

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 27 June 2003

## ABSENCE OF MR SPEAKER

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

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

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

## BILLS RETURNED

The following bills were returned from the Legislative Council without amendment:

Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Bill  
Human Tissue and Anatomy Legislation Amendment Bill  
Lotteries and Art Unions Amendment Bill  
Pacific Power (Dissolution) Bill

The following bill was returned from the Legislative Council with an amendment:

Research Involving Human Embryos (New South Wales) Bill

**Consideration of amendment deferred.**

## BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

### Financial Year 2003-04

**Mr SCULLY** (Smithfield—Minister for Roads, and Minister for Housing) [10.01 a.m.]: I move:

That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2003-2004.

**Mr GIBSON** (Blacktown) [10.02 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to lead for the Government in the take-note debate on the budget estimates and related papers. I am proud to be a member of the State Labor Government, because it has achieved a very important milestone. No matter how one judges this budget or any other budget this Government has brought down in the past nine years, our legacy is simple: It has not run this State into debt and it has not left a debt or mortgage legacy for our kids to pay off for years to come. Honourable members on this side of the House should be proud of that achievement. We have managed this State fiscally very well. On Tuesday in this House, Treasurer Michael Egan brought down the State Budget. It is a budget that keeps the promises this Government made prior to the election. As the Treasurer said, those promises were financially modest and carefully targeted, particularly in the needy areas.

As I have said many times over the past nine years when speaking in the budget debate, this budget is in the same spirit as the McKell Government's budgets. It is fiscally responsible and addresses the needs and problems of people today. We have continued to keep our triple-A credit rating. That is due to the performance of the Government over the past nine years. The Coalition had many opportunities during its seven years in office but failed to achieve a balanced budget. It is worth noting that only twice in the history of this Parliament prior to the present Labor Government has there been a budget in surplus. This Government has brought down eight consecutive budgets in surplus. This year, the surplus is a modest \$43 million. The Treasurer noted that the net worth of New South Wales topped \$100 billion for the first time. Honourable members should compare this with the Federal Government's performance, which is a negative net worth of \$101 billion. That demonstrates the performance of this Government.

New spending of \$29 billion in a four-year capital works program will include the Cross-City Tunnel, the Western Sydney Orbital and the Lane Cove tunnel. Community service spending is up by 25 per cent, with \$1.2 billion for child protection. That is good news for everybody in the State. I note that \$205 million will be spent on the new Cancer Institute, with an 11 per cent increase in the health budget overall. In 2003-04 general

Government expenses will total \$34,912 million. Some of the major components include \$8,159 million for the Department of Education and Training, an increase of \$542 million over last year's budget; \$9,267 million for the Department of Health, an increase of \$920 million; \$803 million for the Department of Community Services, an increase of \$162 million; \$1,276 million for the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, an increase of \$109 million; and \$1,816 million for NSW Police, an increase again of \$143 million.

New South Wales is superbly served by our emergency services personnel, both full time and volunteer. The budget provides \$440 million for the New South Wales Fire Brigade, \$144 million for the Rural Fire Service and \$33 million for the State Emergency Service. As members on this side of the House have stated many times, we are not only a city government, we are a government that looks after all of New South Wales. Twenty-six per cent of the State's population lives outside Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and the Central Coast, but the budget provides them with more than 36 per cent of the State's capital works and road maintenance expenditure. The people in the bush appreciate that this Government does not leave them out.

This financial year the expenditure on drought assistance measures is expected to reach \$81 million. In the next six months we expect to spend a further \$47 million maintaining the current high levels of spending on drought assistance. That is very much appreciated in the bush. Government revenues were estimated to total \$35,936 million in 2003-04. This represents only a 2.1 per cent increase over the estimated revenue in the current financial year, however this increase comes on top of strong revenue growth in 2002-03, which is 4.6 per cent higher than last year's budget estimate and 4.3 per cent higher than the actual revenues in 2001-02. For every dollar that New South Wales taxpayers pay to State Treasury, five dollars are paid to the Commonwealth Treasury. Even after Federal grants to the States are taken into account, the State receives only one dollar for every two New South Wales tax dollars received by the Commonwealth.

The way the budget affects my electorate of Blacktown is encouraging and interesting. This budget will deliver to Blacktown increased investments to improve government services to help families and small businesses. The areas of local expenditure this year are \$4.7 million on local public housing; \$16.5 million on local roads and \$13.7 million on local transport. Specific projects that are supported include Blacktown courthouse, with an expenditure of \$2.35 million; 19 units of public housing accommodation at Marayong and Blacktown at a cost of \$1.6 million; the Blacktown Main Street program, which will receive \$250,000; the Blacktown to Prospect cycleway, which will receive \$796,220; additional stabling capacity for rolling stock at the Blacktown stabling yards at a cost of \$5.7 million.

**Mr Gaudry:** The local member must be a great worker.

**Mr GIBSON:** It is very hard work, and it is fitting to see these sorts of results. As part of the Roads and Traffic Authority's capital and maintenance program Blacktown will receive a mammoth \$16,457 million this year. That is for work on the Western Sydney Orbital from Camden Valley Way to the M2 motorway and the north-west transitway network. Total network development expenditure for that scheme in the Blacktown area this year will come in at just over \$8 million.

The budget is good news for the council because the New South Wales Government will dedicate all proceeds from State motor vehicle taxation and Consolidated Fund revenue to the roads program to provide New South Wales with a road system commensurate with the needs of the State. The total funding assistance allocation to councils for regional roads under the block grant and repair programs in 2003-04 is \$133.6 million, an increase of \$3.5 million or 2.9 per cent over 2002-03. The funding is additional to programs announced by the Commonwealth Government under the Roads to Recovery program. I am pleased to advise the House of funds that have been allocated to Blacktown City Council. The Roads and Traffic Authority allocation, including works on State roads in my local area, is a mammoth \$89.189 million.

Financial assistance grants to councils for the regional roads component of the block grant is \$408,000. The 3 x 3 council-determined road component of the block grant is \$197,000. The traffic facilities component of the block grant is \$591,000. The repair program for Blacktown City Council is \$750,000. I am proud to say that the total Roads budget allocation within the electorate of Blacktown, particularly the Blacktown City Council area, is a mammoth \$91.135 million. We have not missed out in the Transport portfolio. Capital works and maintenance in the Blacktown area has been allocated \$13.725 million, which includes five kilometres of track reconstruction, Blacktown stabling yard extension, retailing, under bridge renewal, rail grinding, ballast cleaning, tamping signals and electrical renewal. It is all good news for Blacktown.

The Government's investment in health services in Western Sydney is estimated at \$1.6 billion for the next financial year. Funding for the Western Sydney Area Health Service will increase by \$63 million this year,

or more than 11 per cent to \$615 million. Blacktown Hospital emergency department has benefited from the introduction of a rapid emergency assessment team, an emergency medical unit and an aged care services assessment team. Data released yesterday by the Minister for Health showed encouraging improvements across the metropolitan area, including Blacktown Hospital. For example, the number of patients in triage category three seen within the target time has risen from 35 per cent in January to 42 per cent in April. For triage category four the rate has improved from 42 per cent to 54 per cent.

I am pleased to say that these services will remain at Blacktown Hospital emergency department next year thanks to the \$31 million committed to maintaining the initiatives of our busy New South Wales hospitals. Blacktown Hospital will further benefit from the \$5.5 million for aged care services and emergency teams that will assess older Australians in our hospitals and refer them to the most appropriate place of care. A specific stroke unit has been established at Blacktown Hospital as part of the \$4.6 million set aside for stroke services, a recommendation of the Greater Metropolitan Transitional task force. The hospital also has a new CT scanner to assist medical staff to provide radiology services. I am certain that the people of Blacktown appreciate those initiatives.

As I said, apart from the construction of public housing units, Blacktown was one of six locations selected in New South Wales where Work it, a new employment and training program for social housing residents, would operate. Through Work it, \$280,000 will be spent over two years to assist social housing residents to access training and employment opportunities through a local organisation, which will then tender for selected minor contracts within the Department of Housing. Some \$218,350 has been allocated to continue the work of the Blacktown-Toongabbie information technology management [ITM] project, which has improved life for local people by improving access to services and community life. ITM projects have been established in areas that experience high levels of client housing need. We can never do enough in this area, but it is a move in the right direction.

It is worth noting that more than \$7 million has been allocated for stage one of the north-west bus transit network in Blacktown, which is one of the key initiatives in this New South Wales budget. A total of \$15.7 million has been allocated to the Blacktown area in 2003-04 to upgrade and enhance roads, safety and travelling conditions. This is an example of the Government's ongoing commitment to improving and maintaining roads in Blacktown. This year, \$7.4 million has been allocated to work for stage one of the north-west transitway network, which will link Blacktown and Kellyville and Parramatta and Rouse Hill. The project will improve significantly public transport options for the people of Blacktown, and provide jobs to local people through direct employment and flow-on benefits to the local community. The budget builds on the Government's strong record in improving roads in Western Sydney.

Other major initiatives in the budget for Blacktown include \$796,000 for work on the Prospect to Blacktown cycleway, \$250,000 for the Blacktown main street improvement project, \$30,000 for the Blacktown City Council pedestrian access and mobility plan and \$20,000 for the construction of truck parking bays on the M4. The budget includes \$3 million for important maintenance work on State and regional roads. Blacktown City Council will receive a total of \$1.9 million of State funds to help maintain its roads. Blacktown City Council appreciates that. It is worth noting that \$2.35 million has been allocated in this year's budget for the \$4 million upgrade and extension of the Blacktown local courthouse. We are increasing the space, functionality and security, and improving the design of the Blacktown Local Court in Kildare Road, adjacent to the main shopping centre.

The existing court, built in the early 1960s, did not take into account the large growth in population in our area. It has only two courtrooms, three public entrances and an inadequate waiting area. The three existing public entrances will be reduced to one and a metal detector will be put in place. The latest technology will be installed, including remote witness and videoconferencing facilities. We expect construction to start late next year and be completed, as anticipated, in mid 2005. The budget allocates \$1.28 billion for ageing, disability and home care, a 9.3 per cent increase. I have always been aware of the great need in this area, but it is not until you have to find the services for someone in your family or someone close to you that you realise how great that need is. No amount of money would be enough, but it is pleasing to see that the State Government is aware of, and meeting, its responsibilities for ageing, disability and home care services.

A massive \$29 billion will be spent on capital works in the next four years. The highlights of the capital works program are \$999 million for new and upgraded rail lines, bridges, railway carriages and stations; \$333 million for new and upgraded schools; \$457 million to build and improve hospitals; and a mammoth \$2,220 million for roads capital works and maintenance. One can always look at any budget, pull it apart and

not agree with everything that is in it. But this budget takes into account the promises we made prior to the election and provides for the areas of the State in need.

Education and training will get a record \$8.7 billion in the 2003-04 budget. That is a 7 per cent increase on last year. The \$565 million in additional funding will help deliver the Government's election commitments. Since 1995 total funding for this portfolio has increased by \$2.9 billion. In other words, it has increased by 50 per cent since we came to Government. This funding will ensure that we deliver on our election commitments, including 1,500 new teachers to reduce class sizes, 30,000 casual teachers to be linked up to schools, more security fences, better support for our front-line teachers and new behavioural schools. As I have said on many occasions in this House, education is the main hope for working-class people. I am pleased the Government is taking these positive initiatives. I am proud that since we came to Government there has been a 50 per cent increase in funding in education.

Stamp duty has been referred to as a downside in this budget. Without stamp duty, how do we fund our hospital, education and road commitments? I would like the Government in the near future to look at the issue of stamp duty, particularly as it applies to first-time buyers. We should help people to achieve the great Australian dream of one day owning their own home. Relief from stamp duty for first-time buyers would be a move in the right direction, which most people would support.

Blacktown is gaining the mantle of being one of the most important cities in this nation. Queensland Investment Corporation [QIC] will commence a \$300 million investment at WestPoint shopping centre, Blacktown. Greg Norman has purchased land in the area to build one of the best golf courses in the world and for the development of housing and an international hotel. In the last few years just about every major company in Australia has relocated to the Blacktown area. The future for Blacktown looks very bright. This budget will add to that bright future and to the confidence of the people living in the Blacktown area. Blacktown has a population in the vicinity of 270,000 people. More people live in Western Sydney than in Western Australia, South Australia or Tasmania. This budget looks after the needs of the people in Western Sydney, particularly the needs of the people in the Blacktown electorate. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms SEATON** (Southern Highlands) [10.22 a.m.]: The Leader of the Opposition got it right when he said yesterday that Bob Carr has never seen a tax he did not like and Michael Egan has never seen a tax he would not hike. That is exactly what we have seen in this year's budget. People in the Southern Highlands are asking: Where has all the money gone? They are right to ask that question. The Carr Government—a lazy complacent government in its ninth year—has forgotten the role of government, if it ever knew it in the first place. The Government has wasted millions and millions of dollars. It wasted \$60 million on the failed Sydney Water billing system fiasco. Only this week we heard revelations about the \$114 million wasted on the Millennium lemon train fiasco. In answer to a question I put in Parliament this week, I was told that the cost of buses to transport passengers following the closure of Menangle Bridge has been \$1.37 million. When we add up all these costs, and, no doubt, many other examples of waste and mismanagement that are yet to be revealed, it is clear where all the money is going.

There are numerous projects in the Southern Highlands that could have been funded with the \$1.37 million that was used for replacement buses following the eventual closure of the Menangle Bridge. All sorts of projects could have been funded in our local schools, including the upgrade of classrooms, the provision of toilets and the repair of electrical and plumbing installations. Rather, the money has been wasted on providing alternative transport. The Menangle Bridge fiasco would never have happened in the first place if there had been proper investment in infrastructure. The Southern Highlands has a large list of local needs, which I have raised time and again in this place. I remind the Premier and the Treasurer of the priorities I have identified in the Southern Highlands that need desperate attention.

Tax reform is a most important issue. New South Wales is the highest taxing State in Australia. Stamp duty on property, which has tripled or doubled in places like Mittagong, Bundanoon and Bargo, is crippling home affordability. In my area, between \$10,000 and \$15,000 stamp duty is not an unusual amount to have to pay. For many young people and families in my area, that is not possible. Rather than being able to buy a home in the area they grew up, they have to look at other options, including renting or moving farther field. They abandon their hopes of continuing to live in the place in which they grew up. Land tax is another matter of concern. It is also a tax on renters because when investors buy properties and pay land tax they pass that land tax onto the people who rent the home or property. Therefore, land tax is actually a tax on renters. Another area that needs reform is payroll tax. The Premier is completely unwilling to look at tax reform across all of these categories. In fact, he has imposed new and greater taxes on the people of New South Wales in this budget.

One of the most important areas in which a State government delivers is education. The Southern Highlands has many education needs, not least of which is an additional public high school—a matter I have spoken about at great length on many occasions in this Chamber. The Australian Labor Party, despite the lip service it pays about supporting public education, does not support public education. Two local independent school providers, the Catholic education system and the Anglican schools, have seen a need in our area and are moving to provide services. We need a new public school in the east Bowral area to accommodate growing demand. The former Liberal Government had a new public school on the drawing board in the conceptual planning stage, but the Carr Government abandoned that project.

Bargo Public School needs the delivery of its master plan for improvements, including the construction of a permanent library and hall. Picton Public School has developed a master plan that includes the construction of a large hall and a general upgrade of facilities. Moss Vale Public School needs more permanent classrooms and other upgrades. Mittagong Public School has only 4 out of the 8 to 12 permanent classrooms it requires. It needs commitment from the Government to its overall master plan. Moss Vale High School, which I have raised many times in this Chamber, needs delivery of its master plan, including the provision of safe classrooms for woodworking, the replacement of demountable art rooms with safe purpose-built facilities, an overall upgrade and extension of its hall into a multipurpose facility, improvements to toilets and the canteen area and improvements to disability access including the installation of a lift. Bowral High School—another school I have referred to in this Parliament on many occasions—needs a resolution of its canteen and toilet situation and an overall upgrade of facilities.

Many other projects at our local schools need attention. There is considerable interest in our area for the provision of a local specialist autism class. There was nothing in this budget for such a facility. Almost every school in my electorate needs additional money for basic maintenance, particularly plumbing, the provision of additional electrical outlets to cope with new technology, repainting and security. Bargo Public School has been hit yet again with another episode of vandalism. The principal arrives at the school every Monday morning wondering what fresh horror awaits him. That public school needs better security and more funding to cope with its growing needs.

Another important area is health. I have been approached by many people who are increasingly concerned about the lack of palliative care facilities in the area. Camden District Hospital is the only option for many people who live in the southern part of my electorate. Recently I received a letter from Mr Bryan Kirk, who spoke about the need for palliative care for his mother. He said:

She has been in hospital now for 3 weeks and my father has been by her side, sleeping for the first 2 weeks in a reclining chair and is currently sleeping on 2 mattresses on the floor. I have no complaints about the level of service she is receiving down at Camden hospital as the staff are extremely caring and efficient.

He continued:

If we had palliative care available in the Bowral area, at least my father would be able to return home at night and my sister could stay with either my father or myself and visit my mother. At least one of us would be close by if something was to happen.

That is just one example of the impact of a lack of palliative care close to home in Boreal and in the southern parts of the Southern Highlands electorate, and the Government should give recognition to that need. A renal dialysis unit is also needed at Boreal. The Boreal community has been digging deep into its pockets to raise funds to provide that. We need a matching commitment from the Government. If the Government can manage to find the money to fund country renal satellite services in other places, why not in the Southern Highlands area? My electorate needs more surgery time for elective surgery, more specialist services including ear, nose and throat, cancer therapies, drug detoxification and rehabilitation, urology and geriatric services.

We also need an upgrading of the Boreal hospital, including relocation of the helipad—a matter to which I have referred in this Chamber on many previous occasions. We need to see evidence of a long-term vision and funding for that vision. The Southern Highlands electorate needs a guarantee of long-term comprehensive services at Camden District Hospital, including an ongoing and fully operational maternity facility. We need more nurses, and pay rises for nurses must be funded. We need to complete the volunteer and community funded Kangaroo Valley ambulance station—I look forward to hearing from the Minister for Health about when that finally will be provided—and we need to determine a future plan for the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital. That was delayed repeatedly last year.

