

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 19 September 2002

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

SAVE CALLAN PARK BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [10.03 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Coalition is committed to protecting public lands across the State. Callan Park is one of several sites around Sydney Harbour that the Government intends to sell, and the Coalition is absolutely committed to preserving Callan Park. This bill enshrines our intentions at law. A number of people have been forthright in their opposition to the selling off of portions of Callan Park, including Michelle McKenzie, Jean Lennane and Hall Greenland who are present in the gallery today. They have been vociferous in making their views known and in ensuring that the needs of the communities around Rozelle Hospital and Callan Park are preserved and that Callan Park is not sold off.

The Save Callan Park Bill will preserve Callan Park in public ownership and will ensure that no part of it will be sold or used for residential purposes. The Opposition will carry that commitment into the coming election and beyond. Anyone who lives in Sydney knows that foreshore lands characterise Sydney Harbour. Yet in recent years the Government has demonstrated its intention to compromise what has been preserved for future generations, not only Callan Park, but also the Hunters Hill High School site, the Quarantine Station and the hoax perpetrated on the residents of Balmain concerning Ballast Point. The Government simply wants to sell off land to make a buck, it does not care about communities, it does not have a long-term view, and it does not have a long-term vision for future generations.

The Government is arrogant and has not listened to the people. The Opposition has listened to the community and believes that it is important to retain significant public lands in public ownership, and that is completely in contrast to the Government's views. Currently part of the site is parkland and is used by the community of the inner west and it should be preserved for that use. In the densely populated part of Sydney around Roseville and the Port Jackson electorate, overseen by the Drummoyne electorate, this land forms part of the crucial backyard for local residents. None of it should be sold off, yet that is the Government's intention. However, this bill will prevent that sell off. Whilst the Government does not intend to sell off all the land, most of the proposed sell off is around the perimeter of the park.

That sell off, with up to four-storey developments, will deny access and vision to the current parkland. The Government has claimed that it is giving the people of the inner west the parkland that is already theirs. The question is whether any part of the land should be taken away, and the answer is no. The proposed development will break the tree canopy over Callan Park and Rozelle. The current ambulance headquarters site partially breaches the tree canopy, but that canopy will be extensively breached by the development as it goes through the tree canopy at that site, and the development will be visible from anywhere in the region. The characteristics of that part of the foreshore near Rozelle will be irreversibly lost.

It is absolutely outrageous and unbelievable that as part of the plan for Callan Park, State environmental planning policy [SEPP] 56, which preserves the Sydney Harbour foreshores by ensuring that there is no inappropriate development, has been completely compromised to enable the Government to sell off the land. This breach is another demonstration of the Government's lack of commitment to SEPP 56. These lands should be kept fully in public hands. Ironically, Broughton Hall was originally private land, which was bequeathed to the community in 1916 to be used by returned servicemen from World War I, and it was the day

before National Legacy Day that submissions for its future closed. The Government wants to carve off large chunks of the land that was bequeathed to the people. This is an important piece of land. It includes, amongst other things, Aboriginal and European cultural heritage sites, mental health facilities, drug and alcohol support services, the Sydney College of the Arts, the Sydney Writers Centre and a central public open space for densely populated Balmain, Roseville and the inner west.

This is a significant issue for people in the Drummoyne and Port Jackson electorates. The Government has not listened to the community. Rallies and public meetings have been held. Thousands upon thousands of people have taken to the streets and they have protested at Balmain Town Hall and at other meetings. The Minister for Planning, the Minister for Tourism, who ironically is the local member for Port Jackson, and the Premier have not listened—they do not want to listen—to the pleas of the community to preserve this land.

The honourable member for Port Jackson, hand in glove with Planning NSW, has wasted tens of thousands of dollars trying to defend the indefensible. She has wasted money on glossy brochures to preserve her position and to preserve her hide. She is trying to argue that it is acceptable if a little less than 80,000 square metres of this 67-hectare site is sold off. A 20 per cent reduction of 80,000 square metres to 64,000 square metres does not change the fact that a large portion of public parkland on Sydney's foreshore will be lost for all time.

The message that residents are sending to the honourable member for Port Jackson is that none of this land should be sold. The Callan Park master plan, which is a deceptive and tricky document, is a hoax. This Government is trying to sell to that community land that is unsaleable and unpalatable. The Government's master plan compromises passive open space. Proposed high-rise developments will overlook parkland and the oriental garden. People will not be able to enjoy the peace and solitude that they enjoy today with hundreds of residents looking out over those areas. Effectively, that parkland will become a private area. Worse still, plans that have been promoted by the Government and by the Minister for Planning include private courtyards in that open space.

The proposed development provides for no extra infrastructure to assist the thousands of people who will eventually live there. Under a Coalition government no land at Callan Park will be sold off; it will all be preserved. A Coalition government will preserve Rozelle hospital. It will be redeveloped on the Callan Park site as a centre of excellence for mental health—an \$80 million per annum recurrent commitment to people who need those services. Callan Park is an ideal location for those services. The community agrees that those services should remain, but the Government ignores the facts and it has not in any respect matched the Coalition's commitment. The Government simply wants to carve off a section of Callan Park for financial purposes. In August 1997 the Premier made a number of comments in relation to the Sydney Harbour foreshore. He said:

The Harbour is too precious to be sold off for the exclusive use of Sydney's silvertails.

What is the Premier doing? He is selling off land that belongs to everyone. The Sydney Harbour foreshore belongs to residents of Rozelle and surrounding regions, to residents of Sydney and to all of us. In August 1997 the Premier recognised that that land was too precious to be sold off, but today he wants to sell off that land. The Premier also said:

It has been enlightened government decision making based on a long term perspective rather than short term expediency that has preserved the current green belt of public space around the foreshores of Sydney Harbour and maintained public access to and around the harbour.

I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Premier. Anyone who knows Callan Park would agree with those sentiments. However, despite the Premier's supposed commitment, he wishes to sell off a portion of Callan Park. The Premier also stated:

Just as important decisions were taken in the public interest at the beginning of the century—
that is, around the early 1900s—

regarding Harbour foreshore lands, so important decisions must be taken in the public interest now.

We are at the beginning of a new century. It is just as important now as it was 100 years ago. It is in the public interest that Sydney Harbour foreshore lands are protected and preserved. Honourable members have an important decision to make in relation to this bill, that is, to preserve the foreshore lands of Sydney Harbour. If

the Government's proposals in relation to Callan Park and Hunters Hill are implemented and the quarantine station is leased in the long term we will have sacrificed for eternity what has been given to us by our forefathers. There is no excuse for that.

A Coalition government is committed to preserving all those sites in public ownership. This bill will ensure that Callan Park stays in public ownership for future generations. It will be unable to be sold and it will be unable to be used for residential development. It is our commitment to preserve and protect Callan Park for eternity. Our commitment to the residents of Rozelle is clear. Opposition members will pursue this issue over the next six months, during the period of the State election and beyond. We will preserve Callan Park in public ownership. If the Government does not support this bill that will send a strong message to the community of Rozelle and to other communities.

Opposition members will continue to pursue their campaign to preserve public foreshore lands. What is the position of the Premier and the Government in relation to protecting foreshore lands? The position of the Opposition is clear. All the sites that I mentioned earlier, including Callan Park, will be preserved. I challenge the Government, the Premier and every Government member to support this bill. They should preserve Callan Park, and put their money where their mouths are. The words that they have spoken will ring hollow if they do not support this proposal. I encourage all honourable members to support this bill. I say clearly to the community that, under a Coalition government, Callan Park will be preserved in public ownership for eternity.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Moss.

SAVE HUNTERS HILL HIGH SCHOOL BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI (Lane Cove) [10.17 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Save Hunters Hill High School Bill is to preserve this school as a public secondary school, which would then prevent its closure and subsequent fire sale by the Government. This bill seeks to translate into legislative action a report from the upper House inquiry that recommended that the school remain open. When the Government first announced that it proposed to close Hunters Hill High School the reaction of members of the local community was immediate, emotive and passionate. Their anger and disbelief were clear. Our tight little community was shocked that the Labor Party, headed by the self-described want-to-be education Premier, wanted to put a "for sale" sign over our strong, successful and vibrant local school.

Parents, teachers and students asked, "Why would a government close such a successful school? What did we do wrong and how on earth could this happen?" Perhaps initially some people thought that the Government had just got it wrong and would be convinced on the basis of a good argument and, in good conscience, it would simply reverse the decision, apologise and move on. The community had some faith in the process that had been put in place by the Government. They made formal submissions, held rallies and organised petitions. But all of that was to no avail. Promising full consultation the Government had already decided that its decision to close the school was a fait accompli. It was, in the words of the Minister, not negotiable.

Mr Moss: If only the locals had sent their kids to the school it might have stayed open.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: They do send their kids to the school. If the honourable member for Canterbury visited that school he would see that kids attend that school. He would then be aware that the comments he has just made would have insulted the children at that school. The children who attend the school are from the local government area, as is required by the Department of Education and Training.

Mr Moss: No doubt there has been a concerted effort over the last six months.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: No, over the last six months kids have had to be moved out of that school because the Minister for Education and Training is closing it. That is the level of emotion in this debate. If the honourable member for Canterbury continues to incite me, it will get worse.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I can assure you it will not.

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The consultation was a farce and nothing more than a slick public relations stunt. In my 11 years in Parliament I have never been struck by a more cynical, more damaging campaign than that inflicted by Labor on my local community and, indeed, the rest of New South Wales. As I have stated emphatically, Hunters Hill High School is a strong, vibrant and successful school. Under the leadership of the acting principal, Judith Felton, it was a growing school, in complete contrast to the assertions of the Government that the enrolments were falling. Parents, teachers and residents know how wonderful the school is. As the local member I have often visited the school and been impressed with the fabulous education environment. I have been proud of the many academic, social, cultural and sporting accomplishments of the school. The successes of the school are also recognised outside of our community. For example, Maree O'Halloran of the New South Wales Teachers Federation stated:

Hunters Hill High School is clearly a thriving and successful local comprehensive high school, clearly successful on anybody's terms.

In 2000 the school was the third most successful comprehensive co-educational school in the State on academic grounds. As Bev Baker, former President of the New South Wales Federation of Parents and Citizens, remarked:

That school is a celebration. Hunters Hill High has got wonderful grounds, it has got superb teaching staff, and it has got facilities in the school to allow for expansion. It has the opportunity of being a lighthouse school.

It is time for a pop quiz. Can anyone tell me who said this in this very House a few years ago:

I also want to mention Hunters Hill High School and Epping Boys High School. Though they are outside my electorate they draw a substantial number of students from within. Both have ensured their students are well prepared for the higher school certificate and that the years the students spent at the schools have been happy, creative and valuable for them academically and socially. All these government schools have provided quality education based on ideals of equity and egalitarianism that value the unique individuality of each student.

Mr Debnam: Was it a Labor MP?

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: The honourable member is getting close. Yes, it was a Labor MP.

Mr Debnam: Someone on the front bench?

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: It was someone on the front bench.

Mr Fraser: It wouldn't be Johnny someone?

Mrs CHIKAROVSKI: Was it Johnny someone? It was, in fact, John Watkins, the Minister for Training and Education, the Minister who is now closing this school. What incredible hypocrisy! What an incredible double standard! Shame, John, shame! It is no wonder that Labor is so much on the nose. Hunters Hill High School and the land on which it is located are of major significance. One of the early uses of the land was that it was part of Mary Reiby's farm in the 1830s. For 75 years to just before World War II the site was used as a major picnic area for the people of Sydney. During the war it was utilised by the RAAF, and it was then set aside for public education. In 1958 the school was established. Apart from Parramatta High School, which was dedicated to serving a semi-rural community, Hunters Hill High became the first co-educational high school in the metropolitan area.

Many former students, including Labor's former and acclaimed Attorney General, Jeff Shaw, can attest to the fact that since then the school has been at the forefront of public education. Let me turn to the specific arguments proffered by Labor, which has officially argued that the school should close for one reason, enrolment numbers. Of course, that is not the real reason but I will come to that shortly. Enrolments are not falling; rather they are increasing. As the *Daily Telegraph* reported in August 2001, there were more than 800 expressions of interest from primary school students for 2002, and 90 enrolments confirmed for year 7 for 2002. This was despite Labor ignoring the needs of the school, discouraging enrolments and undermining confidence in the school. The school students are there. Some 46 per cent of students live within three kilometres of Hunters Hill High, a figure comparable with most other comprehensive schools.

The Government has also speculated that the demand for school places is down in the local Ryde area. If that is correct, why are parents from Hunters Hill High telling me that for 2003 they cannot get their sons and daughters into Epping Boys, Riverside Girls, Cheltenham Girls, or even Mosman High. That, more than

anything, is indicative of the demand for school places. The Government knows the reality: in five to 10 years demand for school places in the area will increase. Coupled with the swing back into inner-city living by families, which is implicitly encouraged by Planning NSW and local councils, young families will want the choice of sending their children to a local comprehensive high school. Dr Nick Parr from Macquarie University made projections of a significant increase, estimated to be 12.4 per cent by 2020 in the school-age population in the local catchment area. Closing the school is a gamble. As Gerard Noonan wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

But making a call on whether the drift away from public schools in an area such as Marrickville or Hunters Hill is likely to continue unabated over the next two decades is far harder. Once the property is sold, it's London to a brick that it can't be retrieved. Buying a suitable property to establish a new school in an established but newly revitalised suburb is a virtual impossibility.

Hunters Hill High has been singled out for special attention. The reality is that 81 other high schools have lower enrolments than Hunters Hill, but they are not targeted for closure. Honourable members can be assured that few of these schools would reside on such valuable land as Hunter Hill High School. That is the real reason why the school is to close. If the current or previous Minister were honest, they would simply admit it. They want to close Hunters Hill High School because they want to sell off the land on which the school is located. As Marilyn Parker, education writer for the *Daily Telegraph* correctly concluded, the decision to close the school was "never educationally based".

Real estate estimates are as high as \$60 million for the site. When the estimate went before John Aquilina, the then Minister for Education and Training, one can imagine how his eyes lit up with the promise of so much money, regardless of the educational value of the school. The Minister would have reacted with glee, knowing that he could try to make up for seven years of neglect by racing around and promising a lot of money for capital works to upgrade schools in Labor's marginal seats. As Kathy Prokhovnik, Vice-President of the Hunters Hill High Parents and Citizens, stated:

The school's closure has nothing to do with enrolments or educational opportunities. All that the Department of Education is desperately hiding is the fact that Hunters Hill High is a thriving school with an enviable academic record. What they can't hide is that the money from the sale of the school is to go from this Liberal electorate to boost schools in the surrounding Labor electorates.

That is not my quote; that is a quote from a parent from the school. Kathy goes on to conclude:

This is politics at its most cynical, its most destructive. If a thriving school can be sacrificed for political gain, what else are we about to lose?

The Government said it is not about money. Why, then, was the department instructed to carry out land valuations on a variety of schools in 2000, all of which have been suppressed from the public? We on this side of the House do not believe that you should close the school simply to fund Labor's re-election campaign. The New South Wales Coalition is a strong believer of choice in education, that parents and students should be afforded the choice between, on the one hand, a vibrant and public education system or, on the other, a non-government alternative. Closing Hunters Hill High is denying choice to parents. With places already chokers at other local high schools the choice for a local comprehensive school is severely limited. This, in turn, could force parents to send their kids to non-government schools, continuing the exodus from public education. As the Chair of the upper House inquiry, Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, stated:

The closure of the school seriously reduces the choices available to students on the lower North Shore. The loss of the site will have ramifications not only for the provision of education now but also for the future provision of schools.

If Hunters Hill High closes there will be no provision for public secondary education for boys in my electorate. For girls, Riverside is already well over its capacity of 840, with 950 students crammed into the existing school. I would ask honourable members to think about this: Hunters Hill High is not just about bricks and mortar, and land value. It is about real people, students and teachers and parents, coming together as a school community and moving forward in the pursuit of turning out fine young men and women. This is Hunters Hill High's finest achievement. Students who leave that school are well-rounded members of the community. It simply does not seem fair to close it down, turn off the educational tap, and destroy a school community, all in the name of a few bucks. I urge all members of the House to consider the merits of Hunters Hill High, and to talk to current and former students and listen to their passion.

A few weeks ago I went to a school reunion which was attended by more than 3,000 people. The goodwill that emanated for the school on that occasion was fantastic. Ask Jeff Shaw, who shared the platform with me on that day. We both agreed that Hunters Hill High was, and remains, a fantastic educational

institution. I am sure the former Attorney General would share my view, the Opposition's view, the community's view, and the teachers', students' and parents' view that this wonderful school should not be closed. I urge every member of this House to support the bill on its merits, to understand that it is a bill about people, not about dollars, and to vote accordingly. I commend the Save Hunters Hill High School Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Moss.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

GOVERNMENT (OPEN MARKET COMPETITION) BILL

Second Reading

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [10.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government (Open Market Competition) Bill is important to all citizens of New South Wales, and I hope that it will receive bipartisan support in this Chamber, like the freedom of information [FOI] reforms that were introduced in the Fiftieth Parliament. The Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans introduced this bill in the Legislative Council, and I am very pleased to take carriage of it in the Legislative Assembly. Like the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans, I am a very strong supporter of open and accountable government. The Government (Open Market Competition) Bill is a step toward revitalising devalued freedom of information legislation. Dr Chesterfield-Evans did not call this a freedom of information bill, because "it is trying to change the paradigm from nibbling at the bottom to actually changing a culture at the top".

My commitment to strong and effective freedom of information legislation has continued since the principles of open and accountable government formed part of my pre-election commitment in 1998 and I was first elected to represent the seat of Bligh. It is essential for democracy that the community and the media have full scrutiny of public decisions and the processes by which they are made, whether at the political or bureaucratic level. Full and free access to public information is not only a democratic right, it enables the community to scrutinise its Government and reduce the risk of corruption. A lack of transparency provides the environment for maladministration and corruption to flourish, with special rates and special deals that work against the interests of the public.

When the original Freedom of Information Act was introduced in 1988, Independent members played an important role in the debate. The Independents moved amendments that dealt with many issues, including reducing the maximum amount of time within which an agency could deal with an application, ensuring that the cost of obtaining information was within the reach of the average citizen, removing the five-year limitation on access to information, removing many of the excuses that agencies might put forward for not providing information, and reducing exemptions.

The Independents' Charter of Reform in the Fiftieth Parliament further addressed guaranteed open and accountable government. Improved freedom of information and increased scrutiny of statutory authorities were important goals of the charter. The aim of the Charter of Reform's freedom of information reforms was to make all Government information available unless there was a compelling case for the information to remain confidential. It was intended that any claim for exemption from the Freedom of Information Act should be required to demonstrate that the release of the document would be contrary to the public interest. In a letter to me dated 1 July 1991 in response to the Charter of Reform proposals, Premier Carr, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, reiterated the Labor Opposition's "support [for] reforms that promote the openness and accountability of Government". I remind the Premier and the Government of the Premier's commitment in 1991.

I am pleased to take carriage of this bill in the Legislative Assembly as it addresses serious limitations that have arisen in New South Wales freedom of information legislation during the Fifty-first and Fifty-second parliaments. Ironically, while Oppositions are enthusiastic users and beneficiaries of freedom of information, governments seem adept at honouring the letter of the legislation while using available loopholes to violate its spirit and intent. The problems with the current freedom of information legislation that this bill seeks to address include a lack of independent oversight of the FOI process, a persistent culture of secrecy, prohibitive charges, and excessive use of exemptions, especially commercial in confidence and Cabinet-in-confidence.

I commend the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans for his thorough research in preparing this bill. In November last year he organised a forum on open government, which was attended by speakers from Canada

and New Zealand. The transcript of the seminar's proceedings is available on the honourable member's web site, and hard copies are available from his office. New Zealand has led the way in the provision of government information to the public. The New Zealand Official Information Act came into force in 1982, it was widened in 1987, and it was reviewed in 1998. The Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand, Sir Brian Elwood, spoke at the open government forum in November and praised the success of the New Zealand legislation. He said that the usual concerns about the sky falling—we heard them during the Fiftieth Parliament—were expressed when the legislation was introduced: business claimed it would collapse, the Government was not supposed to survive, and so on. None of this happened, and the regime works very well.

Despite the principles of the Independent's Charter of Reform, the paradigm for FOI legislation has become non-disclosure unless there is a reason to disclose. The onus of proof should be on those wanting to maintain secrecy to prove that there is public benefit in doing so. The New Zealand legislation does just this, turning this presumption around so that information is made available unless there is a good reason under the Act to withhold it. Claims of commercial in confidence or Cabinet in confidence are not enough. In 1999 the New South Wales Auditor-General urged similar increased openness, stating that governments had been too willing to hide behind the excuse of commercial-in-confidence when refusing to reveal details of agreements with the private sector.

Since the Fiftieth Parliament it has become apparent that the community is receiving less information on important matters. Requests for information are routinely denied, usually with the claim that information is commercial in confidence or is a Cabinet document. Mechanisms such as parliamentary inquiries are often obstructed through an overload of irrelevant witnesses or irrelevant documents. Over recent years, information on issues affecting the Bligh electorate, including such important issues as the Eastern Distributor tollway, Fox Studios, Woolloomooloo Wharf, Tennis New South Wales leases at Homebush Bay, and currently the cross-city tunnel have been held back. I refer members to the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans' second reading speech in the Legislative Council for further examples of the frustrations and failures of the current FOI regime.

The New South Wales public has a right to know who is paying, whether people living near major infrastructure projects are paying through their amenity for private profits, and whether contractual arrangements are in the best interests of the New South Wales public. Whilst it is the Government's job to look after the interests of the public sector, the absence of information adds to the appearance that the Government is aiding and abetting private corporations to make money out of the public.

This bill seeks to ensure that all government contracts and their associated tendering documents are made publicly available by all public authorities. The documents are to be available free of charge for inspection and on a web site, with the responsibility oversighted by the Ombudsman. Public authorities are defined in clause 3 of the bill as the Government of New South Wales, a statutory body representing the Crown, an authority constituted for a public purpose, a State-owned corporation or any of its subsidiaries, or a council or county council within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1993.

The second object of the bill is to allow the Auditor-General to inspect and examine the accounts of persons or bodies that receive Government grants. It is fair and reasonable that bodies that receive public moneys should have to, and be able to, account for how that money is spent. I am sure that all honourable members would agree with that. Since the bill was first drafted, it has benefited from input and consultation and it has been amended in response to the concerns raised by people and bodies, including the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General. The bill was further amended since its introduction into the Legislative Council to further clarify it and to respond to reasonable concerns.

The bill has been amended, firstly, to provide a time limit of two weeks for the public authority to make copies of the contract available for inspection. I would expect important documents to be available for much longer, particularly on a web site. The requirement for information to be placed on the Internet is most important as it will allow anyone with a computer to access government information. It is particularly useful for people with restricted mobility or those who live in rural and regional New South Wales.

Secondly, the bill has been amended in response to suggestions from the Deputy Ombudsman to allow the Ombudsman to conduct preliminary inquiries into claims of confidentiality by public authorities. The original bill required an investigation into such claims, which is a more formal and time-consuming exercise. Thirdly, an amendment has been made to change the body responsible for overseeing what information could be withheld from the Auditor-General to the Ombudsman. The Auditor-General felt that the Ombudsman was in a better position to make the assessment since its office would scrutinise the performance of public authorities in relation to the bill.

Fourthly, the bill has been amended to respond to Government members' concerns and refine the circumstances under which the Ombudsman can certify that information might not be released. Finally, the bill has been amended to ensure that the Auditor-General has discretion to audit any grant, rather than to be required to audit all grants, and to provide guidelines on the examination of grant money expenditure to ensure that taxpayers' money is being spent wisely and well. The Auditor-General is to examine the spending of grant money on the basis of whether it was economically, efficiently, and effectively spent. I give notice that I will move a further amendment in Committee to make the definition of "public authority" in this bill consistent with the meaning it has in the Ombudsman Act 1974. This amendment was moved in the Legislative Council, but was negatived without a division. This is a simple amendment that enhances the aims of the bill and is in line with ensuring that New South Wales legislation is clear and consistent.

One perception of this bill in the Legislative Council was that it would cost too much to implement. The New Zealand experience is useful in this regard. Initially there were challenges to the operation of the legislation, but they dwindled quickly once the scope of the Act was established and defined. The cost to a public authority of making contracts available for public inspection is negligible. The cost of open government must also be balanced against the cost of closed government, where significant time and money is wasted trying to have documents made available. The New South Wales taxpayer has had to pay the legal bills for both parties in two major court cases: *Egan v Willis* and *Egan v Chadwick and anor*. Many contracts released after significant battles have been revealed to cost the taxpayers much more than they should have. The publishing of contracts will encourage better bargains and better alternatives. This bill is good for business, good for the taxpayers of New South Wales and good for open and accountable government.

Open, transparent government is a basic democratic right, and public funds are better spent providing for this basic right than battling to keep information secret. There is a worldwide trend toward more open government, strongly supported by public demand for greater accountability, and the New South Wales Government must respond. We need a culture that acknowledges the public's right to access Government information to ensure that the information is made routinely available without citizens having to beg and pay for it, and that the release of information is not blocked as a result of political considerations. This bill aims to make government contracts open, to show where government money goes, and to provide a mechanism for enforcement through the Ombudsman's office. I again commend the Hon. Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans for his excellent work on this bill. I commend the bill to the House and urge all honourable members to support it in the interests of good governance in New South Wales.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Moss.

CONVEYANCING AMENDMENT (MORTGAGES) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 8 March 2001.

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [10.44 a.m.]: The Conveyancing Amendment (Mortgages) Bill will impose on mortgagees and chargees who exercise their power of sale over real estate a higher duty of care than exists under current New South Wales case law. The bill only applies to land, which of course includes all fixtures attached to that land. It does not apply to personal property. The Government is pleased to support the bill, but with some amendments which I will move in Committee and which I will outline shortly.

The Government consulted widely on the implications of this bill. A discussion paper analysing the issues was prepared by my department and circulated to 26 organisations and individuals, including consumer groups, lending bodies, the Law Society of New South Wales, and the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales. It was a very thorough discussion paper. I take this opportunity to commend the officers from Land and Property Information New South Wales who did a great job in preparing the paper.

The department received 11 submissions in response to the discussion paper. Of those, five supported the bill either in full or in part, while six submissions opposed the bill. Not surprisingly, the majority of opposing submissions came from lending bodies or organisations representing lending bodies. The amendments I will propose are based on the submissions received and seek to strike a balance between the objective of enhanced consumer protection for borrowers, which we support, and excessive, possibly counterproductive, regulation. The law in New South Wales on this issue is presently governed by case law, not by statute. The

current duty of a mortgagee is to act in good faith when selling the borrower's property and not to act wilfully or recklessly. In his second reading speech the honourable member for Ballina, when giving reasons why a change in the law is necessary, said:

This relatively low duty of care can have the effect of sacrificing the [borrower's] interests when the property is sold. The temptation for financiers in New South Wales is to sell assets with a view to ensuring their own debt is covered with little regard to any remaining equity held by the borrower.

In other words, there is concern that lenders do not always take steps to achieve the highest possible sale price. Rather, the temptation exists to look after their own interests and sell the property at a price that ensures their own debt is covered but which may be below market value. If a fair market price were obtained, there might be something left over for the borrower. Numerous cases have reached the courts where an unhappy borrower has sued the mortgagee, alleging that a property has been sold for less than the true market value. The borrower either sought to have the sale set aside or claimed damages from the mortgagee for the loss, that is, the difference between the actual sale price and the alleged "true market value".

The intention of this bill is to make sure that when mortgagees sell a property they will be obliged to take all reasonable care to sell it for not less than its market value. Such an obligation is only fair and reasonable. The change will bring the law in New South Wales into line with the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001. The bill is modelled on section 420A of the Corporations Act, which applies to a "controller" of company property. The expression "controller" includes a mortgagee or a receiver. A controller is required to take reasonable care to sell the property for not less than its market value, if it has a market value, or, if it does not have a market value, for the best price reasonably obtainable in the circumstances. It deals with two possible situations: one where property has a market value and one where it does not have a market value.

However, this section of the Corporations Act covers not only real estate but all property owned by a company—both real estate and personal property. There are some types of personal property which do not have a "market value" because there is no existing, independent market which would determine a market value. Examples could be shares in a private company or intellectual property. On the other hand, all real estate has a market value. It should always be possible to ascertain the market value of real estate. This bill only applies to real estate. Therefore, there is no need for the second alternative dealing with property which does not have a market value. In Committee I will move an amendment to delete existing subsection (1) of new section 111A and insert instead a new subsection (1), which reads:

- (1) In exercising a power of sale in respect of mortgaged or charged land, a mortgagee or chargee must take all reasonable care to sell the land for not less than its market value when it is sold.

Queensland and the Northern Territory have legislation that also adopts this approach. Under common law, the decision as to the timing of the sale is entirely within a mortgagee's direction. Mortgagees can choose when to sell the property, and it cannot be alleged against them that they would have obtained a higher price had they sold sooner or delayed the sale. This legislation is not intended to change that position. The use of the words "when it is sold" in subsection (1) after "market value" is intended to make it clear that the mortgagee's duty is to take care to obtain the market value of the land at the time it is sold, whenever that may be.

The second amendment I will move relates to subsection (2) of new section 111A. Subsection (2) as presently drafted would impose a duty on mortgagees, while in possession of the property, to take all reasonable care to prevent the value of the mortgaged property from being diminished. No other State or Commonwealth legislation imposes a similar duty. It is not clear how far mortgagees would be obliged to go in order to satisfy this duty. It is potentially a very onerous duty and could well work against the interests of borrowers rather than help them. Any money spent maintaining a property would be added to the mortgage debt.

Whether that amount would be offset by a selling price higher than would be achieved if no maintenance were carried out would be problematic and could depend on other factors such as the state of the market. A seller who is keen not to be held in breach of this duty may spend on maintenance an amount greater than any increase in the value of the property. Such a situation would leave the borrower worse off. This concern is particularly applicable to rural properties because it is not uncommon for it to take some time to find a buyer. Therefore, the Government does not support this proposal and I will move in Committee to delete the existing subsection (2).

The third amendment I propose to move relates to consequential amendments that are necessary as a result of introducing new section 111A. Parliamentary Counsel has identified three provisions, namely, section

112 (7) of the Conveyancing Act 1919, section 115 (2) of the Conveyancing Act and section 58 (1) of the Real Property Act 1900, which contain provisions that affect or conflict with new section 111A. It is necessary to ensure that the duty imposed by this bill overrides any other provision that may detract from that duty. Therefore, I propose to move in Committee that a new subsection be added to section 111A to provide that:

Nothing in section 112 (7) or 115 (2) of this Act, or in section 58 (1) of the Real Property Act 1900, affects the duty imposed by this section.

For convenience, I propose that the new subsection be numbered (2) and be inserted in place of existing subsection (2), which is being deleted. This avoids the necessity of renumbering the other subsections. I support this bill with the amendments outlined above.

Mr PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [10.55 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the Conveyancing Amendment (Mortgages) Bill 2001. First, I congratulate the member for Ballina, who introduced this private member's bill, because this has been an important and provocative issue in country New South Wales and country Australia for several decades. These new provisions will be enthusiastically welcomed, particularly by those who are in the greatest financial difficulty. I also congratulate the Minister on adopting the bill. Witnessing the acknowledgment of a private member's bill is a unique experience, and it is my first as a member of Parliament. I thank the Minister for his acknowledgment of it. This is about good legislation and good government for the people of New South Wales.

This is important legislation. Every member of Parliament who represents a country electorate has dealt with constituents who have been the victims of unscrupulous mortgage providers. They have given little consideration to mortgagees who have found themselves in trouble when they have tried to sell their properties. These safeguards are very important. My electorate is no exception. One of my constituents, Mr Tony Civarella, has been battling the ANZ Bank for a few years, and, given the difficulties he is experiencing, the timing of this legislation is appropriate. Mr Civarella entered into a significant loan with the ANZ Bank under certain terms and conditions. As we all know, the big print giveth and the small print taketh away. He has certainly learnt that, and that the power and resources of a large corporation such as the ANZ Bank swamp and overwhelm any individual. The battle he has fought against the bank has taken a financial toll on him. He found himself in difficulty, but the three-year battle with the bank has hurt him even more. Apart from the financial toll, he and his wife and children have been subjected to a significant personal toll.

According to Mr Civarella, the bank has acted unconscionably. He was having difficulties with the bank, but it was very heavy-handed and made life difficult for him. It has used unreliable and inaccurate valuations. Valuing irrigation properties and water assets is a complex business, and the bank sent in inexperienced personnel to undertake that work. For some reason they did not see existing rice crops. That affected the valuations and, therefore, the way in which the bank dealt with the Civarellas. This is an ongoing case and I appreciate the opportunity to raise it in this debate. I again congratulate the member for Ballina on introducing this important amendment, and the Minister on accepting it.

Mr HICKEY (Cessnock) [10.58 a.m.]: I support this bill, with the amendments outlined by my colleague the Minister for Information Technology. I also acknowledge that the honourable member for Ballina's legislation will be a significant contribution to the community. It is great to see the Minister working tirelessly for New South Wales. I wish to focus on one of the amendments foreshadowed by the Minister; namely, the deletion of subsection (2) of proposed section 111A. As presently drafted, that subsection would impose on mortgagees a duty to take all reasonable care while in possession of the property to prevent the value of the property from being diminished. It is effectively a duty to maintain the property.

