister for Housing on this subject.

These initiatives will be funded under the Intensive Tenancy Management Program, which has delivered a reduction in crime of more than 30 per cent in Western Sydney. The \$600,000 will be spent to employ a new management team—including, very importantly, a handyman—to implement new strategies to reduce antisocial behaviour and domestic violence, and improve employment and training opportunities. The aim is to provide better public housing management and create a community where people feel safe and have pride in their homes. Staff of my electorate office would agree that home maintenance and organising tenders for maintenance contracts to have minor work carried out have caused considerable frustration and delays for tenants.

Therefore, my staff will be very pleased that for minor works that tenants are unable to carry out themselves, the assistance of a handyman will speed up resolution of minor maintenance issues that are troubling for tenants and save the department a great deal of time. The budget's Health allocation for Mount Druitt is welcomed. Thousands of pensioners and others who cannot afford to see private dentists or podiatrists will be able to obtain help in public hospitals in the forthcoming financial year. This is an important initiative for the Mount Druitt area. The Mount Druitt Hospital and Community Health Centre has already been upgraded, but more than \$500 million has been set aside in this budget to begin another 13 major works around the State. Overall, health funding for Western Sydney alone in the forthcoming financial year has been increased by \$120 million to \$1.4 billion. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

It is not often that I refer to capital expenditure in the Attorney-General's portfolio, but because I have mentioned the courts once, I will do so again. In addition to funding for the new \$9.3 million Mount Druitt court complex, the Blacktown two-court complex will be expanded to three courts, with interview and waiting rooms—a big issue in the Blacktown local government area. Not only has the area been without a court in Mount Druitt but the old Blacktown court complex has been unable to cope with the increased population and increased demand. In addition to a new court being provided for Mount Druitt, the additional courtroom and facilities at the Blacktown court complex should assist in management of the courts system. An Aboriginal service specialist will also be appointed in Mount Druitt under the indigenous justice strategy and \$45,000 will be provided for an indigenous youth initiative in Mount Druitt to help build the respect of young men for the elders—especially youth with a history of elder abuse. A grant will be made to the Gilgai Aboriginal Centre as part of a \$246,000 program to fund seven indigenous youth initiatives across the State. The centre is working to empower Aboriginal communities to address elder abuse.

I briefly mention budget allocations for emergency services, which were highlighted earlier this year when bushfires raged and storms hit the Mount Druitt electorate. I recognise the great work of staff and volunteers who carry out emergency services in the community and bush fire brigade personnel. An important initiative for the electorate's emergency services units is the provision of \$5,000 to fund computers to support their everyday operations. These units have performed crucial functions in the community at the most difficult times, and there were many in the past 12 months. Mount Druitt police station is one of the State's busiest. Superintendent Bruce Newling and his officers do great work in the local community and are having considerable success. He has told me that in various parts of the patrol they have been able to reduce the incidence of housebreaking, car theft and so on. The 14 local area commands in Western Sydney will have a combined budget in 2002-2003 of around \$249 million. This includes recurrent funding for police salaries and capital and minor works expenditure. Overall, the total police budget for 2002-03 increases from \$1.6 billion last year to almost \$1.8 billion. I congratulate Superintendent Bruce Newling and the men and women of Mount Druitt police for the great work they are doing in a very busy police patrol.

Earlier I mentioned the capital stock for the electorate. As a result of a number of representations from the drag-racing fraternity, in the 2002-03 financial year the Government will spend \$16.16 million on a stand-alone drag-racing facility at Eastern Creek near the existing racetrack. The facility will generate about 1,000 jobs and provide entertainment for about 30,000 drag-racing fans. Of course, not all would be from my electorate, but many are, and they have made strong representations for the provision of this facility. The drag-racing track has the potential to draw visitors from interstate and overseas. No doubt it will assist people in my area who have invested in tourist facilities such as motels. The spin-off benefits to the community will be substantial.

In the area of disability services, the State budget provides \$1.2 billion for the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. This demonstrates the Carr Government's ongoing commitment to supporting older people, people with disabilities and their carers in the Mount Druitt area. It builds on previous expenditure of more than \$5 million for 46 community-based services in the Mount Druitt area. Food services help with daily food and nutrition requirements via delivered meals, meals provided in a community setting, and help with shopping or meal preparation. Post-school Options is a transition program for school leavers with a disability. It aims to bridge the gap between leaving school and living in the community. Respite services provide a break for people with a disability, their families and carers. Mount Druitt will share in a total of \$828.2 million for community and accommodation support services for people with a disability through government and non-government services, allocated in part through the jointly funded Commonwealth, State and Territory disability agreement. The New South Wales contribution is more than \$657 million, nearly 80 per cent of total funding.

The Adult Training and Learning System [ATLAS], a program designed to help school leavers with a disability to move from school to employment or vocational education and training, will receive \$17 million. More than \$28 million will be provided for the Home and Community Care Program [HACC], taking to \$141 million the New South Wales total contribution to the joint Commonwealth and State funded project. More than \$3 million will be provided for the next phase of the comprehensive dementia program, an \$11 million program over four years to support people with dementia and their carers. A planned approach to the roll out of funding of services in the Mount Druitt electorate will be undertaken, and it will respond to community need.

Most of my contribution today has been in relation to my role as the local member for Mount Druitt. I have many other opportunities in this House to speak about my Agriculture and Corrective Services portfolios. The submissions from both portfolios in the budget committee process have been very successful. With the drought affecting 62 per cent of the State, there has been great emphasis on the Agriculture budget. The Government has increased funding in the Agriculture portfolio in the 2002-03 State budget to \$159.9 million, up by \$8.4 million on last year's funding. Combined with industry, research and development corporation support and commercial revenue, the total NSW Agriculture budget this year is \$240.5 million for total expenses, up from \$224.2 million last year.

This will ensure that NSW Agriculture can maintain its commitment in the vital areas of animal disease control, food safety, natural disaster responses, education and training, and environmental protection. Together, these areas promote innovative and internationally competitive agricultural industries. The State Government has again increased spending on noxious weed control programs, with this year's allocation reaching \$7.035 million. The budget also includes \$4.5 million as the Government's contribution to running SafeFood Production NSW. This level of funding is expected to continue through to 2005-06. Funding of \$1.5 million has also been allocated to enhance animal disease laboratory facilities at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute in Camden. This is part of the Government's ongoing commitment to ensure that New South Wales is prepared for any endemic, emergency or exotic disease outbreak, including foot and mouth or Newcastle disease—issues which are often debated in this House.

This \$1.5 million capital investment is in addition to the \$75.3 million to be spent in the coming financial year on animal and plant protection programs to protect our animal and plant industries from pests and diseases, and to ensure that they maintain their high standards of quality and safety. A further \$75.3 million will be allocated to innovative and internationally competitive agricultural industries programs aimed at delivering credible, science-based research into productivity, efficiency and marketing. The funds will also help to deliver accredited training and to maintain certification protocols and systems which are necessary to access valuable overseas markets. In addition, \$60.8 million will be devoted to sustainable natural resource programs aimed at delivering sustainable farm management practices through adult learning techniques and peer group support with farmer groups. Also, \$29.2 million will be spent on a range of other programs to manage and deliver the State's animal welfare legislation, to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, and to support regional and rural development.

Specific ongoing initiatives that are funded in this year's State budget include \$2 million to continue initiatives to combat soil acidity, including acid sulfate soils; \$1.706 million for the fifth year of the Government's water reform program, involving both NSW Agriculture and the Department of Land and Water Conservation; \$1.1 million to help NSW Agriculture's role in implementing the Water Management Act 2000; \$1.4 million to help the New South Wales sheep industry combat ovine Johne's disease; and \$954,000 for the third year of the Government's four-year salinity strategy to address agricultural salinity issues. A \$12.8 million capital works program for NSW Agriculture in 2002-03 includes \$2.55 million for the purchase of plant and equipment and \$2.527 million to enhance and upgrade information technology infrastructure. I notice that the honourable member for Wagga Wagga is in the Chamber so I should mention the \$400,000 for construction of a new genetic plant research laboratory at Wagga Wagga, which I am sure he will refer to in his speech on the budget. There will be projects in other parts of the State, including at Tamworth.

The Department of Corrective Services receives a total allocation of \$729 million in this year's budget. This is an \$83 million increase on last year's State budget allocation. The new allocation includes \$117 million to be injected into major capital works programs across the State, many of which are highlighted in question time in this House. These works are designed to help meet the needs of the State's increasing prison population. The number of full-time inmates was about 6,000 in 1994-95 but is now almost 8,000. As I have said in this House before, the number could reach about 9,000 over the next four years. The passage of the Bail Amendment (Repeat Offenders) Bill 2002 is also likely to add a further 800 full-time inmates over the next two years. We must therefore work to ensure that we are ready to meet those growing demands. Work has already begun on building two new prisons, in Kempsey on the mid North Coast and at South Windsor in outer Western Sydney.

A third prison will be built in the State's Central West, with a preferred location to be decided shortly. The 2002-03 State Budget has allocated \$27.7 million to the mid North Coast correctional centre project out of the total \$81.6 million cost. This 350-bed prison is due for completion in 2004. The women's prison in South Windsor, which is to be known as Dillwynia, has been allocated \$25 million in the current budget. This prison is due for completion in 2003-04. An extra \$1 million is allocated to fund investigations into the possibility of expanding the bed capacity from 200 to 300, which would increase the overall cost from \$53.6 million to \$71.6 million. The proposed Central West prison will receive \$8 million in the coming financial year. The Department of Corrective Services will receive an extra \$17.3 million in recurrent funding to meet the operating costs associated with the expected rise in remand inmate numbers following the introduction of the changes to the Bail Act.