Rail services have been another major concern in the Southern Highlands electorate. We need to see a commitment to the total upgrading of the line. I would like this Government to adopt Liberal Party policy and

undertake a feasibility study for the electrification of the southern line—the only regional city rail line that has not been electrified. Menangle bridge has been referred to on many occasions in this Chamber in recent weeks. I note that \$2.2 million has been set aside for planning for the replacement of the Menangle bridge. Such a plan would need to be gold leafed to account for all that money, but I want to see not just funding for the plan but a clear timetable in the budget for the replacement of the bridge with a safe connection. I also await details from the Minister about the status and safety of other rail bridges in my electorate. I am looking for guarantees of the safety of those bridges, out of any necessary upgrading work.

The Picton railway station has still not made it onto the easy access list. The station is very difficult to access for people with disabilities, aged people, and people who are handling prams and children. Many people simply give up and go on to Tahmoor, the next station. They then have to dig deep into their pockets for a taxi to take them back to Picton—all because they are unable to access Picton station. Better parking capacity and parking facilities are needed at Moss Vale. That is another responsibility that this Government has avoided, despite the fact that there is increasing pressure on Moss Vale station. Overall the Southern Highlands electorate needs improved services, including security, cleanliness and reliability of trains. I illustrate those needs with an example from Mr Bob Cashman of Moss Vale. When he and his wife travel to the city by car, the journey takes approximately 1½ hours, but recently they chose to travel by train.

His wife ended up on a nightmare journey. The time taken from Central to Moss Vale as a result of misinformation on timetables and general unreliability was 4½ hours, and from Allawah the journey took 5¼ hours. That is absolutely ridiculous. Why would anyone use a train service when they risk spending more than five hours to accomplish what would normally take an hour and a half in a car? No wonder people are losing confidence in this Government and in the rail system. The Southern Highlands electorate also needs extra police, especially more police on the beat. Moss Vale, Bundanoon, Kangaroo Valley and The Oaks are all single officer stations. We need to maintain police cover in those stations and we need to enable officers to spend more time at those single officer stations. We also need 24-hour cover at Moss Vale and Picton.

The condition of roads in my electorate is going backwards. With the \$100 million reduction in the budget for roads funding, it will be very difficult for councils to deliver on improvements to roads such as Wombeyan Caves Road, Tugalong Road and Meryla Road, and the sealing of many local roads in the southern and northern villages of Wollondilly. More attention needs to be given to Appin Road and Menangle Road. I congratulate Norman Jew of Appin on his advocacy on Appin Road. We need a roundabout at the Menangle intersection and we need a solution for the Bowral bypass—something that the Bowral Chamber of Commerce has been a strong advocate for. We also need a solution to the traffic problems in Picton, including some determination from the Minister about a long-term plan for an eventual Picton bypass. Let us not see Picton abandoned until the problem gets so bad that action is needed urgently; let us plan and allocate funding now to fix the problem.

The Southern Highlands electorate also needs a plan to finalise stage two of the Picton regional sewerage scheme. We need a guarantee of dates to connect Macquarie Grove and the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital to the system. We also need a review of Sydney Water's pricing of connection fees for new business premises. In Wollondilly it costs nine times what it costs in the Premier's electorate to connect new business premises to the system, and that is a disincentive to regional job growth. The Southern Highlands electorate also needs accelerated provision of sewage treatment systems in major growing towns. Tourism also missed out in the budget. I make a plea to the Government to consider that Wollondilly and Wingecarribee have been equally impacted by fires in the past two years and deserve a share of funding that has been disbursed in southern New South Wales and along the coast for the direct advertising and promotion of accommodation and holiday deals.

I want to see the very same promotional system apply in Wollondilly and Wingecarribee so that local tourism operators, bed and breakfast establishment owners, and ecotourism resort owners who have invested in Wollondilly and Wingecarribee are given opportunities to have their facilities promoted to people who live in the city and interstate. My electorate has some fantastic tourism attractions. We have a great product to offer and we need to have an equal share of the State Government assisted promotion.

I have mentioned just some of the key issues in the Southern Highlands that must be addressed. Stamp duty is one of the biggest problems facing families who are trying to buy their home. Home affordability is at record low levels. I commend the Leader of the Opposition, John Brogden, for proposing a stamp duty reduction plan, which was outlined yesterday. I would like members on the Government side of this Chamber to support that plan. The honourable member for Blacktown referred to the need for stamp duty reform; let us see him support that proposal, when it is presented. It is very important to reduce the cost of stamp duty on the purchase

of homes in the Southern Highlands electorate to make owning a home affordable. I commend the Leader of the Opposition for his hard work on producing an affordable, responsible plan to reduce stamp duty.

I must express my disappointment in the way the budget related to the Illawarra because there was absolutely no signal or long-term vision in the budget that would give any hope of the Government being committed to the container terminal proposal for Port Kembla. That proposal could result in the development of more than 3,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Illawarra. All honourable members are aware of the concerns about finding ways to provide more employment opportunities in the Illawarra. This proposal is one of the single most important job creation strategies that could possibly be devised. This Government really needs to support it and give a signal to industry that the Illawarra is where the Government sees the strategic deployment of port facilities in New South Wales. I know that Newcastle City Council is also working very co-operatively and positively with the Lord Mayor of Wollongong to try to progress the proposal so that both Newcastle and Port Kembla will be very important strategic container terminal locations. I ask the Governments to give some sign that it shares that vision and will take steps to progress the proposal.

This morning I was also concerned to hear that Lawrence Hargrave Drive is again closed. Nothing in the budget reflects an attempt to fix a problem that has an enormous impact on Illawarra tourism in particular and on many businesses. People are very concerned that there has been no acknowledgement by the Government of the economic impact of the regular closure of Lawrence Hargrave Drive. Every time it rains heavily parts of the road must be closed. As there is no alternative route on the coast except the freeway, the condition of Lawrence Hargrave Drive is a disincentive to tourists.

I also note the concerns expressed by the Illawarra Business Chamber about the extent to which this budget is anti-business. The Government must wake up and pay attention to those concerns. Illawarra Business Chamber representative Mr Tim Lewis has expressed concern that the budget contains no measures to ensure that New South Wales maintains a competitive business environment. He also expressed concern about the removal of workers compensation relief for employers wishing to take on trainees. I have mentioned my desire for a commitment from the Government about the Port Kembla container proposal. The Government should get behind these measures; it should not make it more difficult for employers to create jobs.

It is appalling that the Government, in its ninth year in office, announced a restructure of the infrastructure, planning and other resource management agencies but three months after the election it is still incapable of producing a detailed budget for those aspects of government responsibility. It has no clear idea about the restructure of the infrastructure, planning, natural resources and related portfolios. That is an abrogation of responsibility. This Government is lazy, arrogant and complacent. Any government serious about public administration and reforming structures would have a clear reform agenda. This Government was re-elected without any such agenda and it has decided to take its time to develop one. In the meantime the State's infrastructure is crumbling. It must send clear signals to the business and investment communities about a long-term vision for the renewal of infrastructure planning. We have seen no such thing from members opposite.

**Mr BARTLETT** (Port Stephens) [10.42 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the New South Wales Government's 2003-04 budget. This is the fifth budget on which I have spoken and I am pleased to see its projected outcomes for the State and the electorate of Port Stephens. As a rule of thumb, about 95 per cent of all State income is used for recurrent expenditure. The State pays the wages of 360,000 public servants and for the maintenance of schools, hospitals and police stations and replacement equipment. Most of the time the Government has only between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of State revenue to spend on new and improved services and capital works.

The stand-out measures in this budget are the 25 per cent increase in the allocation to the Department of Community Services for children and families in need of assistance and the funding allocation for the Families First Program, which I strongly support. Another significant allocation is the \$29 billion four-year capital works program. As a former teacher, I note the increase in funding to employ 1,500 new teachers and to provide for the almost 1,000 new classrooms that will be required to address improved teacher-student ratios in kindergarten and years 1 and 2. They are extremely important measures designed to cater for the needs of young people and to ensure that they can read as they move through the education system. If students fall behind it is usually forever. I am also pleased to note the funding for new marine and national parks. About 26 per cent of the population resides outside the Sydney/Newcastle/Wollongong area, but we have attracted 36 per cent of the capital budget. That is a positive move on the Government's part.

This is the eighth budget surplus produced by the Carr Labor Government, and it is critical that it maintain that record. General government net debt has been reduced by \$8 billion between 1995 and 2003, and

by 2007 it will fall further to \$2.4 billion. Lower debt means a lower interest bill. Since 1995 this State has been saving \$1 billion a year in interest; in other words, we have \$1 billion more to spend on schools, hospitals and police. We are no longer spending that \$1 billion in funding interest payments owed to overseas banks and institutions. The 1,472 new teachers to be employed over the next four years to deliver on the Government's promise to reduce class sizes in kindergarten and years 1 and 2 represents a \$222 million increase in recurrent expenditure—that is, wages—and \$107 million in capital interest on buildings for the hundreds or thousands of classrooms required to house the extra classes.

The electorate of Port Stephens adjoins Newcastle and Maitland and many students in my electorate attend schools in electorates represented by other honourable members. I am delighted to note that the Hunter School of Performing Arts, which many students from Port Stephens attend, will get \$4.9 million and the Callaghan College will get \$4.6 million. After three years of negotiation, Anna Bay Public School will get \$2.6 million and Soldiers Point Public School will get \$3.2 million for improvements. I am delighted to tick the boxes on those election promises. I am also delighted to note that the Manning Bioregion Marine Park will get \$135,000.

I share bridges at Sandgate with the honourable members for Wallsend and Newcastle. My electorate's share of bridge funding is \$230,000. Tourle Street Bridge is in my electorate and \$500,000 has been allocated for the planning stage of its duplication. That is the first stage of a \$23 million project. About \$6 million a month is being spent on the Karuah bypass and dual-lane construction and a further \$23 million has been allocated as top-up funding. Nelson Bay Road, which carries more traffic than the Pacific Highway north of Raymond Terrace, has been allocated another \$2.5 million for an extension between Anna Bay and Bob's Farm. For the first time in many years Medowie Road has attracted a major injection of \$675,000 to seal about 25 per cent of the remaining dirt section. That funding will be rolled out this year and over the next three years.

The upgrade of the Stockton Street roundabout, which forms the entrance to Nelson Bay on the Tomaree Peninsula, has been allocated \$200,000. Given my involvement in the construction of 40 kilometres of cycleway in the Port Stephens area during my 20 years of participation in State and local government, I am delighted to have \$100,000 for the linking of Anna Bay to One-Mile. That will also roll out at \$100,000 a year for four years. The Hunter areas Families First Program, which caters for the needs of young people between the ages of zero and eight years, will get \$2.7 million. The unit based at Anna Bay and the outreach unit at Raymond Terrace connect families to support services and prevent crises before they occur. A number of my friends are volunteers with that program and visit families in distress. They are doing an excellent job.

I turn now to taxation as it applies between the Commonwealth and State. In my view it is time that the Commonwealth-State grant system was comprehensively revised. Queensland is subsidised by other States to the tune of a staggering \$360 million a year, and that is why Queensland is the only State with no government debt and why it can afford to subsidise petrol prices by 8¢ a litre—New South Wales residents are paying for that. Of that subsidy to Queensland, \$190 million comes out of the pockets of New South Wales taxpayers. Queensland may well say that it is spending a lot of money on improvements, but that is because basically it is spending New South Wales money. If the Federal Government gave New South Wales the same tax reimbursements it gives Queensland, we would have an extra \$1.1 billion a year to spend.

I refer now to New South Wales taxes vis-a-vis other States' taxes. New South Wales is the only State or Territory with no charges on bank accounts or credit cards. On stamp duty, the general insurance at 5 per cent is the lowest rate in Australia. On conveyancing, the duty payable on \$400,000 property in New South Wales is \$13,490, in Victoria it is nearly \$20,000, in Queensland it is \$12,475 and in Western Australia it is just over \$16,000. The land tax payable in New South Wales, at the flat rate of 1.7 per cent, is the lowest of any State in Australia. Other States have variable rates up to 5 per cent in Victoria, 3.3 per cent in Queensland, 3.7 per cent in South Australia and 2.5 per cent in Western Australia and Tasmania. It very much depends on whether one is in government or Opposition whether one complains about New South Wales taxes vis-a-vis other States' taxes. The Government has introduced annual indexation and has significantly reduced the rate of land tax since 1995. The current threshold for investment properties is \$261,000, which is up by \$41,000 from last year.

The New South Wales Government has reduced the payroll tax rate from 7 per cent in 1995, to 6.85 per cent in 1998, to the current 6 per cent. The Victorian rate is lower, at 5.35 per cent, but so too is its threshold at \$550,000 compared with \$600,000 in New South Wales. At the end of the day governments need money to provide services that are constantly demanded of them, and there is always a gap between the demand and the supply. By controlling the budget and paying off the surplus, Labor has put New South Wales in its current strong financial position. I turn now to the policy on manufacturing. Secondary industry employment in the Hunter has fallen from 29 per cent of the labour force in the early 1970s to just over 13 per cent today. That



dramatic reduction has been the result of three decades of productivity improvements, the closure of the BHP plant, and the exposure of the Australian economy to international competition.

Without those productivity improvements our economy and society would have been similar to those of Argentina. Instead, we are going extremely well. Rio Tinto, which has a plant in the Hunter, has said that the increase in the Australian dollar has just about wiped out all its profits this year. I recall reading that an aluminium company claimed that every 2¢ rise in the Australian dollar takes \$25 million off its achievable income. In an international competitive environment, the exposure to international competition and being at the mercy of the Australian dollar rate is changing the way that much of our manufacturing is done. Even so, the *Newcastle Herald* ran an article stating, "The region's jobless rate has halved". Even the Hunter, which is going through a massive restructure turmoil, is still achieving improved employment opportunities.

The Government has decided to not reimpose the electricity distributors levy, which was suspended two years ago at a loss to revenue of \$100 million. That change was vital to keeping the Smorgon industries viable in Mayfield. Smorgon employs about 750 people and that \$1 million tax saving enabled it to continue manufacturing. If those changes to electricity pricing had not been instigated, that plant would have faced big financial problems. The *Australian Financial Review* of 11 December 2002 stated:

In an analysis of the State's outlook, Moody's Investors Service reaffirmed the State's AAA credit rating and said the ratings outlook was stable.

That is crucial; the triple-A rating is the basis for the interest rate paid to overseas banks and lending institutions. Once that credit rating is lost, more interest is payable, and obviously that impacts on the bottom line of the budget. The article continued:

It noted that NSW had a series of credit strengths, including an established trend to deliver surplus budgets, a declining debt burden, and a strong fiscal record.

"An easing in the housing market, severe drought conditions in the State, and global uncertainties remain risks to the economic outlook and consequently to fiscal prospects," Moody's said. "Nevertheless, the State's ability to respond to these challenges is enhanced by its strong financial position, its generally Conservative budget estimates and buffers built into the budget."

On Wednesday 25th June 2003 the *Australian Financial Review* published an article by Annabel Hepworth under the heading "Superannuation", which stated:

But despite the recent poor investment returns, the budget papers say the government remains on track to achieve its target of fully funding superannuation liabilities by 2030, 15 years earlier than its original target, set in 1993.

As a teacher I knew other teachers who left the service in the early 1980s because the superannuation scheme they were in was completely unfunded. They thought there would be no money for them when they sought to draw on their pension. One highlight of the Government's long-term achievements has been funding of liabilities for public servants' superannuation. In that same publication an article by David Bassanese stated:

And State government efforts to fund the superannuation liabilities still stand in marked contrast to the federal government's shameful "head in the sand" approach so far.

The Federal Government has about \$84 billion of unfunded superannuation liabilities for its employees. It should be noted that New South Wales employs 65,000 teachers, 15,000 more than the Army, Navy and Air Force staff combined. A healthy society needs three vital sectors: a public sector of efficient governments—and I think I have made my point—a private sector of effective businesses, and a social sector of effective community organisations. Port Stephens has a huge number of hard-working volunteer organisations that I am delighted to assist in funding as and when I can through applications to Ministers. I commend them and their involvement in the Port Stephens area. The immunisation rate for children in the Hunter is now 91.3 per cent, the best in Australia. In 1998 the rate was 64 per cent. Immunisation protects children against measles, whooping cough, rubella, polio, mumps, tetanus, diphtheria and influenza type R.

I wish to acknowledge some of the organisations and groups in the Port Stephens electorate. Terrace Meats has continued to dominate competitions throughout the Hunter region year after year. The Grahamstown Sailing and Aquatic Club conducts sailing activities for young disabled people in the community. The club now has nine disability boats and 52 catamarans. I congratulate the club on the wonderful project it runs. The environment is crucial to the future of Port Stephens, and the best-performing beaches in the Hunter in 2002 were Zenith, Box, Fingal and One Mile. Of course, the beaches have always competed with Nobby's Beach, which is further south. The Government's \$80 million Urban Stormwater Program is important to improving

water quality, and whenever I have the opportunity to match that funding with Port Stephens Council funding I try to do so. So far the Government has funded more than 252 such projects across the State, including those in Nelson Bay, Boat Harbour and Shoal Bay, in the Port Stephens electorate.

The Newcastle Port Environs concept proposal is now on public exhibition. It addresses the conservation values of the Hunter region, and the port-related and airport-related industrial development potential. It also addresses infrastructure and environmental corridors. There are significant opportunities to expand industrial and business support for civil and defence aviation in the area around the Williamstown RAAF base, and the concept proposal addresses that issue. The road and rail infrastructure program includes a \$45 million duplication of the Tourie Street Bridge, which will improve access to Kooragang Island. I am delighted to be part of the Hunter Task Force and the Government in delivering this budget.

**Mr PICCOLI** (Murrumbidgee) [11.02 a.m.]: The budget delivered by the Government earlier this week could be summarised as spin over substance. Whilst the budget papers show a modest budget surplus of some \$43 million, closer analysis shows how risky the budget process is. The budget papers show that, measured against revenue and expenditure, the New South Wales budget process is risky and under threat. In their replies to the Budget Speech, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the National Party said the State would have been something like \$640 million in debt last year if it had not been for an \$800 million revenue windfall from stamp duty.