I would like to address how this duty, were it to be implemented, would affect borrowers in rural New South Wales. Any money spent on a property by a mortgagee while in possession would be added to the outstanding balance of the mortgage debt and would, therefore, increase the amount owed by the borrower. Interest would also accrue on the sum expended. There is often a significant time delay between taking possession of property in rural areas and finalising the sale, for the simple reason that it is often not as easy to find a buyer for rural or remote properties as it is for properties in metropolitan Sydney. There is no time limit on this proposed duty. Is a mortgagee to be obliged to maintain the property for years or possibly indefinitely? Prolonged expenditure would impose an intolerable burden on the already suffering borrower.

We must not forget that if the sale price of the property is less than the amount owing to the mortgagee, the mortgagee can pursue the borrower for the difference after the sale. A prolonged period of expenditure on a property could change a borrower's position from one in which they might expect some surplus from the

proceeds of sale—after paying out the mortgagee—to one in which the proceeds of sale were insufficient to cover the debt and the mortgagee would come after the borrower for the balance. Such a situation would be unacceptable and would disproportionately affect the rural sector, yet it is a possibility under proposed subsection (2). As the Minister has outlined, the Government produced a comprehensive discussion paper on this bill. Credit Union Services Corporation (Aust) Ltd, the association representing credit unions, and the Australian Association of Permanent Building Societies both made submissions in response to the discussion paper that highlighted the potentially counterproductive impact of this duty on people in rural and regional New South Wales. The building societies in their submission stated:

The necessity of maintaining rural or remote properties for potentially extended periods of time during the mortgagee's possession is also likely to affect the pricing of the loan. These undesirable consequences will exacerbate the already difficult lending environment in the bush.

The analysis and consultation undertaken by the Government in respect of this bill has resulted in amendments that will ensure that the final legislation balances the need to protect the interests of borrowers with the need to ensure that their ability to borrow, and the cost of borrowing, is not undermined, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. I congratulate the Minister and his department on undertaking the consultation and bringing forward amendments that will make this a better bill. I commend the bill, with the foreshadowed amendments, to the House.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [11.01 a.m.], in reply: I thank all honourable members who have participated in debate on the Conveyancing Amendment (Mortgages) Bill: the Minister, the honourable member for Murrumbidgee and the honourable member for Cessnock. At the outset I acknowledge that the Government's response to this bill has been both sensible and reasonable. I say that because instead of just rejecting any legislation that comes from the Opposition, on this occasion the Government chose to issue a discussion paper on the bill. That discussion paper, entitled "Mortgagees' Power of Sale", was released in April by the Department of Information Technology and Management.

I compliment the department, and Mr Alan King, in particular, on the quality of the discussion paper. It significantly improved the bill. I thank also Kelly Livingston from the Minister's office for keeping me informed about the Government's progress on the bill. Indeed, the fact that good sense has prevailed has been a victory for democracy. The discussion paper covered the central issue of the duty of care on sale of property, the absence of legislation in New South Wales, which my bill seeks to address, the so-called good faith test, and Australian cases and legislation in other States, namely, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania. It also dealt with market value for property, what a mortgagee should or should not do, and concluded with an invitation for comments from the public on a series of 10 questions which go to the heart of my legislation.

Responses to the discussion paper contained both support and opposition to the legislation, and I shall comment on some of those arguments shortly. The bill can be divided into three central concepts. The first and most important concept involves imposing a duty of care on mortgagees when they are exercising a power of sale in respect of mortgaged property and that they take all reasonable steps to ensure that the property is sold at market value. I note that the Government has agreed in essence with this aspect of the bill, and I appreciate that support.

This measure alone takes the duty of care for mortgagees from merely acting in good faith, and not acting wilfully or recklessly, to a much higher duty of care, which is to secure market price. I note that this aspect of the bill was supported in the submissions by Professor Peter Butt from the Faculty of Law, University of Sydney; Mr Peter Jackson, Partner in Jackson Smith, who was responsible for bringing this matter to my attention; the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales; and the Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales.

Predictably, this increased duty of care was opposed by the Australian Bankers Association and the Commonwealth Bank, which basically argued that the legislation is not necessary. It is interesting that the Department of Housing believes that "the quick sale has been in the best financial interests of both the mortgagee and the mortgagor". It believes that a quick sale is a good sale. I cannot agree with that approach and I find that view from a government department somewhat disturbing.

The Government has indicated that it will move an amendment in Committee which, although worded slightly differently to new section 111A (1) (a), nevertheless embraces the central purpose of the bill. The Government supports the view that in exercising a power of sale in respect of mortgaged land, a mortgagee must take all reasonable care to sell the land for not less than its market value when it is sold. I find that wording quite acceptable. New section 111A (1) (b) refers to obtaining the best price in the circumstances when a property

does not have a market value. A number of submissions to the discussion paper made the point that it is difficult to conceive a situation in which property does not have a market value. On reflection, I am persuaded that this is a valid argument, given that we are talking about a tangible asset like real estate or property. Accordingly, I am happy to accept that paragraph (b) is not required.

The third concept in new section 111A (2) deals with the mortgagee taking all reasonable care to prevent the value of the mortgage property from being diminished. This measure was supported by Professor Peter Butt, Peter Jackson and the Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales. On the other hand, the Australian Association of Permanent Building Societies, the Credit Union Services Corporation (Aust) Ltd and the Australian Bankers Association oppose this provision on the basis that it would add to the cost of the borrower because the costs to the mortgagee of maintaining the property would be added to the outstanding debts and would not be in the borrower's best interests. The Australian Association of Permanent Building Societies stated that because rural properties often take longer to sell than city properties the costs of maintaining these properties to ensure value is not diminished could be a real problem for borrowers in regional areas. The association further stated:

The duty imposed by section 111A (2) of the Bill will no doubt result in needless and costly litigation to determine the ambit of the duty. Ironically, it is likely that defaulting borrowers will allege that the costs incurred by the mortgagee in maintaining the property (which will reduce the borrower's equity in the property) was unnecessary or unapproved by the borrower.

Of course, the intention of the legislation is to protect the interests of the borrower by maintaining the asset in its current condition and not allowing it to deteriorate. Having said that, an argument can be made that new section 111A (2) could have unintended consequences, and in view of the possible negative outcomes for the borrower, particularly as the mortgagee is able to legally pass on its costs of maintenance to the borrower, I am reluctant to pursue this subsection in its current form.

The central tenet of the bill remains. It will lift the duty of care exercised by mortgagees when they are exercising their power of sale to ensure that property is sold at market value. In order to achieve this market value the mortgagee will, in practice, have to ensure that the property is properly advertised and allow sufficient time and include a proper description of the property, including any relevant commercial attributes. That is an important aspect of the legislation. As a result of this bill the duty of care of mortgagees when exercising their power of sale will be much clearer than is currently the situation under common law, where the duty of care is much lower.

I thank all those who have commented on my private member's bill. Special thanks go to Peter Jackson, who drew my attention to the fact that something should be done. I thank also the Minister and the Government for their constructive approach and, as I said before, Alan King and Kelly Livingston for their assistance throughout the process and for ensuring a very good response to the bill. The Minister has foreshadowed that he will move an amendment in Committee and I will accept that amendment as drafted. Ultimately I believe we will have legislation that has no unintended consequences and will achieve everything I had hoped.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Schedule 1

Amendment by Mr Yeadon agreed to:

Page 3, lines 6-18, schedule 1, proposed section 111A (1) and (2). Omit all words on those lines.
Insert instead:

- (1) In exercising a power of sale in respect of mortgaged or charged land, a mortgagee or chargee must take all reasonable care to sell the land for not less than its market value when it is sold.
- (2) Nothing in section 112 (7) or 115 (2) of this Act, or in section 58 (1) of the *Real Property Act 1900*, affects the duty imposed by this section.

Schedule 1 as amended agreed to.

Bill reported from Committee with an amendment and passed through remaining stages.

POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT (ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS) BILL**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 8 March 2001.

Mrs LO PO' (Penrith) [11.13 a.m.]: The Government cannot support the Police Integrity Commission Amendment (Access to Documents) Bill 2001 because it is misconceived and fundamentally flawed. This amateurish "Tinkering", one might say, with critical legislation is a clear demonstration of the Opposition's inexperience and unsuitability for government. The honourable member for Epping suggests that the bill is necessary to address restrictions imposed by clause 46 of the Police Regulation 2000, which deals with police use of confidential information, that were apparently highlighted in the Supreme Court matter of *Commissioner of Police v Kenneth Seddon and Others*, a matter involving former members of the New South Wales Police Crime Management Support Unit. When the honourable member for Epping introduced this bill the Government sought the comments of the then Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission, Judge Paul Urquhart, QC, who advised:

I wish to make it clear that, at least so far as the Commission is aware, clause 46 of the Police Service Regulation 2000 was not the reason why former members of the Crime Management Support Unit... were prevented from volunteering documents to the Commission as part of its investigation into allegations by and about members of the CMSU. Rather, these persons were prevented from volunteering information to the Commission by virtue of orders made by Justice Hulme of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.

I also wish to emphasise that, to the best of my knowledge, there has never been an instance where clause 46 of the 2000 Regulation has prevented the Commission from receiving information sought to be volunteered by a member of the Police Service.

The honourable member for Epping suggests this bill will ensure that members of NSW Police are safely able to volunteer documents and other information to the commission. Unfortunately, the bill's content does not match up to the honourable member's rhetoric. Instead, it may limit the material that can be safely volunteered to the Police Integrity Commission [PIC] and the circumstances in which it can be volunteered. This bill may stop people coming forward to the PIC with some information.

Legislation is currently silent on the circumstances in which information may be volunteered to the PIC, although the PIC's extensive powers to demand material are detailed in sections 25 and 26 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996. New section 60A of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 proposed by the honourable member for Epping would provide that certain material could be volunteered to the PIC. This may have the effect of restricting the volunteering of information that does not meet the requirements of the proposed section. The proposed section does not cover all the material that the PIC has a legitimate interest in or the circumstances in which it can be provided. Whilst the proposed section addresses information and documents, it does not authorise the volunteering of "other things". Section 26 of the Act specifically provides that the commission is entitled to "other things" in addition to information and documents.

The bill also does not enable a former member of NSW Police to disclose relevant material voluntarily. The bill's reference to a "member of the Police Service" does not include a reference to a former member of NSW Police. It should be noted that the case that the honourable member for Epping apparently relies on to justify the need for this bill involved former NSW Police employees. The bill's focus on "the conduct of a member of the Police Service" does not reflect the scope of the information that the PIC has a legitimate interest in, having regard to its functions. Section 3 (d) of the Police Integrity Commission Act provides that one of the principal objects of the Act is to provide for the auditing and monitoring of particular aspects of the operations and procedures of NSW Police. The jurisdiction of the commission is not limited to matters involving police conduct. Section 23 (2) of the Act gives the commission extremely broad investigative powers. That section provides:

The Commission may conduct an investigation even though no particular police officer or other person has been implicated and even though no police misconduct is suspected.

The then Minister for Police, the honourable member for Strathfield, in commenting on section 23 (2) in his second reading speech to the Police Integrity Commission Bill 1996, noted:

... the Government and the royal commission remain firmly of the belief that the Police Integrity Commission must have the ability to conduct proactive investigations, and requires a wide discretion to do so. The wording of the clause ensures that the necessary jurisdiction exists..."

It follows that the power of the Commission under sections 25 and 26 to demand information, documents or other things for the purposes of an investigation, is similarly unlimited. If the PIC has unlimited access to NSW Police information subject to consideration of any possible claim of privilege, it follows that information that may be volunteered to the PIC should be similarly unlimited. The bill places inappropriate limits on the material that may be volunteered to the PIC. The bill introduced by the honourable member for Epping has more holes in it than Swiss cheese and must be opposed by all sensible members of Parliament.

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [11.20 a.m.]: The Police Integrity Commission Amendment (Access to Documents) Bill 2001 purports to respond to difficulties apparently created by clause 46 of the Police Regulation 2000. As the honourable member for Penrith said, the former Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission [PIC] advised that clause 46 had not prevented the Commission from receiving information sought to be volunteered by members of NSW Police. Clause 46 deals with police use of confidential information. The second reading speech of the honourable member for Epping suggests that clause 46 is some recent invention of the Government, introduced in 2000.

Clause 46 substantially remakes clause 55 of the Police Service Regulation 1990, but extends its application to civilian employees as well as police officers. This recognises the Carr Government's increased focus on civilianising non-core policing functions to return police officers to the front line. As police and civilian employees have access to sensitive law enforcement information, it is appropriate that the confidentiality requirements of clause 46 should apply equally. Clause 46 (1) provides:

A member of NSW Police must treat all information which comes to his or her knowledge in his or her official capacity as strictly confidential, and on no account without proper authority divulge it to anyone.

"Proper authority" includes any law, NSW Police policy or the approval of a suitably senior officer. The proper authority exception is of critical importance as it makes clause 46 subservient to all other laws, policies and directions. Clause 46 also does not operate to prevent the performance of operational police duties or police giving information for the purpose of dealing with an emergency when life or property is at risk.

In his second reading speech the honourable member for Epping contemplates Parliament overturning clause 46. This is very dangerous stuff. Clause 46 recognises that police frequently have access to extremely sensitive information in the course of their duties and it is in the public interest to place controls on the release of that information. For example, NSW Police employees should not be able to freely disclose information that could compromise criminal investigations, reveal the location of informants, or create any other risks. Clause 46 has not operated to prevent the PIC from receiving relevant information. Indeed, in the very case the honourable member for Epping relies upon, that is, *Commissioner of Police v Kenneth Seddon and Others*, Mr Justice Hulme made orders on 22 December 2000 that the former NSW Police employees should be able to deliver copies of certain police documents to the PIC. Those orders were reaffirmed by Mr Justice Hulme on 28 December 2000.

The former Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission advised that clause 46 had not caused difficulties in the PIC accessing documents because "the complaints regime and protected disclosures regimes already virtually cover the field." In other words, Part 8A of the Police Act 1990, section 206 of that Act and the Protected Disclosures Act 1994, are proper authority for the volunteering of information to the PIC, within the meaning of clause 46 of the Police Regulation. As noted by the former commissioner, "The mischief that the bill seeks to correct is, therefore, for all intents and purposes, largely theoretical."

Whilst the honourable member for Epping may spend his time seeking to address theoretical matters, the Carr Government is interested in developing practical solutions to address genuine problems. The bill does not address how the proposed section 60A is to interact with the Protected Disclosures Act or the complaint provisions of the Police Act, both of which may be used to volunteer information to the PIC. The narrow scope of the material that may be volunteered, and the circumstances in which it may be volunteered, has already been raised by the honourable member for Penrith. I would ask the honourable member for Epping to consider whether this narrow construction would result in complaints and protected disclosure legislation being read down to limit the information that can be provided by NSW Police employees under those schemes.

I also note that the bill continues to refer to the Police Service Act 1990 and the Police Service. The Opposition may recall that it supported the Police Service Amendment (NSW Police) Act 2002, which renamed the Police Service as NSW Police and the Police Service Act as the Police Act. These changes took effect on 12 July this year and the Police Integrity Commission Act no longer employs the old terms regurgitated in this bill. The bill should be opposed because it is a clumsy over-reaction that has been developed in isolation without consideration of other relevant legislation and because it may actually have the effect of limiting the circumstances in which material can be volunteered to the PIC.

Mr BROWN (Kiama) [11.25 a.m.]: The Police Integrity Commission Amendment (Access to Documents) Bill 2001 is based on fundamental misunderstandings as to the scope of clause 46 of the Police Regulation 2000 and the arguments the Supreme Court was asked to consider in *Commissioner of Police v Kenneth Seddon and Others*. It seems to be the way of the Opposition at the moment. The Liberal Party and the National Party of this State are continuing to misunderstand and trying to confuse the electorate over all policing and crime issues, and shame on them. The public deserves to have fair and frank information relayed to them by the media and this Chamber, but instead this mob here get up and ask questions; they try to confuse the public on these very important issues.

The honourable member for Epping suggests that NSW Police, and by implication the Government, tried to prevent the PIC from accessing information held by former members of the Crime Management Support Unit. This is not the case. Again the Opposition has got it wrong. The Government and NSW Police support the PIC having access to all material necessary for it to properly exercise its functions, whether obtained from NSW Police, current NSW Police employees, former NSW Police employees or the butcher, baker, candlestick maker or tinker. Section 26 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 gives the commission the power to compel the production of a document or other thing by any person other than the ICAC, the Ombudsman or officers of those bodies.

Section 25 gives the commission the power to compel the production of a statement of information by a public authority or public official, including NSW Police or a member of NSW Police. The former Commissioner of Police sought orders from Mr Justice Hulme of the Supreme Court in December 2000 in the matter of *Commissioner of Police v Kenneth Seddon and Others* that recently-removed members of NSW Police be prevented from volunteering to the PIC NSW Police documents that had been improperly removed from NSW Police control.

On 28 December 2000 Mr Toomey, QC, appearing on behalf of Commissioner Ryan, made it clear that NSW Police would willingly provide the documents in question to the PIC if the documents were returned to NSW Police. Moreover, prior to that date there had been communications between senior members of NSW Police and the PIC in which it was made clear to the PIC that NSW Police was not seeking to prevent material being provided to the PIC and that arrangements would be made to immediately provide the PIC with the documents in question as soon as they were returned to NSW Police. It was also open to the PIC to order the former officers to produce the documents to the PIC under section 26 of the Police Integrity Commission Act as the PIC was aware of the existence of those documents.

This was never a case about preventing the PIC from accessing relevant documents and information. It was a case to discourage persons from removing original NSW Police documents, thereby destroying the integrity of police records and limiting their usefulness. NSW Police has quite proper concerns that its original documents should not be removed without its knowledge. The PIC understands these concerns. The loss of control of original documents may prevent NSW Police from being able to properly answer any allegations arising from those documents or being able to fully assist the PIC in its investigations. The removal of some documents from a wider collection of documents may also limit the ability to assess the context of the documents as a whole and negatively affect the management of NSW Police.

Encouraging third parties to remove original police documents and to volunteer them to the commission would also be inconsistent with the record protection provisions of the State Records Act 1998. Original records that are improperly removed from NSW Police, or key parts of those records, might be lost, destroyed, tampered with or otherwise mistreated. That is not to say that legislation should not be considered to put beyond any doubt the right of any person to provide any relevant information to the PIC. However, this bill does not do that.

At the suggestion of the former Commissioner of the PIC the Government referred this bill to the review of the Police Integrity Commission Act for consideration. All of the problems raised in debate on the bill were confirmed through the review process and are dealt with in detail in the report on the review of the Police Integrity Commission Act, which will be tabled shortly. The Minister for Police will pursue a number of amendments to improve the operation of the Police Integrity Commission Act in response to the recommendations of the review. The commissioners of the Police Integrity Commission and NSW Police support any legislation that deals with NSW Police employees volunteering material to the PIC and protects the integrity of NSW Police's holdings of its original documents.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS PATIENT ACCESS**Debate resumed from 5 September.**

Mr McMANUS (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.30 a.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after the word "That" with a view to inserting in lieu thereof:

"this House

- (1) commends the dedicated staff who work in our health system, particularly those who work in the emergency departments, and
- (2) expresses its appreciation to the clinicians and others who worked on developing the government action plan for Health's emergency department services plan."

I listened with interest to the speech of the honourable member for North Shore on this issue. I was not sure that I heard her correctly so I checked *Hansard*. On the second page of her speech she stated:

Some weeks ago I gave a conference outside the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital when eight ambulances were in the car park at any one time. I estimate that up to 16 ambulances had come and gone in the car park during the period of the interview.

My reply to that is: Is that not what ambulances are supposed to do?

Mrs Skinner: Not stuck there, mate.

Mr McMANUS: There was no indication that they were stuck. You have indicated once again how incompetent you are in relation to the things that you tell this House.

Mrs Skinner: They were stuck in the car park.

Mr McMANUS: I reiterate that that is not what the honourable member said on the second page of her speech. She said:

I estimated that 16 ambulances had come and gone in the car park during the period of the interview.

So they were doing exactly what the Government expects them to do. In the past year almost 12,000 patients arrived in emergency departments requiring the highest category for treatment, that is, resuscitation. Those 12,000 people received precisely that, the highest treatment. They were treated within two minutes—every one of them. Back in 1995, under the Coalition, only 76 per cent of those types of patients were treated in the required time. Treating 100 per cent of those patients within two minutes means that often the patients who are not so seriously ill—those whose conditions are assessed as semi-urgent or non-urgent—have to wait longer. Those people represent more than half of all people seeking treatment in emergency departments. People go to emergency departments because they are ill and worried. Some people are very ill when they arrive; others have less serious complaints. Not everyone needs immediate, urgent care.

I recall a person recently ringing a talk-back program complaining about the wait he had in the local emergency department. He had gone there to get treatment for an ingrown toenail. While that may have been important to him, the focus of emergency departments is on providing emergency health care. Emergency departments are not immune to other issues such as the decline in bulk billing by general practitioners and fewer out-of-hours GP services. In May this year a woman in a regional centre took her son to the local hospital. She arrived at 9.30 at night. Her son had cold symptoms and she wanted him checked. If there had been a GP who made home visits, who was available out-of-hours and who bulk billed she need not have taken herself and her child out in the cold night air to get treatment or reassurance at the emergency department.

Every minute of every day three people are seen in emergency departments. Every minute of every day people pour through our emergency departments. All the most critically ill patients—those needing resuscitation—are seen immediately. Our emergency departments saw an extra 5,000 patients in July this year compared with the same period in the previous year. We should applaud the extraordinary efforts of those who work in our emergency departments. The honourable member for North Shore says emergency departments are gridlocked because there are not enough beds. She talks about the Government closing more than 4,000 beds. She does not talk about the number of beds the Coalition closed when it was in government. It closed more than

7,000 beds. It closed, wound down or privatised 30 hospitals. It closed the Western Suburbs Hospital. It closed Kiama Hospital, which we reopened. I well remember that at that time the then Minister for Health, Peter Collins, was determined to close the beautiful little hospital at Coledale in my electorate, and he put Bulli hospital under threat.

The Coalition privatised Port Macquarie Base Hospital, which the now Independent member for Port Macquarie wants brought back into the public hospital system. But the issue is not about the number of beds; it is about patients getting quality care in our hospitals: 100 per cent of all patients who need the most urgent, life-saving resuscitation treatment in emergency departments get that care. On 2 September this year the *Illawarra Mercury* published a letter from Peter Gebauer about his experience at his local emergency department. After an early morning fall he needed stitches and a tetanus shot and he attended the hospital I just mentioned had been under threat from the previous Government. He wrote:

I went up to Bulli Hospital and, after previous media reports, expected a lengthy delay ... I was treated and ready to leave within 20 minutes. I want people to know that the media hype about long waiting times is not always accurate.

Last year, 2000-01, our public hospitals treated 153,000 more patients than were treated in 1994-95. That is 1.42 million people admitted to our hospitals in one year. If the honourable member for North Shore wants to debate beds rather than quality health care she might want to consider the plight of the older people staying in public hospitals who should instead be in aged-care homes. Nearly 800 are waiting for admission to an aged-care facility—to one of the Commonwealth's "phantom beds", beds that should be there for older people but are not.

The cost to the New South Wales hospital system to care for those older people each year is over \$60 million or about 180,000 bed-days annually. That is the equivalent of 488 beds or a tertiary referral hospital the size of Liverpool being taken up by older people who should be in aged-care homes. Gosford Hospital can have up to 30 patients—or a whole ward—waiting for nursing home type beds. These are people who are in Gosford Hospital not because they need medical treatment but because they cannot be cared for at home and have nowhere else to go. When you take a whole ward out of action at a hospital such as Gosford—the only trauma hospital on the Central Coast—it has an impact on how the whole hospital is managed. It has an impact on the emergency department. It means there are fewer ward beds to which patients can be transferred from the emergency department. That means that patients are forced to stay in the emergency department. The emergency department beds are occupied by people who should be in wards, but the ward beds are occupied by people who should be in residential aged-care facilities.

Mr Glachan: Not all of them.

Mr McMANUS: I have referred to beds at Gosford and throughout the State. I have mentioned the inability of the Commonwealth Government to provide those beds. With no beds in the emergency departments, patients wanting treatment have to wait longer. The honourable member for North Shore focused on the access block, but the Government has involved leading clinicians in the development of a comprehensive, integrated emergency department service plan. That plan, developed by senior doctors and nurses who work in emergency departments, has formalised the networking of emergency departments across Sydney. Networking is the clear linking of health services across sites and settings so health responses are better co-ordinated. That does not mean merging services; it means networking serves to strengthen the role of all emergency departments by having them work in a complementary, co-ordinated and integrated way. That means that when one department is busy, others help out.

It is not always possible for emergency departments to anticipate the demands that will be placed on them. How can they anticipate a car accident in which five people are severely injured and in need of immediate emergency, life-saving care? If someone is waiting in the emergency department for treatment for an ingrown toe nail, that person cannot expect to get the same priority treatment as people fighting for their lives. Networking means that access for people requiring emergency care will be improved. It will not matter which hospital a patient goes to. The patient will be assured of the best services available in the network. This means, for example, that when a hospital has made every attempt to allocate beds for patients waiting in the emergency department, the doctor in charge may ask ambulances to go to another emergency department in the network. That may well have been the circumstance witnessed by the honourable member for North Shore, who mentioned many movements at her local hospital. Accessing the network is critical when emergency departments become too congested and there is a risk that patient safety may be compromised. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.40 a.m.]: The amendment moved by the honourable member for Heathcote changes the meaning of the motion moved by the honourable member for North Shore, which deals

with hospital staff and patients. We congratulate the hardworking staff at all hospitals and in accident and emergency departments, but the Opposition will not support the amendment, which, as I said, changes the meaning of the motion. The State Government has failed to confront the ongoing crisis in our public hospital system. For years ambulances have been regularly turned away from hospitals, waiting lists have spiralled, patients have been turned out of their hospital beds in the middle of the night, and doctors and nurses have been put under unacceptable pressure as they seek to cope with the demand.

The accident and emergency department of Hornsby Ku-ring-gai hospital is bursting at the seams because there are not enough staff to treat the ever-increasing number of patients. I am alarmed at the current state of that department. Current figures indicate that in one month 731 people waited longer than they should have to for treatment in the emergency department of Hornsby hospital. Last week 38 patients were classified as imminently life threatened and needing treatment within 10 minutes, but they did not get it. This week 65 patients, or 40 per cent, are in that category. This week 245 patients, or 56 per cent, who were classified as potentially life threatened and needing to have treatment within 30 minutes did not get it. That includes people suffering severe illness, major bleeding, a major fracture or dehydration. In addition, 376 patients, or 47 per cent, were classified as potentially serious patients needing treatment within one hour, but they did not get it. That group would include people with less severe symptoms or injuries, such as a foreign body in an eye.

Last week 32 patients—and the figure this week is 45 patients, or 22 per cent—with minor illnesses or symptoms were classified as less urgent and needing treatment within two hours, but they did not get it. It is sad to report that 265 out of 434 patients, or 61 per cent, waited longer than eight hours for admission to a ward bed. That is classified as access block, and it is the worst statistic in the State. Hospital staff advise that on many occasions each week the demand on the accident and emergency departments is at dangerous levels as hard-working staff try desperately to cope with more and more sick patients. I was told that recently a woman spent six days in the accident and emergency ward at Hornsby hospital awaiting a bed in the general ward. Accident and emergency staff jokingly said that they would allow her to answer the phone as she had become so familiar with the procedures.

On a recent evening there was a code red for ambulance arrivals, meaning that only ambulances carrying life-threatening patients should go to the hospital. However, four ambulances arrived because they had nowhere else to go. They were forced to wait for a long period outside the emergency doors and there was a rushed relocation of patients inside to make way for other sick patients. Staff were alarmed to report to me that at no time on that shift were there any acute care beds available in the accident and emergency department. Nursing and medical staff want to look after their patients appropriately, and patients want to get better, not sicker. However, in the current situation staff and patients are both placed at risk. This problem will not be resolved until more staff are placed in the accident and emergency departments and general wards so that patients are admitted to hospital beds in a timely fashion and the current access block is reduced.

The Government seeks to dismiss those concerns by passing them off as being indicative of a busy winter period. But it is the Government's job to deal with busy winter periods and to have contingency plans in place. Clearly the Government does not have those contingency plans. That is demonstrated every day when hospitals lurch from one ad hoc solution to the next, papering over the cracks in a hospital system that show it is not coping and is putting patients' health, and sometimes their lives, at risk. The Opposition wants to see a real plan, not more Government public relations exercises, media stunts and a dismissal of the problem. After more than seven years in government, the Premier should have come up with a way to cope with these crises. This is what happens when the approach is focused on public relations rather than on solving the problem. I call on the Government to institute measures to alleviate the stress on our hard-working hospital staff and to lower current hospital waiting lists.

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [11.45 a.m.]: I am sure every honourable member would want to congratulate the dedicated staff in the accident and emergency wards of our public hospitals; they do a remarkable job. However, the Government does not provide enough money to enable them to do their jobs in the way they want to do them. Hospital staff are dedicated to the care of the patients who go to them for treatment. They do their best under the circumstances to treat patients quickly and effectively, in a timely manner and to give them the benefit of their experience. That is exactly what the patients deserve. But the Government has been negligent. It has ignored the long waiting times in emergency wards. It is not doing the right thing by the patients or the staff, who work under difficult conditions.

Patients who present at accident or emergency wards suffering from serious injuries experience a tremendous amount of stress. Often that stress cannot be alleviated because of the lack of staff. To a large extent

the Government has deserted the hospital staff. At the Albury Base Hospital, the hospital that I am particularly concerned about, there are major problems in the accident and emergency ward. The latest available figures indicate that of the 322 people who presented and had to be admitted to a bed, 23 per cent, or 74 patients, waited for more than eight hours. Leaving a patient who should be in a hospital bed in the accident and emergency department for more than eight hours places stress on the patient and the family, particularly if the patient is a child.

I know of instances at the Albury Base Hospital when children have had to wait for beds for long periods, and their parents have become distressed about it. With the exception of Port Macquarie Base Hospital, Albury Base Hospital has the worst figures in country New South Wales. I am concerned about the serious problems facing the hospital. As a result of the Government's approach and its failure to listen, anaesthetists at Albury Base Hospital were forced to withdraw their services. That left patients in Albury in dire circumstances. The Government should be ashamed of its treatment of patients and staff at the Albury Base Hospital. I have received numerous complaints from people in person, in writing and over the phone about problems they have encountered in the emergency department of Albury Base Hospital. I have tried to suggest solutions to the staff. People complain that they arrive at the hospital with a child with a fever—it may not be life threatening, but they do not know that—they are booked in and then they have to wait.

The clock ticks on and time goes by, but no-one comes to see them hour after hour after hour. I have suggested to the people in charge of Albury Base Hospital that the simple solution is to have an experienced nurse speak to the parents from time to time to advise them that the doctors and nurses are attending to other patients, doing the best they can to save lives. Using her experience, the nurse could assure the parents that their child's life is not threatened and that the child will be attended to as soon as possible. I know that doctors and nurses are not as concerned about a child presenting with a minor childhood illness as they are about saving someone's life. But surely someone in the hospital should have the commonsense to reassure the parents that they will soon be taken care of and that they have not been forgotten.

Mrs SKINNER (North Shore) [11.50 a.m.], in reply: When notice of this motion was first given, 13,000 people were waiting longer than the specified time for treatment in our emergency departments. When we began to debate the motion a couple of weeks ago, 42,000 people had waited longer than the specified time during the previous month. That figure comes from the information on emergency department waiting times posted on the web site today. That figure has now risen to more than 45,000. It gets worse as we speak. The Parliamentary Secretary tried to dismiss the seriousness of this problem. He spoke about patients with stubbed toes. I can assure honourable members that he does not understand how emergency departments work. He does not know that access block is the lack of beds for patients who need to be admitted to hospital for treatment.

These patients do not have ingrown toenails. The great bulk of patients who are waiting longer than eight hours in emergency departments for beds are classified as imminently life threatened, potentially life threatened or potentially serious. Some patients wait for 24 hours. As the honourable member for Hornsby said, at Hornsby Hospital patients can wait for up to six days for a bed. She is a former nurse in the emergency department of that hospital and she still has good contacts there. I hear the same stories from Coalition members representing country electorates and from people from all over the State. I wonder why members of the Government are so silent on this matter. When has any one of them raised a concern on behalf of a patient or a dedicated, hard-working nurse, doctor or ambulance officer in this House. Never!

Mr McManus: We go directly to the Minister with our concerns.

Mrs SKINNER: And the Minister does nothing. I know that. That is why they come to me. The people in the gallery would know that the Minister does nothing except try to make excuses for the failure of the Government to provide enough resources to ensure that emergency department patients are treated within acceptable times. Some 16 ambulances were tied up at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital—

Mr McManus: They were moving. You said it yourself.

Mrs SKINNER: I thank the honourable member for alerting me to this. We were outside the hospital for about 10 minutes. When we turned up with all the media cameras and the radio and print media, the ambulances were stuck there. They had been there for some time.