Other capital works allocations in the 2002-03 State budget include: \$9.5 million as a final instalment for the \$40.2 million expansion of Parklea Correctional Centre in the Blacktown local government area to provide an additional 200 beds, and \$2 million to build extra accommodation for another 100 beds; \$8.1 million as a further instalment of a \$36.4 million project to complete a new unit at Long Bay Correctional Centre; and \$2 million as the first instalment for an estimated \$50.5 million project to build a new 85-bed hospital at Long Bay for inmates with psychiatric, aged-care and medical needs. Other capital works allocations include funding for Mulawa Women's Correctional Centre, Goulburn Correctional Centre, Oberon Correctional Centre and Brewarrina Correctional Centre. Even without listing all the capital works allocations, that reflects a substantial and impressive budget for the Department of Corrective Services. This budget is a substantially good budget for Western Sydney, my electorate of Mount Druitt and country areas in New South Wales. I commend the Government and the Treasurer on their eighth budget.

[Debate interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment of the House: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.01 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that at 2.00 p.m. this day the business then before the House shall be interrupted and the House shall adjourn without the question being put.

I advise honourable members, parliamentary staff and Hansard that the House will adjourn at 2.00 p.m. today. For the information of honourable members, there will be no private members' statements today.

APPROPRIATION BILL**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL****APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL****GENERAL GOVERNMENT LIABILITY MANAGEMENT FUND BILL****PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (TRADEABLE EMISSION SCHEMES FUND) BILL****PUBLIC FINANCE AND AUDIT AMENDMENT (BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL REPORTING) BILL****STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET) BILL****Second Reading****GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY****Take-note Debate**

[Debate resumed.]

Mr RICHARDSON (The Hills) [12.02 p.m.]: The Treasurer's eighth budget, which was handed down on 3 June, promises much but delivers little, despite record stamp duty revenues from the property boom. There is just \$330 million of new expenditure in the key areas of health, education, police, transport and corrective services. During the past five years infrastructure spending has dropped from 15.6 per cent to 9.3 per cent—an enormous drop in real terms, particularly when we consider that there has been a lack of investment in infrastructure, caused to an extent by the lack of capital in this country and the fact that it is a young nation. The budget commits only \$3.7 million towards the \$407 million upgrade of Royal North Shore Hospital. I heard the Minister for Health crying about this matter in the House the other day. The upgrade of Royal North Shore Hospital is another project that is way off in the future. Only \$3.7 million was allocated in this year's budget for that project and only \$1 million—and this is really alarming—has been allocated for the Parramatta to Epping rail link.

The Government is cutting payroll tax from 6.2 to 6 per cent. However, it is still uncompetitive with Victoria, which has a rate of 5.35 per cent, and Queensland, which has a rate of 4.75 per cent. The cut is largely offset by a \$117 million claw-back from the imposition of payroll tax on fringe benefits and termination payments—a matter that I have not heard the Treasurer say much about, and with good reason. Effectively, there is only a \$25 million cost to revenues as a consequence of the reduction in the base rate of payroll tax. Last year's revenues were \$1.3 billion over budget thanks to a \$900 million windfall in stamp duty on properties and extra GST revenue from the Commonwealth Government. Just over half of that money has been used to help business. Payroll tax could have been cut by 1 per cent, thereby making New South Wales much more competitive with other States.

We can tell where this Government's priorities are from the policing budget. The amount being spent on traffic police—that is, on revenue raising—will rise by 53 per cent, from \$104 million to \$159 million, while expenditure on criminal investigations will fall from \$339 million to \$334 million. New South Wales remains the highest taxing State in Australia. Every man, woman and child in this State pays \$2,373 a year in State taxes—\$290 more than in Victoria. The Government is also trying to make a virtue out of incompetence. I was interested to hear what the Minister for Corrective Services had to say about the increase in the Corrective Services budget a moment ago. It is actually illusory. In my shadow portfolio area of prisons there is a \$65.5 million blowout in existing projects—enough to build two new gaols—and most new prisons are 12 to 18 months behind schedule.

That massive blow-out of \$65.5 million is more than double the Government's \$31 million increase in capital works spending in Corrective Services. The Government has failed to keep a rein on building costs and virtually every prison project is 12 to 18 months behind schedule, despite the urgent need for new prisons created by the Government's amendments to the Bail Act—supported by the Opposition, I might add—which it

predicts will increase the prison population by 800 over the next two years. In fact, the Government is tipping that by 2005 there will be more than 9,600 inmates in our prisons. Blowouts have occurred at virtually every prison project. The original budgeted cost for Parklea Metropolitan Remand Centre was \$36.6 million, but the current budgeted cost is \$40.2 million—up \$3.6 million—and the project is behind by 12 months. The original budgeted cost for stage two of the Goulburn redevelopment was \$40 million and the current budgeted cost is \$47.5 million—up \$7.5 million—and the project is behind by 13 months.

The cost of the Long Bay redevelopment has not increased, but the project is behind schedule by 18 months. I refer now to the big two blowouts. The original budgeted cost for Dillwynia women's prison, which is located in south Windsor, was \$33.6 million, but the current budgeted cost is \$53.6 million—an increase of \$20 million—and the project is behind by 12 months. The original budgeted cost for the mid North Coast gaol at Kempsey was \$47.2 million and the current budgeted cost is \$81.6 million—up \$34.4 million—and the project is behind by 12 to 18 months. That project has become the conservatorium of Corrective Services—that is how big the blowout has become. According to the budget, the percentage of prisoners involved in employment is predicted to rise by 2 per cent to 65 per cent. All of those jobs will be in the Corrective Services Industries [CSI] area. The question has to be asked: Are these real jobs that the Government is creating?

In his 2001 report on New South Wales Corrective Services Industries the Auditor-General said that that industry was costing \$6 million a year to maintain. The Government, however, claimed that it was making \$8.5 million from Corrective Services Industries. What is the truth of the matter? We cannot tell from examining the budget documents. They list "Other operating expenses" within CSI as \$32.329 million for the next financial year without breaking them down. They then give the retained revenues of sales of goods and services as being \$13.465 million, with Corrective Services Industries at just \$332,000. One wonders whether that means that the net profit of Corrective Services Industries this year is predicted to be \$332,000. We simply do not know. The annual report of the Department of Corrective Services claims that the revenue from Corrective Services Industries last year was \$27.15 million, but that is not backed up by the financial statements for 2000-01.

What we do know, and this is alarming given the increase in the prison population, is that revenues are falling. Sales of goods were down \$1.8 million, or 11 per cent, last year and there is another projected fall of \$460,000 this year. So, against a background of a significantly increased prison population and reduced revenues, we are asked to believe that more people will be gainfully employed within the prison system. One really has to ask: What sorts of jobs will they be doing? Will they be the make-work schemes that the Auditor-General spoke about? Are we talking about service jobs—sweeping jobs, primarily—where prisoners go out and work for about 2½ hours a day, complete their tasks and then go back to other activities? They are learning no new useful skills, nothing that they can take into the outside world with them when they finally leave gaol, and they are not making a useful contribution towards paying for their keep while they are within the prison system. Those jobs are being created because the Government wants to look good; because it wants to produce statistics that show that 63 or 65 per cent of the people behind bars are employed in work programs.

The truth is that the percentage of those employed in real jobs is substantially less than that. The budget papers state that the number of community service orders has fallen dramatically from 5,065 to 4,565, with a further fall of 449 predicted next year. That makes a mockery of the Premier's paeons of praise for his Government's efforts in dealing with graffitists in particular. The budget also provides some interesting statistics on escapes and assaults. The number of people who absconded from full-time custody more than doubled last year, from 10 to 23. That shows how poorly supervised many prisoner activities are. The overall escape rate per 100 inmate years climbed by more than 20 per cent. Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 3-41, line item "Program Objective", states, "To classify inmates to the lowest appropriate security level". That is consistent with a Government that talks tough about crime but does not deliver.

For example, I refer to serial escaper Michael Hughes, who escaped from Kirkconnell Correctional Centre on 10 May by cutting through a wire fence. He had previously escaped from lawful custody four times, most recently from Silverwater in 1993, following which he carried out a spate of break and enters and armed robberies. While on work release in 1992 he obtained a key to his employer's safe and stole more than \$8,000 from it. In the District Court in 1994 Judge McGuire described that placement as "akin to placing a paedophile in charge of an infants' school". Judge McGuire sentenced Hughes to a further eight years in gaol, adding to his existing sentence which ended in March 1995. Given that man's track record, his history of escapes and serious crimes committed while at large, how could the Government—through the Serious Offenders Review Council—have justified classifying him as a minimum security prisoner? Clearly that was not appropriate. I could cite many other instances of prisoners whose classification should not be minimum security.

Equally alarming is the number of assaults on staff, which increased from 327 to 358 to 420 in two years—that is a 17 per cent increase in one year. While the number of assaults by inmates on one another is static, and even declining as a percentage of the prison population, the number of assaults on staff is not. That may be due to the policy of racial segregation in place in many gaols. A memo dated 4 April from a consultant Laurence Goodstone to John Klok, the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Corrective Services, and to Commissioner Ron Woodham stated:

Over the last half decade or more, there has been an increasing propensity for correctional centre managers, particularly in maximum security facilities, to cluster inmates by ethnicity. For correctional managers, working with frequently inadequate staffing resources, inmate clustering is all too often the easy way out. Physically separating groups of potentially antagonistic inmates removes the problem of accessibility to each other. However, as this strategy takes hold, managers become even less inclined to look for alternatives, advocating duty of care as the rationale for not trying something else. While all this is going on, the opinion of many staff and inmates generally suggests that clustering is in nobody's best interests.