Every year in his Budget Speech the Treasurer has announced a modest budget surplus—indeed, sometimes a healthy budget surplus—but, as we have seen, in the subsequent year there has been a blow-out in expenditure and the Government has only been saved by revenue windfalls. However, there will come a time when there will not be those revenue windfalls and government revenue will be below budget. As the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, if those windfalls had not occurred in the past four or five years the budget would be something like \$4 million or \$5 million in deficit. These types of budgets are fine while the State's economy is buoyant, but unfortunately the good times will not last forever. One of my concerns as a legislator in this House is that we are not preparing for the bad times. Of course it is easy to spend money when you have it, but it requires a little more skill and talent to prepare for a rainy day. I fear that the Government is not doing that.

The budget allocation for capital works improvements in the Murrumbidgee electorate is fairly modest—as one would expect, my electorate being in country New South Wales. Griffith police station was listed for funding—a reiteration of the announcement a year ago—but construction is yet to begin. The Government also announced capital works funding for Griffith TAFE, which I am pleased about. However, I am sure all members would agree that funding for services is most important. There is not much point having brand new buildings if their facilities are not adequate.

One of the Government's strategies in country New South Wales is to hide inadequate facilities behind brand new bricks and mortar. A classic example is the construction of a new hospital in Hay, an initiative that I and the residents of Hay support. But what services will be able to be performed in that hospital? A few years ago doctors were able to perform relatively minor surgical procedures in Hay hospital, and that obviated people in the Hay district having to travel long distances, usually to Griffith, Deniliquin or Wagga Wagga. Women were able to have their children in Hay hospital, but a few years ago obstetrics services were stopped at the hospital.

In one case a husband and wife doctor team, one of whom was trained in obstetrics, set up practice in Hay. However, I believe that the Greater Murray Area Health Service instructed the hospital management to deter those doctors from coming to Hay for fear that they would want to recommence obstetrics services in Hay. They are now halfway through the construction of a multipurpose service, which, as I have said, I certainly support. The Government has silenced criticism of cuts to services by building a brand new hospital. Everyone who drives past the hospital thinks, "Wow, they are spending money in Hay," but health services in Hay will be worse, not better. There is a brand new hospital, but at the end of the day it is the services that matter.

Every day people come to my electorate office to talk to me about hospital waiting lists. They have a common complaint: they have been put on a waiting list and have had to wait years for elective surgery, and when finally they go to have their surgical procedure done they are told, often only a couple of hours before the procedure is due to be done, that they have been bumped off the list and will have to wait another couple of weeks. They might require a knee replacement, a hip replacement, or a bunion operation, but they all suffer from being put on a waiting list. Each year that I have been a member of Parliament the Treasurer has announced increased health funding. I want to know where the money is going, because it is certainly not going

towards improving health services in my electorate. I am talking about day-to-day health services: elective surgery and emergency department services in the various hospitals in my electorate. These are day-to-day services that people rightly expect, but which are not being delivered.

The same thing applies in Education. Every year the Treasurer announces in the budget that there will be record spending on education, but where are the improved services? New South Wales has the highest average class size but none of that extra funding has gone into reducing class sizes. Prior to the election the Government made a commitment to reduce class sizes, but we are yet to see that occur. Too many students at schools in my electorate are housed in substandard demountable classrooms. Schools have been told that those classrooms would be temporary and that they would be replaced with permanent accommodation, but that is yet to happen. Some of those demountable classrooms have been at some schools for over a decade but no program has been implemented to remove them. Where is the extra funding going?

The Treasurer announced some additional capital works funding for Griffith TAFE, which was a welcome announcement. I said earlier that we are concerned not just about buildings but about what should be done to those buildings and about the services that should be provided. The Treasurer also announced an increase in TAFE fees. TAFE students undertake vocational training—coalface type training or apprenticeship training—for example, hairdressing, mechanics, auto-electrics or business training. Students train specifically for a certain type of job. The Government increased TAFE fees—in many cases substantially—for 40 per cent of students, making it difficult for them to attend those courses. That increase does not relate to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, which gives students an opportunity to pay off their debts through the taxation system.

Many TAFE students will have difficulty paying these fee increases. There are several hidden taxes in New South Wales. It is obviously a strategy of the Treasurer in his Budget Speech to emphasise only the positives and ignore the negatives. For example, the workers compensation scheme in New South Wales, which is in trouble, is significantly underfunded. The Government will have to implement legislation to try to recoup some of the money that is needed to fully fund that scheme, as costs have blown out by several billion dollars since Labor came into office. On 1 September new changes to workers compensation are due to come into effect. Workers compensation premiums will be charged on salaries and wages, directors fees, superannuation contributions, and a couple of other things—something that was not announced in the budget. That is extra revenue that will be raised by the Government. Those premiums will have to be paid by employers.

Most employees would not be aware of the extra revenue that is going to the Government, but it may impact on them when employers are forced to pay increased workers compensation premiums and fewer jobs are available. In addition to hidden taxes, there are hidden cuts in this budget. Quite conveniently, not long after the State election, the Government announced that approximately 700 Department of Education and Training jobs would be lost—some of them from the Griffith and Deniliquin district offices that are located in my electorate.

The Government often talks about creating jobs in regional New South Wales, but it does a pretty good job of removing them. This job loss is an example of that. It also highlights the fact that this Government does not understand western New South Wales. District offices can be amalgamated or restructured in Sydney or even on the coast where there is a relatively high population density and access to public transport. But in western New South Wales—I am sure the honourable member for Murray-Darling, who represents half of western New South Wales, would agree with me—it is difficult when Griffith, Deniliquin and a few other western New South Wales districts are amalgamated into one huge district based at Orange.

If a teacher is having problems at one of the Griffith schools he or she can go to the Griffith district office, which is located just down the road, or even to Narrandera, which is 80 kilometres from Griffith or a two-hour round trip and those problems can be sorted out relatively quickly. People can talk to each other face to face. If teachers are forced to go to Orange, which is about four hours away—it is about seven hours away for teachers in Deniliquin—it will make it difficult not only for them but for parents and students to access the services provided by the Department of Education and Training.

People working at the Orange office will have no understanding or appreciation of the differences or nuances that exist in country communities. For example, the country communities in Griffith are different from the country communities in Deniliquin, Leeton or Boree Creek. If the Department of Education and Training at Orange has under its control several hundred schools, it will not be able to deal effectively with the problems that arise at those schools. This amalgamation is one of the most significant negatives in the Government's performance over the past few years.

The recent amalgamation of hospital boards and hospital areas into area health services helped to decimate health services in country New South Wales. I fear that the same thing will happen in relation to the Department of Education and Training. It is no coincidence that the Minister who is responsible for the amalgamation of the Department of Education and Training is the same Minister who was responsible for the amalgamation of area health services. Quite conveniently, not long after the State election, the Minister informed the department and those who carry out school maintenance that the school maintenance program would be deferred for six months.

Obviously there was a shortage of money in the department, so it said, "We will put off the project for six months." A company like Colin Joss Constructions in Albury, which is responsible for the Riverina school maintenance program, cannot ask its staff to go on holidays for six months. Some job losses have already occurred. I am talking about the maintenance of schools that are attended by children who live in my electorate and in other country electorates. Obviously there are significant holes in the budget of the Department of Education and Training which it is trying to plug by sacking 700 people. So there are hidden taxes and hidden cuts in the Treasurer's budget. Not everything was announced on budget day.

I refer to my shadow portfolio of mineral resources. It would come as no surprise to honourable members that two major coalmining companies—Coal and Allied Industries Ltd and Xstrata—announced over the past few weeks that, because they have coal stockpiles, they will be reducing coal production across New South Wales. With the increase in the value of the Australian dollar and declining coal prices internationally, it is bound to affect their revenue. I do not blame Coal and Allied Industries and Xstrata for reducing their coal production; that is a business decision for them to make. But if the State Government thinks that it has nothing to do with those companies, I am here to tell it that it is wrong.

Coalmining is an internationally competitive industry. Changes to the value of the Australian dollar over the past couple of months have placed pressure on those companies. But there are also cost pressures on the coalmining industry in the form of workers compensation. The coalmining industry pays an average of \$15,000 per employee in workers compensation. When a coalminer walks into a coalmine his or her employer has to pay \$15,000 in workers compensation in addition to that employee's wages. Some mines spend as much as \$25,000 per employee per year on workers compensation premiums. Those are hideous costs for anyone to incur, in particular coalmining companies. We want the New South Wales coalmining industry to be the most competitive industry in Australia and in the world. We must ensure that its cost structures remain low so that when changes in the value of the Australian dollar or international coal prices put pressure on that industry it can continue to produce coal at world-competitive prices. We must reduce workers compensation premiums as much as possible.

Payroll tax is a huge impost on coalmining companies throughout New South Wales. I challenge the Minister for Mineral Resources and the State Government to reduce those costs as much as possible. Most coalmining companies in New South Wales—and I have had significant discussions with Coal and Allied Industries Ltd—are investing large sums of money to improve workplace safety. Coal and Allied, which aims to reduce workplace injuries by 50 per cent every year, achieved a 65 per cent reduction in workplace injuries last year. Despite that significant investment the company is not being compensated by way of reduced workers compensation premiums. The Government must work hard to reduce those costs.

General compliance costs in the mining industry, such as the cost of approvals and so on, are also a concern. Lake Cowal goldmine, which is located at West Wyalong, has been trying for several years to obtain approvals, sometimes with and sometimes without the assistance of the State Government. This process costs mining companies millions of dollars. The situation is no different for coalmining companies in the Hunter and the Illawarra: the approvals process costs millions of dollars. The companies must comply with literally hundreds of rules and regulations and seek approval from dozens of different agencies, and that costs money. These cost impediments on the mining industry in New South Wales must be reduced if it is to remain competitive nationally and internationally.

**Mr MILLS** (Wallsend) [11.22 a.m.]: I am pleased to support Labor's State budget for 2003-04. Anyone seeking advance knowledge of the major items to be contained in the budget had only to turn to the Premier's policy speech delivered on 9 March at Penrith. Labor's election commitments given on that day to the people of New South Wales—which formed the basis of the Labor Government's re-election—are in this budget. That is politically responsible behaviour and the way that democracy should work: Governments that make commitments should honour them upon their re-election. On 9 March the Premier said that Labor had stood for good sound management so that our children would not be burdened by debt. He said:

We've elevated environmental protection to the heart, not the fringe, of politics ... We've engaged a mature electorate about population policy and the slim carrying capacity of our fragile land.

We've argued for tough police powers and for the rights of victims of crime.

We've made the case for a better curriculum—what is taught, how it's taught, and for all our young people to learn about their history.

We were prepared to fight—and fight hard—for the biggest reform to tort law in 70 years: putting commonsense and personal responsibility back into our legal system.

These views had been reached by looking at the evidence, by talking to the experts.

But, above all, by listening to people.

The Premier went on to explain how he had reached his position on stem cell research. He had met the parents of a young boy with a serious spinal condition who may never walk unless a treatment is found. Stem cell research offers the possibility of a cure. The Premier related how he had introduced that young man's parents to researchers and specialists. He promised to try to ensure that stem cell research proceeded and undertook to invest major new funding in that research. As a result the Government introduced the Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Bill and the Research Involving Human Embryos (New South Wales) Bill, which permit the use of embryonic stem cells in research under strict and limited conditions. Those bills, which have now passed through both Houses of Parliament, give effect to the Premier's March commitment.

This is the eighth balanced budget in a row from Treasurer Michael Egan and the Carr Labor Government. It proves that governments that spend beyond their means blow everything but governments that balance their budgets can deliver on social expenditure for the benefit of the people they represent. Under Labor, New South Wales is certainly continuing to live within its means. Honourable members will recall that during the election campaign the Premier announced that Labor was capping its spending on election promises at a manageable \$800 million over four years, with another \$800 million allocated for public works, also over four years. Those commitments are in the budget that we are now debating. In his election policy statement in Penrith in March the Premier announced the State cancer plan, designed to offer better treatment to the people of New South Wales. The Premier said:

It means a whole new approach.

We'll set up a NSW Cancer Institute led by cancer experts and cancer survivors ... We take our plan so seriously, we'll establish the Institute by a special Act of Parliament, making it accountable to the people through the Parliament.

The Government's Cancer Institute (NSW) Bill has now passed through both Houses of Parliament and the necessary funding is in this budget. That is another promise kept and an example of Labor's political responsibility. The Premier also gave a commitment to appoint a Minister for Science and Medical Research—another promise that has been kept. He promised to give schools an extra \$36 million a year for the professional development of teachers. That funding is in the budget. He gave a commitment to fund 200 scholarships a year in order to increase teacher numbers. That funding is also in the budget. The Premier said:

We'll also fix a headache for school principals: getting casual staff when teachers fall ill. We've got a plan to do it.

That promise has also been kept and the necessary funding is in this budget. The Premier gave a commitment to extend the School Improvement Program—which improves conditions in public schools—by two years to cover the whole of the Government's next term in office. He announced record funding for new schools and halls, modern classrooms and security fences. That promise has been kept and those improvements are being made. Heaton Public School and Edgeworth Public School in my electorate of Wallsend are getting security fencing. The Premier promised to implement a new program to improve the day-to-day lives of teachers and students by providing airconditioning in all remaining demountable classrooms in public schools across New South Wales by June 2005. That promise has also been kept: the funding is in this budget and the program is under way. The Premier also said:

If re-elected, we will employ 1400 extra teachers to reduce class sizes in Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2.

To do it, we will spend an additional \$220 million recurrent over four years.

The Government kept that promise and provided funding in this budget. Labor plans to ensure that kindergarten classes contain an average of 20 students, with 22 students in year 1, and 24 students in year 2. The people of New South Wales voted for Labor in large numbers and we are keeping our promise and implementing that

plan. In his policy speech the Premier said that the Government was attacking the root causes of crime through programs such as Families First, which gives children a good early start that is critical to success in later life. He said:

Families First offers practical services such as home visits by nurses, family workers and volunteers. In fact, we now provide 30,000 visits to new mothers every year.

The budget contains big new funding for community services, including Families First. That is another example of this Government's political responsibility: we are honouring our promises and delivering the necessary funding in this budget. On 9 March at Penrith—the day of the policy speech—the Premier announced that in its next term the Government would tackle alcohol abuse in the same innovative way that it approached drugs. The Carr Government honoured its 1999 election commitment to tackle drug abuse; most honourable members will remember the Drug Summit of May 1999. Those programs are still being funded in this budget. The Premier said that the Government would convene a summit on alcohol abuse. Yesterday in this House the Premier announced that the Alcohol Summit will be held at the end of August. We hope that with non-political input from relevant community leaders, members of Parliament and others we can implement programs to tackle the problem of alcohol abuse in our community. Indeed, the problem of alcohol abuse is a little more difficult in that alcohol affects more people than do illicit drugs.

Another election promise of the Premier was to create 15 new national parks and reserves on the North Coast, protecting 65,000 hectares of pristine old-growth forest. He also said that the Carr Labor Government would introduce the legislation on the first day back in Parliament; it did just that. The Legislative Assembly has passed that legislation and the budget includes funding for that commitment. A few weeks ago I was obliged to move offices and, like many of us, I found many pieces of paper that I had not seen for years. I found an article that had appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 27 October 1994, which was the last budget of the Liberal Party-National Party Government when John Fahey was the Premier. In that article I am quoted as having said:

The State Government had failed to provide funding for key projects [in Wallsend electorate] including an upgrading of John Hunter Hospital's accident and emergency section and a multipurpose Centre at Glendale Technology High School.

I am pleased to tell the House that shortly after Labor came to government in 1995 the multipurpose centre at Glendale Technology High School was commenced and the accident and emergency section of John Hunter Hospital—an accident and emergency section than is busier than any of the major Sydney hospitals or anywhere in New South Wales—has undergone two upgrades. The first upgrade to the John Hunter Hospital was not sufficient to meet the continuing demand, so last year the accident and emergency section was rebuilt at a cost of \$11 million. Labor has honoured its political promises since 1995 and has earned the trust of the people of New South Wales. This has been demonstrated by its three successive election wins. I commented in the article on Bruce Baird's missing link in relation to the Cardiff's subway, which was a very narrow underpass beneath the Great Northern railway line at Cardiff that caused tremendous congestion during peak hour. In 1995 Labor made an election promise to rebuild that underpass, and five years later the project was completed. Again, Labor kept its promise.

I will now get down to some tintacks. Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, includes funding for the Independent Commission Against Corruption, which is responsible for promoting and enhancing integrity in public administration in New South Wales by investigating and minimising corruption through the application of its special powers. Total expenses have increased from \$15.3 million in 1998-99 to an estimated \$16 million last year. This year the commission will continue to focus on enhancing its capacity to strategically identify systemic and individual corruption risks, and to improve and develop the commission's investigative capacity. Total expenses are estimated to be \$16.5 million in 2003-04. Some people are trying to stretch the powers of that commission for political purposes.

When my colleague the Hon. Richard Face announced that he would retire at the March election he told a *Newcastle-Herald* journalist the truth: that, after retirement, he proposed to set up a consultancy. The honourable member for Upper Hunter, the then Leader of the National Party, accused him of wrongdoing and corruption. The Leader of the Opposition joined in the accusations, despite Mr Face's statements that he had not taken action to set up any consultancy. The matter was referred to the ICAC. The Sydney media—eager for a Labor scalp prior to the election—started a feeding frenzy. Mr Face did the right thing by the Australian Labor Party and the Government and resigned his ministry early. I might point out that Labor retained the seat of Charlestown, and the honesty and integrity of Richard Face was upheld by the ICAC. In April Richard Face wrote to me as follows:

You would be aware when I stepped down from Cabinet I indicated that the whole issue concerning me setting up a business was just a media beat up. I didn't even have an ABN or a business name. I indicated when I announced my retirement from Parliament that I would have a holiday and then look at what I wanted to do after politics.