Mr McManus: You're changing what you said.

Mrs SKINNER: I am not.

Mr McManus: You said there were 16 ambulances.

Mrs SKINNER: The honourable member is trying to divert attention from a serious problem. The cameras took footage of the ambulances backed up. I draw attention to the access block problem experienced by some hospitals. As at today, at Concord Hospital 46 per cent of patients waited more than eight hours for treatment; at Penrith-Nepean, 47 per cent; at Prince of Wales, 63 per cent; at St George, 52 per cent; at Blacktown, 49 per cent; at Hornsby, 61 per cent—the worst in the State; at Manly, 53 per cent; at Mount Druitt, 46 per cent; and at Sutherland, 44 per cent. If we go to the base hospitals in the country, 23 per cent of patients waited more than eight hours for treatment at both Albury and Port Macquarie. Of the smaller rural district hospitals, at Belmont 46 per cent of patients waited more than eight hours for treatment; at Shellharbour, 42 per cent; and at Camden 31 per cent.

I want to know when the honourable member for Illawarra has ever raised in this place any concerns on behalf of patients, or whether anything she wrote to the Minister has achieved any result. The figures in the Illawarra are getting worse and worse. With one or two exceptions, Labor Party members in this House are silent on these issues. Do they raise their concerns with the Minister? No, they raise them with me. They ring me and tell me stories about patients in their electorates because they know that is the only way treatment will be improved. The members of the Labor Party know to whom I am referring; I will not name them in this place. They are so concerned about their constituents that they raise their concerns with me. [*Time expired.*]

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

WILD DOG CONTROL

Mr WEBB (Monaro) [11.58 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Victorian and New South Wales Wild Dog Control Co-ordinating Committee for convening the successful National Wild Dog Summit in Wodonga;
- (2) notes the important role dogmen play in wild dog control and the formation of the National Association of Dogmen at the Summit; and
- (3) calls on the New South Wales Government to:
 - (a) support the Summit recommendations, particularly the continued use of 1080, the reintroduction of aerial baiting and enforcement of all public land managers to control wild dogs and vermin;
 - (b) work with relevant bodies toward uniform national legislation for pest species control; and
 - (c) provide additional funding for the development of regional wild dog control plans.

It is a pleasure to move this motion. For many years the problem of wild dog control has confronted not only my constituents but the constituents of many other members, both State and Federal. The dingo fence, which is indicative of the significance of the problem, is part of Australia's heritage and history. On our property, which is on the edge of the Brindabellas, there was an old dingo fence that had been erected many years ago as part of a long structure. We replaced it with an electric fence. The motion seeks to congratulate the Victorian and New South Wales Wild Dog Control Co-ordinating Committee on convening the successful National Wild Dog Summit, which was held in Wodonga, Victoria, in February this year.

The motion also notes the important role that dogmen play in wild dog control and the formation of the National Association of Dogmen at the summit. Further, the motion calls on the New South Wales Government to support the summit recommendations, particularly the continued use of 1080, the reintroduction of aerial baiting, and the enforcement of all public land managers to control wild dogs and vermin. It also calls on the Government to work with relevant bodies towards uniform national legislation for pest species control and to provide additional funding for the development of regional wild dog control plans.

This very successful summit, which was attended by more than 400 people, conducted a full and comprehensive assessment and analysis of the wild dog problem in south-east Australia. It was the brainchild of a number of people. I particularly congratulate Brian Fraser on his role in bringing this large group of people together, and Winston Phillips and Noeline Franklin, who played a major role in organising the summit. A

recent delegation by Brian Fraser, Ian Litchfield, Sue Litchfield, Susan Mitchell, Ian Lobban and Betty Murtagh to the Federal environment Minister, Dr David Kemp, through the Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Gary Nairn, again highlighted this issue and sought a national approach to control this very serious problem. Mr Nairn said the Minister believes that the problem should be given a national focus in the hope of a more co-ordinated approach, and he added:

But it must also be pointed out that state governments need to do more on the funding front. Farmers are required to control feral animals on their properties, at their own expense. It should be the same for public land in neighbouring National Parks.

This is the nub of the argument. Recently the New South Wales Government conducted several inquiries, such as the inquiry into pest vertebrates, and has taken on board many of the concerns and relevant considerations that were raised in those inquiries. The recent trials conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in Kosciuszko National Park and other moves are appreciated, but they do not go far enough. The issue still exists. Wild dogs are still killing sheep and impacting on the social and economic parameters of farm production and rural community life. They also have a massive impact on the environment. Before the dogs go onto the ranges and grasslands to attack sheep, they destroy the native fauna and flora and habitat of native animals in national parks and reserves. One important segment of the seminar related to the role played by dogmen—who told interesting stories of their experiences and raised concerns about wild dog control generally—and the National Association of Dogmen was formed at the summit.

I commend all the dogmen throughout the Monaro electorate, including John Coman, a delegate from Bombala with 50 years service, current; Scott Guthrie, a delegate from Bombala with six years service, current; Bruce Jamieson from Jindabyne-Snowy with 50 years service, part-time current; George Freebody from Numbla Vale-Paupong, which is east of the southern Kosciuszko National Park, with 45 years service, part-time current; Kerry Wellsmore from Paupong, with five years service, part-time current; John Walters from Paupong, with five years service, part-time current; Mick Hedger from Snowy Plains-Rocky Plains, with three years service, current; Tim Russell from Adaminaby-Yaouk-Shannons Flat, with 22 years service, part-time current; Michael Davis from Adaminaby-Yaouk-Shannons Flat, with eight years service, current; Billy Morris, whom I have worked with in the Yass and Brindabella areas, with 30 years-plus service; John Ward from the Badja area, which is south-west of Braidwood, with 40 years service, now retired; and Warren Schofield from the Badja area, who has worked on and off in this area over the past few years. These dedicated people have a remarkable ability in this field and do a wonderful job.

I commend Ellen and Bill Green for the constant pressure they have applied to the Bega Rural Lands Protection Board, the Monaro wild dog control group and me to bring about changes in the Bemboka area. Unfortunately, wild dog control is not recognised as a problem in this shire. Although the National Parks and Wildlife Service is working with the local community, the problem has now extended to the tablelands. I again commend Winston Phillips for his role as a ranger in Cooma-Monaro, which generally covers the south-east, and Graham Hillyer in Bombala. People such as Brian and Jan Mitchell, who featured in the *Land* last year, told of their experiences. I am sure many honourable members read or heard of the horrific tale of the decimation of their flock by wild dog attacks and the social and economic costs to them and to their community.

Other people told their stories. Sylvia Golby from Ingabyra was bailed up by a wild dog. I recently heard stories of people in the Bega Valley who were stalked by dingoes that came within a couple of metres of them. The message is that soon we will be talking not about wild dogs attacking sheep but about their attacking people. There is evidence that campers and others in recreational parks have been stalked. Campfire stories are told about the fear felt by people who have been encircled by a pack of dogs. There is a real potential for attacks on people. An attack has already occurred on Fraser Island, and it can happen elsewhere.

Rix Wright, a sheep farmer from Delegate, wrote passionately of his experience of sheep kills by wild dogs. Such information was used by the Monaro wild dog group to support its claim for more work to be done to control wild dogs. The flock of this sheep farmer, who treats his animals in a compassionate manner, was decimated by wild dogs. His story was the same as that told by Brian and Jan Mitchell. They work as shepherds, taking a compassionate approach to their flock and to sheep breeding. Yet they have to pick up dead and mauled sheep with pieces hanging off them. It breaks their hearts, and affects the whole community, to see these defenceless animals stalked and mauled by wild dogs.

Although I represent my electorate in this debate, this issue goes beyond my local area. The Opposition calls on the New South Wales Government to work towards a national approach and to find solutions to the problems on an interstate basis. The National Parks and Wildlife Service allows dogs to roam inside a dingo-fenced area in the north-east of the State. That does not help the cause of graziers in the north-west and western

areas of New South Wales. The Government must provide additional funding for regional wild dog control plans, which can be used by local communities in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, the rural lands protection boards, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service to address this very serious problem.

The Government must come up with national legislation to control pest animals and other species. The recommendations from the summit are to promote the continued use of 1080 and reintroduce aerial baiting. Aerial baiting is considered the most effective selective tool available. Other methods available are shooting, trapping, and mound baiting, but aerial baiting is considered the main tool to be used to capture the clever dog. There is a major concern that selective trapping, shooting, and mound baiting enables the continued breeding and proliferation of intelligent, educated animals. Such animals are clever stalkers and do a lot of damage. Public land managers have a responsibility to address this problem and support their local constituency. *[Time expired.]*

Mr AMERY (Mount Druitt—Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Corrective Services) [12.08 p.m.]: The Government will not oppose the motion moved by the honourable member for Monaro, although I take issue with his inference that the Government is not taking the necessary action with regard to wild dogs. I hope my contribution will clarify the situation. The impact of wild dogs on the sheep industry, in particular, has been raised with me by members of Country Labor and I am pleased that the honourable member for Murray-Darling and the honourable member for Tweed will contribute to the debate.

The National Wild Dog Summit, which was held at Wodonga on 22 February, was a highly effective forum for discussion on the impact caused by wild dogs and the problems faced by wild dog control groups in various locations across the country. Although the conference was held some time ago, I support the motion of the honourable member for Monaro that the committee be congratulated on convening that successful conference, and I am sure all honourable members would do likewise. The summit emphasised the importance of dogmen, and although dog trapping is only one of a suite of control methods, its importance is well recognised, especially for the control of rogue dogs.

Two NSW Agriculture staff, Mr Eric Davis, Program Leader, Vertebrate Pest Management, and Mr Peter Fleming, Senior Research Officer, were in attendance, and Mr Fleming gave a presentation on the development of wild dog management plans. Their attendance reflects the fact that the Government acknowledges that wild dogs, including dingoes, are responsible for causing stock losses and that they also pose a significant threat to native animals. That is why I, in conjunction with my colleague the Minister for the Environment, actively encourage the preparation of wild dog management plans.

A number of wild dog management plans have been prepared. These plans involve land-holders, rural lands protection boards, NSW Agriculture, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, the Department of Land and Water Conservation, and wild dog control associations. This approach is yielding results. The co-operative wild dog plan covering the Brindabella and Wee Jasper valleys, which was launched at Wee Jasper in May, is a case in point. The Wee Jasper plan, as it is known, is part of the wider south-west wild dog project. The plan was prepared by a working group of representatives from NSW Agriculture, the Yass Rural Lands Protection Board, private land-holders, State Forests, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, contract trappers, and the South East New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory wild dog project committees.

The plan is being implemented across all land tenures, including national parks in the region, which is important. It identifies where wild dog problems are occurring and where and how the dogs should be controlled. It also identifies the responsibilities of all land-holders and the resources that each group will provide to implement the plan. The use of buried bait stations complemented by contract bait trappers to remove "bait shy" animals is the key to the success of this program. Preliminary reports show that in some parts stock losses have been reduced by 70 per cent to 80 per cent, and credit should be given to those involved in those projects. The reports also show that graziers are now putting sheep back into areas previously considered unprofitable because of wild dog attacks. The plan has achieved wide community support and demonstrates what can be achieved when communities are prepared to work together.

I am also pleased to report that the Wee Jasper plan is also being used as a model for other areas of the State and I congratulate those who formulated and implemented that plan, which is seen as a benchmark for similar plans throughout the State. NSW Agriculture also provides training to staff from rural lands protection boards, private land-holders and other government agencies as part of the project. Training is also provided to wild dog controllers in occupational health and safety issues as part of a wider rural traineeship. There is also

broad training in the biology and ecology of wild dogs and other pest species, along with the use of 1080 poison and other control techniques. The trainee wild dog controllers also receive specialist wild dog training from experienced wild dog controllers.

Regarding the motions carried at the summit on the use of 1080 poison and aerial baiting, I can advise that, subject to proper regulation, I support continued access to 1080 poison to control pest animals. I also support the use of aerial baiting in areas where this is an appropriate technique and, where appropriate, it is supported by an environmental impact assessment. The Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 binds the Crown. Indeed, references to Crown land and national parks is an important component in the debate. Pest control orders under this Act require public land managers to control wild dogs, feral pigs and rabbits to the extent necessary to reduce the risk of these pests causing damage on any land. These provisions were introduced to ensure that public land managers meet their responsibilities to control pest animals.

The conference also passed a motion requesting the formation of a Federal ministerial committee to ensure consistent wild dog control between the States and to match State funding for wild dog control on public land. In support of this motion I asked NSW Agriculture to raise this matter at the Vertebrate Pest Committee meeting held early in May. The Vertebrate Pest Committee subsequently requested relevant New South Wales and Victorian authorities to conduct talks on wild dog cross-border issues and report back to it as soon as possible. Another summit motion expressed opposition to the release of wild dogs or dingoes used for experimental purposes after such experiments are completed. I can advise that animal research in New South Wales is tightly regulated under the Animal Research Act. This Act already requires appropriate arrangements to be implemented when experiments are completed.

The summit also called for a national conservation policy for threatened and protected species to facilitate the good management and control of pest species. This approach is consistent with a recommendation by the New South Wales Regulation Review Committee regarding a national approach to dingo conservation and has my support. The summit also called for all relevant bodies to work towards nationally uniform legislation for the control of pest species. I support this objective and, in this context, the work of the Vertebrate Pest Committee, which is a national subcommittee of the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee. Although its decisions are not binding on each State, the Vertebrate Pest Committee can refer issues to other relevant standing committees and ministerial councils.

The Vertebrate Pest Committee is a national forum that is working to co-ordinate and harmonise pest animal research and policy between States. I also noted the support of summit participants for the development of wild dog management plans and I can report that this important issue is currently being addressed. The development of wild dog management plans is already under way in many areas of New South Wales using a planning process that relies closely on input from local graziers. It is apparent from the summit that an equivalent planning approach does not apply in some other States and that New South Wales land-holders have a much greater say in planning for wild dog management than some of their interstate counterparts.

The Government does not oppose this motion. It shares the sentiments of the honourable member for Monaro in acknowledging the efforts of his constituents and the work of the summit. However, I hope that my comments have allayed his fears that the Government is not sitting on its hands on this matter and that they have highlighted the significant effort of all agencies and committees, not only in this State but throughout Australia. I also acknowledge the wonderful work of land-holders who, for a long time, have been battling this difficult problem.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [12.18 p.m.]: My electorate of Burrinjuck borders Kosciuszko National Park, and wild dog control affects both my electorate and that of the honourable member for Monaro. I congratulate the honourable member on moving this motion. I appreciate that he gave notice of his intention to move it at about the time that the National Wild Dog Summit was held, so it has been on the notice paper for some time. It was heartening to hear the Minister for Agriculture confirm his support for the motion, particularly as it calls on the New South Wales Government to:

provide additional funding for the development of Regional Wild Dog Control Plans.

The summit was an excellent opportunity for local people to lobby, in a statewide forum, politicians and those who ensure that wild dogs are dealt with appropriately. Those lobbying efforts seem to be paying off, yet terrible attacks continue to occur in my local area. On 3 September—just last week—the *Tumut and Adelong Times* carried a front-page story headlined "More dog attacks; Calf Killed at Tumut, Sheep Maimed at Talbingo" that stated:

Stock owners around the district continue to fight a frustrating battle with dogs attacking livestock, with the most recent attack on a calf near Tumut leaving its owner distraught and angry.

The article tells how Ron Jeffery from Tumut discovered that one of his calves had been mauled and killed by dogs. He lives near the town limits on the Snowy Mountains Highway at the western entrance to Tumut, which is on the edge of the Kosciuszko National Park. Another newspaper article with the headline "Dog attacks continue in Tumut, Talbingo" is accompanied by some graphic photographs that I imagine would distress the average reader. These attacks continue in spite of all the best intentions and efforts. It is important that we continue to try to deal with the wild dog problem properly.

I pay particular tribute to Bill Morris from the Yass-Brindabella area, who is recognised as an outstanding trapper. I have nothing but the highest praise for Bill, who does his job with great gusto and is passionate about the control of wild dogs. However, much remains to be done. I must also mention Noeline Franklin, who lives near Kosciuszko. She corresponds with me from time to time and wrote recently about the local echidna population. Wildlife is often the forgotten victim of wild dog attacks, particularly in our national parks. Ms Franklin wrote:

Our local echidna population essentially gone, swamp wallaby another favourite food only found on the edge of new dog territory. Wombats only now on private land or new dog territory many wallaby and kangaroos mustered out of the bush onto private land. Few now seen in the bush ... Echidna quills were a big feature in wild dog faeces from 1973-1979.

She goes on to say that her nine-year-old daughter saw her first echidna only recently. I saw one ambling across the paddock at Vale View last weekend. It is good to see them at my home but it is unfortunate to learn that they are seen rarely in the Kosciuszko. Ms Franklin referred to the number of dogs caught in the Brindabella Valley, which comprises 1,200 hectares, in the past 18 months and points out that they would require:

.... in the order of 24,000 wallaby based on 3-4 wallaby per week killed per dog ... Clearly an unsustainable population of dogs draining into the area. A bush fit dog would need 800g + per day of high-protein food. Large visible species down to the less obvious rodents, possum, lizards, fish, birds, frogs etc. Offered the choice dogs do not scavenge old kills off large animals instead select only certain organs and move on.

Ms Franklin emphasised the need for wild dog control not only to protect our domestic stock but to ensure that our native wildlife does not disappear completely. [*Time expired.*]

Mr BLACK (Murray-Darling) [12.23 p.m.]: I am pleased to support suburban Labor by speaking to this motion. The Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Corrective Services is a great Minister who is very much on the ball when it comes to addressing the wild dog problem. I note the presence in the gallery of Bo Bo Harrison, who was a great mayor of Kiama for 15 years and a member of this place for 13 years. His presence is relevant to this debate as he keeps a pet dingo in his backyard.

The Wild Dog Destruction Act has existed since 1921. Before I detail its role, I must inform the House that Wild Dog Destruction Board rates, which are due next January, have been written off as part of the drought assistance package. That assistance to graziers is valued at \$670,000, which is a significant contribution to drought assistance from this Government. As far as we know, dogs—in the form of dingoes—have lived in the west of New South Wales for the past 30,000 years. When western New South Wales was first settled, dingoes were a major problem. Charles Rasp, the founding father of Broken Hill, began his career as a boundary rider. Every night boundary riders would herd 500 or 600 sheep into pens to protect them from wild dog attacks. Sir Sidney Kidman, of the great Kidman empire, was the first to erect dingo fences in the west. These were private fences erected in the north of the unincorporated area, and some of them remain to this day.

In earlier times very large dingo traps were used extensively—strychnine was the favoured poison, not 1080—and today they can be seen adorning the back walls of hotels and elsewhere. Some of them are more than four feet long. If the truth be known they are probably the most efficacious means of controlling dingoes. The Wild Dog Destruction Act 1921 includes dingoes within its definition of wild dogs. The Act has jurisdiction only within the Western Division of New South Wales, where it requires owners or occupiers of land to suppress or destroy wild dogs continuously. Notices may be issued to owners or occupiers of land to control wild dogs. The Act also prohibits ownership of dingoes in the Western Division of New South Wales without the written permission of the Wild Dog Destruction Board, which was constituted under the Act. The Act provides for the collection of wild dog rates and the maintenance of the wild dog fence. The Act does not bind the Crown.

When I was first appointed chairman of the Bush Childrens Hostels Association the majority of kids who stayed at Allison House in Broken Hill were from working-class families who lived in huts along the

fence—in those days there was a hut every 20 miles. Operations are largely mechanised nowadays: The days of using tines on huge hayforks to chuck the roly-polies from South Australia over the fence into New South Wales are gone. Today people use graders to do the job. Each worker on the dog fence was responsible for the upkeep of the fence for 10 miles either side of his hut. Famous histories of the dog fence reveal that camels were vital to the operation of the dog fence. Each boundary hut was supplied with several camels on which workers would patrol the fence.

As I have said, the Wild Dog Destruction Act was established in 1921. The South Australian fence was originally built as a rabbit fence in 1890 and was converted to a dog-proof fence in 1917. The Queensland fence was similarly originally built as a rabbit fence in 1890 and was converted to a dog-proof fence in 1914. Incidentally, the Queensland fence is situated fifteen minutes across the border into Queensland. Many people think it marks the boundary between Queensland and New South Wales, but it does not. The Wild Dog Destruction Act 1921 placed responsibility for the fence with the Western Lands Commission, and a 1957 amending Act established the Wild Dog Destruction Board and transferred responsibility to the board.

The board currently comprises representatives of three pasture protection [PP] boards. It is chaired by Geoff Wise, the Regional Director and Western Land Commissioner, and the PP boards are represented by Mr N. Leigo from Wanaaring, Mr D. Barlow from Milparinka, and Mr J. Gall from the Broken Hill PP Board. Mr Ken Turner, the President of the Pastoralists Association of West Darling, and Mr E. Davies, representing the Western Division Council of the New South Wales Farmers Association, also serve on the board. The board employs eight maintenance workers, two full-time plant operators, one casual plant operator and two leading hands to support the operations manager. The board's principal task is the destruction of dogs but it is absolutely imperative that we continue to maintain the dog-proof fence. [*Time expired.*]

Mr R. H. L. SMITH (Bega) [12.28 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the honourable member for Monaro, which is my neighbouring electorate, and also the honourable member for Burrinjuck in her contribution to the debate on wild dogs. I thank the Minister and Government members for their support. Before I was elected a member of Parliament I was a grazier, and I educated my children from a farm. I do have a relatively good idea of the effect of wild dogs. Even though my property does not border those areas that harbour wild dogs, I have seen many sheep maimed by wild dog attacks and I know the frustration and hardship that people experience with sheep, particularly on the boundaries of national parks. I know the heartache they go through when wild dogs come onto their land and cause destruction. Farmers put an unbelievable effort into breeding sheep, and it is devastating when they see those sheep maimed or killed.

Many graziers give up sheep farming altogether because the wild dogs eventually become too big an economic burden for them. The graziers either sell their farms or take up cattle farming or something else. Of course we also hear of wild dogs attacking calves. I congratulate the honourable member for Monaro on moving his motion. I believe the Wodonga summit on wild dog control was attended by about 500 people—it was a packed house. That indicates the concern about wild dogs particularly on land that borders public lands and national parks.

Over the years the National Parks and Wildlife Service has, from time to time, been extremely good in controlling wild dogs. But it has eased off and the wild dog population has built up. All owners of public land—whether it is the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Conservation and Land Management [CALM] or State Forests—have a responsibility to be good neighbours and to ensure that any wild dogs within their areas are controlled. Over the years there has been a lot of experimentation with different ways to control wild dogs. One thing that must remain in the armoury to control wild dogs is the 1080 poison that is used. I believe there is also a training program to make sure that trapping continues on from one generation to the other. It is a specialised job. Certainly 1080 must remain as one of the weapons that can be used to control wild dogs. Experiments have been carried out with regard to bait sites and so on.

I agree with the honourable member for Monaro that 1080 must remain part of the armoury, but there must also be helicopter baiting well into the public land, whether it be national park or other land: it is usually national park. Helicopter baiting must go deeply enough into the land to ensure that the dogs do not come out onto farmland and cause hardship to the farmers. We all know that there is an obligation, to a degree, to keep the national parks in a pristine state and to protect the flora and fauna, but surely the farmers have a right to make sure that their neighbours control those wild dogs, weeds, and other destructive things that come out of national parks from time to time.

It gives me great pleasure to support the honourable member for Monaro and to congratulate the Government on supporting this bill. It would be a great thing to hear it introduced in this Parliament. We all know that the Parliament is basically made up of city members and it might at least bring to the fore the fact that there are major problems in country areas that need the attention not only of country members but also those members who may not know about things that happen in the country, such as wild dog attacks. [*Time expired.*]

Mr NEWELL (Tweed) [12.33 p.m.]: I join my colleagues on both sides of the House in supporting the motion, but with the qualification that we do not necessarily agree with some of the sentiments expressed in it. Wild dogs may not be as big an issue on the coast as it is in areas such as Monaro, but it certainly causes problems from time to time. I bring those problems to the attention of the House and also make some remarks regarding the National Wild Dog Summit which was held in Wodonga, and the role of management plans in addressing this situation.

The problem with wild dogs on the North Coast, and indeed along many areas of the coast, does not emanate necessarily from the populations of dingoes and dogs running wild in national parks. It starts with domestic dogs that have either gone wild and run into forested areas—whether private or, as in my case, public lands—or they have been poorly trained by their owners. People who live on rural acreage often like to walk in national parks or along rivers and creeks and take their friendly dog with them. By doing so they are extending the dog's territory from their own five-acre or 10-acre lot to include their neighbour's paddocks, and possibly national parks, if they walk that far. When the dog is not on a chain or a leash it can go for a run by itself, particularly at night, when it can get together with other dogs and form a pack.

Whilst my electorate does not have sheep, which succumb very quickly to dog attacks, the dogs do cause problems with cattle, particularly pregnant cows. If a number of dogs harass those cows they can actually cause an abortion and the loss of a calf. It is a problem that arises from time to time. I have to confess that the moment I am not aware of any particular pressing problem, although a couple of years ago I had a serious problem with wild dogs in one part of the electorate. With the concurrence of the National Parks and Wildlife Service baiting was carried out, using 1080 I believe, and a plan was put in place to control those dogs that had gone feral. I understand it was a successful approach.

The Wild Dog Control Committee, which convened the National Wild Dogs Summit at Wodonga, was obviously successful. A number of motions were moved in that summit which, as the Minister indicated, were quite important. A motion requesting information of a Federal ministerial committee to ensure consistent wild dog control between States and to match State funding for wild dog control on public land was passed at that conference. Whilst not a huge issue for some of the land-holders along the border ranges area of my electorate, I am sure that they would be most pleased if there was a little more co-operation between New South Wales and Queensland on this issue.

The summit also called for a national conservation policy for threatened and protected species to facilitate good management and control of species. That approach was consistent with a recommendation by the Regulation Review Committee regarding a national approach to dingo conservation. I note the support of the summit participants for the development of wild dog management plans. Whilst the problem is not as big in my electorate as it is in other parts of New South Wales that devote considerable resources to management plans, with the co-operation particularly of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Rural Lands Protection Board in my area the problem is being kept under control. [*Time expired.*]

Mr WEBB (Monaro) [12.38 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members who spoke to the motion, and especially the Government and the Minister for not opposing it. The Minister may have drawn an incorrect inference that I was saying that the Government was doing very little or nothing or sitting on its hands. I did acknowledge what the Government and its agencies are doing, but it is clearly not enough and more needs to be done, as all speakers in the debate have said. The Minister referred to departmental officers Eric Davis and Peter Fleming, who was one of the presenters at the Wodonga conference. Land-holders, rural lands protection boards, government agencies and wild dog control committees all play an important part with wild dog management plans. The Wee Jasper plan put forward by the Yass Rural Lands Protection Board, under the great guidance of its chair, Peter Southwell, is a leading document on this issue.

Stock losses have been reduced in some areas but, sadly, as the honourable member for Burrinjuck and the honourable member for Bega have stated, losses continue in many areas. There is a problem in estimating and confirming sheep losses to wild dog attacks. I am thankful for the Minister's clarification in response to questions I have asked. I continue to question the Government and government agencies on this important issue.

The Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs is at the table at the moment. I recently asked him a question relating to the placement of dingoes under the Companion Animals Act. This has relevance to the remarks of the honourable member for Tweed, who referred to rural-residential areas and the impact of town dogs when they become wild and form packs.

The support of the Minister and other speakers for aerial baiting with 1080 and continued trapping is welcomed. I also welcome the response to the recommendations put forward by the wild dog summit at Wodonga on 22 February. Much work has to be done to continue the impetus from that day, and the work done by Brian Fraser and Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Gary Nairn, in taking the matter forward to the Federal environment Minister, Dr David Kemp. State Ministers need to take the issue on board. The upper House committee inquiry held hearings throughout New South Wales and shortly will make recommendations. I particularly thank the people who made submissions and spoke at public hearings. The honourable member for Burrinjuck mentioned Billy Morris. Other trappers also made a colourful contribution to the inquiry, which I believe came about partly due to my prompting.

The honourable member for Burrinjuck referred to the continuing attacks and the impact on wildlife, which has been well documented by Noelene Franklin from Brindabella. She also mentioned the role of the Gundagai and Yass boards around Kosciuszko National Park. The honourable member for Murray-Darling spoke of his experiences, told the Kidman story, and detailed the history of the fences and the Wild Dog Destruction Act. The honourable member for Bega told of his experience in the Bega Valley and of graziers having to give up sheep farming. Sadly, we know that this is a very real problem. The need for a fully integrated pest control plan is obvious. It should be right across the State. Wild dogs are a very important part of the problem—people become emotional about this issue—but pigs, rabbits and other pest species are out of control. In times of drought action is even more important. I thank the Government for supporting my motion. [*Time expired.*]

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Precedence of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit General Business Notices of Motion (General Notice) No. 124 [Tribute to Mrs Pat Makin] standing in the name of the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai to be called on forthwith.

TRIBUTE TO Mrs PAT MAKIN

Mr O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai) [12.46 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes the imminent departure of Pat Makin, Acting Manager of Parliamentary Printing, thanks her for 16 years service to the Parliament and wishes her well for the future.

I pay tribute to the service of Pat, or Patricia, Makin to this Parliament. Patricia finishes this afternoon after 16 years service to the Parliament of New South Wales. She has served under seven presiding officers: Speakers Kelly, Rozzoli and Murray and Presidents Johnson, Willis, Chadwick and Burgmann. I resisted the temptation this morning to ask her to indicate her league table of Speakers, because she still has half a day to work. Pat started in the Parliament in 1986. She told me that she was employed as a small offset printer. Anyone who knows Pat knows that she had an occupation well suited to her stature. She was employed first in the Legislative Council printing section. She subsequently undertook a TAFE course in desktop publishing and, following the closure of the Government Printing Office, undertook desktop publishing duties in the Parliament.

In 1988 Pat became a supervisor and in 1991 Parliamentary Printing Services was established. When Paul Guilfoyle left 4½ years ago Pat became head of the section. She has been acting in that position since 1997, but she has certainly not been acting in the work she puts in on a day-to-day basis. I am sure I speak for all members when I say that no matter what the job, no matter what the pressure, Pat Makin was always gracious and generous in her dealings with members of Parliament. She was deferential, even if there were often times when she did not want to be deferential. Above all, she was a professional. I, for one, am very grateful for the service she has provided to me as a member of Parliament over the 7½ years I have been here.

One of the first relationships a member has on being elected to Parliament is with the printing and stationery staff. Members do not get far in their representational activities unless they have letterhead stationery and business cards. Pat and the team were always at pains to assist new members of Parliament establish their

offices and equip themselves to represent their constituents in the best possible way. I also acknowledge two other members of the Parliamentary Printing Services who are leaving. David Jones is occasionally seen to be away from the printers downstairs—members might bump into him in the corridors—but he has been responsible for the in-house printing in this place. Robert Bartrim has been a terrific support to Pat as acting head of the section over the past 4½ years.

Pat, David and Robert leave the Parliament's service today, having taken voluntary redundancy. It is fair to say that changes brought about through the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal and the electorate mail-out allowance have basically overtaken the printing capacity of the Parliament. The Government Printing Office closed 10 years ago, and we are now seeing the closure of the Parliament's printing services. What will remain downstairs will be a stationery and photocopying section. As all members know, we now have greater and freer access to commercial printers in our electorates and elsewhere. I wish Pat well in her retirement. She certainly deserves a good and long retirement because she has worked hard for the people of New South Wales through this place, for the people who work in this place and for those elected to this place.

Pat has three children and one of her daughters has given her three grandchildren. I know that as part of her retirement Pat has set herself the task of assisting her daughter in rearing those grandchildren. Just as there can be, from a member's perspective, no greater role in this place than to represent one's electorate well, there can be no greater role for a grandmother, or mother, to bring up one's children well. Pat, I thank you for all you have done. I know Pat is watching on the monitor but she refused to come into the gallery today; she said she would get far too emotional. Thank you, Pat, for all your efforts for me in my 7½ years in this place and for your efforts over 16 years on behalf of the people and the Parliament of New South Wales.

Mr WHELAN (Strathfield—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.51 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai for raising this matter in the House. Too often those who work in the precincts of Parliament House are not given adequate thanks; usually that happens only once a year or when a Clerk at the table or senior officer is deserving of thanks. I join with the honourable member in acknowledging Pat's service and concur with everything he said. I spoke with Pat this morning and I know that by her very nature she does not like the limelight. However, Pat, you are well respected by everyone in this Parliament. There has never been a job that has been too difficult for you, and you have always been very obliging and at hand to help members wherever possible.

As a result of your moving on, we are losing a great personality in Parliament House. You have never lost your willingness to smile, to be happy, and to turn around grumpy members who may arrive in the printing section with requests that cannot be fulfilled instantly. On a number of occasions members have remarked to me about the obliging service they have received from you and others in the printing section. I am sure you did not want a great fanfare, but when the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai spoke he did so on behalf of all members. I am sure that I also speak on behalf of all members in thanking you for a job well done. I have often said to you, and I do not want to embarrass you, that you remind me of a pocket dynamo. You are diminutive by nature, but very large in stature and in the respect we have for you. We wish you well in the future. I look forward to you coming back in six weeks time, in October, and being able to charge a glass and pay tribute to you and thank you for what you have done.