That memo indicates that Mr Goodstone is not supportive of the current policy of racial segregation in maximum security gaols. A Cabinet confidential SWOT analysis, carried out by the Council on the Cost of Government, reached my desk earlier this year. It states that one of the weaknesses of the Department of Corrective Services is that numerous reviews are not translated effectively into practice. The memo by Mr Goodstone in relation to gangs in correctional centres given to Mr Woodham last November is a classic example of the problem. Lots of reviews have been held and the Minister and the Government have been advised of the problems, yet no action has been taken to rectify them. Possibly as a consequence, the number of working days lost to strikes has more than doubled during the past two years, from 603 to 1,252. Industrial unrest at the John Morony Correctional Centre resulted in a 17½-hour lockdown of prisoners. Clearly that was not in the best interests of the prisoners or of prison management. Overall, the Department of Corrective Services is not a happy ship.

I refer to my other shadow portfolio of Housing. The Carr Government will slash funding from public housing by \$122 million, almost 20 per cent, to \$494 million, which will increase waiting lists and create continuing problems with backlog maintenance. This is inexcusable given that 96,000 people are on the public housing waiting list and the \$750 million identified maintenance backlog, which the Minister confirmed at last night's estimates committee hearing is really \$1,100 million when statutory requirements of \$350 million that have to be met are added. In 2002-03 nearly 999 new public and community housing units will be completed, a fall of 15.5 per cent from last year. The Carr Government has overwhelmingly failed to provide low-income earners with one of the most fundamental needs of all: a roof over their heads. The public housing waiting list is up 8,000 from when the Carr Government came to power, and this budget will do nothing to reduce that waiting list. The Carr Government's contribution to the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement is down a massive 8.8 per cent to \$172.8 million, continuing the trend of recent years. By contrast, the Commonwealth Government's contribution of \$321.2 million is down just 1 per cent on 2001-02.

Clearly the Government will continue to fund its maintenance program by selling off more homes than it acquires. In 2000-01 the Government disposed of 611 dwellings, but acquired or built 544, including crisis accommodation and community housing—that is a net loss of 67 units. Excluding community housing and crisis accommodation, just \$8.7 million out of a total of \$81.9 million spent on public housing capital works in 2000-01 went into acquisition. The rest was spent on redevelopments, essentially backlog maintenance of existing properties. Recently the Minister for Housing announced that he would redevelop 800 homes at Minto, and only 20 to 30 per cent of the homes that will replace them will be public housing. Up to 640 low-income families will be left without homes when the development is completed. There is nothing in the budget that gives them any hope for the future—no innovation, no vision, no concern for the disadvantaged.

I refer now to what is in—or should I say, what is not in—the budget for my electorate. Along with the rest of New South Wales, The Hills electorate suffered from the dearth of new initiatives in this year's \$32 billion State budget. Treasurer Michael Egan could find only \$2 million for the proposed Epping to Mungerie Park rail link. However, that was \$2 million more than was allocated for that project last year, a project that was announced in 1998—before the last election. But even that \$2 million eclipsed the \$1 million that will be spent on the Epping to Parramatta link. The budget allocates \$13.4 million for the Parramatta to Mungerie Park bus transitway, another project on the drip-feed that will not be delivered until 2006. Based on this Government's track record, it will almost certainly be late. So far as that project is concerned, I do not know that it will ease the public transport problems in The Hills because it is not necessarily going in the right direction. It is okay if someone who happens to live at Rouse Hill wants to travel to Parramatta, but if the person does not want to travel to Parramatta he or she will face congestion on the roads. The Windsor Road upgrade is continuing, but clearly is a long way from being completed. The other options are so far in the distance that they are almost fairyland stuff. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Government proposes to start planning a road tunnel under Lane Cove, the so-called missing link between the M2 and the Gore Hill Expressway. The 3.4-kilometre privately funded tunnel is expected to cost \$815 million, which is substantially more than the cost to build the entire M2. It will include extra lanes along the Gore Hill Expressway and an extra westbound lane on Epping Road from Lane Cove River to Wicks Road, North Ryde. The toll for the 3.4-kilometre roadway could be as high as \$5 each way, which would take the weekly cost of commuting from my electorate to the city to \$100 in tolls alone. The decision to increase the toll for both the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Tunnel by 80¢ is already causing thousands of motorists to divert to Victoria Road. They have to either pay through the nose or sit in a seemingly never-ending traffic jam.

The long overdue \$16.4 million upgrade of the maternity wing and emergency department of Hornsby Hospital—an emergency department I have had personal experience of in the past 13 months—will not start until next year and will not be completed until 2005. Alarming, the Government has allocated only \$2.7 million to improve accident and emergency department services throughout Western Sydney, including Westmead Hospital. Recently it was reported to me that more than five ambulances were queued up at Westmead Hospital waiting to offload their patients because of a lack of beds. As the honourable member for North Shore has pointed out on a number of occasions, new buildings are useless without front-line staff to man them. Nothing in the budget will encourage nurses to come back into the system. Without more nurses, hospital beds will remain empty, waiting lists will remain high and long delays and ambulance turn-aways will remain commonplace at accident and emergency departments.

The Government has committed \$63 million to upgrade Windsor Road and Old Windsor Road, but that money will only bring the project back on track after years of underfunding. Budgeted work for this year includes \$18 million to widen Windsor Road between Roxborough Park Road and Showground Road. Until the local Fix Windsor Road Now campaign, these improvements were not even considered by the Carr Government. It took a concerted effort by the local council, local residents, the Kellyville-Rouse Hill Probus Association and local Liberal members of Parliament—Windsor Road services as many Labor electorates as it does Liberal electorates—to get the Government, through Carl Scully, the Minister for Roads, to commit an extra \$123 million to complete the job to widen Windsor Road to four lanes all the way to Windsor. It is appalling that most of the cost to widen Windsor Road is being met by developers and homeowners, not the Government.

There was absolutely no excuse and no justification whatsoever for the Government to rake in all of that money from home buyers in the western part of my electorate, then not put it back into adequate infrastructure and facilities. The transitway from Parramatta to Mungerie Park will cost \$380 million, but it has been allocated only \$13.4 million in the budget. It is the same issue I mentioned at the beginning of my contribution: very little in the way of new money is being committed. Many of these projects are out in the never-never. One has to wonder whether they will be completed anywhere near on time. The completion date of 2006 for the transitway looks very shaky. The Department of Planning and Landcom will call for select tenders in 2002-03 to develop the \$1 billion Mungerie Park regional centre. I understand that work on the centre may start in the first half of next year. The upgrading of Windsor Road and the provision of rail and transitways to the area will be absolutely imperative. Unfortunately, the Government does not seem to understand the problems it will create by putting off those projects.

I cannot stress too strongly the need for improved public transport in our area. Much more can be done to improve bus priorities and express bus services from my electorate into the city. In the past couple of months a number of new services have been run from Cherrybrook and West Pennant Hills. Hillsbus will run another new service from West Pennant Hills into the city. These services are welcomed. But without improved bus priorities, particularly along the M2, they will not be able to realise their full potential. Honourable members have heard me speak many times in this place about the desirability of making the breakdown lanes on the M2 peak hour bus-only lanes between Beecroft Road and Epping Road. Such a move would significantly increase the capacity of bus services, journey times would be reduced by up to 15 minutes and many motorists who are sitting in traffic jams watching the buses go by would be prepared to switch over to public transport because of its tangible benefits.

The budget provides \$13 million for The Hills schools, including \$11.47 million to build the new Kellyville High School in York Road and \$1.7 million for a new hall at West Pennant Hills Public School. Once again, both projects were announced in last year's budget—nothing about them is new. I have had a look at the site for the Kellyville High School, and I am pleased to report that work has commenced. I am keeping my fingers crossed that the school will be ready for the 2003 school year. If it is not ready, it will be disastrous given the large number of potential students who have moved into the area. Some \$1.3 million has been

allocated in the budget to enable the Castle Hill fire station to finally move to Glenhaven. This project has been in the offing for a number of years. The fire station will then be within 10 minutes call-out of all fires within its catchment, including Cherrybrook. At the moment it can take a fire engine up to 20 minutes to reach a fire.

I am sure that honourable members are aware that the standard time to respond is 10 minutes. If the fire engine cannot get there within 10 minutes there is a pretty fair chance that the home will burn down. Cherrybrook residents will be the major beneficiaries of this move, something for which I lobbied very strongly some years ago. The virtues of this budget tend to be well concealed. The property boom and increased revenues from the GST gave the Government a tremendous opportunity to deliver improved services and infrastructure to the people of New South Wales. But once again that opportunity has been squandered. The paucity of spending on new infrastructure, and the lack of real commitment to policing and health and to the delivery of front-line services in the Department of Community Services are palpable. Much more can be done. The Government needs to realise that its role is to provide services and infrastructure for the people of New South Wales, not to posture and pontificate, which is what we see time and again in this House from Government members and Ministers.

Mr ASHTON (East Hills) [12.30 p.m.]: I congratulate the Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, on once again delivering a State budget that spends appropriately and keeps the bottom economic line in the black. This Labor budget will increase spending in the critical portfolio areas of health and hospitals, education, police and justice, public works, transport and roads—indeed, every facet of State Government. Critically, this budget also increases expenditure for the community, aged and disability portfolio, bringing the total to almost \$1.9 billion—a figure nearly double the expenditure of the last Coalition Government's budget. None of us on this side of the Chamber, or the public, have forgotten that the former Coalition Government butchered the Department of Community Service [DOCS] portfolio area by sacking more than 1,000 DOCS workers. This Government has restored those positions.

Major features in 2002-03 include \$131 million, an 8.3 per cent increase, for the protection of children from abuse and neglect; \$186 million, an increase of \$20 million or 12 per cent, for adoption services and out-of-home and foster care for about 14,000 children and young people; \$346 million, an increase of \$28 million or almost 9 per cent, for home and community care services; and \$443 million, an increase of \$28 million or 7 per cent, for the disability services program. One can see that those figures are all above the inflation rates of this year and last year. In education and training, the former Coalition Government thought that the best way to assist teaching and learning in our schools and TAFEs was to get rid of 2,500 teachers from the New South Wales system. The Carr Labor Government has restored all of those positions and added hundreds more across New South Wales. And more will be done. This year the total budget for the education portfolio will be \$8.1 billion, \$494 million more than last year's allocation.