... I quote from a letter received from the ICAC Commissioner, Irene Moss A.O.—

"The commission received a complaint regarding media reports that Mr Face had established or was proposing to establish a consultancy business in the area of Mr Face's former ministerial portfolio responsibilities of gaming and racing.

"On the face of the complaint together with other matters referred to in the various media reports, there was a suggestion that the conduct as alleged against Mr Face could amount to or involve corrupt conduct as that term is defined in Section 8 and 9 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988* ("the Act").

"On this basis the Commission conducted some preliminary inquiries to determine whether any further investigation was required.

"Having now considered the material obtained from those inquiries together with Mr Face's response to the questions posed to him I am satisfied that there is no evidence of corrupt conduct by Mr Face in relation to the reports of his proposed business consultancy.

"On this basis the Commission has concluded its inquiries into the matter and will be taking no further action."

That finding discredits the honourable member for Upper Hunter, the Leader of the Opposition, the journalists and the news outlets that ran the accusations—we know whose face the egg is on now. It was a waste of the ICAC's resources for party political purposes. I will refer to data given by the Treasurer during his Speech, as I do every year. The Treasurer pointed out some of the inequities regarding overall taxation funding for New South Wales. He pointed out that for every dollar that the taxpayers of New South Wales pay to State Treasury, they pay \$5 to Commonwealth Treasury. Even taking into account Federal grants to the States, New South Wales receives only \$1 for every \$2 received by the Commonwealth. Despite this, the primary responsibility for the delivery of social services and economic infrastructure, on which the wellbeing of our society depends, falls on the States.

Compared with what we contribute, in the coming year the subsidy from New South Wales to the mendicant States—Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory—will rise to \$2.5 billion. Compared to an equal per capita share, this year New South Wales will subsidise other States and Territories to the tune of more than \$1.4 billion: Queensland, \$90 million; Tasmania, \$296 million; South Australia, \$302 million; Northern Territory, \$677 million; and the Australian Capital Territory, \$63 million. That Federation arrangement in Australia is unfair and measures should be taken to ensure that New South Wales receives its fair share. We cannot do it alone; we need Commonwealth co-operation.

In relation to the Wallsend electorate, we have increased investment to improve government services to help families and small businesses. The Carr Government is honouring its affordable pre-election commitments and is working to secure the future of New South Wales. This year the Hunter will receive an all-time record allocation for Health of \$565.5 million, an increase of \$56.4 million on last year, or 11.1 per cent, equal to the statewide increase. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Hunter funding is part of a record State health budget of \$9.3 billion. Highlights in the Hunter include \$16.2 million for the ongoing roll-out of the \$230 million Newcastle Strategy, a plan to redevelop acute health facilities in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. That money will enable a start this year on the new ambulatory acute care at John Hunter Hospital, to be called the John Wallace building. There is ongoing funding for the emergency medicine unit and the newly established rapid emergency assessment team at John Hunter Hospital. There is \$750,00 for improved access to cardiac catheterisation services at John Hunter Hospital; \$750,000 for improvements to the emergency department services at Belmont District Hospital and Maitland Hospital; \$1 million for stroke services, including the establishment of stroke units at Belmont hospital, John Hunter Hospital and Newcastle Mater hospital; and \$360,000 for a major trauma unit at John Hunter Hospital.

I am pleased to say that the annual funding for Kaiyu Clubhouse has increased from \$73,000 to \$120,000 per annum for the next three years. While this is not up to the level of funding for the Tamworth and Balgowlah clubhouse facilities—they are community based rehabilitation programs for people living in the community with mental illness—the increase will enable Kaiyu Clubhouse to fully operate three days per week. I thank Bernard Griffin, Lawrie Hallinan, Les McAllister and the team at Kaiyu for their patience and their commitment and dedication to helping very needy people in the Lake Macquarie community.

Hunter families will share in the record New South Wales Community Services budget of \$803 million in the coming year. That is a 25 per cent increase on last year's budget, and is the largest ever overall annual budget increase for Community Services, as promised by Labor. Another promise delivered! It sees big budget boosts in all four program areas, but particularly the areas that impact on children and young people in need of care and protection, with the budgets for both child protection and out of home care increasing by more than one-third.

There will be a continuation of major initiatives in the Hunter, such as the Families First funded volunteer home-visiting services in Maitland and Singleton to support parents and carers with young children; the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programs in Newcastle and Maitland, which provide accommodation and support services for homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless, including young women and children, women escaping domestic violence, and men and women with drug and alcohol problems; and the Community Services Grants Program, whose projects include the provision of counselling and group work for young people and their families with the aim of keeping families together, a preschool program for Aboriginal children, support and counselling to strengthen vulnerable families, and a project supporting the needs of Italian families.

Hunter children and families will share in the benefits of the \$47 million allocation for improvements to the out-of-home care system, including foster care and the recruitment of 50 out-of-home care caseworkers; \$25.8 million to improve the child protection system, including 100 new caseworkers; additional recurrent funding of \$39.7 million to rebuild the Department of Community Services basic service delivery infrastructure; and \$9 million to assist community partners with increased costs of programs affected by the social and community services award.

In ageing, disability, and home care services, the Government is committed to improving access to specialist and mainstream services for people with a disability and for older people and their carers in the Hunter region. About \$29.2 million will be available for the delivery of Home and Community Care services in the Hunter to assist frail older people and people with a disability to live independently in their homes in their communities, and about \$125 million will be spent on disability services in the Hunter region alone. That spending will assist in the provision of prevention and early intervention programs and improve access to specialist and mainstream services and support networks. The Hunter population will also share in new statewide funding of \$28.5 million over four years for additional personal attendant care services for people with physical disabilities, and \$1.6 million this year and \$3.2 million per annum thereafter to make respite services more flexible and better respond to the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers, through in-home and centre-based services.

There are major road improvements in the Hunter. The Carr Government will spend more than \$100 million on road improvements in the Hunter region this year. A highlight for the Wallsend electorate is the allocation of more than \$700,000 for planning work on the next two stages of the Newcastle inner-city bypass; \$500,000 on stage four from Shortland to Sandgate, including the preparation of the environmental impact statement; and \$200,000 for stage five from Rankin Park to Jesmond, around the back of John Hunter Hospital. That is new money as promised to the local community on 10 March when the Minister for Roads met with the new Lambton Heights Residents Action Group and gave a commitment to planning for the final stage of the bypass road so as to accelerate the solution to a congestion problem that has arisen on Lookout Road in the vicinity of McCaffrey Drive and John Hunter Hospital. I point out that we have kept that commitment—this week the local media did not report that it had been kept.

The inner-city bypass is one of the most important projects in the Hunter, and when it is complete it will boost the region's economy for years to come and provide increased employment opportunities. A total of \$4.5 million has been allocated to the Wallsend electorate this year for upgrading and enhancing roads, and improving road safety and travelling conditions. That is an increase of more than \$2.6 million, showing the Government's ongoing commitment to improving and maintaining roads in Wallsend. It confirms the Government's commitment to spend 60 per cent of the roads maintenance and roads capital works allocation in rural and regional New South Wales.

Other major initiatives in the Roads budget for the Wallsend electorate include \$1.2 million for traffic flow improvements between Kotara and Lambton, on Charlestown Road and Lookout Road; \$1.5 million in the electorates of Wallsend and Charlestown; \$1 million for intersection improvements at McCaffrey Drive and Lookout Road—that construction is under way; \$55,000 for a new bus bay on Lookout Road near John Hunter Hospital; and \$19,000 for Lake Macquarie and Newcastle councils road safety officers. That is the Wallsend electorate's share; overall, the Government is putting in more than that.



The budget includes \$1.1 million for important maintenance work on State and regional roads. Lake Macquarie and Newcastle councils will receive a total of \$2.1 million in State funds to help maintain their roads. Also, \$450,000 of planning money is being spent on the New England Highway-Weakleys Drive interchange. This is Federal funding but the Roads and Traffic Authority is spending the money on the long-awaited grade separated interchange at the congested intersection of the New England Highway and Weakleys Drive. Also, this year's budget has a funding allocation for the Beresfield to Cessnock MR588 route development. A small section at the eastern end of that route is in the Wallsend electorate.

There is a regional block grant for traffic facilities for Newcastle council. The Wallsend electorate's share is \$130,000. The Wallsend electorate's share of the traffic facilities regional road block grant for Lake Macquarie council is \$13,170. The total infrastructure maintenance program for Wallsend electorate is \$1.936 million. In education, a major new capital works project for Callaghan College was announced in the State budget this week. There will be another major upgrade of Callaghan College, worth \$5 million. The next stage will start this year with \$200,000 of planning, and there will be major expenditure next year to provide continuity in the Jesmond upgrade so as to minimise the number of years that students will spend in demountable classrooms during the rebuilding work.

The new project will build on the \$6.78 million stage two upgrade that is already under way at both the Wallsend and Jesmond campuses. The \$1.8 million upgrade at Wallsend will be completed in a few months, and features a new library and staff room with airconditioning and refurbished classrooms. Some \$4.7 million has been allocated in 2003-04 for the remaining project, which is essentially all at Jesmond. Work will continue on the \$1.3 million kitchen upgrade at Glendale TAFE; \$1.18 million has been allocated this year. That is part of a record \$8.7 billion for Education and Training in New South Wales. Since 1995, total funding for the portfolio has increased by almost \$2,900 million, which is up 50 per cent. I reiterate the Government's commitment to reducing class sizes in the early years of school, enhancing the quality of teaching, expanding technology in schools, building on key literacy and numeracy programs, installing airconditioning, and replacing demountable classrooms.

Another school project this year to benefit students living in the Wallsend electorate is for a school in the Newcastle electorate, just across the Wallsend electorate boundary. A \$4.9 million project for the Hunter Performing Arts High School has been announced to upgrade facilities, including a new performance space. I await with great interest the education minor capital works projects lists, in the hope that included on those will be a further stage in the upgrading of the Edgeworth Public School. Funding of \$270,000 from the 2002-03 budget is being spent this year on that upgrading, on new administration works and a new sick bay.

The school needs hall, canteen, library and classroom upgrades. The parents have been patient for many years, hoping for better facilities. The facilities review and demographic review for Edgeworth Public School are nearing completion. I will be seeking action on addressing those needs. Finally, on Education, I want to contrast the Federal Liberal-National Government's budget approach of transferring funding towards private schools with, as is demonstrated by this budget, the strong support of the Labor Government in New South Wales for our public schools.

In the Hunter, policing will benefit from the statewide record \$2 billion budget. The most important matter to mention in the limited time I have available is the continuation of Operation Vikings—those high-visibility, high-impact blitzes on antisocial behaviour involving operations throughout the Hunter Valley in the past financial year. Those blitzes will continue, a fact that will be much appreciated by the people of the Wallsend electorate and the Hunter. There are large allocations of money for installation of in-car video cameras for all police highway patrol vehicles, including those in the Hunter, and an increase in the number of mountain bikes available for bike policing.

Tarro fire station has a new fire engine coming, worth a quarter of a million dollars. This is a category one vehicle, fully equipped with the latest technology, ready to respond to any emergency. Everything on the vehicle is stored ergonomically so that firefighters can quickly and safely retrieve equipment at the scene of the fire. Tarro fire station has increased responsibilities in the Beresfield, Thornton and Hexham areas, at the northern end of the F3. The Tarro firefighting vehicles were the first emergency vehicles to reach the scene of the Hexham derailment last year. I congratulate Captain Eric Larkins and his excellent crew. With the new machine they can put behind them the troubles caused by their old machine.

Another Labor promise kept is evidenced by the minerals budget. The State Government has allocated \$10.6 million this year to facilitate the relocation of 200 Department of Mineral Resources jobs to Maitland by

late next year. That is great news for the whole of the Hunter region, because these are jobs throughout the whole of the Hunter region. In transport services, \$22.6 million is allocated for the upgrading of bridges, including the Iron Bark Creek bridge, on the boundary of Wallsend and Port Stephens electorate at Sandgate, and \$3.7 million for vital upgrading of infrastructure to take the export coal to the Port of Newcastle. I commend the budget to the House. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr HARTCHER** (Gosford) [11.52 a.m.]: This is a budget that the Treasurer, in his normal hypocritical way, described as a Labor budget through and through. It is a Labor budget through and through: it is a bad budget, it does not do anything for the economic development of the State, and it fails to address many key issues facing New South Wales. I propose to deal with but some of them—those relating to industrial relations and workers compensation and those relating to the Central Coast. In relation to the Government's allowances for the extraordinarily incompetently run WorkCover scheme, the budget papers reveal that one of the arms of the WorkCover scheme, the Dust Diseases Board, continues to have operating costs blow-outs.

Last year the Dust Diseases Board was expected to have operating costs of just over \$85 million. In fact, its operating costs blew out to \$105 million. Though that is an increase of nearly 25 per cent, no explanation has been given for it, nor has there been any inquiry made to determine why the operating costs of the board should have blown out so substantially. More significant is the blow-out in the administration of WorkCover, according to the budget allocation. The WorkCover Fund is losing \$2.5 million a day. Under this Government that fund now has a deficit of \$3.2 billion. When Labor took office in 1995 the WorkCover Fund was in surplus to the extent of \$800 million. The fund has lost \$430 million in the past six months alone. At \$2.5 million a day, it will lose something like \$50,000 in the time it takes me to deliver these few remarks.

Notwithstanding that, an additional \$20 million has been allocated for administration of the WorkCover Fund. Last year its allocation was \$218 million. This year it is \$241 million. What is being done at the WorkCover Authority? No-one will ever know. It has been transferred to Gosford. My electorate office is just around the corner from the new premises built for WorkCover staff, but I do not know what benefits it has brought to the township of Gosford. Presumably, more people buy lunch at the local cafes. But, apart from the local benefit, this is an extraordinary incubus that is saddled on the people of New South Wales. The report of the Federal Parliament's inquiry into compliance, or lack of compliance, with national standards shows that administration of the WorkCover Fund has cost \$1 of every \$6 it receives. That is, of every \$6 raised, \$1 goes to administration. That is confirmed by this budget allocation of an additional \$23 million. Yet once again we are not told the reason that this increasingly large amount of money goes into this black hole.

Significant, too, for the whole of New South Wales has been the Government's decision to slam the opportunities for thousands of school leavers to get traineeships. In 1997, as part of a program to increase the number of traineeships made available to young people, the Government introduced a scheme—with enormous fanfare, press releases, posed photographs and an ongoing statewide campaign saying what the Government was doing—under which workers compensation premiums for trainees were paid by the Government. The Premier was photographed everywhere making statements about how beneficial this would be for small business and how even more beneficial it would be in helping young people get a much-needed traineeship when they left school.

Now, after only five years of operation, that scheme is being closed down. The Premier said nothing about this. We heard not a word from the Premier. When he was asked two questions this week in Parliament he gave a very short answer, only a few print lines, saying that the cost of the scheme had blown out from \$4 million to \$47 million and it was therefore being scrapped. There was none of the hoopla or massive media barrage we saw at the time the scheme was introduced. The Government hoped that it could quietly kill off the scheme. Well, it cannot kill off the scheme and dash the opportunities for thousands of school leavers to get much-needed traineeships.

When the scheme was introduced the average number of traineeships available was 10,000 a year. Now it is 40,000 a year. That is to be regarded as a great tribute to the success of the scheme. Employers, recognising that the cost of employing a trainee could be reduced because workers compensation premiums were being paid by the Government, a very high on-cost, have been prepared to take on more trainees. But within the next 12 months—the amendment dates from 1 January 2004—the Government effectively will wind the system back to the old days. The probable result will be that only 10,000 traineeships will be available each year in New South Wales. That means under this Labor Government 30,000 young school leavers will lose the opportunity to train for a career.

This Government, which claims it is looking after youth, looking after future employment, helping small business and assisting rural New South Wales, has, in the most deceitful way, turned its back on all of those people, turned its back on the young people it claims it is assisting, and scrapped the one Government program designed to assist them. We will hear more about this over the next year or two, because denying young people the opportunity to advance themselves through employment-related training and education is to deny them their future.

The fit-out of the Industrial Relations Commission will cost almost \$9 million. That fine historic building in Phillip Street possibly needs a \$9 million refit, but what are the Government's priorities? This Government is prepared to spend \$9 million on furniture and on refitting and reconfiguring the internal structure of a building at the corner of Phillip Street and Bridge Street, yet it is prepared to deny 30,000 young people the opportunity of employment-related education. That says something about the priorities of the Government and its attitude towards young people.

On Wednesday the Premier quoted me as having congratulated the Government on its health expenditure on the Central Coast. That is quite true; I did. The Government's health expenditure on the Central Coast was \$69 million, the largest of any area health service outside Sydney. I appropriately said that that was a plus for the Government. The Premier, in his usual dishonest way, did not tell the House that I also said there were minuses for the Government in the budget. The Premier selectively quoted only what I said about the pluses. The minuses were quite extensive. A week before polling day the Premier promised that there would be a program to upgrade The Entrance Road and that \$16.6 million would be allocated to that upgrade.

The Premier made that promise when the seat of The Entrance was starting to look dicey for the Government. Of that promised \$16.6 million, \$1 million has been allocated in the budget for planning. Not a single tractor will move, not a single shovel will hit the soil—it is just \$1 million for planning. No projected completion date was given for these promised roadworks. The Premier made that promise as he stood in his Napoleonic pose before the television cameras. He said that he and the Minister for Gaming and Racing, the Hon. Grant McBride, would make sure the road was widened. Not a word has been said about how that promised \$16 million has turned into \$1 million for planning.

I applauded the promise of \$13.3 million for the widening of Avoca Drive—where the candidate who opposed me posed for a photograph and was almost hit by a car. The people of the Central Coast would be delighted to see Avoca Drive widened. When the Labor Party failed to win the seat of Gosford, all that was allocated to that project was \$1 million, again for planning. Once again, not a single tractor will move and not a single shovel will turn. The Entrance Road and Avoca Drive will be allocated to the planning section of the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA]. It is interesting to note the way money is allocated for planning to show a purported compliance with government promises.