Mr GLACHAN (Albury) [12.53 p.m.]: I wish to add a few words to those of my colleagues to express how sad I am that Pat is leaving after 16 years with Parliament—although we all have to leave at some time. Pat has been a wonderful person to deal with and it has always been a pleasure to go down to the printing section and be greeted by her. Pat has been very helpful by making useful suggestions about our printing requirements. Her manner and the way in which she has dealt with our requests was always bright, cheerful and helpful. As someone who has been involved in retailing and knows a bit about customer service, I can say that Pat is an expert in customer service. There are many nice people in Parliament House but Pat is especially nice. Although I will not be here much longer myself, I will miss her; things will not be quite the same. I know that all my colleagues will miss her and I join with them in wishing Pat well for the future.

Mr GIBSON (Blacktown) [12.55 p.m.]: I, too, would like to say farewell to Patty. When I first came to Parliament House as a member, one of the first people I met was Pat Makin. Pat became not only a very good work colleague but also a very good friend. I am Pat's local member; she lives in my electorate. Pat has been helpful to many people, and she was often one of the first to guide people and show them how to do things, how to get documents printed. My staff became very friendly with Patty, and when they needed to get a job done they had only to ring Pat and it would be done. I will miss her immensely as a work colleague, but I will be her friend forever outside Parliament. Parliament will be losing a key person.

When we can afford to let people like Pat go, we are either travelling tremendously well or not travelling as well as we should be—probably the latter! I was saddened yesterday when the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai mentioned that Patty was leaving; I knew that things had not been too good in the printing section for quite some time but I did not know she had made the decision to leave. She will be a great loss to the Parliament and to all members of this Chamber. As the honourable member for Strathfield said, members could bounce into the printing section and Patty could bounce them out almost as quickly. She could tell them which jobs were possible and which were not. Everyone got their work done eventually, and learned to treat Patty as a friend. That is the way it should be. She has been a great acquisition to the Parliament and to every one of its members. I am very sad to see Patty leave today. I wish her all the very best for her future.

Mr McGRANE (Dubbo) [12.57 p.m.]: I endorse the sentiments already expressed in regard to Pat, David and Robert, on their leaving the services of this Parliament today. As already mentioned, when a member comes into this place it can be very lonely, especially for an Independent member who does not have the backing of a party machine. An Independent member has to look around for friends and, of course, Patty was one person I got to know very well. Pat is a great friend, but she had her ways: she could steer you in the right direction. Before I became a member of Parliament I was the mayor of Dubbo. In some respects, mayors get things easier than members of Parliament, because they have secretaries and back-up staff.

When I came here I had no idea about running an office. I did not know how to order pens, paper or ink. I had to go to the stationery and printing section and learn how to do that so I could man my office in Parliament House. Pat was the guiding force that helped me through all that. In a sense, she was a bit like a mum to me; when I had problems, I would have a chat with her. I am sure Pat appreciates what I am saying. Pat, you have been a great mate. We all appreciate the 16 years of great service you have given to this Parliament.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lynch): Order! With the leave of the House I propose to allow debate on this motion to proceed beyond 1.00 p.m. and to allow additional speakers to the number provided for in the standing orders.

Ms ALLAN (Wentworthville) [12.59 p.m.]: I join with my colleagues in expressing sadness at Pat Makin leaving the service of the Parliament. As previous speakers have generously said, Pat has been an outstanding member of staff and it is people like her that give glue to this institution. In the years I have been here I have seen very few people at the centre of a friendly, social network. I am sure that we all have our friendships and enmities, and they rise and fall proportionate to our successes or failures. Over the years Pat Makin has been a consistently loyal friend. She is loyal to those from all sides of politics. She assists members of Parliament; she does the job. I have news for the honourable member for Dubbo: it does not matter whether you have a party machine behind you, you tend to be fairly lonely when you come into this place. We are not good at educating members of Parliament when they get here. You just have to learn as you go.

People like Pat Makin certainly contributed to my education in this place. Like the honourable member for Blacktown, Paul Gibson, I have been her local member. She is the sort of person who reminds you of that regularly, and that is great. Over the years she has worked with a great team of people. She and Demetrio and the other staff in Printing Services are always helpful. For some time I have been saddened by the direction that section has been taking. Although it may be tremendous for us as members of Parliament in the long run to have a new regime, it certainly takes away from the personal and educational side of things. I have learned a great deal from Pat. I hope that whoever takes her place is as useful and as helpful as she has been. Pat, I hope that you are out there listening, that you redirect your life, and that you have a very healthy and enjoyable retirement from Parliament.

Mr McBRIDE (The Entrance) [1.01 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai for moving this motion. When I first came to this place one of the first groups of people I met were the staff from the printing section. As the honourable member for Dubbo said, all of a sudden you have to outfit yourself, and the first contact you have is with Printing Services. Like other members of Parliament, my experience is that there was a wonderful family atmosphere in Printing Services. When you went down there, you were greeted warmly and treated like a human being. In other parts of the Parliament you might not have been treated the same way. Unfortunately, I did not get an orientation because I became a member as a result of a by-election. My orientation was through Printing Services. They told me what to do and where to go.

My wife, Barbara, and my children have met Pat. My children refer to her as "Aunty Pat". She visits the Central Coast regularly. On many occasions I have seen her on the Central Coast on holiday with her grandchildren. My whole family appreciates the contact we have had with Pat since I have been a member of

Parliament. Another two members of Printing Services are leaving at the same time as Pat. Bob Bartrim, better known as Bones, has spent 45 years working in printing. For 35 years he worked at the Government Printing Office. Subsequently he spent one year in private enterprise, and then spent the rest of his career in the printing section of Parliament House. David Jones, who is also a regular visitor to the Central Coast, has also been a good friend. I support the motion. Farewell, Pat. It has been wonderful. We appreciate your contribution, as well as the contribution of all the staff of Printing Services, to new members.

Ms HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [1.03 p.m.]: I wish to say a fond farewell to Pat Makin. I thank you for taking on one of my jobs as one of your final jobs. At the moment Pat is organising some printing for me. Your services to printing in this place have been absolutely outstanding. Some 16 years of service to the Parliament sounds more like a sentence.

Mr O'Farrell: A minimum sentence

Ms HODGKINSON: A minimum sentence, according to the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai. You have done an absolutely outstanding job. We have fond memories of you on both sides of this House and we certainly wish you well for the future. I have spoken with some former members of this House about you. Wendy Machin has fond memories of you, Pat. She would like to extend her thanks to you for the wonderful service you have given this place, and for the wonderful service you gave her. It is with great regret that we speak to this motion. Pat, you have provided a wonderful service to us individually as members of Parliament. As many honourable members have said, you have also been a good friend to many of us. Today is a sad day for us because you are leaving. I hope that the next stage of your life is very fruitful.

Motion agreed to.

[Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Mills) left the chair at 1.05 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

STORM DAMAGE

Ministerial Statement

Mr DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts) [2.15 p.m.]: I have just returned from visiting the storm-ravaged suburb of Dapto in the Illawarra, and I can inform the House that the vicious winds that swept through the region overnight have caused a great deal of damage. On advice from the State Emergency Service [SES], the Treasurer has approved the storm-affected areas being declared a natural disaster area. The areas covered by the declaration stretch from the Illawarra and the Southern Highlands in the south to the lower Hunter in the north. There is scope to extend the declaration if that is appropriate.

As at 2 o'clock today the SES had received 1,200 requests for assistance. Almost half of those tasks are now completed. This vicious windstorm caused extensive damage in suburbs in 30 local government areas. Wind speeds of well over 100 kilometres per hour were recorded in some areas. The Bureau of Meteorology advises that strong winds will continue throughout the day in the Illawarra and Sydney areas. Wollongong, Shellharbour, Goulburn, Wollondilly and the Sutherland shire have suffered the most severe damage. Roofs have been completely blown off some houses and fallen tree branches, flying roofing and debris have caused major damage to other properties. Large trees have been uprooted and have toppled onto houses, cars and powerlines. It is nothing short of a miracle that no-one was injured in the storm.

In Dapto, the worst hit suburb, a steel roof was lifted from a house and ended up 200 metres down the road wrapped around a power pole. With the assistance of New South Wales Fire Brigades and the Rural Fire Service, 300 SES volunteers have been in the field since last night and will continue to work throughout the days to come. Out-of-area SES response groups from the lower Hunter and Sydney northern divisions are also in attendance. Once again, we thank our dedicated volunteers, who are working in difficult and often dangerous conditions to help protect the community.

Mr STONER (Oxley) [2.20 p.m.]: Severe weather conditions, with winds of over 100 kilometres per hour, occurred yesterday and continue today. The Bureau of Meteorology has issued a gale warning for New South Wales coastal waters from Montague Island to Ulladulla and a strong wind warning for waters from Ulladulla to Port Macquarie.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. That warning includes the honourable member for Murrumbidgee and the honourable member for Camden.

Mr STONER: The poor weather conditions will continue due to a deep low south of the Tasman Sea directing a vigorous south-west stream over coastal waters.

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

Mr STONER: The weather has caused significant damage to houses and property on the New South Wales coast, particularly in the Illawarra and the town of Dapto. Roofs have been lifted off and trees have fallen down. It is only fitting that the area has been declared a natural disaster area. Weather events such as these are considered by experts to be more likely to occur during spring in an El Nino period. Unfortunately, we may experience further adverse weather conditions. The Coalition congratulates the magnificent and unstinting efforts of the State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service volunteers and members of New South Wales Fire Brigades. Those unsung heroes, through hard work and dedication, help people who have been adversely affected by savage weather, such as that which occurred yesterday.

CENTRAL WEST SOFTWOOD PLANTATION TENDERS

Ministerial Statement

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [2.22 p.m.]: I would like to update the House on a large new log tender that could result in more than 100 jobs for the Central West.

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

Mr YEADON: Last Monday the honourable member for Bathurst and I called for expressions of interest in 450,000 tonnes of logs from State Forests softwood plantations in the Bathurst, Orange, Lithgow and Oberon areas. The results speak for themselves. Last week more than 20 representatives from 15 companies and investment groups attended a State Forests information day about the tender. These included companies and groups of investors from overseas and interstate, as well as existing local timber processors. There is considerable interest in investing in new value-adding processing facilities that could lead to the creation of more than 100 jobs in the Central West. That is an excellent response which confirms that the availability of this additional wood could lead to a significant expansion in economic activity and employment based in the Central West softwood plantations. New processing facilities could produce sawn timber products for domestic and export markets and for expanding the local manufacture of panels and other wood fibre-based products.

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

Mr YEADON: The plantation management and timber processing activities based in those forests already provide direct economic benefit to the region of around \$150 million per year and directly employ more than 800 people, so already it is a significant regional industry. In fact, the Central West is the second largest pine plantation region in New South Wales, the southern area of Tumut-Cooma being the largest. Potential investors in this resource were also interested to learn that approximately 15,000 hectares of privately owned softwood plantation within the region are capable of producing an estimated 100 tonnes of sawlogs and 150 tonnes of pulpwood a year.

New processing facilities in the region would further boost investment in private plantations. Imagine what economic activity would be generated if these plantations had an extra layer of environmental, international value through carbon credits! Unfortunately, that is not the case because the Federal Government refuses to ratify the Kyoto protocol. This State has led the world in working on carbon sequestration and carbon credits. This is the time we have been waiting for. Every commentator and expert agrees that Australia will benefit from signing the Kyoto protocol. New South Wales has certainly worked to ensure that some of those economic benefits are achieved.

We are on the starting grid, we have the motor ticking over and we are just waiting for the starter to drop the flag. However, someone called John Howard is lying right in the middle of the grid. It is interesting to gauge the commitment of Opposition members to the development of rural industries. No wonder they are so much on the nose in their own electorates; they will do nothing for their regional communities. The criteria of State Forests for evaluating bids from prospective purchasers of additional wood in the Central West will include a detailed assessment of the regional economic benefits to be generated by each proposal put forward. Again the Government has a defined plan to ensure that it maximises the economic outcome for regions such as

Macquarie. The next step for those parties interested in tendering is to lodge a proposal for all or part of the wood on offer. The Government looks forward to those formal proposals. Based on the proposals, a short list of preferred proponents will be selected and invited to present detailed tender submissions by 28 October.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [2.27 p.m.]: The Opposition always welcomes the creation of new jobs, and it welcomes the potential of 100 new jobs associated with the tender for 450,000 tonnes of softwood timber. However, the Minister for Forestry drove a forest agenda that cost this State hundreds of jobs. He took away the resource that was available to the timber industry under the regional forest agreements [RFAs], and the Premier was right in there with him. It ill behoves the Minister to try now to take credit for creating 100 jobs when he cost the regional areas of New South Wales hundreds of jobs. The RFAs have been put in place, yet the Government is now looking at converting State forests that were agreed to under the RFAs to national parks. To not honour an RFA that was passed by the Parliament and signed off by the Commonwealth is to betray the Parliament. I ask the Minister and the Premier for an undertaking that they will not unravel the RFA in the fourth year of a 20-year agreement. The Minister referred to jobs in the timber industry. I point out that the Government's native vegetation legislation is having an adverse impact on timber resources on private land. Why is that occurring?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Transport to order.

Mr D. L. PAGE: It is occurring because members of native vegetation committees who know nothing about silviculture and the timber industry are drawing lines on maps, locking up timber resources on vast areas of privately owned land and saying, "You can't touch it". The Minister must recognise that he has taken away half the Crown resource. Although plantations are coming on line, albeit too slowly, New South Wales is far behind the 20:20 vision, which aims to treble the size of the plantation estate by 2020. That leaves us with the private resource, and the Government's native vegetation legislation is ruining completely any opportunity to access it. The Minister made some comments about the Kyoto protocol. The reality is it would have been better if everyone had ratified the agreement at the time. However, key countries—such as the United States of America, which is responsible for 25 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions—would not ratify the agreement. Why not? The United States would not ratify it because the Chinese and the Indians would not do so.

Mr Yeadon: They have.

Mr D. L. PAGE: The Chinese have because the agreement is not binding on underdeveloped countries. That point is often lost. It is not the sort of agreement that would bind Australia. The Federal Government is within an inch of achieving the target set out at Kyoto, which is to achieve, by 2010, 108 per cent of 1990 emissions. Australia is on track in that regard. The fact that we have not signed and ratified—

Ms Moore: It's a disgrace!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The former member for Kiama is in the gallery and he will want to know that the honourable member for Bligh is on her best behaviour.

Mr D. L. PAGE: Even though Australia has not ratified the Kyoto protocol, we are on track with regard to its prime objective: to reduce by 2010 greenhouse gas emissions to 108 per cent of their 1990 levels. Emissions in Australia are currently running at 111 per cent so we are not far away from achieving the protocol target—and we still have eight years in which to meet that objective.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government members will remain silent.

Mr D. L. PAGE: Instead of trying to score political points in this place, the Minister should examine his record on forestry. This Government has cost the State hundreds and hundreds of jobs. The next time the Minister makes a ministerial statement he should ensure he tells the truth.

WESTERN PLAINS ZOO WHITE RHINOCEROS ACQUISITION

Ministerial Statement

Ms NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Tourism, and Minister for Women) [2.32 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to advise the Parliament of some great news for the Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo. Five white rhinos are being airlifted from South Africa and will arrive in Adelaide tomorrow. They

will spend two months in quarantine at the dedicated rhinoceros quarantine station at Monarto Zoo and after that they will be taken to Dubbo for acclimatisation. When their acclimatisation is completed the animals will go on display at the Western Plains Zoo, hopefully during this year's Christmas school holidays.

The rhinos will be vital to the expansion of the Western Plains Zoo's white rhinoceros breeding program. The zoo will soon be involved in the display and breeding of three of the five surviving rhinos species on earth: the white, black and greater one-horned rhinoceros. These displays and programs are being developed under the \$35 million master plan redevelopment at Western Plains Zoo. The first of these animal display projects, the Rhino Range exhibit for the greater one-horned rhinoceros, is scheduled to open next year. These majestic rhinos will prove a powerful attraction to the visiting public, boosting tourism in the Central West.

The Western Plains Zoo attracts more than 280,000 visitors and it spends more than \$5 million on wages and food. It also provides 120 regional jobs. New South Wales zoos are recognised as being among the world's best and are international tourism icons in their own right. The arrival of these five white rhinos will also provide a great opportunity for New South Wales' great open range zoo to make an important contribution to global efforts to save these animals. I look forward to advising the House of further developments regarding these animals—preferably the pitter-patter of little rhino feet.

Mr J. H. TURNER (Myall Lakes—Deputy Leader of the National Party) [2.35 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Tourism for congratulating the Coalition parties on their foresight in creating Western Plains Zoo. That occurred under the Askin Government and Tom Lewis was the relevant Minister. We also thank the Minister for congratulating the former environment Minister, Tim Moore, who initiated attempts to preserve the white rhino. The Minister's announcement is a continuation of Coalition policy, which we thank her for endorsing fully. We note that the white rhino project is important not only for Australia but for the whole world. The Coalition's initiatives in this area are obviously paying great dividends.

JOINT SITTING: PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON REFORM OF THE LAW OF NEGLIGENCE

Mr Speaker tabled the minutes of the joint sitting held on 18 September 2002.

Ordered to be printed.

PETITIONS

Harbord Telecommunication Facilities

Petition objecting to the installation of a telecommunications tower and antennas at 87 Harbord Road, Harbord, received from **Mr Barr**.

Allambie Heights Telecommunication Antennas

Petition opposing construction of telecommunication antennas at Allambie Heights Oval, received from **Mr Hazzard**.

Nurses Salaries

Petition praying that the Government grant New South Wales nurses an increase in salary to help overcome the shortage of nurses, received from **Mr Barr**.

National Parks and Wildlife Service Prosecutions

Petition asking that the National Parks and Wildlife Service be directed to redress the injustice suffered by the Bacic family and to ensure that future prosecutions under the National Parks and Wildlife Act are properly and responsibly based, received from **Mr Rozzoli**.

Lane Cove Tunnel Works

Petition praying that the House initiate a review of Lane Cove tunnel works, received from **Mr Collins**.

Cammeray Traffic Arrangements

Petition praying that pedestrian traffic signals be installed at Raleigh Plaza on Miller Street, Cammeray, and that the 1997 traffic study be implemented, received from **Mr Collins**.

Blacktown to Castle Hill Bus Transitway

Petition requesting that construction of the Blacktown to Castle Hill Bus Transitway, proposed for the eastern side of Sunnyholt Road, be moved to the western side of Sunnyholt Road, received from **Mr Gibson**.

Manly Lagoon Remediation

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

Richmond Regional Vegetation Management Plan

Petitions seeking extension of the exhibition period of the draft Richmond Regional Vegetation Management Plan, received from **Mr Fraser**, **Mr George**, and **Mr D. L. Page**.

Hunters Hill High School

Petition praying that the decision to close Hunters Hill High School be reversed, received from **Mrs Chikarovski**.

Northbridge Primary School

Petition seeking permanent classrooms to replace temporary demountable classrooms at Northbridge Primary School, received from **Mr Collins**.

Albury Electorate Policing

Petition asking for increased police presence in Henty, Culcairn, Walla Walla and surrounding areas, received from **Mr Glachan**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

OASIS LIVERPOOL DEVELOPMENT

Mr BROGDEN: My question without notice is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much disorderly conduct in the House. I place all members on two calls to order.

Mr BROGDEN: Did the Minister for Sport and Recreation mislead Parliament yesterday when he tabled a document showing that John Della Bosca was present at an Oasis meeting in November 2000, or did John Della Bosca mislead Parliament on 27 August when he denied being present at any Oasis meetings? Who is telling the truth?

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

Mr IEMMA: I tabled a document yesterday in response to a question that was asked by the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai the previous day to table and detail all of the occasions that I had met Mr McIntyre and the Bulldogs officials. A check of my records reveals the information that I have tabled to the Parliament. The document that I tabled yesterday, I stand by, and the information contained in that document is in response to the request to table the details.

Mr BROGDEN: I ask a supplementary question. Since the Minister has had four opportunities to set the record straight in this House since John Della Bosca's statement, why did he keep John Della Bosca's involvement and the involvement of Eddie Obeid a secret for three weeks?

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

COALITION SENTENCING POLICY

Mr BARTLETT: My question without notice is to the Premier. What is the latest information on sentencing?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind all members that they are on two calls to order. The honourable member for Epping is on three calls to order.

Mr CARR: Yesterday was not the happiest day for the Leader of the Opposition and he is showing some signs of still wearing the humiliation inflicted on him on that occasion. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said he would create a new offence for serial indecent assault of a child under 10. The only thing wrong was that he gave it a sentence five years lower than it now attracts in the Crimes Act! His "tough on sentencing" is about lowering the sentence for one of the worst imaginable crimes.

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

Mr CARR: Here is his second mistake: The Leader of the Opposition did not just forget to read the Crimes Act, he forgot to read his own policy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I include the honourable member for Wakehurst in that warning. I suggest that he cease talking.

Mr CARR: Yesterday afternoon the Leader of the Opposition told Philip Clark he was introducing a compulsory life sentence for someone who has sexual intercourse with a child under 10. That was at 5.10 p.m. Hours before, at 11.15 a.m., he said it was going to be not a compulsory life sentence but a sentence of 15 years.

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

Mr CARR: It was a compulsory life sentence at 5.10 p.m. but at 11.15 a.m. it was a sentence of 15 years. Something is going on here. The Opposition is making up policy on sentencing as it goes along. The Opposition's sentencing policy is starting to look like a birthday cake, John Hewson's birthday cake. Here is mistake number three: Three minutes later he tells Philip Clark that serial sexual assault laws were too complicated and he was going to simplify it. Wrong again. His very policy does not apply to serial sexual assaults, it applies only to indecent assaults. But the mistakes do not stop there.

Here is mistake number four, and it took place at one of those memorable Liberal press conferences. The House will fondly recall that famous press conference from the last State Election campaign, which had the previous Leader of the Opposition standing there with the late unlamented Michael Photios. As someone said to me, Photios is like a parrot on the shoulder of Long John Silver, Photios correcting the then Leader of the Opposition. By the way, this thing about regime change in Iraq, George Bush has got to be careful, the Liberal Party in this State is a case study in regime changes, and every regime is worse than the previous one.

It is a familiar setting, imagine the scene: a Liberal Party press conference, the Leader of the Opposition and his mate the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Attorney General. The reporter asked, "Can't a judge direct a jury to find manslaughter?" The Leader of the Opposition replied, "Yes, a judge could do that as well." The reporter asked, "So in fact—" The Leader of the Opposition cut him short, turned to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and asked, "Is that correct?" The Deputy Leader of the Opposition replied "Yes". The Leader of the Opposition then stated, "Yeah". So that is clear! The greatest legal mind since Sir Owen Dixon clarifies the matter.

Mr Hartcher: Under the standing orders I seek a clarification. I quote a question asked of the Premier: "So you are guaranteeing then, Mr Premier, lower crime rates in Sydney?" The Premier's reply was "Yes". Mr Willesee asked, "Guaranteed?" The Premier's reply was "Yes". This man has guaranteed that crime will drop in New South Wales. It is here. The Premier has guaranteed it. He talks about radio interviews—you really did a beauty, Bob!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr CARR: Read the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* today. Not 15 seconds later a reporter asked a separate but identical question, "But can a judge direct the jury to make a finding of manslaughter?"

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

Mr CARR: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition—remember his emphatic "Yes" 15 seconds earlier—this time said, "No!" The brilliant legal mind—he took a point of clarification—said "Yes" and 15 seconds later said "No." Bring back Photios! Here is mistake number five: The Leader of the Opposition was asked this question by a reporter, "What would happen to a father who killed someone who sexually assaulted their child?" The Leader of the Opposition replied, "Oh, in that case either the police or the prosecutors would seek to charge that person with manslaughter because of the style of the offence."

Manslaughter? Crown Prosecutors advised my office this morning that in almost all cases they are charged with murder. Fathers who have killed paedophiles are convicted of murder, so are battered wives, so are so-called mercy killers. But under this package that has been cobbled together and that is still being made up as the Opposition goes along there is one inflexible sentence. So the cold-blooded professional criminal who commits a murder gets the same as the battered wife provoked beyond endurance to do an unpardonable act, or the father of an assaulted child who kills the paedophile—the same inflexible, all-purpose sentence. All the facts are there. I have a raft of case studies that make this point. Half a dozen mistakes are being corrected, being patched up as they go along with this cobbled together policy that the member for Wakehurst opposed when the shadow Cabinet considered it.

Look at a case of a so-called mercy killing or a case of an 18-year-old daughter whose alcoholic father violently and sexually abused her since she was in primary school. She had tried to escape. Her mother refused to take her. She was convicted of murder. But she would get the same sentence under the Opposition's approach as a hardened professional criminal who cold-bloodedly murders a gangland opponent or an innocent person. Under this policy every murder is regarded the same and treated as the same. Manslaughter is not an option. The experts advise that these convictions are for murder. But under the Opposition proposal every murderer must be treated with the same inflexible, all-purpose sentence. And that is a profound mistake and a mistake that the people of this State would understand.

The policy that is supposed to be so tough turns out to be tough on battered wives, on daughters who kill fathers after years of sexual abuse, and on mercy killers. But the Leader of the Opposition is not tough on juvenile gang rapists, because this scheme does not apply to juveniles who commit adult offences. Opposition members had not thought of that, had not applied their great legal minds to that, had not given it consideration. When it comes to paedophilia, the Leader of the Opposition wants to actually reduce the maximum sentence by five years, as we established in this House yesterday, following which he fled the Chamber, I think in tears—that was the impression we all had—and hid under his desk. Opposition members are worse than incompetent; they are dangerous, and the policy they enunciated is unravelling before their eyes.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Mr SOURIS: What action does the Minister for Regional Development propose after recent Government media statements that changes to public liability insurance meant an important event for regional New South Wales, the Christmas in Mudgee Street carnival, could go ahead and now has proved false, with the organising committee unable to obtain insurance, giving the lie to the Premier's resurrection of fun statement earlier this month?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the National Party has asked a question. He will listen to the answer in silence.

Mr WOODS: If there is one person, and one government, that is leading the nation in reform of the insurance industry it is this Premier, and this Government. The Premier has been through all the reforms that are proposed, and they are going to have a profound effect on the insurance industry. Whilst Opposition members drag their feet and do not know what they are doing the Government is taking the steps necessary to ensure that life will be able to go on in a reasonable way right across the State.

SUGAR INDUSTRY RESTRUCTURE

Mr NEWELL: My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. What is the Government's response to the Federal Government's tax on consumers to pay for the sugar industry restructuring package?

Mr Armstrong: A sweetener.

Mr AMERY: That is a very good interjection from the honourable member for Lachlan. I acknowledge the great interest of the honourable member for Tweed in the North Coast of New South Wales and agricultural industries.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst has been called to order three times and continues to interrupt the proceedings of the House. I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the honourable member for Wakehurst from the Chamber.

Mr AMERY: Otherwise known as the star of Mental Health Week.

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

Mrs Chikarovski: Point of order: In the absence of the member for Wakehurst, whom you have asked to leave the Chamber, I ask you to ask the Minister for Agriculture to withdraw that remark. It is unparliamentary. It lowers the tone of the Parliament and brings all of us into disrepute. I ask you to ask the Minister to withdraw the remark.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Minister for Agriculture meant the remark in a jocular manner. However, if any member takes offence at the remark—and one member has obviously done so—I will ask the Minister to withdraw it.

Mr AMERY: I am pleased to withdraw it.

Mrs Chikarovski: Withdraw.

Mr AMERY: I withdrew. What is the Leader of the Opposition doing here? He has broken a record: he has been here for 15 minutes in question time. Well done!

Mrs Chikarovski: Point of order: Mr Speaker, you directed the Minister for Agriculture to withdraw. He should do so in an appropriate and respectful manner, taking into account that he is insulting people with mental health problems in the way that he did. He should not make a joke of the mentally ill. He is a disgrace.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister has appropriately apologised and withdrawn the remark.

[Interruption]

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

Mr O'Farrell: Point of order: I thank the member for Wyong for making my point. Mr Speaker, 17 minutes and 28 seconds ago you put everyone in the House on two calls to order. The only person, besides the member for Wyong, whom you put on a third call to order, and then evicted, is the honourable member for Wakehurst—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The honourable member for Ku-ring-gai will resume his seat.

Mr O'Farrell:—despite the fact that the members for Bathurst, Fairfield and Swansea have repeatedly interjected. Can we simply have some fairness in here, which the people in the gallery would expect?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai does not resume his seat I will ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him from the Chamber. I call him to order for the third time.

Mr AMERY: I acknowledge the strong performances from the honourable member for Ku-ring-gai and the honourable member for Lane Cove; I think some new suits have been bought! I have acknowledged the honourable member for Tweed and we should acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition, because he has stuck around for four rounds of a 10-round match. He is doing extremely well. If the Premier is right—and we know Premier Lang was right, and we know Premier Carr is always right—that would prove conclusively that some Balmain boys do cry. As the Premier said, let us not have any more distractions. I acknowledge, again, the honourable member for Tweed for raising another rural issue.

The Leader of the National Party is a financial whiz. With a financial record like that, is it any wonder that he has to pay a week in advance to get his pizza home delivered. He wanted to spend \$50 million at Luna

Park. The Leader of the National Party is trying hard, but the honourable member for Barwon is waiting in the wings. The New South Wales sugar industry extends from the Queensland border to north of Grafton. It generates approximately \$230 million for the regional economy and is one of the region's biggest employers. It would be great to get a question from the Leader of the National Party on this important matter. The sugar industry includes 630 farmers, and 450 mill and refinery workers.

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

Mr AMERY: By the way, the Leader of the National Party could do with a notebook. New South Wales produces only 4 and 5 per cent of the total sugar cane crop. But Queensland produces approximately 95 per cent and Western Australia's Ord River produces less than 1 per cent. On 10 September the Federal agriculture Minister, Warren Truss, announced an assistance package for the Australian sugar industry worth \$150 million over four years. That package was announced in a way that indicated that it was a Federal Government package; people thought that the Federal Government was coming up with the package to assist them, out of their own money. It is very important for honourable members, and the people in the gallery, to know where that money is coming from, and particularly where it is going.

I will release some figures on that in a moment. Mr Truss has ignored the New South Wales sector of the industry, but not our consumers, who are firmly in his sights. New South Wales consumers recognise what I said about the size of the sugar industry—95 per cent in Queensland, but only a small component by comparison in New South Wales. New South Wales consumers will fork out \$33.6 million through an 18¢ per kilogram levy on sugar whilst our sugar farmers will receive just \$3 million in assistance. This levy is being disguised by the Federal Government as an assistance package. In fact, it is nothing short of a new form of hidden taxation from Canberra at the expense of New South Wales consumers.

It is very similar to the Federal dairy industry assistance package that was also funded by the consumer to the tune of 11¢ per litre of milk. Mr Truss, the Federal agriculture Minister, said that the sugar industry assistance package is to provide \$60 million for regional programs to facilitate aggregation of farms, rationalisation of transport and harvesting systems, diversification and value-added opportunities; an interest subsidy scheme to support replanting of crops. Our drought-affected farmers would like some of that \$60 million.

Mr Truss further said the package would provide short-term income support measures for a period of 12 months to help stabilise the industry and help those in immediate need and also assistance for farmers wishing to exit the industry; a one-off tax-free payment of \$45,000. The honourable member for Lane Cove should lighten up, she has done well today. I think she is dressing for change, there is something going on over there, a regime change. Although the New South Wales industry is far healthier than the Queensland industry the package will also be of some benefit to our producers.

Mr Slack-Smith: What are you complaining about?

Mr AMERY: I am complaining because, again, New South Wales consumers are paying the lion's share of a fund which is going interstate, again. The crop replanting component of the assistance package could benefit those New South Wales cane growers who were affected by severe frosts this year. According to Greg Messiter, the Chief Executive Officer of the New South Wales Sugar Milling Co-operative, the \$60 million regional initiatives component of the package may provide assistance for the industry to further develop value-adding of sugar cane. The proposed levy should generate approximately \$100 million, leaving approximately \$50 million to be provided by governments. Again, here is another interesting aspect. The \$50 million balance is expected to be funded with \$25 million by the Commonwealth and \$25 million by the States.

However, the funding arrangement was not discussed or agreed to by any of the States prior to the announcement of the package by Mr Truss. That is how the Federal Government works out things: it works out a levy to hit New South Wales the hardest. That is the sort of thing that Premier Lang referred to when he said, "Federation was a plot against New South Wales". Every time a levy or taxation is struck, it hits hardest in New South Wales and the money goes to other States. Without any consultation, all States are expected to contribute \$25 million. For New South Wales consumers the price of sugar will rise by about 18¢ per kilogram as a result of this out-of-hand decision by the Federal Minister. That is a 14 per cent increase in the retail price of sugar, which is currently around \$1.28 a kilogram.

Mr Slack-Smith: It is getting dearer.