Some highlights from this year's budget include nearly \$500 million over four years for the State literacy and numeracy plan; \$88.5 million over the next four years for initiatives to enhance the quality and quantity of teachers in the State system; \$40 million over the next four years for targeted assistance to schools whose students have special problems and needs; and \$180 million in 2002-03 for school maintenance. Of the \$70 million education budget, my electorate was pleased to receive more than \$1 million for school maintenance projects. It should be pointed out that this Government is continually spending money in our electorates, and the funding is always gratefully received.

I am particularly pleased that the Treasurer has announced the allocation of an extra \$47.5 million over four years for a wider range of placement and support options for disruptive students. In a perfect world there would be no need for this expenditure, but society needs to recognise that when an adult's life goes completely off the rails and he or she becomes involved in crime, drug addiction, domestic violence, either as a perpetrator or a victim, or a myriad of other social problems, this is often predicated and predicted by that person's experiences at school. Our society must recognise that early intervention is vital in assisting children and young adults with some terrible problems, often manifested by terrible behaviour at school. We will have to do even more to help them and the majority of students whose learning and advancement is badly affected by the disruptive few.

Technology is also a big winner in the education budget. Increased funding has been provided for computers in schools, bandwidth in schools and TAFEs, e-learning accounts for staff and students, and technology training for teachers. An allocation of \$823 million dollars will be provided over the next four years for these technology initiatives, including \$567 million to continue the Computers in Schools Program, including additional technology support in schools; \$157 million to provide for the progressive upgrade of bandwidth in schools and TAFE colleges; \$82 million for e-learning accounts for staff and students in schools

and TAFE; and \$17 million for technology training for teachers. A further \$140 million over three years has been allocated for capital projects to assist these initiatives, particularly the expansion of network bandwidth. The total allocation for school capital investments in 2002-03 will reach \$300 million, which is \$42 million more than last year's allocation. A further \$72 million will be spent on TAFE capital works across the State.

Parliamentarians should not ignore the great role the TAFE system plays in the education structures in New South Wales. We need to recognise that TAFE today offers hundreds of courses, taught by highly qualified staff, to meet the demands of a different society and economy. University is not the answer for many students; the cost is too great, the length of courses is too long, and there is no certainty that a course a student is following will lead to a satisfactory and worthwhile career. TAFE courses, being more "hands-on", give thousands of students earlier access to employment, fully qualified. I believe that members of Parliament, particularly members on this side of the House, should fight the Federal Government's recent plans to apply Higher Education Contribution Scheme fees to TAFE courses.

An engineering production skills course run at the Chullora TAFE was offered to students completing their year 10 School Certificate. Senior head teacher Arthur Crossan and Ivan Noacco ran the course with a concentration on "kids at risk"—those who have little chance of senior school success but are dedicated to studying machining, hard tool use, welding, workshop practice, drill use, measurement, and occupational health and safety. Many of those students, who are mostly boys, want to pursue careers in panel beating or motor vehicle repairs. The course was partly funded by the Federal Government until this year but, not surprisingly, funding was stopped. The State Department of Education and Training picked up the bill, and the course will continue this year. However, it is still under threat. The course has 105 students on the second semester waiting list, but only 30 places can be filled. I trust that the course can be run continually, as the students doing these types of courses need that extra "leg up" to complete TAFE courses.

As one would expect from a State Labor budget, health spending has been greatly increased, by \$554 million to almost \$8.9 billion. The New South Wales health system runs 206 general hospitals, 280 community health centres, and 500 early childhood centres. Extra funding of note is \$35 million for rural health initiatives, and an additional 226 mental health beds, and this is in addition to the 150 beds previously announced. I am sure all members realise that mental health is an increasing problem for our society. It afflicts people of all ages and incomes, with or without family. We are still not able to confidently predict who may become mentally ill, when or why. While I recognise the great importance of providing hospital beds, much more needs to be done, especially for the youth and our school-age children whose illnesses, fears and anxieties are never diagnosed as being something more serious than just "hating school".

New South Wales cannot do the job alone. I recognise the roles of our Premier and the former Premier of Victoria, Jeff Kennett, in raising people's awareness of mental illness, particularly depression. I would hope that when the Federal Government changes its "We are a big player on the world stage" attitude, the Prime Minister—who lives in the 1950s, when mental illness presumably didn't exist—puts realistic dollars into this health problem. Let us not forget that the Federal Coalition Government's major health initiative was to increase the cost of prescription medicine by nearly \$5 a script—and to make sure that the former Federal Minister for Health, Dr Wooldridge, could land a good job as health consultant to a rival organisation to the Australian Medical Association by making a donation of more than \$4 million to the construction of its headquarters. It also allowed his e-mail accounts to be easily accessed through the Federal Department of Health.

I note also that the State budget has allocated an additional \$16 million for dental health services to provide an additional 85,000 services per year, an extra 4,000 denture services to older people, and new services to rural areas. Let us not forget that one of the first budget decisions of the Howard Government was to gut the federally funded dental health scheme. I congratulate the Carr Labor Government on taking every step possible to ensure that much of this scheme is replaced, despite the Federal Government's heartless disinterest in this health area. It seems that the Federal Coalition Government is keen to have older people's votes but it does not worry about giving them teeth.

I will make brief reference to the State funding allocated to the Drug Action Plan. More than \$52 million will be provided for this purpose in 2002-03. This includes \$18 million to expand drug and alcohol treatment, and intensive support for addicts, and a further \$4.3 million for drug education. I also congratulate the Carr Government on extending the trial of the medically supervised self-injecting facility in King's Cross, to ensure the best feedback possible on the success of the trial. The Police budget for 2002-03 is \$1.8 billion. Police will be visible and proactive in the fight against crime. Record numbers of police, all required to do beat policing, has been a commitment of this Government.

Police powers have been increased; bail is harder to obtain; drug houses have been smashed and nearly every police car will be a mobile police station. No police station will close. In my electorate, Revesby police station will remain open and will be used as a base for patrols in south Bankstown. This budget allocates \$117 million for new gaols and correctional facilities. With much tougher sentences and bail law changes, we will need extra gaols. The Bankstown Local Area Command welcomed 28 new officers in May, and more will arrive in September-October. New uniforms will also greatly assist police to actively do their work and look like they mean business, taking the fight up to the criminals.

I also welcome the new courthouse that will be built in Bankstown. I and some of my parliamentary colleagues, such as the honourable member for Bankstown, who is present in the Chamber, have held discussions with the Minister for Police about new facilities for police in the Bankstown area. Many hundreds of police officers are located in a series of premises that are not suitable to run this large local area command, the biggest in New South Wales. Safer communities are not just provided by the police force. The New South Wales Fire Brigades, the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Services will this year receive \$565 million, an increase of 83 per cent over the last seven years. Our State Emergency Services officers are the best trained, best resourced and best equipped officers in Australia. That was evident during the recent bushfires in the early new year.

In Transport more than \$5 million has been allocated for maintenance on rail infrastructure, covering track reconstruction, re-railing, underbridge renewal, rail grinding, ballast cleaning, tamping, signal and electrical renewal across the New South Wales rail network. These improvements will enhance safety and reliability, reduce speed restrictions and wear and tear on rolling stock, and improve passenger comfort. They will also reduce the need for future maintenance, resulting in efficiencies in service reliability and cost savings. These measures by the Government are particularly welcome on the East Hills line, which is one of the fastest growing lines in passenger movement in New South Wales. A further \$131 million has been allocated towards continuing construction of the first 81 Millennium train carriages, and \$50 million towards stage two to construct a further 60 carriages. Funding for school student travel subsidies has increased by \$11 million to \$427 million. Subsidised concessions for pensioners, people with disabilities and other travel subsidies has been increased by \$5 million to \$305 million.

In my electorate of East Hills I welcome the installation of Easy Access facilities and the general upgrade of Padstow railway station at a total expenditure of \$4.323 million, with an allocation of \$2.1 million this year. I am pleased to say that the upgrade work at Padstow station is on time and within budget. Construction of a train turn back facility will be provided at Revesby, at a total of cost of \$12.8 million. An amount of \$4 million will be spent on that project this year. Within a few weeks the plans will be submitted to Bankstown City Council. I urge the council to examine those plans as quickly as possible so that work can commence in the very near future. That project will facilitate rail access for passengers on the East Hills Line, from as far as Holsworthy and Campbelltown, into the city, and the turn back facility will enhance the availability of rail services for passengers who use the Revesby and Padstow stations.

A fair degree of publicity has been given to the New South Wales State budget and the present advantages received in revenue from State stamp duty charges levied in a buoyant property market. However, for every dollar that New South Wales taxpayers pay to the State Treasury, they pay more than five to the Commonwealth Treasury. Even after Federal grants to the States are taken into account, the State receives only one dollar for every two New South Wales tax dollars received by the Commonwealth. In the case of New South Wales, this imbalance is made worse by being short-changed in our share of Commonwealth grants to the States. New South Wales accounts for 34 per cent of the nation's population and contributes 36 per cent of Commonwealth taxation, yet we receive only 32 per cent of all Commonwealth grants to the States. When we compare our contributions with those of other States, New South Wales taxpayers subsidise other States by some \$2.3 billion. Compared to an equal per capita share of Commonwealth GST grants, we subsidise the other States by some \$1.2 billion each year.