I am amazed at how active the Government is with its promises prior to elections. In 1999, once again prior to an election, full-page advertisements were taken out by the Carr Government in every Central Coast newspaper, with photographs of all Central Coast candidates, promising that \$800 million would be spent to improve the rail service from the Central Coast to Sydney and cut 20 minutes off the journey. The Central Coast is Australia's largest commuter area—50,000 people a day travel from the Central Coast to Sydney or Newcastle, more than any other region in Australia. Accordingly, the F3, the major highway, is clogged in the morning unless one leaves home by 5.00 a.m. The trains are overcrowded and the journey takes some 90 minutes. It was a major promise to spend \$800 million over a period of years to straighten the old railway line that was built in the 1880s and ensure that the trip time was reduced by 20 minutes.

Nothing happened in the 1999 budget. In the 2000 budget, \$1.2 million was allocated, again for planning, and the date of completion of the program was shown as 2012. No more money was allocated, and in February this year the Treasurer announced that it had only ever been a planning idea; it had never been a development idea. This budget makes no mention of the project, no money has been allocated to it, and it has disappeared off the list of government works. An \$800 million promise before an election and full-page advertisements have become zero four years later. That says something about the integrity of the Treasurer and the Premier, and it says a lot about what a Labor budget means. When the Treasurer says this is a Labor budget through and through, he is right, because it is a budget that is essentially deceitful—not necessarily in what it says but in what it fails to say.

In addition to other roadworks, the Central Coast was promised an overpass at York Street, East Gosford, something that the RTA recommended some years ago. That recommendation was supported by the

Staysafe committee of this Parliament after it visited York Street, East Gosford. The overpass is essential because children from four schools—St Joseph's Catholic College, St Edwards Christian Brothers College, St Patrick's Catholic primary school and East Gosford primary school—have to cross a very busy road at considerable risk each day. Both political parties promised a much-needed bridge prior to the 2003 election. What has the Carr Government done about the promised bridge, which, after all, is only a pedestrian bridge and could be built in a reasonably short time? It has allocated only \$500,000 out of the necessary \$2.5 million required to build the bridge.

The Government promised to finalise the bridge within 20 months of the 2003 election or 18 months from the 2003 budget announcement. The budget announcement has been made, and \$500,000, only one-fifth of the required money, has been allocated. It is not clear now when the promised bridge will be completed. I would be very surprised if it is completed within the prescribed time. This bridge, like many other things promised to the people of Gosford, is being pushed back and will be long delayed. Not even the greatest critic of the Government would believe it could jeopardise indefinitely the safety of young schoolchildren by refusing to construct a bridge, as it has refused to construct the high-speed railway link.

The people of Gosford are paying more in stamp duty than they should. In 1995 stamp duty on the average house in Terrigal was only \$5,000. In 2003, only eight years later, people buying houses in Terrigal are paying \$15,000. In eight years under this Government there has been a threefold increase in stamp duty on homes in Terrigal. That is true right across New South Wales, but especially on the Central Coast—yet there is no relief despite the Government obtaining hundreds of millions of dollars more than it has budgeted for. In the last budget it gained \$830 million more than it had budgeted for. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. John Brogden, put a plan to the House to return unbudgeted stamp duty to the community. I am pleased to say that the plan received the enthusiastic endorsement of the media, especially the *Daily Telegraph*. As the *Daily Telegraph* put it, it is not Bob the Builder any more. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Carr Government has failed to ensure that the unbudgeted stamp duty it receives as a windfall is returned to the people from whom it is taken: the young people of the State, who, more than ever, need to buy a home but whose dream of home ownership is passing out of their reach. Young people who are leaving school are penalised by the budget. Young people who need to buy a home are penalised by the budget. Young children who want to cross a road in safety at York Street, East Gosford are penalised by the budget. It is true that it is certainly a Labor budget. It is not only a Labor budget in the way it hits young people; it is a Labor budget in the way it hits older people—those in my electorate and across the whole of New South Wales—who wish to play a game of bowls or join a recreational and licensed social club.

The poker machine tax announced by the Treasurer in this budget will have a massive impact on the operations of smaller clubs on the Central Coast. It is almost a death tax, which has been made clear by the clubs and by no less a person than the former member for East Hills, the Hon. Pat Rogan, a fine member of this House—even though he was a member of the Labor Party! He did a great deal of good work, especially in relation to the royal commission into Chelmsford Private Hospital. He has shown that the budget will have a particular impact on the operations of smaller clubs and will force them to curtail their operations. Jobs will be at risk and the social activity, especially of elderly people, will be in jeopardy. Young people will suffer, older people will suffer, employment-based education will suffer, the employment of people in licensed clubs will suffer—yes, it truly is a Labor budget in the classic sense.

Who benefits from the budget? Who benefits from the bloated expenditure of a Government that fails to address the need for reform, especially in public transport? One can only speculate as to who the beneficiaries are. I am sure that will be laid out by other speakers. They are certainly not the people of the Central Coast. The only bright spot for the people of the Central Coast was the \$69 million for the Central Coast in the health budget. However, people are still waiting and will continue to wait, despite the \$69 million, for up to four hours to access emergency services at Gosford Hospital. Up to 12 ambulances at a time queue up outside the emergency department at Gosford Hospital, but the budget does nothing to rectify that. No-one could be pleased with the budget.

The Hon. Michael Gallacher, the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, drew attention to the outer suburban railway carriages that were to be available for the Illawarra region and the Central Coast in 2005. The completion date has now been put back to 2007. The cost blow-out is \$171.5 million, an increase in \$51.5 million from the 2001-02 estimate of \$120 million, and only \$6.8 million has been allocated for 2003-04. The people of the Illawarra and the Central Coast will have to wait even longer for their promised outer suburban railway carriages. The same is true for the Hunter Valley. The total cost for rail cars in that area has

doubled to \$102 million from \$62 million in the 2001-02 budget, but only \$10.2 million has been allocated for 2003-04. Train travellers will miss out.

The Government is not concerned with train travellers, as is evident from the epic story of the Millennium trains. The Government is concerned only with featherbedding and keeping its trade union mates happy. The Government is giving \$5 million a year to the trade union movement through the WorkCover Fund for so-called education programs on workers compensation, which are the responsibility of the trade union movement. That is where the money goes and that is why the WorkCover budget has blown out from \$218 million to \$241 million. Yes, this is a Labor budget!

**Ms SALIBA** (Illawarra) [12.15 p.m.]: I support the 2003-04 budget, which is the ninth balanced budget delivered by the Treasurer. The Illawarra wins a healthy share, with a record \$7,138,000 being spent on new schools, hospitals, roads, railways, public houses, and power and water networks. The budget will deliver for the Illawarra with increased investment to improve Government services to help families and small businesses. The Carr Government is honouring its affordable pre-election commitments and working to secure the future of New South Wales. Some of the key areas of local expenditure this year for the Illawarra include \$2.6 million on transport and \$1.86 million on roads. I am pleased to note that money has been made available for the completion of the Princes Highway upgrade at Figtree.

Some \$738,500 has been allocated to complete the Princes Highway and O'Briens Road upgrade, which is one of the key initiatives in this year's New South Wales roads budget. Some \$1.9 million has been allocated to the Illawarra area to upgrade and enhance roads, safety and travelling conditions. That indicates the Government's ongoing commitment to improving and maintaining roads in the Illawarra. The Princes Highway and O'Briens Road project will provide a dedicated left-turn lane into O'Briens Road, two through lanes and a dedicated right-turn lane into Woodrow Place for northbound motorists. A dedicated right-turn lane into O'Briens Road and two through lanes will be provided for southbound traffic.

The work, which started in March, addresses the need for safety improvements at the junction, given the significant increase in residential and commercial development in the area in recent years. Unfortunately, shortly after the budget was handed down last year and the Minister announced that the work would be carried out over a period of time, a young man lost his life at that intersection. It is great to know that the intersection will be repaired to ensure that that kind of tragedy do not occur again. The budget builds on the Government's strong record in improving roads in the Illawarra and will result in the continued improvement in the quality of roads throughout the State.

Other major initiatives in the budget for the Illawarra included \$200,000 for the Unanderra to Mount Kembla cycleway. I acknowledge Brian Dellit, a resident of Mount Kembla, and the Mount Kembla residents generally who have lobbied to ensure the construction of the cycleway from Mount Kembla to Unanderra. I look forward to attending the opening of the cycleway and watching people use the facility. Some \$100,000 has been allocated for construction of a right-turn bay at Farmborough Road, Unanderra. That work is already under way. Some \$80,000 has been allocated for the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Jerematta Street and Moombarra Street, Dapto. That intersection is an accident waiting to happen. I am pleased about the construction of the roundabout, which will alleviate some of the problems. Funding of \$50,000 has been made available for a study to examine bus usage on the Lake Entrance Road, Shellharbour, in particular at Shellharbour Square shopping centre, to ensure the free movement of buses.

The budget includes \$300,000 for important maintenance work on State and regional roads. That will help local councils in improving and maintaining the local road network. Shellharbour City Council and Wollongong City Council will receive a total of \$1.1 million in State funding to assist in the maintenance of their roads. More than \$108 million is being spent on road improvements in the Illawarra and south-east region of the State. During the next financial year the Government will continue its commitment to a \$380 million program to upgrade the Princes Highway. That highway is important to the people of my electorate, as it is the main road that passes through the Illawarra. Any problem on any part of the highway has an impact in the area. At the commencement of holiday periods there are always delays to south-bound traffic on the Princes Highway, starting at Kiama and going through to Albion Park and Dapto. That has been so for many years.

I am pleased that the Government has continued its commitment by the allocation of this money. It is an absolute tragedy that the Federal Government will not acknowledge highway number one, the Princes Highway, as a road of national importance. Until it does, the road will never be in a proper condition. Why does the Federal Government not put the same money into the Illawarra that it did on the Central Coast? We need

improved facilities in the Illawarra. We are not second-class citizens. We want to be treated the same way people all over Australia are treated. It is about time the Federal Government took an interest in the Illawarra and allocated funding to improving the Princes Highway.

The Government has allocated \$3.1 million for preliminary works on the Wollongong Northern Distributor, which feeds onto the F6. That road is another feeder into my electorate and is used by many of my constituents. There is funding of \$1.2 million to plan the Princes Highway upgrade from Oak Flats to Dunmore. That upgrade will result in a marked improvement in traffic flow on the Princes Highway. In addition, \$100,000 had been allocated for network development, \$374,000 for maintenance, \$197,000 for road safety and \$1.189 million for traffic and transport. That is a good outcome for the Illawarra electorate. As I said earlier, both the Wollongong City Council and Shellharbour City Council will benefit from the allocations. Wollongong will receive \$76,120 as a regional road block grant for traffic facilities and Shellharbour City Council will receive \$11,390 for a similar grant. Other funding includes \$219,160 for traffic management.

The people of the Illawarra will benefit from the funding provided in the budget for public housing. The Government has demonstrated its commitment to the future of public housing by spending \$6.866 million from the 2003-04 housing budget on new capital works in the Illawarra to assist people with housing needs. The Government's public housing budget of \$642.9 million includes \$396 million for the upgrade and maintenance of public, community and Aboriginal housing. The Illawarra is one of six selected locations in New South Wales to commence WorkIt, a new employee training program for social housing residents. In the Work It program, \$208,000 will be spent over two years to help social housing residents access training and employment opportunities through a local organisation. Those organisations will then tender for selected minor works contracts with the Department of Housing. The works will include cleaning, landscaping, and lawn and ground maintenance. The organisation will be required to directly employ tenants to deliver the contracted works.

In 2002 a statewide three-year \$170 million boost to improve assets and provide new housing assistance was announced. The second instalment of \$56.9 million has been delivered in this budget. The housing budget also includes an allocation of \$77.4 million to the Aboriginal housing sector, \$25.8 million to be spent assisting 71,000 people into private accommodation through Rent Start, \$11 million to be spent in rental subsidies to allow 1,700 people living with a disability or HIV-AIDS to remain in private accommodation, \$14.4 million to provide 40 new crisis accommodation properties and upgrade existing properties which will house nearly 60,000 people in crisis housing this year, \$1.5 million on homeless initiatives in the Sydney metropolitan area, and funding to put 1,000 public housing tenants through training programs. The Housing budget reflects the Government's commitment to securing the future of public housing and helping people in need.

Over the next four years an extra \$25.9 million is to be spent on public libraries. I thank councillor Joan Vinton of Shellharbour City Council, who has been active in lobbying for additional funding for public libraries. On a number of occasions she approached me and representations were made on her behalf to the Premier. Representations were also made on behalf of a number of other council areas. I am pleased that an extra \$25.9 million will be spent over the next four years on public libraries, mainly in regional New South Wales.

The Arts Access program builds on the expansion of arts activities in regional areas, providing for initiatives such as travel ticket subsidies to targeted isolated schools for children in years 5 to 8, bringing artists and performers into isolated communities, expanding the geographical reach of performing arts to works, giving teachers the opportunity to work with arts companies to increase their knowledge and skills, and providing special arts programs for talented indigenous people. Over four years \$1.9 million will be allocated to that program to provide access to high-quality theatre, dance, music and art. It is important that young people are encouraged to become involved in the arts—my son Dennis looks forward to attending the Roo Theatre in Shellharbour each week—and funding has been made available through Shellharbour City Council to encourage them to do so. That allocation is good news for the people of my electorate.

Education in the Illawarra region has been given a great boost. There are two TAFE projects in my electorate alone. An amount of \$9.095 million will be spent on a multifunctional complex at Shellharbour TAFE, with \$6.046 million being allocated in this budget, and \$5.9 million for refurbishment of trade workshops and general purpose spaces at Wollongong TAFE, for which \$250,000 has been allocated in this budget. Again, that is good news for the people of the Illawarra. Those TAFE institutions provide educational training opportunities for young people in my electorate. The region will also benefit from the \$104 million that has been allocated for the maintenance of schools and TAFE colleges in rural and regional New South Wales.

Health funding for the Illawarra has reached a record level. The New South Wales Government has delivered the largest-ever health budget to the Illawarra with spending at an all-time record of \$298.3 million. In

particular, \$2.5 million has been allocated towards the \$500 million Shellharbour Hospital emergency department's redevelopment. Project plans have been drawn up and very soon tenders will be called for the commencement of work. The emergency department currently has a capacity of 15 beds, which will be increased to 20 beds, and better facilities for staff and patients will be provided. That is certainly good news because it will alleviate some of the problems experienced in my electorate by people who are unable to afford the services of their local general practitioner. All honourable members know why they cannot afford private medical services—the Federal Government is not expanding Medicare to allow more doctors into the system.

The Federal Government is all about destroying Medicare and it has slowly and surely destroyed the public health care system. This State's emergency departments have to pick up the slack and treat people who have a cold, the flu or some other problem that would otherwise be treated by a local doctor. Many constituents are required to pay a fee for medical treatment by their local doctor. I urge my constituents to shop around and find a doctor who still bulk-bills because if people do not use bulk-billing, the service will slip through our fingers. The only way to prevent that is by stopping the Federal Government burdening this State's public health system. This year's budget has allocated \$4.4 million to the Illawarra for clinical services, \$236,000 for the establishment of a bone marrow transplantation service, and \$1.2 million for improved access to cardiac catheterisation services at Wollongong Hospital.

This year's budget has allocated \$844,000 for stroke treatment services, including the establishment of a stroke unit at Wollongong Hospital. I acknowledge the work of Dr David Serisier, Peter Edwards and Victor Reid, which has been instrumental in having the stroke unit set up. Dr Serisier is a neurologist with whom I had personal dealings two years ago when my younger brother had a massive stroke. He is very lucky to be alive. Dr Serisier treated my brother, and during his treatment I became very much aware of the difficulties of dealing with people who have suffered a stroke. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Dr Serisier, Peter Edwards and Victor Reid worked very hard to ensure that the stroke unit was set up. Peter and Victor are both community representatives who lobbied their members of Parliament. They have met representatives of the Minister for Health at Parliament House and have actively gone out into the community to raise funds to support the stroke unit. That is good news for the people of the Illawarra because the most crucial time for a stroke patient is within the first three hours after the attack. If the patient is taken to hospital, is diagnosed and commences treatment early, there is a much better chance of recovery than would otherwise be the case. I thank those gentlemen and other people who have been involved in the fundraising committee for their hard work in ensuring that the stroke unit became a reality.

The budget also provides for improved rail services for the Illawarra and the South Coast. Among the key improvements are \$3.7 million for easy access upgrades to railway stations. Passengers on the Illawarra line tell me that they really need more services during peak periods, and as a member of Parliament I can vouch for that need from personal experience. The Government is spending \$11 million on a Bondi Junction turn-back, which will mean that South Coast trains will be able to travel up to Bondi Junction and make the return trip in a much faster time. The increased budget allocation will provide up to 20 trains per hour, which will result in improved services for the people of the Illawarra, compared to the current maximum of 14 trains per hour. The Illawarra line has a 96 per cent commuter utilisation rate and is highly patronised by the community. During peak periods the trains are always full. The provision of additional trains will bring enormous benefits to commuters of the Illawarra and those throughout the region who travel by train.

In conjunction with Bicycle New South Wales, the parking space levy has been used to fund the installation and maintenance of bike lockers to the tune of \$115 million at bus and rail stations in metropolitan areas as well as in the Illawarra and South Coast. The bike lockers are fantastic. Recently a new station was opened at Oak Flats and its facilities include a number of bike lockers on the platform. Commuters are able to bicycle to the station, lock the bike away safely, and feel secure in the knowledge that their bike will be there when they come back. The lockers are great news, and they are also beneficial for the environment. Commuters are doing their bit for the environment by using their bikes and using people power rather than motorised power.

Illawarra families share in the 25 per cent budget boost in community services. Money is being spent on prevention services, early intervention, intensive and statutory intervention services, out-of-home care and adoption services. This is good news for the people of Illawarra. It is important to support prevention and early intervention as a way of maintaining families and keeping them together. At times it is very difficult for young families when finding work may be a problem and when there are other social problems. It is important that governments recognise their responsibilities to the families of New South Wales, the families of the Illawarra in particular. It is great that this Government has recognised its responsibilities by allocating increased expenditure in this budget.