Mr AMERY: Yes, it is, as a result of this levy. The sugar industry in New South Wales is a model for the rest of the industry in this country. That is an important aspect; our industry is being caught up in the very inefficient Queensland industry. Under the package, about which New South Wales was not consulted, consumers and taxpayers would fork out millions of dollars, not to assist our farmers but to prop up Queensland farmers. As happened with the dairy deregulation assistance package, the Federal Government tries to take credit while our New South Wales consumers pay more. For the benefit of honourable members I will leave on the table of the House a number of pie charts that indicate very clearly how the money is collected and where it will go. Members will be able to see clearly how New South Wales consumers are being hit by this levy.

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

Mr AMERY: I again congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for lasting this long in question time.

BATHURST GAOL DETOXIFICATION UNIT

Mr RICHARDSON: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Corrective Services. Will he explain why, in a re-run typical of *Yes Minister*, the new detoxification unit at Bathurst gaol, which he officially opened in February, seven months ago, has still not accepted a single inmate?

Mr AMERY: Basically because they are still waiting for the honourable member for The Hills to arrive.

Mrs Chikarovski: Point of order: It is clear that the Minister for Corrective Services has a problem with people who are mentally ill, and with people who are addicted to drugs and other substances. I ask you to ensure that when he addresses the House he does not insult people in this community who are desperately in need of help.

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

Mr Scully: Tell me that the honourable member for The Hills is not mad.

Mr AMERY: The honourable member for Lane Cove has assured us that he is not in any one of those categories. We must acknowledge that strong performance by the honourable member for Lane Cove. We have really started to notice that she is looking every bit the leader that the current leader is not. She did not flee the Chamber when the blowtorch was turned on her. They need a recount, and there would be more than one vote in it next time. Yes, I did attend the Bathurst unit. What the Government and the department are doing with detoxification units not only at Bathurst but in all of our organisations—

Mr Hartcher: A prison without prisoners is like a hospital without patients.

Mr AMERY: Or like an Opposition without leadership. We are opening detoxification units not only at Bathurst but in a number of our prisons throughout the State.

Mr Richardson: Why don't you put inmates in there?

Mr AMERY: Can anyone understand what he is saying? He is a bit of a worry. People will be referred to this centre and every other centre when the department and Corrections Health so deem. I also have a lot of wards around the State that do not have people in them, but I am holding one open. The opening of the Bathurst detoxification unit, as I am sure the honourable member for Bathurst will attest, went extremely well. I am very pleased with the department, which is now going through the process of locating appropriate people for the detoxification units at Bathurst and elsewhere in the State. People will be sent to Bathurst at the appropriate time. People are being referred to the Bathurst unit.

The honourable member's question is very similar to his claims in the media that the authorised strength of the department is different to the actual strength. I tried to explain to him that I am authorised to employ 100 people to staff the new gaol at Kempsey, but we have not employed them yet because we do not have a gaol at Kempsey yet. That is an example of the rationale I get from him all the time. As staff become available for these units we will allocate them not only to Bathurst but also to every other detoxification unit throughout New South Wales.

UNDERGROUND POWER CABLES

Mr WEST: My question without notice is to the Minister for Energy. What is the Government's response to a recent Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] report on underground cabling?

Mr YEADON: I thank the honourable member for Campbelltown for his interest in new infrastructure in new areas such as Campbelltown.

[*Interruption*]

The Leader of the Opposition interrupts. Like the Minister for Corrective Services, I am surprised that he is still here, particularly as we are now well into question time. It is a record! I would have bet London to a brick on that by this time his eyes would have been welling with tears with his little lip all a-quiver as he fled from the Chamber. I do not agree with the Minister for Corrective Services about this Balmain boy stuff. It goes back too far. We need something more up to date, a contemporary name. Perhaps something like "Blubbing Broggo, the wet-eyed wimp from Warriewood". That is the sort of thing we need, a much more up-to-date name, like the "wet-eyed wimp from Warriewood".

[*Interruption*]

The honourable member for Gosford interjects. He is 99 per cent of the reason for the emotional vulnerability of the Leader of the Opposition. He keeps setting him up. I can see by his face and demeanour that he is animated and delighted about the situation. We will have to give him an application form. Over the past nine months the Government has undertaken the most extensive studies and consultation on undergrounding that this State has ever seen. Today the Government will release the final report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal on the cost and benefit of undergrounding. This report shows the modelled costs of a broad-scale undergrounding program to be between \$3.6 billion and \$5.9 billion over 40 years. That is an estimate, and I emphasise "estimate", of up to \$3,800 per household.

Mr Armstrong: Point of order: Like all other honourable members, I am interested in the answer to this question. But will you now match the same money for water for inland New South Wales?

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

Mr YEADON: It might be an idea if the honourable member listened to the response. It should be noted that this does not include the cost of undergrounding telecommunication cables that use the same poles, which is estimated at up to an additional \$2 billion, or roughly \$2,000 per household. Practical experience in other States where undergrounding programs are already in place suggests that the cost could be even greater. For example, Western Australia suggests \$4,500 per household and Queensland suggests \$4,400 per household. My view is that the cost would be greater than \$3,800 in Sydney. If the geography, density, et cetera, of a place like Perth is considered, one would have to assume that the costs would be greater in Sydney because of its more difficult terrain and environment. IPART found that the quantifiable benefits of undergrounding were between \$535 million and \$625 million over 40 years. This includes reduced costs in motor vehicle accidents, improved reliability in electricity supply, and costs avoided in maintaining overhead electricity supply networks, including things like tree trimming.

This is an important point: The costs of undergrounding outweigh the quantifiable benefits by a staggering 300 to 400 per cent. After careful consideration of this issue and extensive public consultation, the Government has decided that undergrounding the entire system is simply not worth the price tag. Put simply, it would redirect taxpayers dollars away from new schools, hospitals and roads. This is particularly the case when we consider that almost half of Sydney's power cables will be buried within 20 years at no additional cost to households. Sydney already has the largest underground electricity network in Australia, with almost 20,000 kilometres of underground cables already in place. We expect this to expand at a faster rate due to the urban growth and redevelopment occurring across Sydney. By way of assistance, we will develop better mechanisms for undergrounding cables where communities are willing to pay, which I will elaborate on later.

Many people across Sydney and in the Illawarra have experienced blackouts in the past 24 hours because of high winds of up to 95 kilometres per hour damaging the overhead electricity network. While the Government understands that interruptions in electricity supply cause difficulties in people's daily lives, the costs of mandating underground power would have too great a financial impact on family budgets. There is no

doubt that undergrounding can resolve particular reliability problems within the network and there are many examples where distributors have already undergrounded the network, and the benefit outweighs the cost. While this is an important issue, particularly during storms and fires, to assume that no maintenance is required on underground systems is simply ignoring reality. Underground electricity networks can be more expensive to maintain and take longer to fix because faults can be harder to find. For example, the honourable member for Bligh recently wrote to me about delays in repairing street lighting in Kings Cross. As honourable members would appreciate, good street lighting is important to the Kings Cross community. In this instance, EnergyAustralia advised me that the streetlights were supplied by underground power.

Due to delays in locating underground faults, excavating, and obtaining permits from council to disrupt traffic, EnergyAustralia sets a benchmark of 21 days to repair streetlights once the problem is reported. By comparison, EnergyAustralia's benchmark is five days for streetlight repairs that are fed by an overhead network. Another key issue is the economic inequities created by trying to fund such an expensive undertaking. When we looked at other States where undergrounding programs were in place, affluent suburbs were more likely to have their cables put underground before other areas. This does not even address inequities between the city and the bush. It is totally unacceptable for the Carr Government to ask rural communities, which are already straining under the current drought, to pay to underground electricity cables in Sydney. Similarly, there are inequities for those who already have paid to have their power supply put underground. This is the case for 27 per cent of Sydney's residents, and they predominantly live in the new residential areas of Western Sydney. We expect this to expand at a faster rate due to the urban growth and redevelopment that is occurring across Sydney.

As I said earlier, we will develop better mechanisms for undergrounding cables, particularly where communities are willing to pay. Let me be clear: if people want to pay to have their cables put underground, we will make it easier for them to do so. In the next six months I will further investigate with electricity distributors flexible payment options for householders who want their cables underground. We will also work with local councils to improve processes for burying cables in new developments and redevelopments. This approach will be voluntary; we will not force councils to do so. These initiatives will achieve most of the outcomes we are looking for, without placing a massive cost on mums and dads. Of course, as technology improves we will continue to look at ways to underground cables that are economically efficient for the community.

TENTERFIELD HIGH SCHOOL SKILLS CENTRE

Mr TORBAY: My question is to the Minister for Education and Training. Will the Minister advise the House whether the establishment of a skills centre at Tenterfield High School is going ahead?

Mr WATKINS: The honourable member for Northern Tablelands has been an extremely keen advocate of this project. Our education and training system is world class, whether in a small country town or in a suburb in Sydney. Over recent years the Government has significantly invested in giving school students the opportunity to gain industry experience and necessary skills. I am pleased to inform the honourable member for Northern Tablelands of a significant investment of \$165,000 at Tenterfield High School for the establishment of a skills centre for school students. The money will fund the creation of industry-standard facilities at the school and significantly expand training opportunities for students.

The skills centre will include a brand new workshop with welding bays, as well as computing and business equipment, and the school's existing training facilities will be refurbished to industry and commercial standards. With the establishment of this centre the school will be able to deliver more training in hospitality, information technology, primary industries, business services, construction and automotive repairs. It will also enable the school to introduce training in retail, metals, and engineering. One of the strengths of this project is the enthusiastic support and recognition given to vocational education courses by the local Tenterfield community. The community is committed to a training agenda that will enhance employment prospects for its students. The present strong links with industry will be extended as the skills centre increases the range of courses on offer.

Tenterfield High School has an enviable record of success in educational and vocational programs. The school has received many awards and acknowledgements for its commitment to quality education and training. The benefits are readily apparent. The retention rate of students in years 11 and 12 is improving, while students, particularly indigenous students, are experiencing much better employment prospects. Student participation rates in vocational education and training courses at Tenterfield High School have increased dramatically in recent years. Currently, 117 students undertake vocational courses. Following the completion of the new facility, more than 140 students will be able to access a better range and quality of vocational training.

This year across New South Wales about 64,000 students have enrolled in vocational higher school certificate courses. This is a 16 per cent increase since 2001. Of those 64,000 enrolments, public education accounts for 48,000. The new funding represents a critical Government commitment to provide vocational training opportunities to school students in rural New South Wales. Our investment in vocational education and training initiatives, such as the Tenterfield High School skills complex, can make a difference in rural economic development and provide increased opportunities for rural youth. I commend the honourable member for Northern Tablelands for his commitment to public education and I thank him for his warm welcome to me on my recent visit to his electorate.

WESTERN REGION CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES

Mr BLACK: My question without notice is to the Attorney General. What is the latest information on crime prevention measures in western New South Wales?

Mr DEBUS: I commend the honourable member for Murray-Darling for his well-known interest in this issue. The people of towns like Bourke and Brewarrina face significant challenges, including the present drought.

Mr Hartcher: And crime.

Mr DEBUS: And crime? Who advises you on legal matters? You do not know that Mark Textor is a pollster, not a lawyer. That is the problem. As I have talked with people from western New South Wales—and indeed their member of Parliament—they have told me that on the one hand they want tough law enforcement measures, but that they also want to deal effectively with the causes of crime. That means supporting young people in their towns who face significant barriers associated with isolation and the lack of job opportunities. We are dealing here with young people who are bored, who go to school hungry, and who come from disrupted and dysfunctional homes. Local police, teachers, magistrates and Department of Community Services workers are confronted every day with the consequences of these social problems. The Government has sat down with these communities and asked what other practical forms of assistance they think will address these problems. We know from all the work done by the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department that small community-driven projects can have a significant impact on antisocial behaviour. Staffing a youth centre can contribute to a drop in break and enter offences of up to 50 per cent.

The now rather famous Youth Go Kart program at Dareton, which recently attracted a good deal of national attention, is one of several initiatives credited with a 54 per cent drop in assaults, a 49 per cent drop in break and enter and malicious damage offences, and an overall reduction of 31 per cent in crime in that small western town. Earlier this year I was able to advise the House of a range of initiatives to the value of well over \$300,000 to support the Brewarrina community. Today I advise that after detailed local consultation, the Government will provide an additional \$540,000 to the Bourke community and \$443,000 to the Walgett community to support a range of services that will provide steady progress in crime prevention and community development. These solutions are a mix of capital and developmental projects funded over three years.

The first projects identified by the local communities are the refurbishment of the Bourke Widjeri Hall and the Walgett Gingi Mission Hall. Community halls are critical for communities to come together, to celebrate special occasions and to socialise together. The Government will provide capital funding to refurbish the Widjeri Hall in Bourke, allowing for a range of activities for up to 100 adults and 200 young people. The Gingi Mission Hall will be refurbished jointly with local Aboriginal organisations. It will be able to accommodate health clinics, child care services and other activities that are vital to the community. The next cluster of projects to be funded are targeted at truancy and absenteeism.

Mrs Chikarovski: No-one is listening.

Mr DEBUS: You are worried about some people who are disadvantaged in the community and not others, is that it? Local communities and parents are worried at the prospect of young people drifting into crime and cutting themselves off from school. At Bourke High School, a successful mentoring program has already achieved real results in improving attendance, behaviour, and the retention of youth at risk. This program will provide funding for years 8 and 9. Computer equipment will also be provided to Bourke High School to support a tutoring program which focuses on children at risk between the years of six and eight. Results so far show that there has been an incredible 80 per cent improvement in the attendance rate and an overall improvement in the attitude of young people going to Bourke High School. In Walgett the Government will establish a school-based

breakfast program to provide a nutritious breakfast to students with special needs. It is a sad reflection on our society that something as simple as a good breakfast can make a difference between life on the margins and a fighting chance at participating in education, but that is the case. Once kids are at school, they have a fighting chance of learning.

The crime prevention program is of no interest to the shadow Minister for Police and the shadow Attorney General because Mark Textor has told them that crime prevention does not rate with the people they want to impress with their completely crazed mandatory sentencing myths. I congratulate the community leaders of Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett on their consistent support for positive justice initiatives such as circle sentencing and youth conferencing. I congratulate them on having sat down to work out the strengths they already have and the resources they need to build on those strengths, and on working with the Government today to deliver the initiatives I have described and, indeed, others that are to be negotiated.

SOUTH COAST CHARCOAL PLANT

Mr HUMPHERSON: My question is to the Minister for Planning. How does the Minister reconcile his statement when approving the South Coast Mogo charcoal plant that no tree will be cut down to reduce charcoal, while the timber supply agreement specifies that the logs provided must be at least 150 millimetres in diameter and between two and 11 metres long, have no pronounced bends, and be delivered in log form?

Dr REFSHAUGE: It is very clear that the conditions I have imposed on that consent will stand. If the conditions are broken, I will close the plant down.

Mr HUMPHERSON: I ask a supplementary question. Arising from that answer, is the Minister prepared to give that same answer to the rally at Mogo on Saturday?

Dr REFSHAUGE: I have given that answer on every public occasion and I will continue to give it. If they break those conditions, I will close that plant down.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING NORTHCOTT ESTATE

Dr REFSHAUGE: I wish to provide a supplementary response to a question without notice asked yesterday by the honourable member for Bligh regarding the need for a community worker at Northcott. The Government is committed to improving the wellbeing of public housing residents. The initiatives we have introduced include intensive tenancy management, tenant employment programs, handypersons, and the creation of a senior client service officer position. I want to ensure that tenants with high needs have access to those necessary services. The Government will employ a community development worker to assist tenants on the Northcott estate in Surry Hills. The worker will have a clear set of community development objectives and will work closely with existing networks. Review of the ongoing need for the position will occur at six monthly intervals.

Questions without notice concluded.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Kyoto Protocol

Mr CARR (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Citizenship) [3.38 p.m.]: My motion is urgent because, with the United Kingdom, the European Union, China, Russia and India now committed to Kyoto, the protocol will come into effect soon. Australia cannot afford to be left out. My motion is urgent because Australia stands to be locked out of carbon credit markets, and that will cost investment and jobs. My motion is urgent because the polar icecaps are melting, the coral in the world's oceans is turning brittle, and species are being placed at risk because of a warming of the world's climate produced by the greenhouse phenomena.

ACIL Consulting Pty Ltd Water Sharing Plans Report

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [3.39 p.m.]: This matter should be considered urgently because the social and economic impact of changes to water-sharing arrangements will be far greater than indicated in a report released today by ACIL Consulting Pty Ltd and the Government. It is obvious from comments by the Minister

for Land and Water Conservation in his press release that he supports ACIL's position. Blind Freddy could see that the report issued by ACIL does not reflect the true situation regarding changes to the water bulk access regimes. For example, the ACIL report claims that only three jobs will be lost in the Namoi Valley, when a Department of Land and Water Conservation [DLWC] report commissioned by the University of New England indicated that 190 jobs would be lost in that area.

Similarly, the ACIL report states that only 23 jobs will be lost in the Gwydir Valley, while the departmental report reveals that 300 jobs will be lost. I spoke this morning with the managing director of one of the largest employers in New South Wales, Auscott Pty Ltd, who told me that his company alone will lose 19 jobs in the Namoi as a result of the water-sharing plan. He further indicated—that this point is particularly relevant—that he was not consulted by ACIL in compiling the report. This motion is urgent because the ACIL report failed to examine the full impact of the changes statewide. It considered only 13 water management plans across the State despite the fact that 37 such plans are in place in New South Wales. So ACIL examined fewer than half of existing draft water management plans. Furthermore, the report is based largely on the DLWC's integrated quantity and quality model for water and the irrigation industry is extremely concerned about the accuracy of that model.

Mr Stewart: Point of order: The honourable member for Ballina is failing to establish the urgency of this matter in accordance with standing orders. He has not told the House why the matter is urgent.

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

Mr D. L. PAGE: This matter is urgent because the Government will use this report, relying on the fact that it gives a true indication of the impact of its water reform program. At the beginning of the ACIL report its authors state:

ACIL does not warrant the accuracy of any forecast or prediction in the report.

What could be clearer?

Mr Stewart: Point of order: Standing orders require the honourable member for Ballina to substantiate the urgency of this matter, not debate the issue.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Ballina is debating the substance of the issue.

Mr D. L. PAGE: This matter is urgent because the Government has given ACIL an unrealistic time frame in which to do a proper economic and social impact assessment of its water reforms. The Government gave this company only a month or so to do that work. There is no way that a company—no matter how good it is—could produce such a significant report in a matter of four weeks or so. ACIL has conducted a desktop study that uses purely secondary, not primary, information that was basically supplied by the Government. So why would this report not reflect the Government's general position? I think it behoves the House to consider seriously the impact of the ACIL report and to agree to debate this matter urgently. I would like to ascertain the feelings of people in country areas, where there is a significant potential for job losses as a result of this ACIL report.

Mr Stewart: Point of order: Standing orders require the honourable member to substantiate the urgency of this matter. He is simply not doing that; he is debating the issue. This is a gross breach of standing orders as you have ruled on the matter several times, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member for Ballina to abide by the standing orders.

Mr D. L. PAGE: Every member of Parliament who represents a country electorate with irrigation infrastructure will be impacted by this report. It is important that the House debate this issue.

Mr Gaudry: Point of order: The honourable member for Ballina is deliberately flouting your rulings.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Before I put the question I draw the attention of the House to the form of the motion that the honourable member for Ballina is seeking to move, which I have read closely. It contains four paragraphs, the first of which calls on the House to note with concern the inaccurate findings of the Government-commissioned ACIL report into the economic impact of draft water sharing plans. That paragraph is in order. However, the Chair does not accept the second and third paragraphs of the motion as they are matters for debate. They should not constitute part of the motion.

The second paragraph calls on the House to note that the finding of the ACIL report that 48 jobs would be lost statewide is inconsistent with previous research commissioned by the Department of Land and Water Conservation. That is a matter for debate and should not be part of the motion. The third paragraph calls on the House to note that authors of the report relied on secondary information, including questionable data from the Department of Land and Water Conservation. That is also a matter for debate and should not be part of the motion. Only part of the fourth paragraph is in order. It calls on the Government to disregard the report's findings and then refers to the conduct of a proper and thorough socioeconomic impact assessment of water reform. That is out of order. Only a small part of this motion in its present form is in order. Honourable members who might wish to give notices of motions for urgent consideration in future should take note of my ruling. I will now put the question.

Mr D. L. Page: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I have made my ruling.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 54

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

Noes, 33

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

Pair

Ms Harrison

Mrs Skinner

Question resolved in the affirmative.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Urgent Motion

Mr CARR (Maroubra—Premier, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Citizenship) [3.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this House calls on the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol.

A study released this week by CSIRO scientist Dr Paul Fraser on the 1987 Montreal protocol on chlorofluorocarbons [CFCs] shows that international conventions can work. The nations of the world can voluntarily agree to change their behaviour and rescue the environment, and they can do it without loss of wealth and production. Two other pieces of research released this week—one by Dr Warwick McKibbin from the Australian National University [ANU] and the other from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics [ABARE]—show that the costs associated with Kyoto are negligible. These reports are not from environmental organisations. ABARE is notoriously conservative. McKibbin has found that the cost of ratifying the Kyoto protocol is a fall in gross domestic product [GDP] of 0.33 per cent through to the year 2010. That is, two or three weeks economic growth—in other words, we would catch up in two or three weeks. It is as simple as that.

The cost of not ratifying the Kyoto protocol is 0.4 per cent. So when one considers that the GDP will otherwise grow by 40 per cent over the next decade, the costs are a trifle. The ABARE modelling shows that the economic cost to Australia from implementing the Kyoto protocol will be low. If we implement it we will experience a loss of gross national product [GNP] of 0.15 per cent in the year 2010. To make a comparison, the cost of a drought in 2002 will be 15 times greater than the cost of the Kyoto protocol in 2010.

The opinion that Kyoto is affordable is backed by 270 of the nation's academic economists in a rare public statement. The well-known commentator and author Clive Hamilton has documented the collapse of excuses for not ratifying the Kyoto protocol. First, it has been said that Australia is a net energy exporter. It does not matter. Emissions are counted in the countries where coal, gas or oil are burned, not the countries from which they are exported. In any case, other net energy exporters have ratified the Kyoto protocol, or will do so, in the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada and Russia.

It is said that Australian firms, especially aluminium smelters, will go offshore. Wrong. Within a decade developing nations will be covered by Kyoto or its successor. I have spoken in my office here to an aluminium firm that says it is building into all its work the assumption that Kyoto will apply to it wherever it produces aluminium. It is said that Kyoto will cut greenhouse emissions by barely 1 per cent. Well, let us make a start. The polar ice caps are melting. Every glacier on the planet is unstable. There is less snow on every normally snow-covered mountaintop than there ever was. The frozen soil of the north-west of North America is being exposed for the first time since records have been kept. Let us make a start and wind back by 1 per cent. The alternative is to let emissions continue to grow.

It is said that developing countries are exempted from the protocol. Yes, but that ignores the fact that developed countries produce 80 per cent of greenhouse emissions. The developing countries will follow when they see the wealthy lead the way. It is suggested that nobody knows what the targets will be after 2012. True again, but if we are not part of the protocol we cannot negotiate what those targets might be. Bystanders will not get a look in. The fact is that if we are out of this world system we will not be engaging in the trading that is permitted under it and we will miss out on the growth of clean, green industries that will spring up, encouraged by what this protocol represents.

The Tokyo Electric Power Company, because of our legislation, came here to fund 3,000 hectares of new plantations on the North Coast. Under our legislation it was recognised as a carbon sink. That company walked away with carbon credits, because the Tokyo Electric Power Company was anticipating the day when the Kyoto protocol would be in place. If we are not recognised as part of this new world, this treaty system, will we get such investments? It is certainly less likely. Global Renewables has invented a way to transform garbage into energy—no landfill and no methane. Methane is a worse greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

That Australian company is involved in a \$200 million project in a big Chinese city of 5.2 million people. It will earn half a million dollars in carbon credits each year. Those credits have been sold to BP. The company cannot use them here in Australia because the Prime Minister wants to keep us warm and comfortable, away from issues such as becoming a republic, apologising to Aborigines or ratifying the Kyoto protocol. He

wants to keep us warm and comfortable in our living rooms with our hot water bottles, our chocolate drinks and our black and white televisions—old Australia, Sandy Stone's Australia. He wants to keep us out of the Kyoto agreement, keeping Australia warm and comfortable.

We have a raft of examples of Australian technology, Australian companies moving into the world of the twenty-first century with clean, green energy, doing things never dreamt of in the old smokestack economy. We are out of the system. Some United States governments are ignoring Washington and adopting ambitious greenhouse gas reduction programs. All the New England States have signed up to do this. In this State we are endeavouring to do the same. I can promise to bring the same focus on this as on the embryonic stem cell research or reform of the law of negligence. We are talking to others about co-operation on this front. Our greenhouse benchmark scheme—we are the only State in Australia to sign up to it as a compulsory proposition—is pushing in this direction.

The Australia we envisage ought to be at the cutting edge. We have a large land mass. We stand to lose enormously from global warming. The driest continent on earth is the environmentally most vulnerable continent on earth. Global warming would shrivel water flows in the Murray-Darling Basin, reducing them by up to 20 per cent by 2030. It would see arable land withdrawn from production. This battered, degraded continent of ours stands to lose as much as most countries in the world, perhaps with the exception of northern Germany or Bangladesh, from global warming and all that would follow it. The debate has come a long way since Paul Ehrlich came to this country in the early 1970s and raised this as a theoretical possibility.

In the early 1970s greenhouse was recognised as a phenomenon but it was thought that it might hit the world some time after 2050. Well, it is upon us now. It is recognised. The countries of the world acknowledge it. That is why they have signed up. And they will begin to discriminate against those countries that stand aside. As I argued in my article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Monday, what happens if China says, "No, we want a truly green Olympics. We will only do business with partners that have signed the protocol"? What happens if the Federal Republic of Germany says, "No, Europe only trades with parts of the world that are Kyoto compliant"?

This could be the new protectionism. Australia ought to be part of this system. It is inconceivable that Australia will get a better deal than Kyoto represents for us as a carbon-based nation. It is inconceivable that we could extract a better deal. We ought to join up. We ought to tell the Federal Government to join up. We ought to work hard to make New South Wales compliant. Why can the Opposition not support this motion? Why can there not be a united message from this Parliament to Canberra? Why can we not be united on this and say that it is in this country's economic and environmental interest for us to be part of the Kyoto protocol and not stand aside? Will the Leader of the Opposition take a position with all enlightened citizens or will he stand with his Prime Minister, who wants us to be warm and comfortable and out of this world trading system?

[*Debate interrupted.*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr AQUILINA (Riverstone—Minister for Land and Water Conservation, and Minister for Fair Trading) [4.07 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow eight further speakers for five minutes each in the debate on the motion for urgent consideration and for private members' statements to be postponed until the conclusion of the debate on the motion.

Mr TINK (Epping) [4.07 p.m.]: Whilst not opposing the motion, I just wish to point out that it does take up the time of Parliament when there are still other important matters to be debated. Some of the spin meisters of the present Government ought to be more careful with the notes that they put out to Ministers on how to answer Oasis—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. I remind him that what he said after I directed him to resume his seat will not appear in *Hansard*.

Motion agreed to.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Urgent Motion

[*Debate resumed.*]

Mr BROGDEN (Pittwater—Leader of the Opposition) [4.08 p.m.]: We saw a classically arrogant presentation from the Premier this afternoon—an arrogant man with an arrogant Government, one that has forgotten the interests of the economy of New South Wales. Through its attempt to ignore a national approach to a global issue it will put at risk employment opportunities in New South Wales into the long-term future. The Premier also sought to distort the words of Professor McKibbin and, more importantly, attempted to present to the people of New South Wales an image that nothing is being done by the Commonwealth Government in regard to many of the protocols laid out in the Kyoto protocol. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Indeed, the Howard Government's \$1 billion investment in greenhouse programs is having a major impact on emissions, preventing the production of 60 million tonnes of greenhouse gases each year. Furthermore, the economy is becoming less carbon intensive: projections are for a 43 per cent improvement from 1990 to 2012. The Howard Government has recently announced a climate change agenda that will focus upon the longer term, covering not just the next few years but a 20 to 30 year time horizon.

The strategy is intended to ensure that Australia can continue to cut greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining a strong competitive economy. Both of those objectives can be met. However, the Premier claims that nothing will happen if Australia fails to sign the Kyoto protocol. This nation is moving forward in the important area of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is being led by the Commonwealth Government. The strategy will be developed over coming months between all levels of government, business and the community. The Government has consistently stressed that all the major generators of greenhouse gas must be part of a global response to climate if that response is to be effective. The Kyoto protocol will make only a modest contribution, around 1 per cent, to reducing the growth of global emissions.

Even as a first step the protocol does not provide a clear path for developing countries. The United States of America has indicated that it will not ratify the protocol. Together the developing countries already produce most of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. The Federal Government has taken the decision to not ratify the Kyoto protocol because, under present arrangements, it is not in Australia's interests to do so. Despite that—and this is an important point—Australia will continue to strive towards its Kyoto target of limiting greenhouse gas emissions to 108 per cent of the 1990 levels by 2012. A national greenhouse strategy has been endorsed by the Commonwealth and every State and Territory government.

The Commonwealth Government has established the world's first government agency dedicated to cutting greenhouse gas emissions, the Australian Greenhouse Office. The Commonwealth Government is investing almost \$1 billion in a comprehensive and innovative set of domestic programs to reduce emissions. That investment, coupled with the commitments by State and Territory governments, places Australia among the world's leading nations in addressing climate change. Some key programs that Australia has in place include the greenhouse gas abatement program. As part of a new tax package in 1999, the Federal Government committed \$440 million to cost-effective and large-scale abatement opportunities across the economy. The program is expected to deliver savings equivalent to the annual emissions of more than two million cars.

Did we hear about that from the Premier? No. The picture he painted was one in which Australia was moving nowhere. Indeed, there is national leadership on this issue, and the State Government should support the national position. The mandatory renewable energy target, the Renewable Energy Electricity Act, which came into effect on 1 April 2001, requires wholesale electricity purchasers to increase renewable electricity generation equivalent to 20 per cent of Australia's residential energy consumption by 2010. The target sits alongside government programs that devote approximately \$377 million to the development and uptake of renewable energy. The greenhouse challenge is a joint, voluntary initiative between the Government and industry to abate greenhouse gas emissions.

The Greenhouse Challenge Program has been successful in limiting industry emissions and more than 700 companies are now committed to the program. There has been an outstanding response from local government to the Cities for Climate Protection Program, with about 150 councils covering 60 per cent of the population joining the program. That is the highest rate in the world. Through that program local councils can draw on international expertise and best practice in developing effective greenhouse solutions at the local level.

Lastly, the national carbon accounting system assists in monitoring land use change and its impact on Australia's emissions. It has world-leading capabilities. The Premier, in support of his argument, was keen to quote from Professor McKibbin, who was interviewed on the ABC's 16 September *AM* radio program. The Premier failed to say that Professor McKibbin also said:

Signing up to Kyoto was a very short-sighted perception, and this is a very long-term problem. I am very surprised that these people would take this view, very poor public policy.

That is the professor's view of the Premier's position: it is very poor public policy. Earlier the Premier spoke about the Tokyo Electric Power Company commitment to the North Coast of New South Wales. That investment has gone ahead without Australia signing the Kyoto protocol. That defeats the Premier's argument that we will not secure those sorts of investments without signing the Kyoto protocol. The investment by that company has gone ahead anyway because of the Commonwealth leadership on this issue. Indeed, New South Wales is the only State that wants to buck the Commonwealth trend.

The arrogant Premier forgot to tell the House that Peter Beattie, the Premier of Queensland, accused him of grandstanding. He is slow to pick up on the program, isn't he! The Opposition has known that for 7½ years. We are sick of it, and so are the people of New South Wales. Peter Beattie was right. The Premier is grandstanding, and ignoring the fact that the Commonwealth leadership is moving this debate forward. Indeed, our programs at a national level will ensure that we are only a scintilla away from meeting the Kyoto protocol in total. That is what the Premier will not tell this House. This motion is another stunt by the Premier, who wants to talk about Commonwealth issues and not deal with local issues. He talks about Federal issues, for which he has absolutely no responsibility.

Mr Yeadon: He didn't say that.

Mr BROGDEN: He told us that. He tried to make this another stem cell issue. The issues of importance to New South Wales include rising crime, increasing hospital waiting lists, crises in emergency wards and the continuing flight of students from public schools to private schools because of the Government's failures. The Premier does not want to talk about any of those issues. The Premier also ignores that the United States has failed to sign the Kyoto protocol. We are being asked to sign a protocol that the United States, one of the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters, will not sign and which will significantly disadvantage the people of Australia. The Premier also failed to mention that the developing countries that have signed the protocol are not being forced to meet the targets.

The Premier says that the people of Australia should sacrifice their economic prosperity so that developing nations will not have to meet targets. Why should we meet targets that the developing nations will not have to meet? Why should we sign a protocol that the United States will not sign? A national approach must be taken to this issue. The Premier is isolated in his approach and the Commonwealth Government is taking a national unified approach to ensuring that we will begin to reduce emissions. The Premier has asked for unity. Why does he not support the approach taken by the Federal Government?

Mr Yeadon: Because it hasn't got one.