Of course, we recognise that it behoves the wealthier States to assist the smaller and poorer States. It is a Labor tenet in government to assist other governments and people in less advantageous situations than we are. That was the original principle of socialism: to give people a helping hand. The difference is that this Federal Government has played favourites. When it struggled to try to hold power in South Australia and Western Australia, all sorts of financial commitments were made. We had the financial obscenity in 2001 when the Coalition Government in Canberra spent billions of dollars on largely middle-class welfare to retain marginal seats in the Federal election—the seats of Ryan in Queensland and Aston in Victoria. This blew out the Federal budget surplus, which Treasurer Costello had proudly trumpeted, and produced a deficit in this year's Federal budget. Honourable members should compare that performance to the record seven straight budget surpluses of this State's Treasurer, who inherited a massive debt before he gave his first Budget Speech.

Sydney newspapers have correctly titled this budget as Bob the Builder's budget. This Government will invest \$26 billion in a four-year program for new public works and investments. This represents an increase of \$5.4 billion on the amount spent in the past four years. Let us remember the outstanding achievement of this Government in building and paying in full all of the Olympic venues and infrastructure. In 2002-03 alone, the total State Asset Acquisition Program will total \$6.4 billion, sustaining approximately 96,000 direct and indirect jobs. This is an increase of \$294 million, or 14 per cent on last year's budget. The budget also recognises the importance of continuing our legacy of improving the State's environment and protecting our great natural resources. This Government is undertaking far-reaching reform on greenhouse gases, salinity, water and forestry. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I particularly welcome the amount of almost \$45 million in the Environment budget to reduce waste and continue to fight illegal dumping and littering. On Henry Lawson Drive at Picnic Point the beauty of Yeramba Lagoon and the Georges River foreshore is continually destroyed by illegal dumping of all sorts of rubbish. Dumped household items and building materials are all too common. Once virtually a whole house was dumped on the site. As I drive past that area almost every day, I look to see what else has been dumped. I have raised this problem in the House on previous occasions. I am pleased that the Government has reacted with the imposition of greater fines. We have to stop people dumping materials in this area. I do not want Yeramba Lagoon to be closed to picnickers because of "tossers" dumping rubbish and building materials. The Georges River National Park is located in my electorate. I am pleased to say that the \$1 million upgrade of the park, including Fitzpatrick Park, is almost complete.

I welcome the tax changes made by our Government. It is the fifth successive time the Carr Government has reduced taxes in New South Wales. While demands are infinite, resources are finite. It is a good government that lessens the burden of tax, yet still increases services to the electorate. The tax changes for 2002-03 include: the complete abolition of payroll tax on apprentices' wages from 1 July; the reduction of payroll tax from 6.2 per cent to 6 per cent on 1 July; the broadening of the payroll tax base so that fringe benefits and eligible termination payments will be treated in exactly the same way as the income of ordinary wage and salary earners; and from 1 August the halving of the stamp duty rate on all general insurance, including public liability insurance, from 10 per cent to 5 per cent, giving New South Wales by far the lowest insurance stamp duty rates in Australia. The net cost of these measures is \$215 million in a full year.

As the Treasurer said, the cut in tax rates over the past five years has accumulated to \$1.4 billion a year. Returning this money to the community each year increases the spending power of our citizens and the investment opportunities for our businesses. The tax cuts in the business sector are gratefully received in the East Hills electorate. The suburbs of Milperra, Revesby, Padstow and Condell Park provide thousands of jobs for the people of Sydney and the residents of the Bankstown region. It was not so long ago that Bankstown was the second-largest area for light industrial and industrial work outside the Sydney central business district.

Because all politics are to some extent local, the budget is good for constituents in my electorate. Bankstown council again receives an increase for local roads, and the Georges River foreshore has received extra funding for walkways and cycleways. The extra funding for our schools is most welcome. The Government made an announcement earlier about the schoolyard blitz. In my area 19 schools benefited from grants for extra work to be done in our schools—from fences to replacement of flooring, carpeting, re-roofing and painting. This was welcome, because it was money additional to the budget. There is more to come. We now have the front-yard blitz. Work will be carried out to make the front of schools attractive and get rid of some of the litter that tends to accumulate there. Once again, government schools are being looked after in this budget.

The Carr Government's commitment to the performing arts in Bankstown and south-west Sydney is recognised by the arts grant of \$1.5 million to Bankstown council. My electorate has produced dozens of highly capable artistic and musical performers who are now well known in Australia and overseas. Col Joye learned his music playing mainly in his father's garage in East Hills. Bryan Brown and some of the more modern stars—groups such as Human Nature, or Wendy Tierney and the people who provided the Millennium Buzz, which I am sure the honourable member for Bankstown will remember and which was so successful in the Olympic year—are examples of the talent in the East Hills area. The Government, together with the council and the Department of Education and Training, has established a talent advancement program that will identify young talented people and help them showcase their achievements on the wider world stage. The money will be well spent to assist the youth of Bankstown and other southern suburbs.

I will refer briefly to some of the improvements that will be made to stations in my electorate. I have mentioned Padstow, and easy access facilities are planned for Revesby railway station. Most honourable members are enthusiastic about this. As society becomes increasingly older it is important that people have easy

access to railway stations. The days are gone when we can keep building long ramps and steps to gain access to stations. Of course, these facilities are costly and they cannot all be done at once. A new car park is being planned for rail travellers at Revesby station. There will also be a turnback facility at Revesby. This will enhance quick movement in and out of the city for people travelling from Revesby.

The 2002-03 budget provides an extra \$11.6 million in transport expenditure for my electorate in the next financial year. The Government is spending millions of dollars on rail improvements and maintenance in East Hills, which will improve comfort, safety and reliability of services for people in that area. This includes \$4 million towards a \$13 million turnback facility at Revesby, and \$2.1 million for the installation of easy-access facilities at Padstow station. Another \$5.1 million will be spent on track reconstruction, re-railing, underbridge renewal, signal and electrical renewal and other maintenance work. Funding for new homes and improved government-subsidised housing in the East Hill electorate is an important part of the 2002-03 Housing budget, with the allocation of \$4.7 million.

The Government is working hard for all of New South Wales and is committed to building on its proud record in public, community and Aboriginal housing. There is a \$4.7 million investment to build or buy 35 new homes and modernise existing homes. The honourable member for The Hills referred to the 94,000 people on the waiting list. In the mid-1980s, when I was working for the former Minister for Education, Rodney Cavalier, nearly 100,000 were on the list. The fact that it has not become any worse in the past 15 years shows that governments—Coalition and Labor—are doing as much as they can. Honourable members should remember that most immigrants end up in New South Wales. They cannot all buy property in Sydney in the present market. There will always be a high demand for public housing. This Government is doing as much as it possibly can. Extra homes will also be leased for government-subsidised housing.

Despite continuing Federal Government cuts, the State has increased funding to help those most in need, including the elderly, people with disabilities, large families and people with support needs. I commend the Carr Government's budget to the House. It stands in stark contrast to that of the Howard, Abbott and Costello budget of a few weeks ago. The Federal budget has been designed to rob the poor to pay for the war. It reminds me of the tactics used by Coalition governments of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The Government is beating up external threats to Australian security to justify cuts to those seen as undeserving like the unemployed, Aborigines, university students, those in government schools and TAFE's and, even more tragically, those on disability pensions—those likely to need extra medicines and hospital care. Those people will be moved to the Newstart unemployment lists. They will be forced to seek work they cannot do for the privilege of losing over \$25 a week in their pensions.

A Labor budget, State or Federal, would never contemplate something like this. The New South Wales Government has allocated record sums for 2002-03 and has maintained its triple-A standing and the respect of financial markets here and overseas. New South Wales will remain Australia's leading State by a long way while the majority of members of the New South Wales lower House of Parliament represent Labor. Once again, I commend this budget and congratulate the Premier, the Treasurer, Ministers and the Labor members who contributed to its formation.

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.57 p.m.]: When a member of the Opposition speaks in reply to a budget, it is easy for the Government to point the finger and accuse him of being a whinger or being ungrateful. I point out from the start that I am not ungrateful for the benefits my electorate has received in the budget. Because of the way this place is managed, because of the way this House operates, there are no points of order and the opportunity for Opposition members to raise concerns are limited. So I see this debate as an opportunity for us to have our say, to give constructive criticism to the Government and to apply the microscope, in the hope that the Government will improve the way it operates. In this budget the Wagga Wagga electorate received some funding. That was through community organisations putting pressure on the Government and through hard working public departments contributing to the economy in our region and battling hard, along with me, to increase funding and benefits for the region.

I will begin by pointing out where the Government has gone wrong and then I will touch on some issues I would like to have seen highlighted. The losers in this budget were businesses. The payroll tax base will be broadened so that fringe benefits and eligible termination payments will be slugged. There is no payroll tax relief, except for apprentices. While I welcome that, from 1 July the tax will drop from 6.2 per cent to 6 per cent, but no further. The Government has been intensely lobbied to reduce payroll tax. Victoria is reducing its payroll tax to 5.2 per cent, and in Queensland it is below 5 per cent. Therefore New South Wales does not have a competitive edge to drive business and gain greater economic benefits.

The budget has not provided stamp duty relief on home buying despite a property boom that has handed the Carr Government a \$1.5 billion bonanza in the past three years. The Government's much-proclaimed school improvement package has in fact been slashed by \$100 million from what was promised last year. In April 2002 the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirmed that New South Wales is still the highest taxing State in Australia—a dubious honour. Average State and local taxation per person in this State in 2000-01 was \$2,373, which was \$290 per person more than the second-highest taxing State, Victoria, and \$363 per person more than the national average.

The Carr Government has collected record revenues and has increased its revenue three times faster than the rate of inflation. While the Sydney consumer price index [CPI] has increased by less than 18 per cent in six years between 1995-96 and 2000-01, government revenue has increased by 49.6 per cent. In the six years between 1995-96 and 2000-01, tax revenue collected from stamp duty on contracts and conveyances has increased by 87.8 per cent. Land tax revenue has increased by 58.4 per cent and payroll tax revenue by 38 per cent.