The 2003-04 budget provides for Illawarra children and families to share in this State's disbursements with \$47.1 million being allocated to improvements for the out-of-home care system, including foster care, and the recruitment of 50 out-of-home care caseworkers. In addition, \$25.8 million has been allocated to improve the child protection system, including an allocation for 100 additional caseworkers. Additional recurrent funding of \$39.7 million will assist in rebuilding the Department of Community Services [DOCS] basic service delivery infrastructure and will improve research capacity, operational support, staff development and information technology systems. That is all good news for the people of the Illawarra.

The Government has allocated \$65.3 million for ageing, disabilities and home care services in my electorate. Older people and people with disabilities and their families and carers in the Illawarra region are set to benefit from funds for a range of support programs. Apart from funding for prevention and early intervention strategies, \$28.5 million will be allocated over four years for additional personal attendant care services for people who have physical disabilities. The allocation will include \$1.6 million for 2003-04 and \$3.2 million per annum thereafter to make respite services more flexible and more responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, their families and carers through in-home and centre-based services.

The Illawarra will benefit from the \$2 billion record Police budget. A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to join Peter Barnes, the Acting Area Commander for the Lake Illawarra Area Command, on his beat in the Dapto shopping area. We talked to businesspeople who had experienced minor problems. It was good to see the local Acting Area Commander doing time on the beat as required by the State Government, which expects everyone from the Commissioner down to spend some time each week on the streets. Operation Vikings is very important in my electorate and \$3 million has been allocated for its implementation this year. It involves a high-visibility, high-impact blitz on antisocial behaviour. Operation exercises have been carried out across the Illawarra in 2002-03.

In addition, \$8.598 million has been committed over two years for the installation of in-car video cameras for highway patrol vehicles, some of which will operate in the Illawarra. An allocation of \$1.2 million has been made for the supply of new front-line police uniforms, which the Lake Illawarra Area Command has trialled. They were very successful and the police officers in my electorate look smart in them. They are comfortable and officers can move more freely in them than they did in their old uniforms. Officers can choose which uniform they wish to wear.

The Illawarra Area Health Service will receive \$120,395, the Illawarra Women's Health Centre will receive \$54,286 and Mission Australia in Wollongong will receive two sums—\$99,502 and \$230,407. These allocations confirm the Government's commitment to those services and its recognition of the support they provide to the community. That funding means that problem gamblers and their families will continue to have access to specialist counselling services. These organisations have achieved good results in recent years and they will continue to deliver valuable community support.

Illawarra emergency services have had a boost in funding of \$75,000 for four units to purchase new emergency vehicles. Hardworking volunteers donate hours to help in floods, storms and other emergencies and I am pleased that the State Government has indicated its support of them with this funding. Funding has also been allocated for smaller projects in my electorate. For example, \$27,832 has been budgeted for Dapto Neighbourhood Centre Inc., which provides transport for people whose access to mainstream services is limited by physical, social and geographical factors. I thank Shelley Shannon, the co-ordinator, and the volunteers of the Dapto Community Transport Program.

The allocation is recurrent funding and it provides for 15 hours of co-ordination. The group transport program provides social outings, transport for day care in Dapto, two shopping bus services each week and transport for some local groups. The program has 30 volunteer drivers and only Dapto residents can access services at the moment because of the level of demand. As at 1 June the program had 298 registered clients for group transport and had provided 5,389 trips. It is a valuable service and, although the demand for expansion is constant, I am grateful that funding has been provided to allow it to continue achieving these great results.

The Carr Government is getting on with the job of approving the largest capital works program undertaken in this State. The *Illawarra Mercury* front-page headline in response to last Tuesday's budget was "\$262 million boost: Capital works program sustains 4,000 jobs". That is good news for the Illawarra community. This record program totals nearly \$29 billion over four years, which is an increase of nearly \$5.3 billion, or 23 per cent, on the previous four years. This year's record \$7,138,000 capital works program is \$788 million more than last year's \$6,350,000 program, or an increase of more than 12 per cent. Since 1995 the



Carr Government has cut general government net debt by \$8 billion. That represents savings of about \$1 billion in interest payments compared to 1995. These are vital funds that can be spent on schools, hospitals and police. I commend the bill.

**Mrs PALUZZANO** (Penrith) [12.45 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to address the House on the New South Wales Government's 2003-04 budget, and in particular on the impact of the budget in the electorate of Penrith and Western Sydney. This budget is a credit to the New South Wales Government and once again demonstrates its commitment to the residents of Penrith and the western suburbs of Sydney. The Government's budget for Western Sydney focuses on four key priorities: firstly, securing jobs and investment; secondly, supporting families and communities; thirdly, protecting the environment; and finally, providing better government services. Once again, the New South Wales Government has managed to present a balanced budget while continuing to increase spending.

The Government has also managed to honour election promises made in the 2003 campaign. The 2003-04 budget continues to build upon last year's budget, which delivered unprecedented funding for the people of Penrith and Western Sydney. The vital areas of Health, Education, Transport and Community Services remain the Government's key priorities in this year's budget. This budget delivers \$7.1 billion to Western Sydney, which is an increase of \$1.4 billion on last year's budget. The Treasurer said in his Budget Speech:

It's a budget that will help New South Wales get steadily further ahead—step-by-step, year-by-year.

This same statement can be applied to Penrith and Western Sydney. This budget will ensure that residents in Penrith can look forward with a positive attitude knowing that the Government is committed to improving services and facilities in the local area. That the New South Wales Government can provide the residents of this great State with increased spending on services and facilities is a great achievement in itself. That it can do so in a socially and financially responsible manner is a credit to it and the Treasurer.

I take this opportunity to tell honourable members about specific spending arrangements for Western Sydney. One of the important aspects of the budget is increased Education spending. The Government's budget delivers \$1.9 billion for Western Sydney's schools and technical and further education [TAFE] colleges. Two local schools in my electorate of Penrith have been big winners from this year's budget. Glenbrook Public School will receive \$3.052 million to upgrade classrooms, toilets and special program spaces, and to provide a new administration and library facility. Penrith Public School will receive a further \$1.47 million to help fund a new state-of-the-art hall, a canteen and an outdoor covered learning area. That will pay for a touch more—\$4.52 million more—than a coat of paint. These funds will allow schools in Penrith to continue to offer young children the best education possible.

Already Australian schoolchildren are the best in the world in literacy and numeracy skills, but we cannot rest here. It is important to continue to improve schools to keep our children at the top. The Government recognises the extreme importance of quality education for all. Funding such as I have outlined will ensure that children in Western Sydney are given the same chances as those elsewhere in the State. I am happy to report that TAFE colleges have also been looked after in the budget. More than \$7.5 million has been set aside for maintenance work at seven Western Sydney TAFEs, including buildings at the Blue Mountains and Granville. TAFE colleges offer a valuable alternative to a university degree and the budget shows that the Government is committed to providing the best possible education for all students.

But the Education budget is more than about allocating money to individual schools and TAFE campuses. The Government is committed not only to improving places of education but also to addressing how students learn, and is offering to help them. The 2003-04 budget estimates that nearly \$6 million will be spent on the Government's Reading Recovery Program in Western Sydney. That program was established to help students who, after the completion of year 1, are experiencing difficulties in learning to read and write. In 2002, 275 teachers at more than 200 schools in Western Sydney took part in the Reading Recovery Program and helped 2,415 students. Similar programs to help students struggling with mathematics will also be funded in this year's budget. Programs such as Counting On and Count Me In will continue to be funded.

Altogether, \$36.8 million will be provided to schools in Western Sydney as part of the Government's literacy and numeracy plan. The introduction of computers and the Internet into schools over the past 10 years has changed the way students are taught. The Government's budget recognises that, and has allocated millions of dollars in technology grants to schools in Western Sydney. On top of that, programs such as Computers in Schools will continue to be funded. The Government also recognises the cost of sending children to school. That is why in the 2003-04 budget, parents in Western Sydney will receive almost \$17 million through the

Government's Back-to-School Allowance. At my local shoe store I have met many parents using that funding to purchase shoes for the new school year.

I turn now to Health in Western Sydney. Along with Education there can be no more important area of funding in the budget than Health. Unlike the Federal Government, which seems unconcerned by fewer and fewer doctors bulk-billing and higher fees for visits to one's local general practitioner, and is happy to place more pressure on hospital emergency departments, the New South Wales Government is taking a proactive approach to health care. In stark contrast to Mr Howard and Mr Costello's huge cuts to public hospitals, the New South Wales Government is again pledging more support to the State's health system. I am happy to report that residents in Western Sydney already have access to some wonderful health services. Recently, the Penrith Breast Screening Centre opened; that is a permanent facility offering free breast screening to women between the ages of 50 and 69.

Another initiative of the Government is to make free hearing tests available to check newborn babies. During the recent election campaign the Premier and I visited Nepean Hospital to announce that new screening service. We spoke with a number of new mothers, one of whom, like me, had become the mother of a third child. I joked with that new mother about the hearing test replacing the saucepan test. We both laughed about that, but the Premier was quite perplexed about the so-called saucepan test. I recounted the story of taking my nine-week-old son to a cracker night and his not moving when a cracker exploded near him.

When I took him home and placed him in his bassinette, I stood beside him and merrily bashed away at two saucepans. Again, he did not flinch. My husband came home and found me quite distraught and attempting to phone a help line. If my child had been born in 2003, he would have had a hearing test before he was discharged from hospital. That new test gives peace of mind to new mums. The joke between that new mum and me about the saucepan test—which she had done with her other two children—emphasises the importance of the newborn hearing test. That is another great initiative by the New South Wales Government.

Last year the Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, spoke about the Health budget and used the phrase "enormous funding increase" to describe the funding, as was correct. The Health budget for 2002-03 increased by more than half a billion on the previous year. It gives me enormous satisfaction to tell the House that the 2003-04 budget exceeds last year's enormous funding increase. It gives me even more pleasure to reveal that Western Sydney will receive a large part of that Health budget to continue to improve health facilities in the region. The Health budget for Western Sydney delivers \$1.6 billion for new and ongoing health services. That is an increase of \$166 million on last year's budget to Western Sydney, which represents an 11.9 per cent increase.

I will now outline some of the major achievements of the budget for Western Sydney. The Government has set aside \$6.8 million to go towards the redevelopment of the existing emergency department at Nepean Hospital. That huge amount will surely be of great benefit to residents of not only Penrith but also greater Western Sydney. The Government has also committed \$4.6 million to establish specialised stroke units at six Western Sydney hospitals, including Nepean, Campbelltown and Westmead. In 2001, strokes accounted for nearly 9 per cent of all deaths in Australia. The establishment of stroke units at major Western Sydney hospitals is truly an investment in the lives of all residents in the region.

The 2003-04 Health budget also provides \$8 million in annual funding to Blacktown, Liverpool, Westmead and Nepean hospitals to continue the trial of emergency medical units [EMUs]. The EMUs provide care for patients who go to emergency departments and do not need to be admitted to hospital; they require only observation. This has a dual benefit. Firstly, the patient will receive medical treatment and remain under close observation and, secondly, the patient will not take up a place in the hospital that could go to a more needy patient. Another \$3 million will allow the continuation of the trial of the rapid emergency assessment teams at selected hospitals throughout Western Sydney. Those teams of experienced doctors and health care professionals significantly reduce waiting times at emergency departments and may, indeed, be the difference between life and death.

Other important areas of spending in the health budget are \$1 million for cardiology services at Nepean Hospital; \$200,000 for additional trauma staff at Westmead and Nepean hospitals; \$300,000 for additional medical and nursing staff at Nepean Hospital to deal with bone marrow transplantations; and \$400,000 to establish a new renal dialysis unit at Nepean Hospital. As with Education, the Government recognises that Western Sydney residents' health concerns cannot all be looked at in the confines of hospitals and medical centres, or fixed with bandages and plaster. That is why the budget also addresses areas such as mental health in Western Sydney. The \$1 million that was allocated in last year's budget has been rolled over for the capital

development of the Westmead Millennium Research Institute. The budget also builds on the work already done to recruit more mental health clinicians in Western Sydney, with 50 more expected to be recruited this year.

Western Sydney will also receive a large percentage of the funds that the Government has allocated to non-government organisations and community groups that improve support for carers. That is on top of the \$465,000 funding for new carer support services in Western Sydney. I am happy to inform honourable members that the Government not only is committed to improving the education and health of the people of Western Sydney but also is working to protect their safety.

New South Wales Police expenditure will total \$1,816 million in the 2003-04 budget, a massive 9 per cent increase on last year's budget. Residents in Western Sydney can look forward to seeing more police on the beat because of that funding. The effect of more police on the beat cannot be underestimated. It is one of the most effective strategies for tackling crime and one that I am proud to support. The Carr Labor Government is committed to making Western Sydney communities safer. The Government's commitment to increase police numbers by 1,000 was met ahead of schedule and I know that the Penrith community is very grateful for its new officers.

I was fortunate recently to meet some of the new probationary constables from Penrith, St Mary's and Blue Mountains local area commands. These men and women are a credit to the uniform they wear, and I have no doubt that they will always protect people wherever they work. Many of them spoke highly about the training they received at the police academy, but that does not mean that more cannot be done in this area. That is why I was happy that more than \$9 million is being spent to upgrade educational facilities at the Goulburn police academy. This money will ensure that future graduates of the academy will be the best-trained officers in the country.

I am also happy to report that the Government has earmarked \$15 million to continue Operation Vikings. During the recent election campaign members of the public told me how much they valued high-visibility policing in the area, and I am happy to let them know that this trend will continue. The people of Penrith have every right to feel safe in their community. The Penrith local government area recorded falls in five types of major crimes between 2001 and 2002. Sexual assault decreased by 41.2 per cent, break and enter in dwellings and non-dwellings decreased by more than 20 per cent each, motor vehicle theft fell by 13 per cent, and theft from motor vehicles fell by 20 per cent. The continued commitment to Vikings raids will hopefully result in crime in our local area continuing to fall.

Whilst we try to reduce the number of crimes being committed, it is important that we do not forget about those who have been arrested and are serving their punishment in gaol. A custodial sentence is not meant to be easy, but people in gaol still need to be protected and looked after so that on release they can once again become valuable members of society. The Department of Corrective Services has allocated approximately \$175 million for the containment and care of gaol inmates in Western Sydney. The Penrith electorate has three correctional centres, one for youth, one for males, and one for females. Recently I visited the Emu Plains Correctional Centre and observed the excellent services it provides for women with a drug problem. The Government is to be commended for the funds it provides for those services. The centre, which has the only remaining dairy in the Penrith electorate, provides all the dairy produce for the Department of Corrective Services.

I turn to the Department of Community Services [DOCS] budget and what it means for the people of Penrith. The New South Wales Government has recognised the importance of front-line DOCS workers and has provided additional funding for various programs—unlike the Opposition, which wanted to cut hundreds of front-line DOCS workers just prior to the election. The 2003-04 DOCS budget is more than \$800 million, a massive 25 per cent increase on last year's budget. The budget allocates increased funding to early intervention programs and prevention services. One of the most important funding guarantees is the \$1.7 million for the continuation of the Families First Program in Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. The Families First Strategy was designed to expand the parenting skills of parents with children under the age of eight, and it has been a great success thus far. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

Another important project the budget continues to fund is the DOCS domestic violence help lines, and the Government has made a commitment to provide \$18.65 million for that project. I am also happy to announce that the budget offers recurrent funding for a number of youth-based organisations in Western Sydney. The Penrith Channel Youth Cafe, which is located very close to my electorate office in Penrith, was recently granted recurrent funding of more than \$170,000 a year. The funding will enable the cafe to continue existing programs, as well as develop new programs.

The DOCS budget also allocates \$1.28 billion to the Department of Ageing, Disability Services and Home Care. Expenditure in Western Sydney is expected to reach nearly \$260 million. As well as addressing the need for more services for children and families in need, the New South Wales Government is committed to addressing social problems such as excessive gambling. By taking an holistic approach to addressing such problems we stand a better chance of reducing the number of cases of excessive gambling. The 2003-04 budget allocates more than \$2.24 million from the Casino Community Benefit Fund to counter problem gambling in Western Sydney. Excessive gambling harms the individual, but there is also a cost to the family and the community in general.

We continually read newspaper articles about well-liked and well-respected employees being arrested because of action relating to a gambling addiction. We must all work towards finding a solution to this problem. Two organisations in Penrith dedicated to providing counselling services for problem gamblers and their families have been allocated funds from this year's budget, and I am happy that they will be able to continue providing a valuable service to our local community. Wesley Gambling Counselling Services has been granted more than \$200,000 to continue to provide a counselling service to problem gamblers and their families, and Credit Line Financial Counselling has been provided \$9,500 to assist in providing a part-time counsellor to deliver an outreach service in Emu Plains.

Many residents tell me how frustrating it can be to get stuck in traffic when driving to work every day, especially for residents in Western Sydney who work in the Sydney central business district. The Government must rise to the challenge of making public transport more convenient. However, public transport is not the only issue that needs to be addressed; roads should also be improved. This budget goes a long way towards addressing a number of problems with Transport and Roads in Western Sydney. I am happy to announce that the Government anticipates spending \$1.192 billion on public transport and roads in Western Sydney. A large proportion of this funding will be spent on the rail network. As a commuter on the 9.05 a.m. train from Penrith, I am very pleased about that. We must strive to make public transport safe, convenient and affordable. I believe that the Government has carefully considered these factors in the preparation of the 2003-04 budget.

Rail safety is being addressed, and the Government is committed to increasing the number of State Transit officers by 200 before the end of 2004. This will increase the total number of transit officers to 500. Those officers look out for our safety on trains and railway stations. Making public transport more convenient encourages people to take buses and trains, and thereby reduces the number of cars on our roads. Obviously, this has massive benefits for the environment and other motorists. The Government is working hard to ensure that public transport is convenient, by spending money on additional car parking spaces, maintaining railway stations, and ensuring that passengers are able to travel in comfort. In this budget \$6.9 million has been set aside for the continuation of works on 41 new train carriages to service outer suburban areas, including the Blue Mountains. A massive \$64 million will be spent on the maintenance and operations of railway stations throughout Western Sydney.