Mr BROGDEN: I have just outlined it. If the Minister for Energy listened instead of continually interjecting he would have heard me outline it. We want to get on with the job and support the Federal Government in its attempt to deal with this issue in a sensible way. As I said before, Peter Beattie has said the Premier is grandstanding on this issue. That is what he is doing today: he is grandstanding and wasting the time of this House. With only six months until the next election we should be talking about matters that concern the people of New South Wales: class sizes, rising crime, and hospital waiting lists. Let us get back to what matters in New South Wales today.

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [4.18 p.m.]: I begin my address by noting the startling lack of support in this Chamber while the Leader of the Opposition was speaking. I counted about eight members, and half of those will retire at the next election. The Leader of the Opposition has either no support generally, or no support on this matter. There was an extraordinary lack of support for the Leader of the Opposition. I support this important urgent motion. I am not sure what more the Coalition and John Howard need to convince them. Their own economists and agencies tell them that ratification of Kyoto is sensible and economically smart.

Dr Warwick McKibbin's report was released only this week, although I note it was concluded in April and held back by the Coalition Government because it was too incriminating. It indicates that up until 2010 the

economic cost of the Kyoto protocol will be higher if Australia does not ratify the treaty than if it does. Let us be clear: Dr McKibbin is not generally known for his support of the ratification of Kyoto, as indicated by the Leader of the Opposition. The *Australian Financial Review* described Dr McKibbin as one of the Howard Government's few friends. That may be why the Federal Government asked him to do some modelling on implications of ratification of the protocol. Lo and behold, look what came back: modelling that highlighted the costs of not ratifying the protocol! Even the Federal Government's economist could not deny the costs to Australian business of ignoring the reality of greenhouse gas emissions and the international support for the ratification of Kyoto.

Why will the Federal Government not ratify the protocol? Is it because it has a better strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? We have heard that strategy outlined by the Leader of the Opposition. No way is it a better strategy! Perhaps the Federal Government thinks the better strategy is to bury its head in the sand. It has certainly used that approach often enough. Perhaps the strategy has more to do with saving face than it does with good policy, or working with industry to provide a real outcome. This little face-saving exercise might suit the Prime Minister, but it is a fairly costly exercise for the economy and the businesses of this country. Businesses are losing the opportunity to invest in a range of measures that can mitigate against greenhouse emissions.

The Carr Government recognises that this strategy is not good enough for business. We have a responsibility to make the most of our opportunities. What is more, country New South Wales will benefit the most from the opportunities generated by the Kyoto protocol. Country Labor recognises this, and that is why we are right behind ratification and the benefits it will bring not only to the environment but to investment in rural New South Wales. We have already seen the benefits of Government initiatives. I am proud of the work done by State Forests to encourage investment in rural and regional plantations and in carbon sequestration. More than \$9 million has already been invested in plantations by business, and I am talking mostly about large international companies like the Tokyo Electric Power Company. There is more on the horizon. The TEPCO deal is worth up to \$120 million as we move forward.

The last thing I want to see is all of that falling over because John Howard does not want to lose face and change his mind on Kyoto. He should not kid himself: the opportunities are real and they should not be jeopardised. Only this month I announced an agreement that will result in the establishing of 500 hectares of hardwood plantations on the New South Wales North Coast. Those plantations will be established under a new forestry investment program developed by N. M. Rothschild and Sons. The investment is worth more than \$1 million and will generate approximately 10 jobs—jobs that the Coalition do not seem to care about. A combination of the benefits of ratifying the Kyoto protocol and the progress that had been made in carbon credits could have resulted in a lot more jobs. It is all well and good to take a cavalier attitude and follow along as the United States lap-dog, but it is just not fair to the people of rural and regional New South Wales. I support the urgent motion calling on the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol.

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [4.23 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate. Global climate change is not a State issue. No effective international framework has been put in place to deal with it, because the Kyoto protocol has not been universally ratified. It is regrettable that no international market exists for carbon credits. When the Kyoto protocol was first drawn up it would have been better if everyone had signed it. It is a shame that a number of concerns were expressed about it and, therefore, a number of countries did not sign it. A number of underdeveloped countries that did not initially sign the protocol have signed up in the past week or so. As honourable members would be aware, underdeveloped countries are not committed to targets in the same way that developed countries are required to commit to them. It is also regrettable that the United States, one of the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, is not a party to the Kyoto protocol.

Even if everyone had signed the agreement, the level of reduction in emissions would be roughly 1 per cent. That is better than nothing, but it would not have a huge impact. Australia's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions is approximately 1 per cent, although on a per capita basis we are high emitters of greenhouse gases. Therefore, Australia would suffer economically if we were to sign off on the protocol. The Federal Government is already putting in place protocols that will bring us within a hair's-breadth of meeting the targets set out in Kyoto. At this stage the figure is about 111 per cent based on 1990 emissions and the target is 108 per cent, but we have eight years or so before that target has to be reached. Australia's performance, even though it has not ratified the agreement, is looking fairly good.

We have a \$1 billion investment in greenhouse gas emissions. Whether or not we sign the Kyoto protocol, Australia will have saved 60 million tonnes of greenhouse gases by the end of the decade, which is equivalent to taking all cars off Australian roads. It is a significant contribution, despite the fact that it is not believed to be in our national interest to sign off on the Kyoto protocol at this stage. The Premier acknowledged

that the protocol would reduce greenhouse gases by only 1 per cent. He made the point that no economic costs would be associated with that. I draw to his attention the press release issued by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which states:

NSW WRONG FOR TRYING TO GO IT ALONE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND KYOTO

Comments today by New South Wales Premier, Bob Carr, that the NSW Government will unilaterally pursue climate change policies are not in Australia's best interest.

Australian industry is committed to reaching the 108 per cent target as agreed to by Australia at Kyoto in 1997. However, in meeting this target, industry needs a nationally consistent policy approach to climate change. We do not need State and Territories going it alone.

The decision of the NSW Government to pursue a climate change policy that is not within a strategic, long-term, nationally consistent framework places industry in an unacceptable position. Industry needs certainty and consistency in order to stay competitive and to attract investment, and different climate change policies across jurisdictions will simply not provide this.

At this point in time, it is recognised that ratification of the Kyoto protocol is not in the interests of Australian industry, economic growth and jobs. Federal and State/Territory Governments are therefore encouraged to formulate climate change policies that meet targets in a fair and equitable manner at least cost and with maximum benefits.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is of the view, acknowledging that jobs are important, that Australia should have a national approach. Although the Premier's symbolic gesture might make him feel good, the reality is that that is all it can be: a symbolic gesture. The reality is that if the agreement is signed the protocols to reduce greenhouse gases have to be implemented, and that is what the Federal Government is doing.

Mr GREENE (Georges River) [4.28 p.m.]: One must have a great deal of sympathy for the honourable member for Ballina, who obviously had a great deal of difficulty putting his arguments together. He had no great enthusiasm for them, and that was recognised throughout the House. At one stage we were not certain whether he was defending the Leader of the Opposition or saying that, like the majority of Australians, Australia should sign the Kyoto protocol. We sympathise with the honourable member for Ballina. As the Premier said, signing the Kyoto protocol will not cause any great economic problem for Australia. Of all the developed countries in the world, only Australia and the United States of America have not signed the protocol.

That is a sad reflection on the lack of leadership from the Australian Commonwealth Government. It is also a sad reflection on the Leader of the Opposition, who tried to defend the Commonwealth Government, its lack of initiative and its inability to recognise the need to sign the Kyoto protocol. There is no doubt that signing the Kyoto protocol would place Australia in an economically sustainable position. Indeed, our signing the protocol is an environmental imperative. I recognise, as the people in my community do, that our country should not remain isolated. As the Premier said in his contribution, we as a State have to provide leadership and try to force the Commonwealth Government to acknowledge its responsibilities.

The honourable member for Ballina said that we are well on the way to reaching the targets required by the Kyoto protocol. We will reach those targets, yet we are not prepared to sign the protocol. That is the absurd argument being put forward by the Coalition at a national level and now, sadly, at a State level. The people of Australia, and certainly the people of New South Wales, will derive great benefits from the signing of the protocol. As the Minister for Energy said, the investment opportunities resulting from the signing of the protocol will provide great benefits for New South Wales, particularly country New South Wales. More importantly, it will give us an opportunity to protect and save our environment, which is in a parlous situation. It is a sad state of affairs when the Coalition fails to recognise the sensitivity and importance of the environment.

In my community local environmental groups are concerned about the lack of leadership on this matter and about the fact that Australia will not sign the Kyoto protocol. Only today my staff spoke with representatives of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Society, a local environmental group which does magnificent work on local projects and is keen about environmental issues. Its members would be particularly concerned that the Federal Government is not prepared to come on board. Opposition members have said that if we abide by the protocol we will make only a 1 per cent improvement. As the Premier said in his speech, we should be looking to make a start. To do nothing is to go backwards. We need to go forward and take the necessary steps, no matter how small those steps may be. I am sure that the people in my community who are concerned about local environmental issues are also concerned about international environmental issues. There can be no more important environmental issue than global warming and greenhouse gas emissions. We must be prepared to take this important step and sign the Kyoto protocol. We as a community must provide leadership on this important matter.

Mr BARR (Manly) [4.33 p.m.]: I speak in favour of this urgent motion. A healthy economy depends on a healthy environment. The two cannot exist separately. We cannot differentiate the economy from the environment, and we cannot differentiate a well-formed, functioning society from a healthy economy. Everything ultimately falls back on a healthy environment. On current estimates the ocean is rising by one millimetre per year. It is estimated that by 2020 it will rise by five millimetres per year. Higher tidal levels than those experienced in the past have eroded the sand along many beaches up and down the seaboard from Manly to Byron and Belongil. The environment is changing. Why? The scientific evidence is because human activity is affecting the global environment.

We have only one planet. It is a wonderful place called planet Earth. It is all we have got and we have to nurture and look after it. This debate is not merely about signing a legal document; it is also about a moral issue. We should be morally committed to fighting for our planet—every nook and cranny, every square metre, across political boundaries and across continents. What happens in another part of the world impacts on us. Earth is not a large planet; we can move around it quickly these days. Some people have the notion that we should bury our heads in the sand and line up with the United States of America. The United States is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gas on a per capita basis, and Australia is the third largest. We are avoiding our moral obligation as a country and we are avoiding our obligation to make this a better place for future generations.

There has been some debate as to whether the Kyoto protocol is the be-all and end-all. It certainly is not, but it is a step in the right direction and it is a step that we should take. I was embarrassed about what our Federal environment Minister, Dr David Kemp, said at the recent conference in Johannesburg. I could not think of a more uninspiring person to represent us at a conference on these important environmental issues. It was like *Back to the Future*—he showed the mentality of a person of the 1950s. Unfortunately, we are walking with the United States. The rest of the world is marching to the beat of a different drum. Under the original Kyoto agreement Australia was one of three countries, the other two being Norway and Iceland, allowed to increase emission levels on the 1990 base. We were allowed to go up to 108 per cent. That was an extraordinarily good deal for Australia, yet we are walking away from it. We are not likely to get a better deal than that. As has been stated by the Premier and other speakers, we will miss out on the trading opportunities available under this treaty.

We should focus not only on international conventions such as the Kyoto protocol but also on local initiatives. As the saying goes: think globally, act locally. We should look at the problem of car emissions. The Government has avoided the testing of car emissions at the time of re-registration. Cars are great polluters of the environment, particularly ones that are not tuned properly. We should also look at reducing the number of plastic bags used at supermarkets. In addition to requiring our Federal Government to commit us to the Kyoto protocol and make us work harder at improving our environment, we should be doing all sorts of things at a local level to improve the environment. By doing so, we can improve the environment in our local areas and help improve the planet as well.

Ms MEGARRITY (Menai) [4.38 p.m.]: I support the Premier's urgent motion because global climate change is the most comprehensive environmental and business challenge facing the world today. That statement is as true now as it was on 29 November 2000. On that day I drew the attention of the House to the collapse of the United Nations Sixth Conference of Parties, known as COP-6, a climate conference that was intended to set the rules for the Kyoto protocol. My urgent motion read:

That this House:

- (1) notes the suspension of the sixth conference of parties to the Kyoto protocol under the United Nations Framework Convention for climate change in The Hague;
- (2) commends the New South Wales Government for its leadership in providing workable solutions to global climate change such as carbon trading, anti-salinity measures and the rehabilitation of degraded lands; and
- (3) calls on the Commonwealth Government to take a similar leadership role and broker global co-operation on the most serious environmental issue facing the world today.

During debate on that motion the honourable member for Cessnock quoted Peter Garrett's view that Australia was directly responsible for the collapse of those talks in what amounted to the most destructive act of diplomacy in Australia's history. On the eve of the conference, environmental groups such as Greenpeace and the Australian Conservation Foundation criticised the Australian Government's negotiating position at the conference and accused the Australian Government of adopting a "smoke-and-mirrors approach" and "playing a

cheat's game" when making a commitment to emissions reduction. The Chief Executive Officer of Greenpeace, Peter Mullins, said that Australia was completely out of step with responsible governments of the world. He said:

We're going into these negotiations with the worst greenhouse record of any developed nation.

He referred to a Senate inquiry into global warming that was conducted two weeks earlier which found that carbon dioxide had increased by 17 per cent from the 1990 level, which was, according to Peter Mullins, "double the 8 per cent increase Australia bullied the world into at Kyoto". Don Henry, the Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, said:

If countries like Germany, Denmark and United Kingdom can reduce their emissions, why can't Australia? Even China and India managed to cut their greenhouse pollution last year.

He continued:

The problem is that the Australian Government has failed to implement an effective greenhouse reduction strategy. Least-cost and voluntary measures dominate the policy that is still focused on fossil fuels.

Honourable members may recall that in November 2000 a Senate report was released on global warming. The majority report from the Australian Labor Party, the Australian Democrats, and the Greens criticised the Australian Government's greenhouse policy and found that the Australian Government was not doing enough to meet the Kyoto targets. Gareth Walton, the climate campaigner for Greenpeace, welcomed the report and stated:

The report recognises that Australia could be leading the world in taking effective action to tackle climate change, but the Government's short-sighted approach means we are lagging behind at the end of the queue.

That was the situation in November 2000 and it remains the case almost two years later. The Howard Government's record on this issue is appalling. Back in November 2000 the Leader of the Opposition, when he was merely the honourable member for Pittwater, told us that this issue was totally irrelevant. Today, as the Leader of the Opposition, he tried to tell us that the Federal Government has a strategy and is moving forward. It is hard to see whether that is the case.

I recently represented the New South Wales Minister for the Environment at an excellent seminar run by the Australian Industry Group. A Federal Government bureaucrat did his very best to try to explain the Howard Government's approach to Kyoto, but I have to report that he was no more convincing than the Leader of the Opposition was today. In stark contrast, the Carr Government has taken a proactive role in the promotion of new plantation sinks that are compatible with article 3.3 of the Kyoto protocol. Article 3.3 identifies sinks as afforestation or reafforestation of land cleared prior to 1990. Of course, I am aware that much of the conjecture at COP-6 centred on carbon sinks under article 3.4 of the Kyoto protocol, which relates to human-induced emissions from agricultural activities and land clearing. However, the New South Wales' approach has always been to comply with article 3.3 of the Kyoto protocol.

The New South Wales Government is obviously committed to finding practical solutions to the environmental challenges facing us today. It has demonstrated an ability to be proactive and innovative in response to international greenhouse commitment, which will not only minimise any adverse impacts but generate new activities for business, assist in diversifying the New South Wales economy, and create green jobs. The time is well overdue for the Federal Government to show some leadership and tackle this very important issue.

Mr CAMPBELL (Keira) [4.43 p.m.]: I support the Premier's urgent motion, which states:

That this House calls on the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol.

I do so because this is one of those rare occasions when protecting our environment from further degradation and the economy come together. It is not often that we have that pleasant juxtaposition, but that is the case with the need to endorse and ratify the Kyoto protocol. Working towards implementing the goals of the protocol will help the environment without having an adverse economic impact. The implementation of the protocol will encourage new investment in alternative technologies as well as research and development. That will be of benefit to regional economies, particularly in the Illawarra and, indeed, Wollongong, the city of innovation.

It will encourage ongoing investment in renewable energy sources such as solar or wind. Indeed, there is potential for the utilisation of wave technology to generate electricity from the breakwaters at Port Kembla

harbour. These measures will benefit regional economies and reduce greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride. The protocol seeks to attack those gases. In addition to wave technology, another innovation to reduce greenhouse gases in Wollongong is the Solid Waste to Energy Recycling Facility [SWERF], a demonstration plant run by Energy Developments Ltd in conjunction with Wollongong City Council, which converts household waste into an inert substance that is used to generate electricity. In the longer term, less garbage will go to landfill, thereby reducing the amount of methane that escapes from landfill. The SWERF plant is located next to the existing garbage tip and is mining methane out of the garbage tip to add to the process.

We can work towards meeting the important goals of the Kyoto protocol by using these innovations. Carbon credits are also relevant. We know that the Tokyo Electric Power Co. has committed to 3,000 hectares of new forest in New South Wales as part of a carbon sink and trading carbon credits worldwide. However, future investment is in doubt because credits may not be recognised if Australia does not ratify the Kyoto protocol. Indeed, some of the new forest plantations may not be as prevalent in the future because the Howard Government wants to follow the United States of America. Australia does not accept that it is out of step with the international community and the Australian community, which understands the importance of these issues and believes that Australia should take a leadership role.

Indeed, just as New South Wales is taking a leadership role in stem cell research, medical indemnity and liability insurance, it is now taking a leadership role on the Kyoto protocol. It is unfortunate that time and again on this issue we have to drag the Federal Government kicking and screaming, while the Prime Minister remains relaxed. That is a luxury many people in this country and in the Keira electorate would like, but only if it can be done in a proactive way as part of the international community dealing with important environmental issues like reducing greenhouse gases. Indeed, New South Wales is the only State so far to have legislated for an enforceable greenhouse benchmark for electricity retailers, which is another reason why this motion is so important. [*Time expired.*]

Mr TRIPODI (Fairfield) [4.48 p.m.]: The fact that the Federal Government is refusing to sign the Kyoto protocol indicates that it is unsophisticated in the way it views the determinants of economic growth. As the Premier has already said, the challenges for future economic growth and structural adjustment will require Australia to be a responsible global participant. They will require Australia to sign agreements such as the Kyoto protocol and, as in the past, be the voice of responsible world citizenry. As the Premier said, environmental standards will become the new protectionism: nations will use them as excuses for erecting barricades against competition. We must wonder at the challenges that some of the signatories are taking on, and respect them for doing so. For example, the People's Republic of China has signed the World Trade Organisation agreement, and that will pose a major economic challenge for that country. As a consequence, I believe that over time China will look for ways of protecting itself. It could, like the European Union, argue that it should not engage in free trade with nations such as Australia that do not comply with agreed environmental standards.

This would put new pressure on Australia to achieve structural adjustment. In the 1980s and 1990s under the Hawke and Keating governments Australia undertook enormous structural adjustment. Our economy is now enjoying quite buoyant growth—which it has had for a decade—because those governments accepted the economic challenge of changing to meet the needs of a modern, competitive world. That challenge has now assumed a new form, and responsible citizens of the world are demanding that nations comply with a range of new standards regarding the environment, human rights, and so on. The Australian Government seems to be running scared from this challenge. Industries, which will bear the cost of these reforms, are ahead of the Federal Government in this regard: They already incorporate within their cost structures the anticipated expense of complying with new world standards. That is a worry.

Opposition members have said even today that meeting the targets set out in the Kyoto protocol is not an enormous challenge for Australia—economic or otherwise. However, the Federal Government continues to drag its feet. Industry is preparing to meet new standards, as are governments around the world—particularly in poorer countries. For example, Russia, India and China have signed the protocol and are willing to accept the challenge. They understand that the new, modern economy will demand that nations meet these agreed environmental standards and be responsible citizens of the world.

I am concerned that the Federal Government does not believe that is important. It must prepare Australia now to access other world economies in a free-trade environment and ensure our medium-term and long-term economic growth. The Federal Government can do that by making Australia a signatory to the Kyoto

protocol and other similar agreements. Its failure to do that points to an unsophisticated, short-term view of how to guide this country through the global economy, in which standards are evolving and the goalposts are shifting.

This issue is enormously concerning to most informed citizens of Australia. More and more nations are going it alone in setting targets and increasing their share of renewable resources as a proportion of total energy production. They are saying unilaterally, "We want to be responsible citizens and we believe that this is important if we are to reduce energy production that is having a negative impact on the world." As a result, those countries will be able to rise to meet the new challenges of the modern world.

Mr NEWELL (Tweed) [4.53 p.m.]: I support the Premier's motion, which calls upon the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol. People must understand that the Federal Government has refused to ratify the Kyoto protocol and that Australia and the United States of America are the only developed nations not to do so. China, Russia, Japan, the European Union nations and Canada have indicated they will ratify the protocol. The Earth Summit held in Johannesburg earlier this month revealed the high level of support for the Kyoto protocol. Australia was certainly embarrassed by the lack of support for its position at the summit. Colin Powell was booed while speaking on behalf of the United States, which indicated the strength of feeling against the United States for failing to ratify the protocol.

Victoria and South Australia have called upon the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol, and no doubt the New South Wales Parliament will do likewise this afternoon. There was an illustration earlier this week of how governments can make a difference to the health of the planet. I refer to the release of scientific research that revealed that the ozone layer is repairing itself. It is certainly time for the Federal Government to join the New South Wales Government in supporting the ratification of this protocol. Findings released recently prove that governments can make a difference. The Australian Government under Prime Minister Hawke ratified the protocol in 1989 by enacting the Ozone Protection Act, which ensured that all chlorofluorocarbons [CFCs] were phased out by 1995. The decision to ban the use of CFCs has had an enormous impact and helped to repair our environment—a fact that is not lost on anyone—and the present Federal Government should act to make a difference, enhance our environment and our economy.

The Premier outlined how the Kyoto protocol will affect the environment and our economy. If the Government signs the protocol there will be a small decrease in the gross domestic product for a short period. However, if it does not sign the protocol, the gross domestic product will increase only slightly. So there are benefits to signing the protocol. One key benefit of ratifying the protocol will be the ability to take account of greenhouse abatement measures carried out in Australia. That could translate into jobs in my electorate and could include investment in carbon sequestration. New South Wales has been a prime mover in promoting carbon sequestration by developing world leading carbon rights legislation. New South Wales State Forests has developed a range of plantations that could qualify for sequestration credits under the Kyoto protocol. However, this plan will be in jeopardy if Australia does not ratify the protocol.

The North Coast has been a key beneficiary of sequestration investment, which is already translating into jobs. More than 1,500 hectares of hardwood plantations have been established to date on the North Coast, which has created 30 new jobs. If we do not ratify this protocol we will put at risk further potential gains. Plantations have been established in Wauchope, Kyogle, Grafton and Urbenville and there are plans to expand the program further. Some 500 hectares of hardwood plantations per annum could be established over the next seven years, which would create new jobs on the North Coast. Signing the Kyoto protocol will not cost Australian jobs, but failure to sign it will cost jobs on the North Coast. I urge Coalition members to ask their Federal colleagues to come to the party and sign the protocol. All our plans could be scuttled by the stubbornness of the Federal Government in refusing to ratify the Kyoto protocol.

Ms MOORE (Bligh) [4.58 p.m.]: I support the Premier's motion calling on the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto protocol. I believe that the Premier is showing real leadership on the most critical environmental issue confronting the Australian community. He is doing so in the face of a leadership vacuum in the Federal Government. In passing, I commend the Federal Government for its record in only two areas: gun law reform and East Timor. In most other areas—whether it be its record on refugees and detention centres, its record on education, its failure to honour the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, its environmental record, or its very frightening foreign policy—the actions of the current Federal Government make me and many Australians like me hang my head in shame.

Whilst I commend the Premier for the position he has taken on Kyoto and the lead he is showing, I am extremely disappointed about a failure to respond appropriately on a very important State environmental issue. I

refer to the Minister for Energy saying today that he would not honour the commitment to underground cables. I have looked at his consultants' figures and I say in passing—because I know this issue is going to continue and I commit to that, as does Cables Downunder—that it would cost only \$1.20 per household per week over a period of 30 years. Getting back to Kyoto, I believe that the Premier has brought together two compelling arguments. I say to the Federal Government that if it does not care about our environmental future—which from its actions it clearly does not—it should care about our economic future. As the Premier said in his article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Monday

The network of agreements created by Kyoto mean trading opportunities and incentives for new industries and huge funds of global capital for investments in clean power. But by standing aside from Kyoto we'll be left behind.

We will be left behind because little Johnny Howard is following George W.'s lead on this, as he is on so many other issues. As I said before, it makes me hang my head in shame. It is very interesting that some State governments in America are ignoring Washington, ignoring George W., and adopting ambitious greenhouse gas reduction programs. As the Premier is quoted in this article:

For example, all the New England states have joined with Canada's eastern provinces to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2010, and 10 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

So they are concerned, they are getting together, they are taking action, despite George W. I have been communicating with the Premier on this issue. I wrote to him in July and said:

In light of the leadership vacuum in Australia can you get together with the other Premiers and with business leaders and shame the Prime Minister into signing the Kyoto Protocol?

When the Premier was speaking today he gave us examples of industries that are going to go elsewhere if we do not sign up. In my letter to the Premier I said:

I was particularly interested that despite the USA not signing the Kyoto Protocol, it is aggressively developing renewable energy technologies ...

Again, we are not doing that because of the Federal Government, whereas the United States of America is. When they have a new government they will not be left behind, as we could be if our State governments do not act. So I again call upon the Premier to get together with the other Premiers and business leaders and take the action that the Prime Minister is failing to take so that we are not left behind when the United States of America changes direction, as undoubtedly it will. I thoroughly endorse the statement made by the Premier at the end of this article on Monday: that with his head and his heart he believes we should ratify the Kyoto protocol. I wholeheartedly endorse that.

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.03 p.m.]: I am happy to support the motion moved by the Premier, which calls for the endorsement of the Kyoto protocol. There are two broad categories of arguments that I believe are relevant in this debate: a very general argument, and a specific argument about the merits and demerits of the protocol. I believe that the general argument was clearly put by the Premier, and it goes to the core of what Australia is about. That is, are we part of a world economy and a world society, or are we simply trying to marginalise ourselves, not have a separate identity, and either ignore the rest of the world or, alternatively, like a lap-dog, follow the example of other countries?

In some ways that has been a central theme in the European history of Australia: Are we an independent country? Are we our own country? Are we simply a colony of England? Do we follow hopelessly and mindlessly what other countries, our other big powerful friends, do? Do we see ourselves as part of the South Pacific or are we simply a part of Europe that has been accidentally dropped on the other side of the globe? If we are in fact our own country, if we are trying to chart our own history, if we have our own identity, we need to make our own decisions about things such as the Kyoto protocol. We need to be a lot more than, in the words of Greenpeace, one of the poodles of America. We need to be able to make our own decisions. The concept of Australia being a poodle is a fairly unattractive one but regrettably it is a fairly accurate description of us at the moment.

As a number of other speakers have said, the only true industrialised countries in the world that have not ratified the protocols are the United States and Australia. When you look at the pros and cons of those arguments it is hard to find a rational explanation for why we have not ratified the protocol. One is drawn inevitably to the unpalatable conclusion that we are simply refusing to ratify because that is the position of America and therefore we are slavishly following that example. There seems to be a failure to make a rational assessment of our own best interests. We are simply automatically and rather forlornly following what some other country is doing.

That goes to the core of our identity as Australia, as Australians. Are we simply to sit back in the comfort zone, assume everything is to be relaxed and comfortable, not make our own assessments, rely upon our great and powerful friend, and perhaps betray our own interests? Some of us would argue that we have been doing that for far too long. The financial reality is that there are commercial advantages that flow to Australia from its ratifying the Kyoto protocol. Some of them have been touched on in this debate. If some trading partners decide they want to be genuinely green and fully endorse the Kyoto process, that might disadvantage us.

As I recall, the Premier specifically gave the examples of the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Germany. What would happen if they were to punish, by way of their trading relations, countries such as Australia that did not ratify the Kyoto protocol? In addition, there are some very specific commercial advantages that could flow to Australia if we endorse the protocol. For example, if we do not adopt the protocol, enterprises in country New South Wales would not gain the maximum benefit from trading in carbon credits. There are all sorts of advantages that could flow to Australia and country industries as a result of Kyoto-compliant offsets.

It is worth noting that South Australia and Victoria have already called for ratification of the Kyoto protocol. As other speakers in this debate have pointed out, various American States have gone against the lead of George W. and argued in favour of meeting criteria that would fit with Kyoto. Once again, as has already been pointed out in this debate, there is some evidence suggesting that the ozone layer is repairing. That stems directly from government action. Processes like the Kyoto protocol can work, they can be effective. It would seem to me that the protocol is to the benefit of everyone in this country. Certainly it is to the benefit of Australia as a separate entity.

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to resolution business interrupted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OLD NORTHERN ROAD AND NEW LINE ROAD UPGRADE

Mr RICHARDSON (The Hills) [5.08 p.m.]: Saving lives—whether through the health care system, policing, search and rescue operations, or road safety measures—is a primary role of government. For many years since the formation of the Staysafe Committee in 1982 there has been a bipartisan view towards road safety in this Parliament. The Government cannot continue to ignore the report on Old Northern Road and New Line Road prepared by Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey in 1998, a copy of which I recently obtained under freedom of information legislation.

According to the report, over the five years between July 1991 and June 1996 there were 377 crashes recorded on Old Northern Road and 139 on New Line Road. Nine people died, four on New Line Road and five on Old Northern Road. The crash rate for the section of Old Northern Road between Castle Hill Road and Glenhaven Road was 105 crashes per 100 million vehicle kilometres. The section of road between Castle Hill Road and Hastings Road had 85 of the 109 crashes recorded, and the crash rate increased to 152 crashes per 100 million vehicle kilometres. The most common crashes were rear enders.

Further out into the electorate of Hawkesbury the crash rate increased significantly to 215 crashes per 100 million vehicle kilometres, and the type of accident also changed. Here the most common crash type was the vehicle going out of control. Honourable members will no doubt recall the recent horrific crash on Old Northern Road at Dural in which four young men died in a head-on collision when the driver lost control of the Mitsubishi Mirage in which they were travelling. New Line Road had a more consistent crash rate of 84 to 89 accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres. However, with four people dying on just 3.4 kilometres of road, the fatality rate per kilometre was 12 times as high as for the 47.4 kilometres of Old Northern Road. The most common crash types were rear end, out of control, and right angles. According to Gutteridge, Haskins and Davey:

... the primary causation for these high crash rates is ... high volumes of through and turning traffic, insufficient lane capacities during peak periods, the meandering and undulating road alignment, and limited delineation and guidance, particularly at night.

While there has been some money spent on maintenance work over the last four years, such as renewing the road pavement and improving the road shoulders, the vast bulk of the major work on both New Line Road from

Round Comer to Cherrybrook and Old Northern Road from Round Comer to Castle Hill Road is designated "for future funding". And that is despite the fact that the already high traffic counts in the study have increased significantly over the last four years thanks to significant additional development in Cherrybrook and South Dural. In 1998 New Line Road carried up to 28,000 vehicles a day. Hornsby Council estimates the figure would be closer to 34,000 today. Yet the road is single lane between David Road and Purchase Road, hilly and winding, and does not even have footpaths so students attending John Purchase Public School and Cherrybrook Technology High School—the biggest high school in New South Wales—can walk safely to school. Of New Line Road, the study says:

During peak periods, its operation is unstable with continuous stop-start conditions, long queues and major delays... especially on approaches to the bridge over Pyes Creek, where the carriageway narrows from four to two lanes down a steep alignment.

The authors are also highly critical of traffic conditions at the intersection of Hastings Road and Old Northern Road, an issue I have raised in this House on many occasions in the past. They describe "the conspicuousness of the intersection" as poor and "sight distance" as minimal and say that traffic volumes alone dictate the need for lights. A table on page 29 of the study gives the average delay for traffic turning north into Old Northern Road at this intersection as 77 seconds during the evening peak hour and an incredible 9.1 minutes during the morning peak hour! Not surprisingly, it rated an F for fail. Again, quoting from the report:

Travelling conditions for New Line Road are worse than for Old Northern Road as it carries approximately 25 per cent more traffic.

The report describes its operation during peak periods as:

... unstable, with continuous stop-start conditions, long queues and major delays... especially on approaches to the bridge over Pyes Creek, where the carriageway narrows from four to two lanes down a steep alignment... causing numerous rear end and out of control type crashes.

The long-term strategy for Old Northern Road between Castle Hill Road and Galston Road and New Line Road from Purchase Road to Old Northern Road is supposed to provide a four-lane carriageway with improved alignments. When this is done, the authors say, crashes are expected to reduce accordingly. Recently representatives from Cherrybrook Technology High School, John Purchase Public School, Hornsby Council, Eastwood police, the RTA and I met early one morning at Pyes Creek.