The Government has consistently collected more revenue than was budgeted for. In the six years between 1995-96 and 2000-01, the Carr Government has collected almost \$8 billion, that is, an average of 5 per cent more revenue per annum than was budgeted for. In the six years between 1995-96 and 2000-01, it has collected \$1,974 million in stamp duty on contracts and conveyances, that is, an annual average of 21.3 per cent more than was budgeted for. Contrary to what Labor would have us believe, in the five years from 1996-97 to 2000-01 Commonwealth grants have exceeded budget expectations by an average of 3 per cent per annum. The Government is depending on strong stamp duty collections from the Sydney property market to sustain its overspending, but it will be caught when the market turns.

In April 2002 the Auditor-General revealed that the Government had overspent its budget by \$6 billion, an average annual overspending of \$1 billion, or 4 per cent. In the six budgets between 1995-96 and 2000-01 the Carr Government increased recurrent spending by more than 31 per cent, whilst Sydney's CPI grew less than 18 per cent. Labor's costs have blown out, in violation of its fiscal principle number 5, constraining growth in net costs of services and outlays, contained in section 15 of its General Government Debt Elimination Act 1995. Between 1995-96 and 1999-2000 the Government diverted more than \$4 billion from the capital budget to fund its recurrent spending. In April 2002 the Treasurer sought an additional \$1 billion from the Parliament for recurrent spending.

I have said before, and I will continue to say, that the Government has wasted billions of dollars. Some examples of waste over which this Government has presided are: in 2000-01, \$133 million on consultants, which the Premier promised to cap at \$50 million; in 2000-01, \$104 million, which the Premier promised to cut to \$35 million per annum; the cost of the M5 East increased from \$520 million to \$794 million, that is, a \$280 million blow-out; an \$800 million blow-out for the Parramatta to Chatswood rail link; \$25,000 on a graffiti report which suggested that graffiti be covered up—I could have told the Premier that and put the \$25,000 to our local hospital; and a \$75.6 million blow-out for the Conservatorium of Music. We could have used some of that money for our conservatorium of music. In each of those areas the Government has failed.

I have provided a broad outline of where the Government has failed with its waste and mismanagement in its budgeting. I will now raise issues of concern to me that should have been addressed in the budget but were not. Health care is the number one priority in my electorate. Only yesterday the honourable member for North Shore moved a motion in his House citing the terrible state of the health system. I pointed out at that time that at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital the waiting lists had increased since March 1995, when this Government came to office and when the Premier wrote in blood that waiting lists would be halved or he would resign. At that time the waiting list at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital was 1,276, and it increased in April 2002 to 1,481. In relation to people waiting 12 months or more for elective surgery in rural hospitals, which includes Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, in 1995, there were 77 people waiting and in April 2002 there were 241—an increase of 164 people.

I am disappointed that after considerable work was put into the clinical services study by health professionals and others involved with Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, and after calls were made by the Chair of the Greater Murray Area Health Service, Lynda Summers, for the Government to fund the redevelopment of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, funding was not provided to help with the procurement and feasibility study. That study was recognised as a priority, and I am disappointed that the Carr Government has not supported the hospital board and its chairman in their call to have the hospital redeveloped. We have been successful in lobbying hard for extra dialysis facilities, and that is welcomed by the hospital. It was dreadful that people in Wagga Wagga could not get access to dialysis facilities.

Our community has worked and lobbied hard for extra funding from the Minister for Health for enhanced cancer care services, and we have received that funding. We have also received \$3.8 million extra for the Greater Murray Area Health Service budget. That is needed but it will not be enough to reduce the waiting lists. Wagga Wagga has a crisis with a lack of specialist anaesthetists, psychologists, psychiatrists and occupational therapists. Once again, the medical fraternity in our area has raised concerns, and an article in today's *Daily Advertiser* states:

GMAS is so wrong: Surgeon

A local surgeon has described the current staffing shortage at Wagga Base Hospital as an embarrassment to the State Government.

The medical fraternity and the public are very concerned about this crisis, but we can still see no end to it. Representatives met with the Minister in Temora in a very constructive way to try to deal with the problems confronting Health. They worked with a task force and produced a document which put forward solutions to the crisis within the Greater Murray Area Health Service regarding the lack of anaesthetists. A report was given to the Government, which the Minister has never made public, yet he increased benefits across the board. He did not make any allowance for the differential between city and country practitioners, which is an important distinction. More recently, in Albury-Wodonga anaesthetists have been given a deal, which has not been made public, which allows them to be paid more money than anaesthetists in Wagga Wagga. That is unfair and the Minister must come to grips with that problem and resolve it one way or another.

I wrote to the Minister and had meetings with his staff about the nursing crisis. Whenever I speak about hospital waiting lists I am told about the nursing crisis. I have a solution which I have put to the Minister and the department. Enrolled nurses are currently trained in Cootamundra, registered nurses are trained at Charles Sturt University and assistants in nursing are trained at Wagga Wagga TAFE. My solution is for the Minister to run a special pilot program at Wagga Wagga TAFE. The program would fund places for people to train as enrolled nurses in Wagga Wagga over a two-year period, with classes of 17 to 36 per year. That would produce upwards of 60 to 70 graduates who would be qualified enrolled nurses. At the moment, people must travel to Cootamundra to train as an enrolled nurse. Many potential nurses who want to re-enter the work force are middle-aged women and men with families, and it is difficult for them to travel to Cootamundra to partake in the course.

Although people travelling to Cootamundra receive some funding, it would be much easier to run a pilot program with increased courses at Wagga Wagga TAFE, along with the course in Cootamundra. We could help solve the nursing crisis if the Minister would give this pilot program the nod. Enrolled nurses could then access Charles Sturt University. It would mean that they could live and work in Wagga Wagga, attend the university in our city and graduate as registered nurses. That would solve the problem that I hear about every time a question relating to health is asked of the Minister.

The Government must make some serious decisions in that regard. Wagga Wagga can help to solve the problem relating to nurses. We are happy to do it. All those departments I have mentioned are more than happy to comply and work with the Minister. All it needs is commitment. I note that Education has received a rap from many members, and so it should. Education is an important issue for all of us. The education of our children is of the highest priority to me and, I know, to all members of this House. One school in Tumbarumba has not had a maths teacher since the beginning of this year. Students sitting exams now have not had the benefit of a qualified maths teacher. While I recognise that some teachers are supplementing the teaching staff at Tumbarumba, what is needed is a maths teacher.

Recently when I asked a question about the lack of teachers the Minister rattled on about how a plan was in place and we would know the results of that in two or three years. The reality is that kids in Tumbarumba need a maths teacher now. The kids sitting exams are severely disadvantaged because they do not have a maths teacher. I understand that in towns throughout my electorate there are no replacement teachers, for example, for teachers on sick leave. I receive correspondence to this effect daily. The Government has not come to grips with that problem. We hear about plans, but replacement teachers should be in place now. These kids are being severely disadvantaged. I welcome the announcement in the budget about computers in schools. However, the way the program has been put together, the computers do not talk to each other.

The computer systems are antiquated and have been acquired over a number of years. The intentions were good but the linkages do not work. Therefore, kids do not attend computer classes because the computers continue to break down. Some serious thought needs to be given to how to deliver information technology [IT]

classes in schools, and whether there should be a specialist department that manages each school, looks at the existing equipment and recommends upgrades so that the systems work. That would encourage children to take part in IT classes, because IT is the way of the future. I am disappointed that no managerial decisions have been announced in the budget. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Roadwork is always high on the priority list for my electorate. Funding has been allocated for Jingellic Road, which was a deathtrap and desperately needed funding, although about 1.5 kilometres of the road will not be sealed. The local community signed petitions to this place and lobbied hard to have that road sealed. However, we will be petitioning once again and lobbying the Minister hard to get more funding to seal the road completely. My electorate needs more roads funding. In the mountainous areas is a huge logging industry that is expanding, thanks to the Visy plant. That is a welcome development, but we need to ensure that the roads are in good condition to keep motorists safe but, importantly, provide access for logging trucks to help boost the region's economy.

Bridges in my electorate need replacing. One such bridge is Kapooka bridge. In previous budgets the Government committed \$400,000 to the design of Kapooka bridge, yet I have not seen any indication of more money being attributed to the bridge. Listening to other speakers today, I have become aware that Opposition members have received only the budget booklets that were released on the night of the Budget Speech. The fine detail that Government members have provided in their contributions to the debate lead me to assume that they have been given a great deal of detail. Indeed, I think they have in their possession the breakdown of the individual funding and spending projects within their electorates. I have not received a breakdown for my electorate, and I would think that no other Opposition members have received the finer breakdown of what is included in the capital works announcements titled "various".

In all fairness, if the Government wants to receive a better response from Opposition members which does not portray us as always having a hit at the Government, it would be appropriate to provide to us with the same documentation that Government members receive so that we can give it more bouquets instead of brick bats. Another matter that concerns me relates to the issue of development. There does not appear to be much flexibility in helping local governments or businesses to develop. In one case we have been working very hard with Country Energy to have natural gas connected to Tumbarumba and The Rock. I compliment the staff of Country Energy on their contribution. They have been excellent in helping us work through the issues. However, we need flexibility.

If the Government is ever to nurture rural New South Wales, if it is serious about delivering business industry expansion and jobs to the people of New South Wales, it must be flexible about the way it produces and implements infrastructure. For instance, on the desktop audit the Tumbarumba gas line has come up short, but we are having a devil of a time getting the Government to be flexible enough to help fund the shortfall. I understand that governments must make a return on their money, and that is reasonable. I have already given the Government a biff under the ear for waste and mismanagement. The Government needs to be flexible and look at receiving smaller returns on its investment if the investment will improve the greater good.