The New South Wales Government aims to make public transport affordable to schoolchildren, as well as the disabled and elderly. In the 2003-04 budget the Government has committed almost \$450 million to the continuation of the School Student Transport Scheme. The scheme provides subsidised travel to and from school for eligible students. The Government has also provided \$233 million to subsidise pensioner and welfare concessions on CityRail and State Transit services. In my electorate of Penrith I have met with a number of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. All levels of government need to work together to address the problem of homelessness in our society. This budget provides more accommodation for people who are in the most urgent need of housing. More than \$23 million has been allocated for capital works expenditure in Western Sydney over the next year to provide emergency housing. The money will fund the purchase or construction of 186 homes in Western Sydney, 11 of which will be specifically for crisis accommodation. I am pleased that a further \$50,000 will be provided for the implementation of the Western Sydney Homelessness Strategy.

It gives me great pleasure to speak about some of the environmental initiatives in Penrith. One of the most important grants announced prior to the election, and confirmed at the council meeting last Monday night, is more than \$82,500 to Penrith City Council. The grant will enable council to hire a weed harvester to harvest weeds such as the *egaria densa*, which has become a problem for recreational users of the Nepean River. As I said, Nepean River is Penrith's ribbon of gold. I am proud to say that the Carr Government has stepped in to help with the protection of this wonderful natural asset. In recent years *egaria densa* and alligator weed have plagued the river. But this budgetary allocation will not be used to eliminate that problem; it will be used to address the problem in a slow and cautious manner. If council agrees, that money will go towards the purchase of a weed harvester which council trialled prior to the election.

The weed harvester will come from a local company that not only built it but also designed it and patented it. Unlike its American counterpart, which slashes the weed and lets it float down the river to regrow, this weed harvester cuts the weed and collects it in a bag. It is then taken off site away from the river and is dried and re-used. This wonderful initiative is more than a weed eater, as was claimed in one of the local newspapers; a local company that has initiative and drive has been given support to improve the Nepean River. The aim of the Western Sydney budget is to secure jobs and investment. Even though the purchase of this weed harvester might mean less than \$100,000 for a local company, it will increase the number of jobs and investment in the local economy. I could refer in my speech to the real benefits of this budget that will be provided to people in the Penrith electorate, as well as the wider regions of Western Sydney. What I have outlined constitutes only a portion of the total \$7.1 billion that has been allocated to Western Sydney.

I refer to the \$3 million that is being spent on purchasing new fire trucks and the \$60 million that has been allocated to upgrade the Penrith sewage treatment plant. I could speak at length about the \$3 million funding increase for linear accelerators at Nepean Cancer Care Centre, or the \$300,000 that is being spent on the TAFE Youth at Risk Scheme to help students with their further education. I have no doubt that other honourable members in the Western Sydney region will refer to some of these projects.

I hope that Opposition members are able to see past party politics and admit that this budget delivers large amounts of money to those who need it the most. This budget, which is a good budget, is solid and fair but, most importantly, it is a helping budget. It provides for quality education for our schoolchildren, state-of-the-art hospital treatment for our sick, concessions for our elderly, and assistance and support for our most vulnerable. I applaud the New South Wales Government for introducing this budget and I commend it to the House.

*[Debate interrupted.]*

#### **PRINTING OF PAPERS**

##### **Motion, by leave, by Mr Scully agreed to:**

That the following papers be printed:

Half Yearly Report of Sydney Water for the period 1 July to 31 December 2002, dated January 2003  
Report and Determination under Section 14 of the Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Act 1975—Judges, Magistrates and Related Group  
Report of the Wine Grapes Marketing Board 2002  
Report of the Wild Dog Destruction Board for 2002  
Report of the Parole Board for 2002

#### **SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**

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

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 1 July 2003 at 2.15 p.m.

#### **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

##### **Financial Year 2003-04**

*[Debate resumed.]*

**Mr KERR** (Cronulla) [1.14 p.m.]: The new honourable member for Penrith referred to the tragedy of gambling and how admired and well-respected employees are often caught up in it and steal money from their places of employment. While nobody could accuse the present Government of being admired and well respected it is the biggest addict to gambling in this State. I urge the honourable member for Penrith to look at the budget papers where she will see the revenue that is derived by this Government from gambling. If the honourable member looks at the history of gambling in New South Wales she will see the proliferation of gambling that has occurred under the Carr Government. That has brought in its wake the family and individual tragedies that she mentioned briefly.

Given the record revenue that this Government receives because of the economic stewardship of the Howard Government, the taxpayers of New South Wales were entitled to look forward to the Premier coming

into this Chamber and announcing some form of taxation relief from the unceasing greed they have witnessed since the Carr Government has been in office. Instead, comet Egan landed in this Chamber and unleashed a barrage of abstract notions of unprecedented duration and ferocity. Even Labor-friendly Independents shielded themselves as faith, social fabric, and modernisation—and I am referring only to the first page of the Budget Speech—rocketed across the Chamber and thundered into the benches. Satellites tracking earth from deep space would have blown their fuses at the sheer philosophical energy that was unleashed.

It got worse. On several occasions the Treasurer abandoned ordinary English prose and spoke entirely in lists. Only one of these lists was strung together by an angry conjunction. As the Leader of the Opposition said, the Treasurer sought to justify his rises in taxation and his tax record by saying, "If we lived in the Garden of Eden, there would be no taxes." In the beginning, when Mr Egan was the out form, he was created a Minister by caucus. Madam Acting-Speaker, I am not suggesting that you or the Parliamentary Secretary, the honourable member for Menai, were present at that creation. I am sure that the Parliamentary Secretary is glad because she could be mistaken for the creator.

The Treasurer, having been created, was given financial dominion over the fish of all the rivers in the State, the fowl of the air and battery farms, the cattle—including a dairy farm in Penrith—the whole of the State and every creeping thing that relied on a budget item for its funding. We do not know when the Treasurer took the career decision to eat the apple. However, we know that every budget since that time has planted numerous orchards of forbidden fruit in the form of taxes. The Premier and the Treasurer—a former resident of Cronulla—neglected the Cronulla electorate and, in particular schools, in the 2003-04 budget. Parents of pupils at Burraneer Bay school met with the former Minister for Education seeking additional funding for that school. I have spoken in this House and to the Minister about the need to upgrade that school.

At the last election Tracie Sonda, an Independent candidate, said that funding for an upgrade of that school had been included in the 2002-2003 budget. I have looked at those budget papers but that funding does not appear to be there. I do not believe Ms Sonda has lied about that funding, but I urge her to produce her budget papers for 2002-2003. Each year the Government spends less on roads in the Cronulla electorate. The Roads and Capital Maintenance Program has now fallen to a new low of \$1,227,000. The honourable member for Penrith mentioned the problems that her constituents have travelling to work. I assure her that those problems are shared by everyone in the metropolitan area and in country New South Wales. New minor roadworks in Cronulla do not go far enough.

The Government has provided \$60,000 to erect right-turn signals at the intersection of the Kingsway and Gannons Road, Caringbah, \$50,000 for a cycleway at Woolooware Bay and \$10,000 for a wombat crossing at St Aloysius School on Nicholson Parade, Cronulla. The electorate's roads have been poorly maintained by the Carr Government, and their condition has worsened since the May downpours. The Kingsway and President Avenue, for example, are littered with potholes. Fortunately, the Howard Government has provided much-needed funding—thanks largely to the energetic representations of the Federal member for Cook, Bruce Baird. Sutherland Shire Council is building new right-turn lanes on President Avenue but the road remains a danger to motorists, who must swerve daily to miss potholes that have been there for months. The State Government has elected to patch the Kingsway instead of resurfacing it. President Avenue and the Kingsway are the two major routes across the shire and Cronulla electorate motorists deserve better than these goat tracks.

The announced repainting of Tom Uglys Bridge is a rehash of last year's announcement of \$875,000 for that task, but not a lick of paint has been applied to date. The budget contains no funds for the promised transport study of the abandoned F6 corridor. I assure honourable members that that totally short-sighted decision will cause gridlock and other adverse consequences that will increase as the years go by. The duplication of the Cronulla railway line could also be described as duplicity, with planned works continuing from last year's announcement. Some \$1,400,000 has allegedly been spent so far and the public have a right to see what is being planned for that duplication. For the \$900,000 allegedly spent on the Miranda Station Easy Access Program commuters have received only a lot of boardings, presumably designed to give the impression that something is happening. Just what is the Government doing with the people's money?

Turning to the environment, the Government continues to neglect Kurnell, with no funding provided for the promised \$5-million upgrade of Captain Cook's landing place. That is the name that local residents—the people who matter—want for that locality. Government members have referred to the importance of law and order and the Government's performance in this area. Many of their constituents will spend the summer—and indeed the winter—in Cronulla enjoying the walks, restaurants and other facilities that my electorate offers. I make no secret of the fact that I believe there are two types of people in the world: those who live in the

Cronulla electorate and those who want to live in the Cronulla electorate. Those Government members who have spoken in this debate fall into the second category. I am sure they will visit Cronulla and when they do they will find, thanks to this Government, a police station badly in need of upgrading. Its present manning levels are equivalent to those of 1995 when the Coalition was in government. Those levels should have increased substantially with the effluxion of time. By neglecting law and order in Cronulla, the Government is doing a disservice to those people whom its members represent.

The single ray of hope in this budget debate was provided by the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke about how he would use the budget surplus to offer relief to home owners. People have been totally ripped off by increasing stamp duty and land tax payments. I believe there is a great deal of support for the proposals outlined by the Leader of the Opposition, which will help families. We have heard about Department of Community Services initiatives and how the Government is being "tough on the causes of crime". The best thing for this Government to do is ensure that every family has a home. The Government should have alleviated some of the financial pressures brought to bear on young families by providing some stamp duty relief in this budget. The money is available.

The Treasurer spoke in this place about how many budgets he has delivered. With each budget, his reputation for accuracy has suffered. In fact, if the Treasurer were to hail a taxi and tell the driver to take him to Hurstville station I believe the driver would make an educated guess and take the Treasurer to Cronulla station, thinking that is where he wanted to go. The Treasurer spoke in glowing terms of the budget surpluses that he has delivered. However, he has been fortunate that the Howard-Costello Government has been in office since 1996, providing sensible national economic management. The Treasurer's sources of revenue, such as stamp duty and payroll tax, are totally dependent on the national economy and its performance. If the national economy were performing today as it did under the Keating Government, the Treasurer's budget would be not in the black but in the red. Mind you, I agree with those honourable members who have said that black is an appropriate colour for the budget papers: black to represent people's dashed hopes for tax relief and everything else that is happening in this State. So long as the Carr Government remains in office, things can only get bitter.

**Mr STEWART** (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.27 p.m.]: I am pleased to report that in the Carr Government's eighth balanced budget the Bankstown electorate wins a healthy share of the record \$7,138 million to be spent on schools, hospitals, roads, railways, public housing and the power and water networks. This budget will deliver for Bankstown, with increased investment designed to improve government services that help families and small businesses. Importantly, the Carr Government is honouring its affordable and carefully costed pre-election commitments. The budget gives effect to those pre-election promises in order to secure the future of New South Wales as a whole, and especially areas such as my electorate.

The Carr Government is getting on with the job, approving the largest capital works program ever undertaken by a State Government. We should all be very proud of that achievement. The Treasurer has advised that this record program totals almost \$29 billion over four years, which is an increase of almost \$5.3 billion, or 22 per cent, on the previous four years. This year's record \$7,138 million capital works program is \$788 million higher than last year's \$6,350 million program, which is an increase of more than 12 per cent. We can afford that increase, which is part of this Government's continuing commitment to improving infrastructure in this State in a fiscally responsibly manner.

Since 1995 the Carr Government has cut general government net debt by \$8 billion, an amazing result. Responsible fiscal management has led to savings of approximately \$1 billion in interest payments compared to 1995—vital funds that can now be spent on hospitals, roads, schools and police. As with the past eight budgets, the Government's sound financial management has meant a reduction in State debt, so that extra funding is available for vital services in the community. Despite the uncertain global economical outlook, our finances have never been in better shape.

I am extremely pleased to report that as a result of this healthy budget, the Bankstown electorate has received a whopping \$25.4 million in local capital works expenditure. Without doubt, this budget delivers for the Bankstown community and its surrounding areas. The electorate of Bankstown is a diverse community, which requires significant service delivery. The electorate incorporates Yagoona, south Strathfield, Belfield, Lakemba, Punchbowl and the central business district of Bankstown. The Carr Government is honouring all its pre-election commitments and is working to secure a future for my local area and across New South Wales. The key areas of expenditure for the Bankstown electorate include: \$2 million for the Attorney General's Department, \$1.7 million for education and training and \$3.5 million in successive budgets for TAFE, \$3.756 million for public housing, \$39,000 for the Legal Aid Commission, \$4.675 million for public transport and \$5.063 million for roads.

That is a tremendous result for the Bankstown community, which continues to work in partnership with the Carr Government using the successful formula of enhancing local communities through interaction and communication. Key projects supported in the budget include \$400,000 of the \$3.5 million allocation for the civil construction and carpentry workshop at the Bankstown-Chullora campus of TAFE, which is an excellent training facility for the area. Bankstown Public School has received \$1.5 million of the \$1.71 million allocation for construction of a new hall, canteen and covered outdoor learning area at Bankstown Public School, the largest local primary school in my area. The school is a barometer of my local community. The student body is represented by 50 to 60 different nationalities and the school is a microcosm of the larger multicultural community of Bankstown. For many years I have worked with the school community, in partnership with the Government, to achieve this great result.

Other allocations include \$2 million towards the massive \$16 million redevelopment of Bankstown courthouse; \$1.6 million to upgrade and provide a right-hand turn movement at the intersection of Stacey Street and Rickard Road, Bankstown; \$3 million for local road upgrades; and \$1.85 million for 24 units of public housing accommodation at Greenacre and Belmore. This budget delivers for the Bankstown electorate. I have mentioned the principal items of budget expenditures but, of course, smaller allocations have also been made. The Minister for Education and Training is delivering better education and training with \$1.9 million being allocated in the 2003-04 budget for capital works projects valued at more than \$5.21 million.

The Minister has advised me that the \$3.5 million construction project for Bankstown TAFE will commence in 2003-04, with funding of \$400,000 to begin the construction of a workshop and seminar room, teacher accommodation and a bulk store for materials. I commend the Director of Bankstown TAFE, Heather Crawford, for being an outstanding college director. She has been innovative and has steered the college in new directions. Heather has the respect of the community and understands that the college must meet market sector demands. The students are extremely satisfied with the services provided by the college, and I commend Heather Crawford and her staff team for delivering that fantastic result.

I am pleased to report that the 2003-04 budget provides an overall record sum of \$8.7 billion for Education and Training. I commend Greg Ellem, former Principal of Bankstown Public School, who retired last year, for his tireless work for the school community. The new principal, Greg Mason, has worked diligently to understand the needs of the school community. I look forward to working closely with Mr Mason, who has a fantastic education background from which Bankstown Public School will reap the rewards. I commend the president of the parents and citizens association, Poorna Karunaratne, who has worked tirelessly to ensure that this year the school will have the benefit of the new facilities.

Since 1995 the Carr Government has massively increased the total funding for the portfolio of education by \$2.9 billion, up by 50 per cent—an amazing result. The Carr Government is committed to reducing class sizes. The Government has listened to the concerns of teachers and has reduced class sizes for years K-1 to K-3—those early developmental years. The Government is expanding technology in schools and building on key literacy and numeracy programs. Importantly, it is continuing the program to install airconditioning and replace demountable classrooms. Demountable classrooms have been a bone of contention in certain communities through certain schools. I assure the House that the Government has listened to those concerns and is moving to deliver what has been asked for in relation to that issue.

Other budget highlights for education include \$6,618 million in total recurrent funding to schools, \$1,344 million in recurrent expenditure for TAFE New South Wales, and \$24.7 million in 2003-04 for recurrent and capital funding to progressively reduce class sizes in the early school years to which I referred. The Government's massive injection of funds into public education will take public education forward into a positive future. Roads in the Bankstown electorate will receive some dramatic improvements as a result of this budget. I am pleased to report that more than \$5 million has been allocated in the 2003-04 budget to upgrade and enhance local roads in the Bankstown electorate and improve safety and travelling conditions.

That is an increase of more than \$3 million in the area, showing the Government's ongoing commitment to improving maintenance and road safety in areas such as Bankstown. This year \$2 million will be spent on constructing a dual right-hand turn bay at Stacey Street for southbound traffic entering Rickard Road, which has long been asked for and is now being delivered by the Carr Government. That means that traffic will be directed into the Bankstown central business district [CBD]. That did not occur effectively in the past, and business has suffered as a result. Bankstown Square management, Centro Properties, and Bankstown City Council have worked closely with me on this proposal, and I am pleased to say that it is now being delivered.



I am pleased to report to the House that, as part of their involvement in the proposal, Centro Properties, which owns Bankstown Square, and Bankstown City Council will each contribute \$400,000 to this project. I mentioned the word "partnership". This is another classic example of the Carr Government working in partnership with local communities. In this case it is working in partnership with the business community and Bankstown City Council, delivering a result for the community. The right-hand turn will dramatically improve traffic conditions and safety. Importantly, it will enhance the business infrastructure of the Bankstown CBD.

Other major initiatives in the budget for roads include nearly \$3.4 million to maintain State and regional roads in the area; nearly \$1.5 million for traffic facilities and the cost of developing a pedestrian access and mobility plan in conjunction with Bankstown City Council; and \$193,000 for road safety initiatives, including the relocation of hazardous poles in Olympic Drive and along the Hume Highway in the top end of the Bankstown electorate. Also, Bankstown City Council, Canterbury City Council and Strathfield Municipal Council will receive a total of \$1.4 million of State funding to help maintain their roads. I know they are pleased about that.