We watched students on foot run across the road in front of speeding vehicles and then stumble down the rutted track behind the eastern Armco barrier alongside the bridge over Pyes Creek. Others walked on the road side of the western barrier, just inches from cars travelling at up to 80 kilometres per hour. Surely these high accident and fatality rates, the danger schoolchildren face walking to school every day, and the nine-minute waiting times at the Hastings Road intersection are sufficient reason for the Government to invest money in upgrading these two roads. I know that the honourable member for Hawkesbury, who shares both Old Northern Road and New Line Road with me, would agree. I call on the Government to release its timetable for upgrading both of these roads in line with the strategy outlined by Gutteridge Haskins and Davey.

GRAYS POINT PUBLIC SCHOOL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr COLLIER (Miranda) [5.13 p.m.]: On 17 September I had the privilege of attending the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Grays Point Public School. Following a strong campaign by the North West Arm and Grays Point Progress Association, the school began in 1952 on the site of what is now the Grays Point community hall. In 1962 the school moved to its present location in the Royal National Park, and it is in fact known as our school in the park. The school's motto is *nulli secundus*—second to none. The ceremony and anniversary celebrations were just that: second to none. I was delighted to be among the official guests at the invitation of Mrs Sue McAuliffe, the school principal.

Present along with 370 pupils were parents, grandparents, former teachers and staff. Also attending were assistant principals Jennifer Read and Diana McCarthy, parents and citizens president Karen Langham, the school council president Sue Spect, and school sponsor Mr David Tyler of Ray White Real Estate at GyMEA. The concert organised by the school was simply wonderful. It illustrated not just the school's history but also the changing times. It had something for everyone. It brought back great memories and highlighted the progress that has been made in public education over the last 50 years.

The masters of ceremonies were the school captains Jay Hitches and Erin-Maree Tinker, vice captains Matt Kneller and Lindsey Minto, as well as Jemma Holbrook, Laura Hanna, David Girle and David Clarke. Mr

Deputy-Speaker, in our school days we would not have seen students actually conduct the ceremony. Proceedings started with the principal's welcome followed by the year 3 and year 4 dance group performing the Gene Kelly number from the 1950s *Singing in the Rain*. It was raining at the time and we were under the covered outdoor learning area [COLA], which had been constructed by the community with the help of the State Government, for which we were grateful. Despite the rain the concert really warmed us up.

Following *Singing in the Rain* we saw a play, the *Class of 1952*. Many of those in the Chamber might remember back to 1952 when marbles were played in the playground, girls skipped, and occasionally students were caned. A new sovereign was crowned in 1952. Brianna Barwise, playing the Queen, marched down the aisle dressed in regal attire to the tune of *God Save the Queen*. Emma Graham then played on the violin the old school song from 1962, which was sung by students to the tune of *Waltzing Matilda*. Year 2 students really got everybody bopping with a 1962 summer revival, with songs from the sixties such as *Let's Twist Again* and *Surfin' USA*, but with the words changed to "Surfin' Gymea Bay".

A sponsor's speech was then given by Mr David Tyler of Ray White Real Estate, Gymea. Mr Tyler deserves praise for his speech in which he said that local business men and women should have the philosophy that since they take from the community it is their duty to give back to the community. The years 5 and 6 dance group then gave a rendition of *Under the Southern Skies*, which was followed by a performance by Kirrawee High School students. I mention particularly Erin Marshall, a very talented student, and Antony Gullick, the musical director of Kirrawee High School. Primary schools in the shire have a great relationship and interaction with the local high schools.

We were then treated to a fantastic debate entitled "Life was better in 1952 than in 2002" by Kristie Simmonds, Liam Roffe, Ashleigh Mackay, Jay Hitches and Jack Shepherd. The years 1 and 2 dance group then performed the number *Cartoon Heroes* prior to the cutting of the fiftieth birthday cake. Grays Point Public School has an enormous input from the community. The marvellous teachers, staff and principal work hand in hand with the community of Grays Point in everything from lamington drives and Oktoberfest to fund-raising for the COLA. The school community raised with me the need for a wombat crossing and one has now been provided. Our school in the park is a wonderful school. It is a school I am proud to have in my electorate. Happy birthday, Grays Point Public School.

OVERSEAS NURSES REGISTRATION LANGUAGE TEST

Mr WEBB (Monaro) [5.18 p.m.]: I address a fairly serious matter that I am sure all honourable members would be aware of: the nursing crisis and the shortage of nursing staff in Australia, and certainly in my electorate. Ms Jean Taminaya is now nursing in Saudi Arabia because she has been unable to satisfy the minimum requirements of the International English Language Testing System [IELTS], which would enable her to sit for the competency test required by the New South Wales Nurses Registration Board. I have received a petition signed by 62 of my constituents requesting the Government to investigate this anomaly. I understand that another 40 people are prepared to sign a petition regarding the unacceptable current shortage of nurses in New South Wales hospitals and the possibility of recruiting suitably qualified overseas nurses to ease that crisis.

The petition refers to Ms Jean Taminaya, who holds a Bachelor of Science in nursing, has had 12 years nursing experience in English-speaking hospitals and has been offered two nursing jobs in Australian hospitals, pending registration. Ms Taminaya has been assessed by the Australian Nursing Council [ANC] and recommended to the New South Wales College of Nursing to undertake competency based assessment. Ms Taminaya has twice reached the IELTS band 6.5, described by IELTS as "exceeding a competent user" and indicating that she can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations such as dealing with and treating patients in hospitals and in the medical environment.

However, it is absolutely incredible that Ms Taminaya cannot sit for the competency test to assess her skills. To become a registered nurse in New South Wales an international candidate must initially have his or her qualifications assessed by the ANC and then, on recommendation to the New South Wales College of Nursing, attend and pass a 12-week practical nursing competency course. Ms Taminaya has 12 years nursing experience and comes from an English-speaking country, and has passed all of the requirements of the IELTS at some stage to a satisfactory degree, but not altogether under the new regime of band 7. Originally she attained the average band 6.5, but for one reason or another did not pass. By the time she did the test again the band had been lifted to 7.

Band 7 is described as a "good user"; it is the level of a person who has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriateness and misunderstandings in some situations;

generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning. It has been put to me that almost all graduate teachers, many people in business, most Australians—certainly many members of this House—would not pass band 7. It is amazing, even absurd, that the band has been raised for a test that has been described as being "not necessarily an English test, since it is full of tricks and one needs to have good test-taking strategies to pass it". I have met Ms Taminaya and discussed these issues with her and I have written to the Minister. I have taken this matter as far as I can, but without success.

The IELTS band 9, described as an "expert user", would suit a professor of English grammar who has full operational command of the language. In the past Ms Taminaya satisfied the requirements of band 6.5, but not in the time frame suitable for registration and the process of being employed in a hospital. I have been forwarded a reference from Calvary Hospital in Canberra and a number of certificates and references in support of Ms Taminaya. I have also been forwarded a reference from her current employer, a hospital in Saudi Arabia, where she is working as a nurse in a fairly high role. She has received promotions at that hospital. The petition to which I referred states:

We therefore request that the NSW Government investigate this gross anomaly in the current (upgraded) IELTS English entry requirements for overseas nurses.

I urge the Government to take note of my suggestion as a way of addressing the nursing crisis in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

LIBERTY NETWORK INTRODUCTION AGENCY

Mr LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.23 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House, especially the Minister for Fair Trading, the exploitation of a constituent of mine by what purports to be an introduction agency. In short, my constituent was conned out of \$40,000 when he was in no fit state to be dealing with such matters. I will not use my constituent's real name in these comments in an obvious effort to protect his privacy and retain his self-esteem. For the purpose of my comments, I will call him David. Until three years ago in July 1999, David had been married for 17 years. His family lived in a house he had built as an owner-builder. They had two children aged 14 and 17 years. That relationship failed and this had a quite catastrophic impact on him. In his own words, it "killed" him; he felt completely ruined. In August this year the Liverpool Area Mental Health Team, referring to David, said:

David has been a client of our mental health service since July 1999. David has an extensive mental health history, not only just with our service, but with other area health services also. David has a history of depression/anxiety, which at times has seen David very agitated and unable to manage his daily activities. David's mental state is often affected by his illness to the point whereby he becomes disorganised, panic stricken, paranoid and extremely vulnerable. When unwell mentally, David is often confused, has difficulty concentrating, his memory is poor and his judgement can be clouded. David is still currently under case management.

He had built his own house and has achieved good qualifications in and worked in graphic reproduction and sign-writing. It is a sign of what has happened to him that he now works in what he describes as a disability factory. He has been constantly on medication since the separation from his wife in 1999. It was while he was in this condition that he fell into the clutches of an organisation called Liberty Network, which describes itself as engaged in "local and international introductions". It is based in Burwood Road, Burwood. At the time David was extraordinarily vulnerable. As he put it to me, he wanted "to retrieve my life".

He was not only vulnerable; I think it is entirely likely that he was not capable of making decisions in his own best interests. Liberty Network must have seen him coming. In this state he saw what he described as a big advertisement for the agency in the *Daily Telegraph*. He went to the agency and saw one person, and paid \$220. The receipt dated 4 May 2002 described this as the basic service for six months. Several days later he saw two more employees at the agency. He recalls that they were called Gina and Cindy. He was told they were a "serious introduction agency". He was told to pay \$5,280, which he did. The receipt dated 9 May 2002 is described as being for personal consultancy. He was told this was to show a photograph of him to a woman in Cabramatta. He was subsequently told that she did not like his photograph.

He also signed what was called a guarantee of service given by Liberty Network, also dated 9 May 2002. It was a very strange document, which certainly does not seem to have been informed by any legal expertise. Its other noteworthy aspect is the misspelling of the word "guarantee". Despite this failure, the stakes were dramatically raised the next day, 10 May. David was told the agency would get him a Russian bride but that it would cost him \$35,000. There was another receipt, dated 10 May 2002, expressed to be for personal consultancy services. It appears to have been signed by Joanne Monaghan. Once again there was another curious document with the word "guarantee" misspelt. David has set out what happened:

Being so vulnerable and mentally depressed, I did not know what I paid the money for. One hour later, I realised what I did and asked for my money back. However, Liberty Network would not give it to me. Gina, their employee stated that I was suffering from buyers remorse.

Not only had the agency extracted over \$40,000 from someone in no fit state to make such decisions, it refused to return the money when requested. Moreover, the agency then insulted him using psychobabble like "buyers remorse". David's father was also trying to help him. However, Liberty Network was nothing if not resourceful. They cajoled David into buying a mobile phone so that he would be able to speak directly with them without the intervention of his father, with whom he was living. David was then an inpatient at a psychiatric hospital from 23 July to 7 August. David and his father eventually extracted a modicum of satisfaction from the agency. After much aggravation the agency agreed to a repayment.

However, the repayment is of only \$30,000, not of the full amount advanced. Moreover, it is to be paid by amounts of \$300 per week for 100 weeks. Additionally, no interest is to be paid. A number of very serious issues arise from this. First, David was incredibly vulnerable when he came into contact with the agency. He was arguably not competent to sign away a substantial sum of money. He suffered from anxiety disorder, deep depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder. He had been on medication for three years. Liberty Network should not have allowed him to give it \$40,000. Second, there is a very real issue as to whether Liberty Network was ever going to be able to supply \$40,000 worth of services. Third, it refused a refund even though David requested it within an hour. And when it agreed to pay some back, it was after a protracted time and in an unsatisfactory manner. I ask the Minister for Fair Trading to investigate these crooks.

CORNELIUS SMITH HOUSE MOVERS AND THE ROADS AND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

Mr CRITTENDEN (Wyong—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an ongoing problem that Cornelius Smith House Movers has with the Roads and Traffic Authority oversize permit section. Over several years I have met the principal, Mr John Smith, a third-generation house mover, on a number of occasions. The firm, which was the first house moving business in Australia, was established in 1890. The company has not been involved in an accident since its establishment 112 years ago. The grandfather of Mr John Smith moved homes eight metres to nine metres wide on bullock trailers over dirt roads. The case I bring to the attention of the House relates to an application on 20 June to move a home from Medowie to Limeburners Creek.

Maitland police approved the move, and booked it for 26 and 28 June. The load was 6.3 metres wide. However, the application was refused under section 8 of the Operators Guide to Oversize and Overmass Vehicle Movement, which limits width to five metres on Bucketts Way for house movers only. Therein lies the nub of the problem. Mr Smith has advised me that mining equipment is moved regularly on Bucketts Way. Dump trucks have a width of seven to eight metres and dump truck tip bodies also have a width of seven to eight metres. Bulldozers are permitted on Bucketts Way without restriction, even though they can be divided by removing the blades. The information provided to me by Mr Smith is that police often request that the blades be removed, although this is not a specific requirement of the RTA.

I understand that several other houses of comparable width have been moved into Limeburners Creek and surrounding areas during the past 12 months. Cornelius Smith House Movers have been granted permission to move houses up to 9.4 metres wide. It is important that the matter be resolved. Small businesses like Mr Smith's house-moving business cannot be affected by restrictions that are not placed on large mining companies. I ask that the Minister for Transport review this matter. I know he is not snowed by bureaucratic obfuscation. I hope he will carefully consider this matter. Mr Smith runs a small, longstanding, family business. It is important that we have equity in the arrangements that relate to all business endeavours in this State, be they small or large. I would hope that if oversize mining equipment is permitted on Bucketts Way because there are no such restrictions, the same sort of latitude will be given to small business people such as Mr Smith.

We must ensure that in areas such as the Central Coast, the North Coast and the Hunter Valley, a house on one lot that is no longer required can be moved to another lot and reattached successfully. It is no small feat to arrange to move a house. I understand that it involves 150-odd people from start to finish, including plumbers, electricians, plan drawers, council departments, engineers, bricklayers, surveyors, et cetera. These people need a fair go to move houses so that those who do not have the wherewithal to construct a new house can purchase a house and put it on land they own and, thus, chase the great Australian dream of home ownership.

TWEED HEADS DISTRICT HOSPITAL COURTYARD

Mr NEWELL (Tweed) [5.33 p.m.]: On Monday 16 September I officiated at a ceremony where I paid tribute to the Twin Towns Meals on Wheels, which very kindly donated \$69,000 to the Tweed Heads District

Hospital to erect an all-weather cover over a dining-cafe courtyard to be known as the Twin Towns Meals on Wheels Courtyard. As honourable members may be aware, stage three of the Tweed hospital was recently opened. It is currently being refurbished. Since 1973 Twin Towns Meals on Wheels has provided regular meal deliveries to home-bound locals. The group is currently providing meals to 132 people. It is a mammoth effort, and certainly deserves the acknowledgment of the community. I was joined at the unveiling of the official plaque by the founding President, Mr David Lindsay, or Dick Wilson, as he is commonly known.

Mr Wilson was especially active in Meals on Wheels in its early years. He pointed out that Twin Towns Meals on Wheels started delivering meals in 1973 to 20 or 25 people who lived on what is now known as the Tweed Coast from Kingscliff all the way up to Palm Beach in Queensland. The area now serviced is much smaller than that and encompasses Tweed Heads, Banora Point and the Currumbin area on the lower part of the Gold Coast. The new courtyard, which has provided an expanded relaxation area for staff, patients and visitors, is the result of fundraising efforts and the personal generosity of members of Twin Towns Meals on Wheels. It is situated just outside the canteen run by the United Hospitals Auxiliary, which has moved into a new canteen facility as a result of the stage three refurbishment of the hospital.

The merging of the existing coffee shop with the protected outdoor space has provided an enhanced amenity, and one that will attract both patients and visitors. It has increased capacity of the cafeteria by up to 40, and provides a very pleasant area in which to dine or enjoy beverages. I pay tribute to the local contractors who carried out the work. The project options study was undertaken by Page Kirkland, which indicated that the design by Health Project International was the most viable. Local firm C. and K. A. Flanagan, Sailmakers, successfully quoted for the construction of the sail roof, and other work was undertaken by local contractors Active Paving and Landscaping, and Twin Towns Glass and Joinery.

I pay tribute to Tweed Hospital for ensuring that local contractors were involved, which enabled the cost of the project, \$69,000, to filter through to the local Tweed economy. I pay tribute to Dick Wilson, the founding President, who remained President of Twin Towns Meals on Wheels for 10 years. He is still in pretty good health, although he has slowed down a bit since those days. The group was very keen and enthusiastic, and certainly deserved the accolades and acknowledgments they received on the day. I commend the Twin Towns Meals on Wheels for their great work.

Mrs MARIA CHAN COMPULSORY LAND ACQUISITION

Mr COLLINS (Willoughby) [5.38 p.m.]: I wish to draw to the attention of the House a compulsory acquisition made by Willoughby City Council, in my electorate. This is a tale which many honourable members of this House will find interesting. I particularly draw this matter to the attention of the Minister for Local Government, to whom I have written about this issue, as indeed I have written to the Minister for Planning. I have made representations on behalf of Ms Maria Chan, a constituent of mine, regarding the compulsory acquisition of her property at 25 Anderson Street, Chatswood, in the Chatswood business district.

Ms Chan and her family came to the Chatswood area some 25 years ago from Rabaul in Papua New Guinea, one of a number of families who migrated to Sydney at about that time. They invested in the said property in 1993. The Chan family story is part of a familiar pattern of Chinese migration to Sydney, much of it to my own electorate, and to Chatswood in particular. The site in question received Willoughby City Council approval for redevelopment with a floor space ratio of 3:1 some time before the current controversy. Ms Chan is now advised by the council that it has resumed her property and has made a formal offer of \$5.83 million, when the site next to it—and this is the point I draw to the attention of the House and the Minister in particular—at 419-423 Victoria Avenue, Chatswood, has been resumed for more than double that sum, \$14 million.

My constituent Ms Chan points out that the \$14 million resumption was for property without the same redevelopment approval that she has. I have made inquiries of Willoughby City Council to try to get to the bottom of this matter. I have received a response, but it leaves the fundamental inconsistency in value between the two properties completely unresolved. For that reason, I have brought it to the attention of the Minister that I have named. Apparently, both properties are being acquired by council for the same purpose, and in the same time frame. The overriding question remains as to why one property, approved for multi-story development, is worth less than half the neighbouring property which has no such approval. I have brought this to the attention of both Ministers. The Senior Policy Adviser to the Minister for Local Government, at the end of his most recent response, said:

I should also mention that the provision of civic cultural and recreation facilities, as proposed in the Civic Place project, is a function of the Council. As an autonomous body, vested with the local government administration of its area, it is for the Council to determine the appropriate level of such facilities in consultation with its local community.

In other words, this property is being resumed for the Civic Place project. I again draw to the attention of both Ministers and the Government that the council does not yet have the funds to pay for the Civic Place project. It is a project that will cost a minimum of \$80 million, on the briefing I received a couple of years ago. I want to warn the Government that there is a substantial claim to both the State and Federal governments for contributions—in the region of \$20 million from the State Government and \$20 million or so from the Federal Government. In other words, the council does not as yet have the money to pay for the project for which these resumptions are occurring.

This must leave in everybody's mind, and in particular in Ms Chan's mind, the question: Why is she, as an owner of a property with a multi-storey development approval, offered less than half what her neighbour has been offered, when both properties are being acquired by council for the same project, which as yet does not have the clearly identified funds for its completion. I would argue quite plainly that individual families should not be required to fund projects like this by having the value of their assets so written down in a council resumption. I ask the Minister to review this case as a matter of urgency.

MENAI PRIMARY SCHOOL CENTENARY

Ms MEGARRITY (Menai) [5.43 p.m.]: I am pleased to advise the House that Menai Primary School has celebrated a centenary of quality public education. It was very fitting that these celebrations coincided with Education Week. On Sunday 8 September a combined church service was held in the old school grounds on the corner of Old Illawarra and Menai roads. The program was coordinated and conducted by all the churches in the Menai community—the Anglican Church, the Baptist Church, the Catholic Church, Menai Church of Christ, Menai City Church, Reformed Church, Salvation Army, Shire West Christian Centre and the Uniting Church. The whole afternoon was a memorable start to a week of celebrations at the current location of the school in Hall Drive, Menai.

The culminating event was the centenary program on Saturday 14 September 2002. Two very special guests were kindergarten student Damien Kotoulas, the youngest child in the school, and Mrs Gwendolyn Mayman, a student at the school between 1914 and 1920. Mrs Mayman, nee Jones, is now aged 94 years, and her family were the first permanent settlers in the area in 1895. In April 1901 an application was made to establish the school, but it was not until May 1902 that the school was officially established. It opened under the tutelage of Miss Mary Richardson, receiving a salary of £88. Due to the lack of a schoolhouse, classes for the 13 students were conducted in the front room, measuring 12 feet by 12 feet, of the Jones' home for a sum of 7/6d per week rent. Interestingly, at this time the area was called Bangor. However, it is believed that Mr Owen Jones, who was Mrs Mayman's father and a fierce Welshman, was instrumental in having the name changed to Menai in April 1910. The first social function was a fancy dress ball on Saturday 23 August 1992. An article on the event in *The Argus*, a shire newspaper, wrote:

Menai is picturesque whether you look at it, or from it. Within itself it is a pretty little town, happily and healthily placed and from it, on account of its altitude, very fine panoramic views can be had

In 2002 Menai is still picturesque, but it has grown a great deal since the school opened in 1902. However, as the authors of the excellent centenary booklet noted:

With these changes we haven't lost the sense of community. This was particularly evident during the bush fires that occurred in 1994 and again in 1997 when homes were lost. We came together to fight mother nature as one.

The centenary book committee, Cheryl Hudspeth, Kerry Knoflack, Leigh Moores, Janyne Walker and Grant Fuller, deserve a very special mention. It is also appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of the school council, the parents and citizens association and, of course, the principal Mr Chris Peoples and the teaching and support staff of Menai Primary School. A particularly innovative publication was the *Centenary Cookbook*, full of recipes submitted by the school community. A wonderful student centenary magazine included a variety of contributions by the current students of the school. Menai Primary is well served by four types of student leadership groups: the Student Representative Council, library monitors, house captains/vice-captains and prefects/school captains. Erin Stephens and Patrick Caldwell, Menai Primary's 100th pair of school captains, wrote the foreword to the student magazine, and expertly hosted the centenary ceremony on 14 September 2002.

I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon's program, which included performances by the school band, choir, dance groups and the very energetic jump rope team. The extensive display of the students' centenary artwork in the hall was irrefutable evidence of the school's commitment to the visual arts. Academic achievements have been recognised by the Director General's award for outstanding literacy and numeracy programs. The motto of Menai Primary School is "together we learn and grow". The principal, Mr Chris Peoples, aptly noted:

During its one hundred year history, the provision of quality programs at Menai Primary School has been built on the strongest foundation—a committed, ongoing partnership that includes the students, their teachers and parents and members of the wider community.

I am certain that all honourable members will join me in congratulating the Menai Primary School community on 100 years of quality public education.

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS ELECTORATE SERVICES

Ms SEATON (Southern Highlands) [5.48 p.m.]: I want to update the House on issues of interest to people who live in the many villages in the Wollondilly, Wingecarribee and Shoalhaven areas of my electorate and report on the village visits I have made in the last two or three months to Kangaroo Valley, Oakdale, The Oaks, Picton, Yanderra, Buxton, Bargo, Thirlmere, Tahmoor, Wingello, Penrose, Canyanleigh, Hill Top, Colo Vale, Yerrinbool, Balmoral, Appin, Exeter, New Berrima and Berrima. I will also visit, as I do each year, many other villages in the next couple of months. I thank all of those who were kind enough to host my visits. The visits usually take the form of a village meeting or the opportunity to meet with individual constituents, generally outside the local post office or general store. In the villages one can always be assured of a cup of tea and a warm welcome. I thank the local community for providing an atmosphere that was conducive to people coming along and raising local issues with me. People who may not take the time to go to the electorate office are able to talk with me when I am in their locality. These visits are an important task of any member of Parliament.

The key issues raised during the visits—not in any particular order and certainly not exhaustively—include the quality and maintenance of roads, such as mending potholes and improving drainage. The major roads referred to were the Appin and Menangle roads, the Bowral by-pass and the Wombeyan Caves road. In most cases, people want unsealed roads sealed, engineering work carried out on dirt roads and grading of roads. Most of this work is the responsibility of council. I always make representations on behalf of my constituents to the local council. But country councils have been starved of funds over recent years and they are finding it increasingly difficult to meet demands, even for day-to-day maintenance of roads in many villages. Road safety and speed zones are also matters of concern, particularly in Wingello and Penrose.

Many people are concerned about the reliability of the electricity supply. I have made some progress with Mr Powis, the Chief Executive Officer of Integral Energy, and will continue to do so. Demand is outstripping supply and often reliability is compromised, not because of storms and other natural events but because of the inadequacy of the infrastructure capacity. Gas connection is of interest to people in Yerrinbool, Yanderra and Picton. Hazard reduction before the on-coming bushfire season is of interest to people in The Oaks, Oakdale, Balmoral, Hill Top and Colo Vale, which were all threatened during the fires last Christmas. Homes were lost in those areas. The need for a second high school, an upgrade of Bargo and Appin schools and a new primary school in Bowral figured high, as did nursing shortages and the need for more dental care facilities. People asked for a commitment on a renal dialysis centre in Bowral and a commitment to match community funding for an ambulance station in Kangaroo Valley. There is also interest in establishing an ambulance station at Bundanoon.

Police shortages, low police numbers and the need for more police presence were high on the agenda. People were concerned about access at Picton station and the reliability and security of our railway line, particularly after the Bargo derailment, which caused many people a great deal of concern and has created a crisis of confidence in the safety of our rail system. Perhaps the most overwhelming and complex of concerns is about overdevelopment. People want to retain village and rural characteristics in our towns. They want a clear plan formulated, particularly in Wollondilly. They want answers from Planning NSW, who will not brief the community. The community knows that plans for large-scale urban development in parts of the Wollondilly shire are in the bottom drawer. Planning NSW will not talk to the community about this issue.

Concerns have already been expressed by councillors Phillip Costa and Christine Towndrow about the Government's plans for the Macarthur south development. People are in limbo in rural areas as to future land use. Many people want to be able to subdivide large rural residential lots but cannot because Planning NSW will not talk to them. People are concerned that their villages will be overtaken by city sprawl and that they will have no control over planning issues. I want the Government to address this issue as a matter of urgency.

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [5.53 p.m.]: The honourable member for Southern Highlands referred in her speech to electricity assets. I am almost certain that the expenditure that has been made available

for this year by Integral Energy is in the order of \$160 million to ensure that our electricity assets are as reliable as possible and that people enjoy this essential service with the minimum of disruption. New South Wales enjoys one of the most reliable electricity supplies in the world. Reliability is a condition of our distributor retailer licence, and the reliability levels are invariably in the 99 percentile. The Government does not rest on its laurels and ensures that the expenditure continues to roll out to make sure that reliability is maintained, if not improved.

MILTON-ULLADULLA HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr W. D. SMITH (South Coast) [5.54 p.m.]: This evening I wish to highlight the United Hospital Auxiliaries, particularly the Milton-Ulladulla Hospital Auxiliary, and the members who give their time, effort and work to benefit their community. The United Hospitals Auxiliaries is a charitable organisation which co-ordinates voluntary work for public hospitals and day care centres under the auspices of NSW Health. The auxiliaries have existed in Australia for many years, with the oldest recorded being established in 1881 in Cowra. In 2002 there are more than 300 branches and over 9,000 members. Their motto, "Let us hold high the lamp of service for the welfare of our hospitals", reflects pride in our hospitals, pride in their work and pride in the notion of community service.

The members of United Hospital Auxiliaries Inc. of New South Wales have collectively raised more than \$5.5 million annually for the past two years, with the hours worked by volunteers being equivalent to \$20 million in wages, had they been paid at a mere \$10 per hour. That equates to more than 1.5 million hours. I recently attended the annual general meeting of the Milton-Ulladulla Hospital Auxiliary at Bannister Lodge in my electorate of the South Coast. I was inspired to see such commitment and to witness people who are willing to put others in the community before themselves, often receiving no recognition or thanks. They do not require thanks, of course, although it is certainly deserved. Their satisfaction comes from the giving process and seeing others assisted in the community. This non-profit organisation was officially established in 1933 to raise funds for the Milton-Ulladulla Hospital to give both long-term and short-term patients a better environment and better facilities. They are a shining example of the sense of community held by so many in my electorate.

Currently, the Milton-Ulladulla Hospital Auxiliary has 44 members. Although auxiliaries predominantly consist of women, I am pleased to report that Mr John Hunter, who has been a dedicated member for many years, occupies the position of treasurer. Narelle Ober is in her third term as secretary of the Milton-Ulladulla branch. She is an experienced hand at charity work, being involved in hospital auxiliaries since 1977. Mrs Ober received an achievement award for 25 years of service with St Joseph's Hospital in Western Sydney by the Western Sydney Area Health Services board. Since moving to the South Coast some years ago, Mrs Ober has continued her dedication and has worked tirelessly with the other members to provide support to the hospital and patients alike. Narelle is an excellent organiser with high standards. She expects a lot from herself and gives her time most willingly to help others.

Mrs Mary Lamb has been a devoted member for seven years and is in her fourth term as president of the auxiliary. She has been a driving force behind the success of the auxiliary in recent times. Mrs Lamb is most thorough in her work and is highly regarded and respected. Under her leadership, in the past 12 months the members have done themselves proud by raising \$15,000. This money was raised not only by the hard work of members selling raffle tickets, knitting knee rugs, holding cake and craft stalls, but also by the generosity of other organisations in my electorate who recognised the fine work of the auxiliary. Those organisations include the Milton quilters who donated \$5,000, the Mollymook lady golfers who donated \$1,500, and a local group of musicians and artists known as the Entertainers, a marvellous group of amateurs who perform with the aplomb of professionals, who donated \$1,800. Each year the Entertainers hold a fundraising concert at Mollymook Golf Club. They raised \$30,000, which they distributed to groups such as the Milton-Ulladulla Hospital Auxiliary, who help our community in an outstanding way.

Over the years the auxiliary has raised money to provide the hospital with a blood pressure machine, a casualty candidate physical ability testing machine, doctors' diagnostic trays, piped oxygen to all beds instead of the old oxygen tanks—that was at a cost of \$20,000—and it has contributed towards providing 20 new beds at the hospital. At the moment, special efforts are being made to raise money for curtains, bedspreads and other furnishings for Milton Ulladulla hospital, which is currently undergoing a \$4.35 million upgrade. The auxiliary not only raises money to assist the hospital but members visit patients each day and offer to shop for them. They even do washing for long-term patients as those patients often have little or no family to do those tasks.

This is most significant in an area that has a particularly high proportion of retirees. Often a husband or a wife is left without support due to the death of a partner. Services for patient care is another aspect of auxiliary

work. Members help at day care and rehabilitation and palliative care centres, library service and Meals on Wheels. This group is a wonderful example of the true sense of community spirit. There is no profit to be made and no real gain other than the joy of doing something for those in need. [*Time expired.*]

KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS

Mr HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [5.59 p.m.]: This evening I place on the public record my concern about Government proposals to overdevelop Ku-ring-gai. I refer in particular to a nine-storey development proposal at Lindfield, which is well out of proportion compared with any other development in that area. The Minister for Planning will give rezoning consent for the site at Lindfield and for half a dozen other sites across Ku-ring-gai. Earlier this week a media report highlighted the fact that PlanningNSW and the Minister are working hand-in-glove to facilitate this nine-storey development in Lindfield. The Minister made it clear to the community and to Ku-ring-gai Council that the development will proceed at that location. That development is in addition to scattered State environmental planning policy 5 developments in various parts of Ku-ring-gai that have substantially altered the character of many streets and localities throughout the municipality. I do not always agree with the council's position on various matters, but it has been prepared to work with PlanningNSW to provide housing choice.

With changing demographics in Ku-ring-gai in recent years the council has been prepared to facilitate a greater diversity of housing, in particular, medium-density housing in the form of townhouses and villas. Much of that development has been located in logical parts of the municipality, that is, close to transport nodes and shopping centres. By and large, residents who have chosen to live there are happy and comfortable with what has been made available. Despite the council trying to accommodate the demands of PlanningNSW and the State Government, it is clear that those demands have not been satisfied. Honourable members would be aware of the unique topography of the Ku-ring-gai electorate. It is bounded by three national parks. Most of the development in that electorate is in rich topsoil areas. Many sloping areas that are not suitable for development probably will not be developed. There is no redevelopment of so-called brown hill sites to provide a greater range of urban development.

One important characteristic in the Ku-ring-gai electorate—in particular in the suburbs of Lindfield, Roseville, Gordon and Killara—is the tree canopy. If a nine-storey development is permitted in Lindfield it will irreversibly change for all time the character of that part of Sydney. I strongly oppose a development of that magnitude. There is no room for such a development. Ku-ring-gai council works within local government parameters, even though the goalposts keep changing, to provide greater housing diversity in the future. I oppose any development of this nature in Lindfield. If the rezoning has not been completed after the next election a Coalition government will halt that development. Any proposal that is out of character, as this proposal is, will not proceed. A Coalition government will not allow high-rise development of this magnitude that will irreversibly damage the Ku-ring-gai electorate or any other electorate.