Tumbarumba is one case that should be looked at exclusively because of its unique nature. However, I predict that if the Government were more flexible in that area, the boost to small communities such as Tumbarumba would be worthwhile. In the area of development, I put to the Minister for Land and Water Conservation a proposal to build a multipurpose service centre on the corner of Edward and Moorong streets in Wagga Wagga. I understand that the proposal has been bogged down in some legal issues relating to land claims, et cetera, but the time it has taken is most disappointing. Developers with an interest in this land are ready to proceed.

Such a service centre would solve many problems for the city of Wagga Wagga. It would move heavy semitrailers from the side of roads, where they pull up unsafely, to a major trucking centre. It would give travellers the opportunity to alight from their vehicles at a major service centre with tourist information, where their cars could be serviced and fuelled. It would provide an area where people with caravans could pull off the road safely. We could have a bus terminal where travellers could alight under cover at night. The service centre could create many benefits for the city. But the wheels of government turn slowly. For instance, Ministers take an inappropriately long time to respond to correspondence. If the Government is serious about addressing development issues and responding to people's concerns, it must focus on providing answers and solving problems rather than passing the buck. I acknowledge the Premier's comments reported in the *Daily Advertiser* on 13 June. We do not agree often, but I certainly concur with the Premier on this occasion. The article, entitled "Innovative visit will help development", states:

Premier Bob Carr said yesterday the visit by the New South Wales Innovation Council to Wagga today would help further advance the development of the biotechnology industry and rural areas.

I acknowledge the contribution earlier today of the Minister for Agriculture, who said that Wagga Wagga has received significant investment. I am always pleased to hear about the creation of more jobs, particularly in areas of excellence at the agriculture research centre or the viticulture centre. The Government must introduce more initiatives and act on the Premier's comments to the benefit of our region. The Premier sent Professor Dennis Wade, Chairman of the New South Wales Innovation Council, to the region. He commented:

Wagga, and the Riverina, have a whole series of unique things going for it which, when you look at it from a distance, has a lot of cards to play in this game.

He continued:

It has a strong background in agriculture and biotechnology, and solid interests in the grain and wine industries.

Something that is also quite unusual is Wagga's high percentage retention of experienced, trained technicians ... This is something areas west of Sydney don't have; it's going to put centres such as Wagga at the forefront.

There's some fantastic, innovative business developing in the Riverina ... There are some things Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong cannot offer, and often you will find it can happen in regional Australia.

Never a truer word was spoken. This Government must now grasp the nettle and act on those comments. It must back up the Premier's comments. With more funding for innovation and biotechnology we could lead the world. Wagga Wagga is situated perfectly to do that. I call upon the Premier to support his words with funding. I do not want to hear about promises that are made but never delivered. Promises must be honoured at the coalface, where they will do the most good.

I wanted to raise other issues in my contribution, but the time available to me is limited. If I were granted another extension of time I would accept it gladly, but that is not to be. The few issues that I have touched upon are of major concern to our region, and honourable members can rest assured that I will continue to raise them in this place. I am particularly concerned about law and order issues and our continuing battle to see Kendell Airlines based in Wagga Wagga and operating in the black. The community is pursuing other initiatives such as establishing a permanent rehabilitation centre for people who are addicted to drugs, and creating a hospice and palliative care facility in the city where people can die with dignity, in privacy, supported by their family in appropriate surroundings.

I want to see accommodation for people with degenerative diseases, in particular young people. That matter is high on my agenda and I shall refer to it later in the year. This is an important issue in the community because these people have nowhere to go. The problems of the homeless must be addressed, and I shall raise these issues with the Government. I shall also hammer home the point that several capital works projects must be completed. I agree that Wagga Wagga has derived some benefit from this budget. I have outlined additional issues that I would like to be addressed, and I will work to achieve those goals. I regard our city and the entire region as a can-do community.

Mr STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.25 p.m.]: I strongly support the Appropriation Bill, and cognate bills. As we know, this is the Carr Government's seventh surplus budget and it is very pleasing that the Bankstown electorate is moving ahead by winning a healthy share of the record \$6.35 million that will be spent on new and upgraded schools, hospitals, roads and other public facilities. Bankstown has fared extremely well in this budget. Increased investment will improve our community services and tax cuts will assist families and small businesses. This budget abolishes payroll tax for the employers of apprentices, which is important to those young people seeking apprenticeships in the Bankstown area. This measure will help 31,000 people throughout the State, and is to be commended.

Local residents and businesses will also benefit from the insurance tax cuts that will reduce household insurance bills by an average of \$40 each year. Small business insurance costs will be cut by an average of \$150 a year. New South Wales now has the lowest tax rates on general insurance policies in Australia. This measure has been heralded in my community as a move towards better and more effective insurance premiums down the track, which is in line with public expectations. The Government will also halve stamp duty on 33 types of insurance, including home and contents, travel, public liability, strata unit, boat, business interruption, burglary, bad debtors, stock damage and property damage. These tax cuts will take effect from 1 August 2002—just around the corner.

In addition to reducing State taxes, the Carr Government has approved the largest capital works program ever undertaken by a State government. An extra \$800 million will be spent this year, which is almost

8.5 per cent more than the \$5,556 million allocated in last year's budget. Since 1995 the Carr Government has cut the State's net debt and liabilities by an amazing \$10.8 billion. This will produce savings of about \$900 million in interest payments compared with 1995 figures and, as a result, vital funds can now be spent on local hospitals, schools and police. I strongly commend the Government's focus on the sound financial management that has produced this budget. I particularly commend the Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, who has reaped the rewards of fine fiscal management on the part of the Ministry and the Premier, and is delivering equity to our communities.

The Bankstown electorate received a whopping \$28.4 million in this year's budget—which is about \$6.8 million more than it received last year. That is a tremendous increase and a record budget for the area. By any measure, my electorate has done extremely well from this budget. I am particularly pleased that Bankstown Public School will receive \$1.7 million for canteen improvements, the building of a new state-of-the-art hall and a covered outdoor learning area. For a long time the local community has fought for these facilities at Bankstown Public School and it is pleasing that this funding has now been received. The Bankstown electorate will receive funding for new works in the Housing portfolio of \$4.6 million, which will help significantly in the local area. It will receive \$730,000 for improvements to stormwater drains, \$1.8 million for local road improvements and \$10.7 million for rail and bus infrastructure.

Bankstown courthouse will receive \$500,000 for future planning and \$16 million is forecast for the development of a new courthouse complex in Bankstown. The Legal Aid Commission office in Bankstown will receive \$39,000; and the State Emergency Service will receive \$10,000. Approximately \$98,000 will be allocated for miscellaneous works and the competitive government sector—which mainly includes work being done on electricity upgrading in the Bankstown region—will be funded to the tune of \$10.7 million. I understand that approximately \$1.5 million of that \$10.7 million will be for improvements to the Bankstown Waste Transfer Station.

The budget was strongly heralded as a positive measure in the area through the local newspapers. The heading on the front page of the *Bankstown Torch* stated "Budget Boost" and referred to the generous commitment that the Carr Government has once again made to the Bankstown electorate, including \$16 million for a state-of-the-art court complex to replace the existing cramped building and \$10.7 million to boost local transport. The \$16 million courthouse is also very strongly heralded and commended in the *Bankstown Express* as being a much-needed facility in the Bankstown region. The *Bankstown Express* also focused on the new school hall for Bankstown Public School, stating, "School hall at last". Under the heading "New homes for old", it referred to the new homes being built in the area to help meet Department of Housing needs.

This fantastic result for the Bankstown region is well recognised by the local press, which always works diligently to report on the facts and inform the local community. Where necessary, the press has provided constructive criticism, but in this case there has been no criticism. The media has given a very positive exposé of what this budget has achieved for Bankstown. I will refer now to money being committed to Bankstown Public School. It is often rightly said that education is the best investment we can make towards a successful future. I am delighted that the Carr Government has made such strong and vital investment in the positive future of the Bankstown area.

I have received advice from the Minister for Education and Training that Bankstown Public School will receive a whopping \$1.7 million to commence upgrading the school, including the addition of a hall, a covered outdoor learning area and improvements to the school canteen, with work to start this year. When this project is completed Bankstown Public School will have a state-of-the-art hall that will support a range of activities, including dance, drama, performance and indoor sports programs. For some time I have lobbied the Government and this project has been strongly supported by the school community. Therefore, it is pleasing to see such a positive and fruitful result for Bankstown Public School.

I thank the Minister for Education and Training for listening to the school's needs and once again delivering a very vital and beneficial project to the Bankstown electorate. I also thank John Burkhardt, the property manager for the Department of Education and Training. John Burkhardt came with me last year to Bankstown Public School to hear first-hand the concerns of this wonderful school. The Minister is to be commended because we now have funding in the current budget for Bankstown Public School, the largest school in my local region, with a population of over 950 students. It is also one of the oldest public schools in the Bankstown region. The school is 87 years old and was the first central school in Bankstown. Many identities have attended this school and it has very much been the backbone for the Bankstown area. This school has been very productive and its history reflects that. I know that these new capital works will help Bankstown Public School to continue its longstanding record as a centre of educational excellence.

The making of a good school is through its leadership, its teachers, its staff, its students and, of course, its parent body. In this regard I would like to make very special mention of the Bankstown school community, which has worked as a team and supported me in my efforts to lobby for the school's new hall and facilities. Greg Ellem, the principal of Bankstown Public School, is retiring at the end of this school year. He has a great history in education; he has been a teacher for 39 years. He first began his teaching experience in January 1963 and he has been a principal for the last 16 years, with nine of those years at Bankstown Public School. By any criteria Greg Ellem is an outstanding educationalist and a leader. During his nine years at Bankstown Public School he has been both an inspiration to and a shining light for the school's community.