The Government appears to be hell-bent on creating a precedent that will lead to larger urban development in areas that have no such development. Ku-ring-gai electorate already offers reasonable dwelling diversity. That should be allowed to continue. My message to the Minister for Planning is: Butt out, give council a chance to continue doing what it has been doing successfully. I fully support the work of Ku-ring-gai council. [*Time expired.*]

EASTERN SUBURBS BUS SERVICE REVIEW

Mr DEBNAM (Vaucluse) [6.04 p.m.]: Tonight I refer again to bus services throughout the eastern suburbs and the city. I have mentioned this issue on a number of occasions. On 6 September 2001 I first referred to a bus service review—the first major review of this nature in 10 years. I encouraged members of the community to embrace this opportunity to comment on bus services. I raised a number of issues that I hoped State Transit Authority executives would take into account in their review, including the need for what I called a hospital bus run through eastern suburbs servicing various medical facilities. That review, which was commenced last year, ran through to early this year. This year I again spoke a number of times about that review.

On 22 March I raised a number of points of concern, most notably the proposed loss of the 321 bus service and the loss of the direct link with the ferry service. I again raised the issue of the proposal for a hospital bus running through various medical facilities in the eastern suburbs, an issue that I have raised in this place over many years. On 11 April I again spoke in this House about the review that is under way. I noted that I had

received petitions from thousands of people expressing concern about proposed changes. The 321 bus route again featured in those letters of concern and petitions. I asked the Minister for Transport to seriously consider another round of consultations.

Honourable members will remember that in April the hapless Minister for Transport cancelled or deferred the proposed introduction of a train timetable change, with the consequent effect that bus changes were also put back. At that time I asked the Minister to use a period of six to eight weeks, which appeared at that time to be available, for another round of consultation and, importantly, to put the timetable out for consultation as that had not been done. The initial review was based on bus routes and not on the timetable. All honourable members would be aware how important the frequency of bus services is to the community. I again raised this issue on 5 September this year when I pointed out that it had been a year of distress for the community after looking at the review and at the Government's proposals.

The community reacted positively to the opportunity to comment, but there is no doubt that the community feels betrayed by what the Government has done with this massive cutback of bus services in the city and in the east. This cutback is not only affecting my electorate. Obviously it has affected the city and all of the eastern suburbs, most notably the electorates of Bligh, Coogee and Maroubra. Earlier a number of constituents from Maroubra expressed great concern about the cutbacks. One of the real problems—not only the 321 bus route, which features continually—is the inability of various public transport arms to ensure that buses and ferries work together.

On 5 September I also raised the fact that Sydney Ferries was not utilising the potential to put on extra services. I also referred to the Bondi Junction interchange and the lack of information and non-user friendliness of that facility. Last week I met with executives of the State Transit Authority at which time I expected to be given a briefing on the proposed changes. However, that was not done. The problems will remain because it appears that the Government is going to stonewall. There are overcrowded buses and a lack of frequency on some routes, the removal of services such as route 321, a lack of co-operation between the State Transit Authority and Sydney Ferries, and a lack of information. A review of new services is not proposed until December.

Recently the Minister spoke about the review of buses. He crowed about his receptiveness to proposed changes. We are not seeing that on the ground and the community is outraged. The Minister then went on to make a number of misleading statements about double-decker buses. Again he demonstrated his disturbing ignorance of the latest innovations in public transport in Europe and London. I made the point earlier today in the House that the new technology double-decker buses have a low floor, high capacity and easy access, and unlike the Minister for Transport, the new buses are popular with the community.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

Mr MILLS (Wallsend) [6.09 p.m.]: On Friday last week I had the pleasure of being a guest at a ceremony at Callaghan College, Jesmond campus, for the signing of memoranda of understanding between Callaghan College, the Department of Education and Training, the Hunter Institute of TAFE and the University of Newcastle. In the days leading up to the establishment of Callaghan College numerous meetings were held locally and deputations of interested parties from Callaghan College high schools approached the former Minister for Education and Training, Mr Aquilina. On one important occasion senior officers of the Hunter Institute of TAFE and the University of Newcastle attended a meeting with the Minister to highlight the importance of links between Callaghan College, TAFE and the university as an integral part of the concept to assist the process of life-long learning and improved student educational outcomes. These links will give students in years 11 and 12 access to university subjects and will provide academic and technology support to staff of the college.

The school captains of Jesmond campus, Renee Milek and Nathan Manning, were the masters of ceremonies. Ian Nebauer, Principal of Jesmond campus, opened the proceedings and Graham Boyd, Principal of Callaghan College, welcomed guests and explained the background to the memoranda. The Relieving District Superintendent, Janina Sulikowski, spoke on the concept of having partnerships for the college. Laurie Tabart, the Superintendent of Newcastle district, spoke about life-long learning and his visions for the college. Speakers endorsed the importance of parent support.

The guests included Margaret Bryden, President of the Combined Parents and Citizens Association for Callaghan College. John McConnell, the first principal of Jesmond campus, and Kathy Tate, the Lady

Mayoress, were also guests. In attendance to sign on behalf of the State Government was my colleague the Minister Assisting the Premier on Hunter Development, Richard Face. Also present was Michael Adermann, the Deputy Director of the Hunter Institute of TAFE, who spoke about enhanced opportunities for learning, information technology support to the college and TAFE staff support to schoolteachers. Brian English, the Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, spoke about the aim of education in people's development, in maximising opportunities and in extending one's capacities. He said that Australians value public education highly and that Callaghan College was the best example in Australia of a model for school, university and TAFE continuity of learning experiences for students.

The memoranda of understanding signed that day make interesting reading. The memorandum of understanding between the college and university, which was signed by Minister Face, the vice-chancellor and the district superintendent, referred to the educational alliance between the university and Callaghan College. It states that the alliance recognises the significant benefits a formal working relationship will bring to the students of each institution. It defines the areas of collaboration and co-operation, and establishes operational protocols to support these links. The memorandum of understanding does not create a legal partnership but is one of co-operation and mutual support within areas agreed upon between the parties, with specific agreements to be reached between the parties on collaborative, operational and financial matters.

The first agreement arising from that memorandum was signed by the college principal and the vice-chancellor. Agreement was reached to have a researcher-in-residence to provide consultation and support by the university to Callaghan College in recognition of their partnership. An office was to be situated at Jesmond, with support to be provided during the week on appropriate days to be agreed between the university and the campuses of the college—that is, the Braye Park Unit, Jesmond campus, Wallsend campus and Waratah technology campus. The researcher-in-residence will support and develop Callaghan College staff with pedagogical change, primarily utilising productive pedagogy and middle schooling techniques. That agreement will commence next year. The memorandum of understanding between the Hunter Institute of TAFE and Callaghan College also has joint objectives, and the first agreement between those two bodies was signed. It was agreed that information technology support services will be provided by the Hunter Institute of TAFE to Callaghan College in recognition of their partnership and each campus will be serviced for the equivalent of one day per week on a cost recovery basis. Callaghan College is going ahead strongly. [*Time expired.*]

SUTHERLAND HOSPITAL KIOSK

Mr KERR (Cronulla) [6.14 p.m.]: I speak about health matters in my electorate. The Sutherland Hospital kiosk opened in April 1960 and is operated seven days a week by unpaid workers. The kiosk volunteers have raised more than \$1 million for the hospital since they set up shop 40 years ago. Every day of every week of every year these people give up their valuable time to provide improved equipment for the hospital. Over the years money raised has gone towards the purchase of essential equipment for the hospital. Profits in the past have bought modules for patient monitors in the coronary care unit, a laparoscopic instrument set, a thoracic scope and a cystoscope for the hospital's operating theatres. The purchase of equipment has taken years of dedicated work by these volunteers. Other purchases in recent years included an anaesthetic agent monitor, an anaesthetic machine and a ventilator.

The dedication and selflessness of these kiosk volunteers have benefited almost every ward of Sutherland Hospital. I am sure that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, the honourable member for Heathcote, has enjoyed the services of the kiosk and, indeed, has made a contribution to the facilities, unlike other candidates seeking preselection for the electorate of Heathcote. In October 2000 I was delighted to advise Mrs Shirley Chirgwin that the Premier's Community Service Award would be presented to the Sutherland Hospital kiosk. The award consists of an engraved wooden plaque from the Premier's Office and a certificate signed by the Premier. The award was in appreciation of the special contribution made by volunteers to the community. Honourable members would have been shocked when they picked up their copy of today's *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* to discover an article that stated:

After 42 years, Sutherland Hospital's kiosk will close to make room for the methadone clinic now located behind the Kingsway building which is due for demolition early next year.

The move will take place after Christmas but a new kiosk location has yet to be decided, despite building works being well under way.

Kiosk volunteers are angry that the hospital executive has "turfed" them aside.

Irene Senior, a volunteer for 18 years, said five or six people staff the kiosk daily on rotation.

Mrs Senior said the Monday group arrived for work on September 16 to find a petition on the counter.

"That was the first we had heard of the closure," Mrs Senior said...

The article quoted the petition as follows:

"After 40 years and over \$1 million, the doors of the hospital kiosk are being closed forever and its merry band of volunteers gone. Save the kiosk and its workers."

There has been no consultation with the community about the kiosk or the location of the methadone clinic—

Mr R. W. Turner: It's a disgrace.

Mr KERR: It is a disgrace. There has been no community consultation about either of those matters. I have cited and discussed individual matters with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, the honourable member for Heathcote, and I have found him to be quite helpful. Although he and I have expressed differing opinions and we have had robust discussions in this House, I have never doubted his genuine commitment to the Sutherland shire. In view of his services to health, it is a great pity that, in the preselection battle, he is being turfed out like the kiosk. Given that the honourable member for Heathcote will retain his position as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health at least until the knives are removed at the next election, I ask him to take an interest in this matter. I know he has good intentions. I urge him to ensure, as a matter of urgency, that the kiosk is preserved and the methadone clinic is made the subject of community consultation.

AUBURN ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mrs PERRY (Auburn) [6.19 p.m.]: Last week, during Education Week, I was delighted to attend two significant events in my electorate, the official opening of Newington Public School and the installation of solar panels at Berala Public School. At both events I was struck by the participation of the students and the attendance of so many parents. School communities cannot exist without such enthusiastic parental support. The Hon. John Watkins, the Minister for Education and Training, joined the celebration to officially open Newington Public School. The opening of Newington reflects the growing population of the suburb formerly known as the Olympic Village, and falls in line with the excellence and modernity of its surroundings. I was delighted to be a part of the opening of Newington Public and to witness the great facilities and brilliant leadership of its principal, Ms Debbie Lowe. Newington is a suburb nestled in the heart of an area that impressed the world as a leading example of innovation, modernisation and organisational superiority. I am confident that Newington Public will complement this outstanding history as it emerges as a budding model of a school led by the sound principles and vision as laid out by Ms Lowe in her official speech. She said:

It would be public. It would be inclusive. It would be multicultural. It would have heart. It would be vibrant, purposeful, forward thinking and up front. It would be part of a global village, technologically competent and environmentally responsible. It would be built on principles of equity ... It would be full of the best possible books, music, science, sport, numeracy and art.

Newington Public School is also a brilliant example of a modern, sophisticated and environmentally sound school—solar panels and all—in the heart of an area made infamous by the Olympics. I extend our wider school community a warm welcome to Newington Public. Not unrelated to the official opening of Newington Public School was the launch at Berala Public School of the Solar in Schools Program, a joint initiative of the Department of Education and Training and the Sustainable Energy Development Authority. Berala Public is a school with great community spirit led by its committed principal, Mr John Warren, and his dedicated staff, who constantly promote harmony among the students through respect and tolerance for each other and the environment. Berala Public is made up of students from many and varied cultural backgrounds. Last week the students gained a fascinating insight into renewable energy technology when my colleague the Minister for Energy, the Hon. Kim Yeadon, visited the school to announce a \$180,000 extension to the successful Solar in Schools Program, which was welcomed by the school community, with Berala Public among 10 Sydney schools added to the program.

The idea of installing solar panels in schools is truly brilliant. How better to promote the idea of sustainable development than to provide opportunities for our students to learn first hand the benefits, and indeed necessity, of utilising environmentally friendly technology. I have no doubt that the students of Berala Public are immensely enjoying and benefiting from this special learning experience. Berala Public received 18 solar panels, which were installed on a site affectionately known as the Pizza Hut building. Aside from their invaluable educational role, the panels are set to reduce the school's energy bills by feeding power back into the

electricity grid. I am pleased to observe that this latest State Government program falls hard on the heels of its last initiative—the environmental education policy. The necessity of teaching our children to become environmentally responsible cannot be understated, and was perhaps best put by a student of Berala Public, Jeffrey Du, who so well illustrated the purpose and aim of the Solar in Schools Program. Jeffrey said:

We learn that solar power is quiet, it doesn't make a single sound. We learn that it is clever, because sunlight is free, and electricity is not, and most important we learn that solar power protects our environment. The environment is very important for our future, and we want to keep it clean and safe.

Both events demonstrate the Carr Government's commitment to improving upon and providing first-rate, sophisticated and evolving educational facilities. In light of the timely debate in this House today concerning the Federal Government's failure to ratify the Kyoto protocol, in my view it is the obligation of all levels of government to encourage, instil and sustain an overall awareness of, interest in, and passion and concern for the environment through our education system for the future of our nation: our children. As many astronauts have commented on, from distance in the vast scheme of things as human beings we share one fate: the Earth.

Mr YEADON (Granville—Minister for Information Technology, Minister for Energy, Minister for Forestry, and Minister for Western Sydney) [6.24 p.m.]: Last week I had the pleasure of joining the honourable member for Auburn at Berala Public School to launch the Solar in Schools Program in that school. I join the honourable member in saying what a delight it was. There is a beautiful sense of community in that school. As the honourable member indicated, it was Education Week and it was fantastic to see such a large number of parents in attendance. I also join the honourable member for Auburn in congratulating the principal, John Warren, and his staff on the work they are doing at Berala Public School. I was rather surprised at the size of the school population; it is quite a large public school. The community spirit and the way the school is run is a great credit to the public education system.

As the honourable member for Auburn said, the Solar in Schools Program is a first-class program providing a range of outcomes, including a green orientation. Most schools operate about 17 computers per year from the solar panels. The program provides a fantastic education device for the students but also for the parents who visit the school. Schools are a key community resource and they are visited by a large proportion of the community. The Solar in Schools Program demonstrates to the community that solar is not an esoteric technology that is way into the future, but that it can be used now, and that our country is best placed to exploit green, clean energy. I congratulate Berala Public School, the Sustainable Energy Authority and Integral Energy, which will purchase the electricity that the school is unable to use and will be fed back into the grid. It was a fantastic day.

DEFENSIVE DRIVER TRAINING

Mr CULL (Tamworth) [6.26 p.m.]: Last weekend I had the opportunity to participate in a defensive driving and awareness course in Tamworth. I do not consider myself to be a poor driver, but given the number of kilometres that country members are required to drive around their electorates, I believe we are never too old to improve our driving skills. The course was conducted by Precision Driver Training from Richmond and was sponsored by the Tamworth Peel Valley Lions Club. I commend the Lions Club for taking the initiative and providing our community with the opportunity to improve our driving skills. Precision Driver Training has specialised in the provision of defensive driver training programs since 1987. The company bases its operations at Hawkesbury showground but extends its services into rural and regional areas as requested. The aim of the company is to promote and encourage driver awareness, driver attitude, and safe travelling distances, create an awareness of the dangers associated with excessive speed, wet conditions and poor concentration while driving, and lay the foundation upon which safe and efficient driving behaviours can be established.

Precision Driver Training incorporates a blend of practical and theory sessions into its course content and its services are conducted with the strictest safety standards in mind. At no time is anyone asked to perform any exercise that could be considered dangerous. Precision Driver Training conducts courses for passenger and light commercial vehicles in both private and corporate environments. It offers four courses: level one defensive driving, level two defensive driving, on-road driver assessments and driver rehabilitation. Precision Driver Training also offers driver awareness programs for heavy vehicle drivers that incorporate basic defensive driving attitudes and skills. Incorporated in these programs are topics and sessions that target all aspects of heavy vehicle driving, loading and manoeuvring. Precision Driver Training also conducts a community-based young driver program. This program operates on weekends and is heavily supported by the police service and local councils. The program seeks to lay the foundations of correct mental attitude, basic vehicle skills and responsibilities to the community.

I commend this program to the House and encourage the Government to consider extending it to all young drivers. At present young drivers are not required to complete any defensive driver training before obtaining their licence. I believe it is important to give people the opportunity to improve their driving skills at a young age so that when they are in a dangerous driving situation they can act appropriately. Precision Driver Training also offers in-house lectures in the form of informative discussion sessions with strong audience participation. Instructors are highly qualified and impart their knowledge in a very professional manner. It is expected that participants will leave the course with an increased awareness and greater understanding of their vehicles, which in turn should assist in improving road safety and reducing overall running costs. The instructors are graduates of the New South Wales Police driver training school and are selected for the friendly and relaxed manner in which they impart their knowledge. Their knowledge of traffic law and regulations is particularly valuable during discussions of driving behaviours.

The results speak for themselves. More than 300 taxi drivers completed the course, of whom only five re-offended. Prior to training, 63 clients from the transport industry were involved in at-fault crashes. After one year of training that number had reduced to 37, and after a second year of training it had reduced to four. The situation was similar for local government clients. Before clients did any training 33 had been involved in at-fault crashes. After one year of training, there were only seven at-fault crashes. I believe all young drivers should complete mandatory driver training and awareness courses as part of applying for their licence. The benefits to the community are obvious, with increased driving skills and understanding of road conditions leading to fewer accidents and fatalities on our roads. I commend the course to the House.

HEAVY VEHICLE SAFETY

Mr D. L. PAGE (Ballina) [6.31 p.m.]: I raise tonight a serious safety issue regarding non-compliance with the law by some—I stress that it is only some—semitrailer and B-double drivers, especially on the Pacific Highway. I speak in particular of drivers' non-compliance with the requirement to maintain a distance of 60 metres between heavy vehicles. The recent opening of the dual carriageway on the Pacific Highway between Yelgun and Chinderah has been warmly welcomed by the majority of motorists and local residents in my area. Motorists can now drive more safely because it is a divided road and the chances of conflict are reduced. They also enjoy driving on a high-standard road and appreciate the fact that this saves at least 15 minutes driving time on the trip between Chinderah and Yelgun. Motorists also appreciate the considerable fuel savings generated by the freeway's construction. Like many others, I have travelled on the road many times since it opened a couple of months ago.

Travelling by car can save time and money, as can transporting goods via heavy vehicles. Since the opening of the road I am informed—I am sure it is correct—that many heavy vehicles that formerly used the New England Highway now use the Pacific Highway. This is because they do not have to traverse the Burringbar Range and they save both fuel and time. Police were so concerned about increased truck and heavy vehicle movements on the Pacific Highway that they conducted a study, which revealed that there had been a 30 per cent increase in heavy vehicle traffic alone—the figures do not account for the increase in other traffic movements. Most heavy vehicle traffic on this road comprises B-doubles or semitrailers and I am concerned that a large number of them tailgate each other, failing to adhere to the 60-metre gap that is required to be maintained between each truck.

When travelling home from functions in the evening, I have seen as many as seven or eight B-doubles, semitrailers or a combination of both driving in a line, one behind the other. Motorists wanting to overtake can be confronted with three or four large trucks travelling very close to each other. There is no opportunity for a passing motorist to avoid oncoming traffic. This can pose significant risks for motorists. The danger is heightened at night when many trucks seem to make the trip from Brisbane to Sydney. They start their journey mid evening and it is not uncommon to pass many trucks travelling in convoy along the Pacific Highway between 10.00 p.m. and 11.00 p.m.

I have written to the police local area commanders in Richmond and Tweed requesting that more attention be paid to enforcing the 60-metre limit. However, I am concerned that that limit is not sufficient. B-doubles are long vehicles and 60 metres is not much in comparison. Perhaps it is time to rethink the law given that these trucks are permitted to travel at 100 kilometres per hour. I am not anti-trucking and I recognise the significant efficiencies gained by using B-doubles as opposed to semitrailers. There are also environmental benefits in terms of reduced greenhouse gas emissions. However, I am very pro road safety and I ask the Minister for Transport, and Minister for Roads and the Minister for Police—both of whom have a role to play through the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Police Force—to take on board my concerns and see what they

can do to help alleviate this problem. It is a matter of concern that some heavy vehicle drivers—not all of them but a significant number—tailgate each other on the road. The practice is bad on good roads, but it is doubly dangerous on inferior stretches of the Pacific Highway.

ORANGE ELECTORATE RAINFALL

Mr R. W. TURNER (Orange) [6.36 p.m.]: I acknowledge this evening the very welcome and enormously financially beneficial rain that has fallen throughout my electorate this week. Most of the Orange area received 30 millimetres which, together with the 28 to 30 millimetres that fell in the previous 10 days, will help ensure that the region will have a quite reasonable spring. Prior to that rainfall the area had been about to enter a green drought—although the situation was not as bad as the disastrous drought conditions experienced further west and in the north-west.

The only drought I have experienced in my 30 years in Orange was the drought of 1981-82, and I would not wish a similar experience on anyone. I had to hand feed some 3,000 sheep, which was both back breaking and financially crippling. I know what I am talking about when I support and sympathise with those farmers further out west who have not received the rain that we received this week. The rain has come just in time as far as the orchardists and grape growers are concerned. It will ensure that the bud burst will be reasonably even, and that will ensure a nice even crop. It will also give the grapes a fairly even bud burst. The *Central Western Daily* of 18 September reported:

Orange orchardists and vigneron yesterday welcomed the rain that fell around the city but in other parts of the State the news was not so good.

Orange and surrounding areas received more than 30mm but in Broken Hill, Gunnedah, Moree, Tibooburra, Tamworth and Narrabri the dust had barely settled with falls of less than 7mm ...

NSW Agriculture drought coordinator Geoff File—

Who is based at the head office in Orange—

said yesterday it was the lot of the farmer that when rain fell it was not always where it was most needed.

Mr File said there was good news for some farmers but for others it was "awful stuff."

The area from Parkes in the north, Condobolin and West Wyalong in the west and across to Canberra and back up to Orange in the east got 30mm or more.. Young got 49mm, it was probably the top score ...

He said the Orange and Young areas were now guaranteed a decent spring.

Although the rain fell very gently, which meant there was no run-off into the dams, in some areas that will help dams, because when you get rain of that strength it sometimes opens up springs and that starts creeks flowing. The grapes, apples and the stone fruit have benefited. Wheat will certainly benefit. It was probably doing a little better than canola, but depending on when the wheat and canola was planted and the condition of the soil it was planted in, some of those crops are doing better than others. Generally at the moment canola is well out in flower but in some areas it is reasonably short. However, this rain will ensure that farmers will get some canola. Given that canola is fetching \$500 a tonne, some of the better farmers will do reasonably well from the wonderful rain we have had this week.

The rain will guarantee lucerne growers their first cut. Let us hope that if we have follow-up falls, they will help the lucerne growers to take advantage of the good prices being paid at the moment for lucerne and any other fodder that can be sold. Cattle and sheep growers will get an advantage from the spring flush in the paddocks. They will have to be aware of bloat with the flush of clover but I am sure that is a slight problem they will not mind having to put up with. The rain will also help the prime lambs. There are a lot of lambs in the paddocks at the moment, following mum around, with not much prospect up till now of getting a good feed. They may now be put on the market as prime lambs, instead of being carried through until next year. Orange will look its best for the Australian national field days early next month. Many farmers will look with envy at our great prospects because of the break in the weather we have had this week.

WAGGA WAGGA BREAST SCREENING SERVICES

Mr MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [6.41 p.m.]: Tonight I want to raise my extreme concern about the unknown future of breast screening in the Wagga Wagga region and the broader region of the Riverina and the south-west slopes. This is causing extreme alarm within our community. I had a conversation with Mr Ted

Coupe, the Chief Executive Officer of Calvary hospital, which has provided breast screening services for about eight years. Mr Coupe then wrote to me as follows:

As mentioned we are experiencing difficulties in assuring medical practitioners contracted to provide a service to BreastScreen NSW South West that they have adequate medical indemnity cover.

The issue is really about the extent of medical cover provided by the Treasury Managed Fund.

Calvary Health Care Riverina, as you are aware, is a Non Government Organisation and as such, we are told, does not meet the criteria for cover under the fund ie. we are not a public hospital or area health service.

The anomaly is we provide a public service that cannot obtain cover for medical practitioners of the program because we don't fit the guidelines.

BreastScreen NSW is saying it is beyond their responsibility and should be taken up at government level.

I wrote to the Minister on 4 July and received a response on 25 July, but the Minister still has not provided me with a satisfactory, detailed response to the problems. Mr Coupe wrote to me again, as well as to BreastScreen, to confirm the advice he was given that there was no likelihood of an improvement in the level of funding to Calvary Health Care Riverina for the operation of BreastScreen. This letter said:

Calvary has been proud of the role it has played in establishing this service in South West New South Wales, the results and achievements of the past eight years and the good relationship and respect fostered in the community in providing this service. This decision has not been taken lightly.

Basically he was referring to the fact that unless there was some action, this service would cease to exist within Calvary hospital. Calvary hospital needs some surety to plan. It is September and the hospital still has not been given any indication of what will happen to this service. Mr Coupe also wrote to Ann Brassil, the director of BreastScreen. He stated:

My response to Dr McGowan's initial letter was that BreastScreen NSW considers the medical indemnity issue a matter to be sorted out locally and that they will not be providing cover to clinicians in BreastScreen NSW South West in the same manner as services administered by Area Health Services because BreastScreen NSW South West does not meet the criteria for cover under the Treasury Managed Fund ...

Furthermore it was advised that BreastScreen NSW is not going to add anything to the public system self insurance, TMF, because this insurance is based purely on claims history and BreastScreen hasn't had any.

Once again this is bureaucracy at work. The service is highly regarded by the broader community, and is available to people in the Riverina and the south-west slopes. The community is alarmed about its possible closure, yet we still have no action by this Government. Practitioners offer extra services that may be withdrawn, and we cannot afford to have that happen. The level of concern has reached such a point that BreastScreen NSW wrote to Mr Coupe, saying in part:

The level of concern has reached the point at which the Medical Practitioners listed below feel the need to withdraw their services ... if there is no change in the insurance coverage.

I have the list here, and it includes Mr Neil Bright, Mr David Ramsden, Mr Colin Kingsell, Mr Warren Hall, Mr John Stuchbery and pathologists Dr Gordon White and Dr Chris Sylvester. If it is not agreed that these services will continue in our city, goodness knows where those people will end up. Women from our region will have to travel to other centres. The expertise we have built around Calvary and the wonderful service it has given to our community will be dissipated. We cannot afford to have that. My staff have pursued this matter diligently. We began making inquiries on 5 August, and followed up with further inquiries on 8 August, 13 August, 14 August, 30 August, and 3 September. Still we have no answer. The Minister must respond with what he plans for the future of this much-needed service for our region. [*Time expired.*]

NORTH HEAD REDEVELOPMENT

Mr BARR (Manly) [6.46 p.m.]: I have spoken before in this House about matters pertaining to North Head, such as the quarantine station and sewerage, but things are now coming to a head. The State Government has an opportunity to do something positive, but it is an opportunity that requires vision. The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust is working on what possible use can be made of the old School of Artillery site; parallel but separately, the Government is dealing with the quarantine station; and there has been a commission of inquiry into the Mawlands proposal—in essence, giving the Mawlands group a 45-year head lease to take over the running of the quarantine station and to do things there that I think are inconsistent with us valuing and maintaining its heritage value.

On 18 and 19 July 2002 the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, held a two-day conference to explore the concept of North Head being a sanctuary. The idea is that a sanctuary encompassing the entire North Head peninsular, including the former defence lands of the School of Artillery, the quarantine station, and the national park, would conserve and enhance North Head's unique environmental and cultural heritage. Wellington, New Zealand, has a 250 hectare sanctuary called Karori which was opened in the 1990s; it is an example of what could be done. It is different in the sense that it does not have the built environment that North Head does but, nevertheless, we should consider models like that to see what is possible.

North Head is the gateway to a magnificent harbour and a magnificent city and this is an opportunity for the Government to do something really special on this site, as opposed to satisfying the bean counters in Treasury to try to get a few measly bucks out of the quarantine station. What the Government should be doing is looking at this concept of sanctuary and what can be done to turn it into something really special and exceptional. The current proposal for the quarantine station is inconsistent, I believe, with the notion of a sanctuary. To give an example, the population of long-nosed bandicoots is in jeopardy. Dr Peter Banks from the University of New South Wales undertook a census this year for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. He put down 250 traps across North Head and caught 67 bandicoots. His estimate is that on the entire North Head there are a maximum of 100 long-nosed bandicoots, with only 27 adult females. He also states that any disruption, even a small disruption, to their habitat will put them at risk of extinction.

That is what can happen at North Head, particularly if the quarantine station goes ahead. I should also point out that Dr Banks was not able to put traps on the St Patrick's site because Lend Lease would not give permission for traps to be set there, which I consider to be a great shame. The concept of a sanctuary is one that the Government should embrace. It should look at this as a golden opportunity to do something really special at North Head, not only to make its name and to show it has a sense of vision at the doorstep to this magnificent harbour but also to attract the people of Sydney and people throughout the world to it. Species can be reintroduced that are no longer in that area. Ecotourism and all sorts of advantageous economic benefits might stem from a sanctuary. The fundamental idea is to value the unique physical environment in that area as well as the built environment and the Aboriginal contribution over many years. This is an opportunity for the Government. I have written to the Premier on this matter and I am hoping to push it further.

BAULKHAM HILLS ELECTORATE RAILWAY STATION CAR PARK SECURITY

Mr MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [6.51 p.m.]: In late June a Kellyville resident contacted my electorate office to say that her Holden Commodore had been stolen from the car park at Schofields Railway Station. Her husband had parked the vehicle there at 6.45 a.m. and returned at 6.40 p.m. to find it was missing. He subsequently reported the theft to Riverstone Police Station. The woman was very distressed, and rightly so. Her husband was due to depart on a business trip to Tasmania at the time and she was concerned because the registration papers, which had their home address, were in the vehicle. She expressed concern that there were no security cameras in the car park, where many commuters left their vehicles parked for hours while they travelled to and from their work in the city. Following her call I made representations to the Minister for Roads and Transport, Carl Scully, about the lack of security cameras in the car park. On 26 August Mr Moss, the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Transport, responded to me as follows:

Although CityRail's core business is the operation of passenger rail services, CityRail is mindful of the needs of its customers. Your constituent (name suppressed) may be able to appreciate that commuter parking facilities at railway stations are provided without charge to rail customers and vehicles are left at the owners' risk.

Cityrail has informed that the original specification for the installation of CCTV equipment was limited to the coverage of railway stations and multi-story commuter car parks-this work being recently completed. At present CityRail's CCTV budget has been exhausted and I understand that there are no plans to extend the installation of monitoring equipment into open car parks.

This is not the first time constituents in the Baulkham Hills electorate have expressed concern about security in railway car parks. More than five years ago I wrote to the Minister for Transport about the safety of vehicles in the car park at Seven Hills railway station. In response, on 5 August 1997, the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport stated:

An agreement had been finalised on 18 March 1997 for the CCTV surveillance system to be monitored by the local police and accordingly the equipment was relocated to Seven Hills police station from its temporary location and was now fully operational.

I was told that the delay in the supervision of the video surveillance was because of a demarcation dispute between transport workers and the police. On 4 February 2000 I was required to make further representations to

the Minister for Transport, once again in relation to the safety of vehicles parked in the Seven Hills railway station car park. One of my Baulkham Hills constituents had informed me that a commuter's vehicle had been damaged in this car park and he was seeking a reassurance from the Minister that cars parked in this car park were under surveillance, as he regularly parks his car on the roof in full view of the cameras installed there. My constituent was seeking confirmation that the surveillance cameras were, in fact, in use and that tapes were made and later referred to the police. He also wanted to know whether whoever was responsible for diligently monitoring proceedings had detected the fact that a number of the cameras had been rotated on their mountings so that they did not view the pedestrian and car park areas they are supposed to cover, but stared into space. He said they had been like this for some weeks.

In addition, on 20 March 2000 I made further representations to the Minister for Transport, again on this car park issue, on behalf of Mrs Mary Ingram of Baulkham Hills. Mrs Ingram advised that on 16 March 2000 she had parked her car on the top level of the car park but because she worked late at night she was too nervous to travel alone by train, so she received a lift home with her husband. This meant that her car was parked in the car park overnight. On the Friday evening at 5.45 she arrived at the car park to find that her car had been vandalised. She was due to work that evening but had to ring and cancel, resulting in a loss of earnings. She then had to pay \$298 to have the vandalised car window replaced.

I am sure that members will be amazed when I report that Mrs Ingram has advised me that this was the fourth occasion in a year that her car had been broken into at the Seven Hills railway station car park, even though she had a powerful and loud alarm system in her car. Mrs Ingram informed me that during the months when security guards were patrolling the station, she witnessed such incidents of vandalism. She further stated that she had been informed that the video cameras were no longer operational and that State Rail could not afford security. The reasons given for this lack of surveillance at Seven Hills railway station car park were completely unsatisfactory. I am concerned that the Minister glibly dismisses the situation at Schofields railway station, saying people park there at their own risk. Surely commuters should be entitled to take their car to the railway car park in the knowledge that their car will be basically looked after so that when they return late at night they will not have to walk home. It is simply not good enough. [*Time expired.*]

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr Whelan agreed to:

That this House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 24 September 2002 at 2.15 p.m.

The House adjourned at 6.57 p.m.