As a teacher by background, I know that the best barometer of an educationalist's success is through the voices and thoughts of the students. In this respect Greg Ellem has proved himself through gaining not only the respect of his students over the years but also trust and love through work he has undertaken with local young people. The end result has been a partnership with him as the leader, the school, the staff, the students and the parent body. As a result, the school environment is productive and community minded. It works hard for the local area. This talented school stands out as a centre of educational excellence. The school also appreciates the multicultural diversity of Bankstown; it is a microcosm that reflects diversity through the multitude of different nationalities represented in the school community.

As a former Parliamentary Secretary for Education, a former teacher, and also as the local member for Bankstown, I can say that Bankstown Public School is easily one of the best schools that I have ever visited and Greg Ellem is to be strongly commended for its success. I know that when he retires he will be sadly missed by the school and the wider community. However, I have no doubt that his great work at the school will leave a positive and firm foundation for the school's long-term future. Others I would like to mention who have strongly supported the hall project and the school community have been the school's deputy principals, Jan Byrne and Del Beasley; the president of the school's parents and citizens association, Mrs B. Nguyen; and the school's community liaison officer, Debbie Wood. Debbie worked really hard with me and with the school community to achieve this positive result for the school, and she deserves an accolade for her efforts.

I would also like to make special mention of an extraordinary woman, Mrs Mavis Cooper. Mavis, who is now in her early eighties, was a student at Bankstown Public School in 1934. Bankstown was a very different place then; it did not have the multicultural element it now has. Back then the population was much smaller—probably about 5,000 people compared with the 200,000 people who now reside in the Bankstown area. Mavis, who has lived in the area since her student days, still comes to the Bankstown Public School, not as a student but as an educationist. Every school day she teaches young people reading. She is part of the school's voluntary reading program. I commend Mavis. It is a tribute to the public education system that it has people such as Mavis. Public education is a great success in this State because Mavis and others like her are its backbone. Their efforts help to ensure a healthy future for public education. I am very pleased that the Bankstown electorate has done well from the Education and Training budget, to which the Government has made a total commitment of \$8 billion, attending to priorities throughout the State. Bankstown has been at the forefront of those priorities.

Another matter that is very important to the Bankstown electorate is policing, and again the electorate has fared very well from the budget. Visible, high-impact street policing and returning police officers to the front line are the priorities of this budget. The focus on allocating money for policing is of particular importance to the Bankstown electorate, where policing has been a very important priority—a matter that the general public acknowledged as most significant when I surveyed them. The \$1.758 billion allocated by this budget for policing will fund a restructured police force focused on increasing visibility and meeting the community's expectations on what the force should be doing. Importantly, the budget will help front-line police get ahead with high-visibility, high-impact street policing, which the community wants. This funding will resource those police.

As a barometer of the success parochially of the restructuring of the police force and focusing on the direction of policing, the Bankstown local area command recently received an additional 36 new police recruits from the police academy. They complement the extra 31 police who came into the area command last December. This better resources the local command and makes it much more effective in getting the job done and meeting public expectations. This is an area command with a strength of 236—an amazing number for a local police command. I commend the Minister for Police, the Hon. Michael Costa, for delivering that initiative and for the additional police recruits recently received. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Of those recruits, 28 went to Bankstown and eight to the Campsie Local Area Command. Those extra officers are warmly welcomed into the Bankstown and Campsie patrol areas. They complement the existing

ranks of experienced police in both the Bankstown and Campsie patrols. Without doubt the additional police strength in my local area will enhance the ability of both the Bankstown and Campsie patrols to effectively deal with crime and community safety concerns. I look forward to continuing to work closely with local police. I strongly commend the Government and the Attorney General for focusing on the delivery of a new courthouse in the Bankstown electorate. From this budget \$500,000 has been allocated to the planning of a new courthouse and \$16 million has been committed to fund that new state-of-the-art facility. It will contain four courtrooms. The local community certainly will benefit from that initiative.

The current courthouse, which has become cramped and inadequate, will be demolished. I hope that, as a result of other manoeuvres now occurring, the new court complex will take up the entire block that is the site of the current Bankstown police station and adjacent courthouse. Of course, that will require Bankstown police to move to new and better premises. Work is being undertaken on that move. I am confident that the Minister of Police will be successful in working towards that movement. At the moment Bankstown police are at five different locations in the area, including the Bankstown central business district. This initiative will enhance communication with police and give them better accommodation to suit their needs and purposes. Importantly, the commitment of this \$16 million will enable the Attorney General's Department to construct the courthouse complex, which the Bankstown region deserves and needs. I strongly commend the Government for that commitment. It will be well received in Bankstown.

Bankstown also receives from this budget \$1.79 million for road network improvements. I commend the Hon. Carl Scully, Minister for Roads. As the Minister's Parliamentary Secretary, I recognise the importance of prioritising the road commitments of this budget on a statewide basis. But Bankstown has not missed out. As I have said, the budget allocates \$1.79 million to improvement of the local road network. As the honourable member for Bankstown, I will ensure that the priorities of the local area will be met from that funding boost. While I am on the issue of transport improvements, I commend Minister Scully for the allocation of an amazing \$10.7 million from the budget for Transport expenditure in the Bankstown electorate. That includes \$7.4 million on track reconstruction, re-railing, underbridge renewal, signal and electrical renewal, and other maintenance work. Further funding will go to refurbishment of Wiley Park station and passenger facilities. Wiley Park residents will be very happy with the announcement of \$100,000 for that refurbishment.

Some \$2.8 million will be spent on State Transit bus concessions in the local area. Other allocations include \$270,000 for community transport services, \$50,000 for maintenance of station and passenger facilities at Punchbowl station—an allocation that will be received very warmly by Punchbowl people—and \$30,000 on maintenance of station and passenger facilities at Wiley Park. That is in addition to the already mentioned \$100,000 refurbishment. This is tremendous news for Bankstown people, who have won considerable gains for transport as a result of this budget.

A very important issue for the Bankstown electorate has always been Department of Housing initiatives. This budget provides \$4.6 million to upgrade the Bankstown electorate housing stock of the Department of Housing. This will enable the building of more homes and the leasing of more government-subsidised housing. The Bankstown electorate is part of the south-western Sydney region of the Department of Housing—a region that is doing very well relative to other areas of New South Wales and will go ahead as a result of this budget. Those who have financial and other problems and therefore are in dire need of Department of Housing accommodation will benefit from this budget commitment.

The whole of the Bankstown local community will benefit from the tremendous commitments made for the improvement of community services and from budget funding for the Department of Community Services. This budget provides a record \$641.1 million—an increase of \$48.1 million dollars over last year's funding—for community services. This is particularly important to the Bankstown electorate, which has quite a number of people who struggle because of their socioeconomic circumstances. They deserve and need particular attention. I am proud of the multitude of nationalities of residents of the Bankstown electorate. However, the social needs of the electorate are perhaps different from those of many other areas of New South Wales. Community service enhancement is therefore extremely important if the Bankstown local government area and surrounding regions, including Canterbury, are to be well placed to forge a better future.

The budget creates opportunities for my electorate, and it is in that context that I commend the Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Faye Lo Po'. The budget allocation of \$6 million will benefit not only the Department of Community Services [DOCS] but also the Bankstown electorate by enhancement of community programs. As I understand it, 63 local services that are already networking and connecting to meet social needs in my electorate will benefit from this very welcome funding. Those service organisations—which include the

Arabic Welfare Centre and the Family Support Service in Bankstown—provide home care services as well as youth, family and individual support strategies, and community development programs that are funded through Community Services grants. I applaud the assistance given to my electorate by the Minister for Community Services and look forward to the Minister visiting my electorate in the not too distant future to inspect the great achievements of Community Services.

This budget allocates \$150 million for culturally diverse communities through the portfolio of the Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Citizenship. Because 120 communities of different nationalities reside in the Bankstown electorate the area is very much a microcosm of multicultural society in New South Wales. As I understand it, the Bankstown-Canterbury community is the best example of multiculturalism in Australia and is the most diverse cultural community. This budget targets very important programs that are designed to improve the lives of culturally diverse communities. Moreover, \$117.5 million will be spent over the next four years on the Families First Program. This morning on the local 2NBC radio program I pointed out that the Families First Program supports families that have children aged from zero to eight years. The program not only provides assistance for children who are gaining learning experiences but also, very importantly, assists parents to be better parents. After all, parenting is not an inherent skill; it is an acquired skill developed from experience. The Government recognises that, and the allocation of \$117.5 million to the program will assist parents in the Bankstown and Canterbury areas to be more effective parents.

It is important for parents to understand the developmental phases of young children. By helping and supporting their children, parents can participate more effectively in the development and growth of their children. By facilitating discussions and networking among parents about common experiences, difficulties and problems, the program also combats isolation. The networking encourages parents to appreciate that the problems of raising children are not peculiar to them. After assessing the pros and cons of various parenting techniques, parents are encouraged to apply positive strategies to develop the necessary cognitive skills and constructive attitudes that will enable their children to meet community expectations. More importantly, as a result of the budget allocation for the program, children will be able to receive a solid family foundation which hopefully will lead to a bright future for them and for the community as a whole. As I stated at the beginning of my contribution to this debate, children are our future and education is their foundation. By financially supporting educational and parenting programs, this Government demonstrates its understanding of the problems confronting society and its commitment to better communities by focusing support on the care of children. I commend this Government for its policies that help communities to get ahead.

In conclusion, I offer thanks to the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Bob Carr, for policies and programs that ensure my electorate will develop and prosper. This great State budget will provide opportunities for my electorate and will no doubt underpin the future prosperity of New South Wales. The budget continues this State's cycle of economic dynamism, thereby ensuring that the New South Wales economy continues to be the driving force behind national prosperity. I am extremely proud of New South Wales and I am equally proud to be the parliamentary representative for the Bankstown electorate—an electorate that any member of Parliament would feel privileged to represent. I commend the bills to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Moss.

The House adjourned at 1.55 p.m.