In terms of public housing, the budget delivers another good report for the Bankstown electorate. Bankstown will receive about \$3.7 million to enhance local public housing. As I said, about \$1.8 million of that will be spent on building new housing stock. The Greenacre-Belmore region will be enhanced as a result of that public housing infrastructure. The housing budget includes an allocation of \$77.4 million for the Aboriginal housing sector. That is an important area, and I am pleased that that has been delivered. Some \$25.8 million will be spent on assisting some 71,000 people into private accommodation through the RentStart program, which is working well; \$11 million will be spent on rental subsidies; \$14.4 million will be used to provide 40 new crisis accommodation properties; and \$1.5 million has been allocated for homeless initiatives in the Sydney metropolitan area. I am glad that the Government is doing something about that important area of concern. The Government is also spending considerable funds in putting 1,000 public housing tenants through employment training programs. So the Government is soundly delivering for public housing.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Housing, I am pleased that the Bankstown electorate has received a fair share of this great budget for both Roads and Housing. Earlier I said that the Bankstown electorate will receive \$2 million for upgrading and rebuilding Bankstown courthouse. That project, which is expected to take a couple of years, is attached to another important development in Bankstown, that is, relocating the police station in new premises later this year. The upgrading of Bankstown courthouse will incorporate the old police station premises. The police station in Bankstown was built in the early 1950s. At that time it was designed to accommodate about 70 officers. Bankstown now has the largest police command in Australia, with more than 250 officers, and it needs accommodation to reflect that. I am pleased that new accommodation will be provided in a central location in the Bankstown CBD. The improved accommodation facilities for local police will also help to improve the morale of police, who need to know that we care about them and that we want to deliver better infrastructure for their needs.

One aspect of the budget I am concerned about is the way the Government has increased the tax on gaming machines. That will have a detrimental effect on local clubs. Several local clubs in my area, including Bankstown District Sports Club, Bankstown RSL Club, Bankstown City Bowling Club, Mount Lewis Bowling Club, Greenacre Bowling Club, Bankstown Polish Club, the Lithuanian Club, will be adversely affected by this move. I hope the Government works co-operatively with these clubs to find ways to enhance their needs and I will try to convince the Treasurer to look at ways to achieve that. I understand why the tax on gaming machines has been increased, but we need to ensure that clubs are not hurt as a result. Clubs are an important part of our local infrastructure, and they deliver soundly for our local communities. Overall, this is a great budget for the State and a fantastic budget for Bankstown. I commend the Treasurer, the Premier and Cabinet. I now look forward to working with the Government to put in place these important initiatives.

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

#### **ASSENT TO BILLS**

Assent to the following bills reported:

Gene Technology (New South Wales) Bill  
Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Bill

## POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

### Report

**Madam Acting-Speaker (Ms Saliba)** tabled, in accordance with section 103 (1) of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996, the Special Report to Parliament entitled "Project Dresden II—The Second Audit of the Quality of NSW Police Internal Investigations", dated June 2003.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

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### LANDCARE FUNDING

**Mr APLIN** (Albury) [1.49 p.m.]: Landcare is one of Australia's great success stories and it is therefore extraordinary that its future is so uncertain. Landcare has been a shining example of government funding encouraging people to actually achieve something worthwhile for the environment. It has been a scheme based on the expertise of a small group of dedicated staff supported by farmers and other concerned citizens. In the electorate of Albury we have some of the best Landcare groups in Australia and their achievements have been recognised by governments and various agencies in order to promote the value of Landcare.

Today I want to mention two Landcare networks—the West Hume and the Upper Murray Landcare groups, each of which employed their own Landcare co-ordinators. These co-ordinators, Kim Krebs and David Costello, have inspired and provided direct support to communities in the Landcare groups of West Hume, Bungowannah-Splitters Creek, Fowlers-Wagra, Mullengandra, Woolshed and Bowna Arm. Landcare is about community involvement in sustainable natural resource management. It involves people working together to improve our situation environmentally, socially and economically. It has been a government-sponsored program involving a community and government partnership, both State and Federal, since 1989.

Landcare groups have become an example of environmental awareness at a local level—a grassroots approach to natural resource management focusing on education and with a commitment to a sustainable future of land use. The majority of projects were funded through the Natural Heritage Trust [NHT] on a competitive basis, and groups applying for funding needed to match NHT funding on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The contribution could be cash or kind and could include contributions from State or local government and private sources. The first project funded was in the former course of the Murray River, at Green Gully. It was a salt abatement program.

What are the main natural resource management issues of importance to Landcare groups? Sustainable farming is a key issue, followed by soil acidity. Biodiversity matters are prominent, and remnant vegetation protection, revegetation, threatened species, habitat loss, pest plants and animals all rate highly. Rising watertables, dryland salinity and streambank erosion complete a list of top issues. In the year 2000 catchments across Australia were asked by State and Federal governments to develop catchment management plans. Through technical assistance from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources—formerly the Department of Land and Water Conservation—the Murray catchment management plan was produced. This document forms the blueprint for publicly funded natural resource management on the New South Wales side of the Murray catchment for the next 10 years.

A recommendation in this blueprint is that the community support previously managed by Landcare needs to broaden its reach. In February of this year the Murray Catchment blueprint was signed off by the New South Wales Government. Hume Shire Council, which is in the news currently as it is the subject of a boundary alteration proposal, took the initiative and was one of the first local government agencies to employ community support staff to help the Murray catchment management plan be successfully implemented across its region. With the skills, local knowledge and networking of the two Landcare co-ordinators, the council considered it appropriate to employ these people as the natural resource officers behind the catchment blueprint.

What is their role? Kim and David are there to help farmers and small landholders make informed decisions about balancing conservation and production. Where possible, they assist in arranging grants to cover fencing material, purchase of local native plants and even offset the costs of establishing perennial pastures. They support over 1,000 landholders. And it is these landholders who are frustrated and concerned because of

the uncertainty surrounding the future employment of the Landcare personnel. In a recent letter to me Councillor Bill MacDonald from Mullengandra expressed the great frustration—even disgust—at Landcare groups with the current funding fiasco. As he states:

It has been known since December 2002 that interim funding would cease at 30 June 2003 from which time the NHT 2 funding was to be implemented. This has been stalled by NSW Government inaction, in signing the Natural Heritage Trust Bilateral Agreement, following Federal Government concerns over the State's financial distribution process.

As Councillor McDonald notes, flowing from this inaction is the uncertainty of employment for co-ordinators, the question of continuity for Landcare projects and support in communities, and indeed the possibility of the very loss of the system itself—which clearly we can ill afford. He puts it clearly:

The once viable, energetic and enthusiastic Landcare structure as it related to NSW is on the verge of demise.

The funding situation has been known for many months, and as late as last week the co-ordinators were given a reprieve and advised they had another 30 days. Hume shire will continue to provide the administrative framework for these officers, with the employment funding coming via the State department. But this temporary and unsettling phase ceases on 31 July. We need certainty. Landcare is vital to the area. We need to retain these experienced and dedicated staff, and we must retain them. [*Time expired.*]

### LIVING IN HARMONY CULTURAL NIGHT

**Ms JUDGE** (Strathfield) [1.54 p.m.]: I wish to commend the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association and the Multicultural Sea Scouts for organising the Living in Harmony Cultural Night—celebrating traditional Chinese Aboriginal culture—on Monday 23 June. This was an absolutely marvellous evening. It was quite unique to see Chinese and indigenous Australians celebrating together. The evening was a celebration of traditional Chinese and Aboriginal culture, and it brought together leading members of those communities, and particularly visiting elders from Nambucca Heads and the broader community.

The evening was co-hosted by the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association, which is based in Liverpool Road, Ashfield, and the Multicultural Sea Scouts, which come under the umbrella of the Scouts. The following representatives from the host organisations were in attendance: Mr Bill Huang, Chairman of the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association; Mr King Lee, OAM, Chairman, International and Cultural Affairs Council, New South Wales Scouts; Mr Bob Wu, Vice-Chairman, Chinese Migrant Welfare Association [CMWA]; and Mrs Tracey Chen, representing the sponsor of that evening, the Symbol Group, which did a marvellous job in supporting the function.

The Chinese Migrant Welfare Association has been operating since 1990, and is funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. Its location on Liverpool Road, Ashfield, is in the centre of the electorate that I represent—Strathfield—where many enterprising Chinese migrants, particularly from Shanghai, have established businesses in recent years. The CMWA sponsored a group of elders from Nambucca Heads to come to Sydney to promote cultural exchange and understanding. The Symbol Group, which is a company from Guangdong Province, in China, generously provided much-needed financial support.

The Living in Harmony concert was a wonderful celebration of cultural diversity, and truly promoted understanding and co-operation. The evening included performances by the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association choir, the CMWA Chinese opera group, a performance by soloist Mr Ye Weihai, a performance by an Aboriginal instrumental group from Nambucca Heads, a performance by the CMWA dance group, a piano accordion performance by Andrew Liashenko and Ivan Liashenko, and a solo performance by John Morrison from the Multicultural Sea Scout group. There were also performances by the group from Nambucca Heads, including a lesson on singing "Heads and Shoulders, Knees and Toes" in their traditional language, which we all enjoyed. One of the Aboriginal elders played some tunes on a gum leaf, so we learned something new.

Elders from Nambucca Heads were Mr Michael Jarrett, Director of Gumbayngirr Children's School; Mrs Jenny Jarrett, Gumbayngirr; Mr Simon Jarrett; Mr Khan Jarrett; Mrs Rose Boston, Aboriginal elder, musical artist from the Muurrbay Language Centre; Mr Russell Walker, Aboriginal elder and board member of the Bawrunga Medical Service; Mrs Violet Perry, Aboriginal elder, Bungalong tribe; Mrs Janet Marshall, Aboriginal artist; Mrs Emily Walker, Aboriginal elder, Gumbayngirr; Mrs Nancy Walker, Aboriginal elder, again from the Gumbayngirr tribe; Mrs Lorraine Edwards, Aboriginal elder, also of the Gumbayngirr tribe; Mrs Christine Jarrett, Aboriginal Elder, Gumbayngirr tribe; and Mrs Amy Marshall, Aboriginal Elder, Gumbayngirr.

I was very pleased to see in attendance that evening Mr King Feng, the Public Relations Consultant of Chinatown Promotions; Mr Johnston Chen and Ms Wang Shu Fen from the West Region Chinese Association; Mrs Claire Lee from the Hills Chinese Women's Association; Mr Hu and Mrs Wang from the Sydney Australian Chinese Children's Art Theatre; and many other distinguished guests and performers. It is events like these that celebrate the multicultural nature of our community and bring together people who build social capital and create a sense of community. I commend the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association, particularly its President, Mr Bill Huang, Secretary Ms Jane Sun, Vice-President Mr Bob Wu and the Multicultural Sea Scouts for this fantastic initiative. It was a wonder evening, much enjoyed by all.

**Mr STEWART** (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.59 p.m.]: On behalf of the Government I join with the honourable member for Strathfield in congratulating the Chinese Migrant Welfare Association, along with the Multicultural Sea Scouts, on running the tremendous function that the honourable member attended. It is an obvious example of multiculturalism at its best and an opportunity to demonstrate indigenous Australia working with multicultural Australia. It illustrates the harmony that we all enjoy, but particularly in my local area and that of the honourable member for Strathfield.

I am blessed to share an electorate boundary with the honourable member for Strathfield. We are pleased to share the perspectives offered to us through multiculturalism. It is good to see these things occurring, as they enhance communication and break down the boundaries between different sections of the community. I commend the honourable member for Strathfield for her initiatives in this area and for working closely with these community groups. She is a tenacious local member, one I am proud to have as a neighbour and one who will achieve great things for the electorate of Strathfield.

#### **PENNANT HILLS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

**Mr TINK** (Epping) [2.00 p.m.]: I wish to raise some traffic matters that affect the eastern side of Pennant Hills Road in the suburb of Pennant Hills. I am indebted to Hornsby council for some papers that I will refer to extensively. In recent years residents and those who participate in sporting activities in Pennant Hills Park have raised concerns about traffic problems in the streets that provide access to the park. Their main concern is the congestion experienced by traffic going to and from Pennant Hills Park during peak times. However, there have also been some complaints regarding speeding in Britannia Avenue, commuter parking in many of the streets east of Pennant Hills Road, erratic driving by service personnel from nearby car dealerships, general problems with traffic on Pennant Hills Road, and traffic, and parking problems in Pennant Hills Park.

Pennant Hills Park is a massive sporting complex, drawing people from all over Sydney, especially on Saturdays. Intense difficulties have been created in the area east of Pennant Hills Road. In addition to individual concerns received by Hornsby council and me, a petition containing 1,037 signatures—which is a significant representative group of that area—was tabled at council's 7 May planning meeting, requesting that council consider the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Britannia Street and Cecil Avenue and the installation of additional road safety signs in the area. The petition further requested that the council recommend to the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] that the timing of the traffic light signals be adjusted to accommodate peak traffic periods, particularly those relating to weekend sport. That is the key issue that the Government needs to address.

Major access to and from Pennant Hills Park is by the signalised intersection of Pennant Hills Road and The Crescent. The Crescent leads to Britannia Street. Alternative access is also available via the unsignalised intersection of Pennant Hills Road and George Street. George Street leads to Britannia Street via Harold Avenue and Charlotte Street. George Street also leads to Britannia Street via Cecil Avenue. It is not unusual on Saturdays during the netball season for traffic to queue from Pennant Hills Road back to the roundabout at Pennant Hills Park. The traffic waiting to make a right-hand turn into The Crescent to access Pennant Hills Park stretches right back to Beecroft Road, causing massive disruption on Saturday mornings to the main north-south highway, which Pennant Hills Road represents at that point.

Discussions with the RTA traffic signal staff revealed that the intersection of Boundary Road and Pennant Hills Road is a master intersection—a formal phrase used by the RTA—and controls the amount of green time given to side streets such as The Crescent. The RTA is considering making The Crescent a master intersection, and that will provide higher priority for traffic entering and exiting The Crescent during peak sporting times. Some improvement to the capacity of traffic turning left onto Pennant Hills Road from The Crescent can also be made with the prohibition of parking on Saturdays on the south-western side of The Crescent between Britannia Street and Pennant Hills Road. The key change that has to be addressed by the RTA

and the Government is to turn the intersection of Pennant Hills Road and The Crescent, which is currently governed by traffic lights, into a master intersection so more time is allowed to get in and out of the local road network.

It is said by some that the provision of traffic control signals at the intersection of Pennant Hills Road and George Street would assist in the reduction of crashes at that location and reduce delays for vehicles exiting George Street. But the intersection is in close proximity to the intersection of Pennant Hills Road and The Crescent, and vehicles from this intersection queue past George Street on just about every cycle. On the information currently available to me I am not in favour of traffic lights at the intersection of Pennant Hills Road and George Street. I believe the primary focus has to be on the intersection of The Crescent and Pennant Hills Road, to turn that intersection into a master intersection, to give that sporting traffic on Saturday mornings a better capacity to get in and out of the local road network. I respectfully request that the Minister for Roads give favourable consideration to that proposal.

**Mr STEWART** (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [2.05 p.m.]: I note the issues raised by the honourable member for Epping regarding traffic surrounding Pennant Hills Park. As Parliamentary Secretary for Roads I will raise that issue with the Minister's office. I will also mention the issue to the RTA. I urge the honourable member to work closely with the local traffic committee, of which the RTA is a member, and the council to find the best way to deal with these issues. I am sure the RTA will co-operate in any way to improve safety and enhance traffic movement in the area surrounding Pennant Hills Park.

### **SCOTTY'S CHOPPERS, URALLA**

**Mr TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [2.06 p.m.]: I am pleased to promote the business Scotty's Choppers in my electorate. About a month ago a small Uralla business was highly commended as a finalist in EnergyAustralia's 2003 Engineering Excellence Awards. Scott Cox of Scotty's Choppers was up against some of the nation's finest and largest engineering firms, and his story is an inspiring one for regional business. Mr Cox undertook his engineering apprenticeship in Armidale and in 1995 started his own general engineering firm. At that time about 20 per cent of the business was devoted to custom-built motorbikes, a passion with Mr Cox, who has been riding them most of his life. He says he learned about building bikes the hard way—by keeping a 1988 Harley Davidson on the road. I, too, share that passion for Harley Davidsons. It was not long ago, since I became a member of Parliament, that I sold my Fat Boy. I wish I had known of Mr Cox's skills then.

In his small Uralla workshop Scott Cox set about building the first all-alloy motorbike in the world. He took it to the Big Boys Toys show at Darling Harbour in 2001, where he won \$10,000 for the best custom-built bike in Australia. In the same year he took that bike, the Alluminator, to the Brisbane Hot Rod Show, where it won the top prize. By this time the Alluminator had aroused a lot of interest in the United States trade and media. In March last year Mr Cox was invited to take the bike to the United States for a photo shoot for *Easyriders* magazine during the mecca of all bike shows—the Sturgis in South Dakota, which attracts 150,000 entries and 500,000 spectators. One of the organisers was so impressed with the Alluminator that he placed it in on display in the festival museum as one of the 12 best custom-built bikes in the world.

The next step was an offer from a United States enthusiast to buy it for \$90,000—one day a tiny workshop in Uralla, the next day at the top of the world! The engineering of the bike is so complex it takes three months to build just one, but for Mr Cox and his business partner, Grant Purkiss, there is a ready market out there waiting for each bike as it is completed. Buyers are waiting in line. Another model, the Excalibur, built of steel and aluminium, is also gaining popularity, and is selling for around \$65,000. At this time no-one else in the world can produce bikes with alloy body parts of this standard.

Mr Cox says his 20 years of experience is paying off and that he based his designs on the way suits of armour were built in mediaeval times. The small Uralla firm has just been awarded an export development grant from Austrade of almost \$39,000 for further marketing and promotion to make further inroads into the United States market, where the response to the bikes has already been phenomenal. Mr Cox's bikes will appear in trade shows, specialist magazines and leading distributors across the country. In congratulating Mr Cox and Mr Purkiss on their achievements, I also pay tribute to many of the other small businesses in regional New South Wales and the electorate of Northern Tablelands that are participating in the global economy and finding that they can operate successfully outside metropolitan areas. Their stories are inspiring.

### WAGGA WAGGA ELECTORATE FRUIT FLY INFESTATION

**Mr MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga) [2.10 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the recurrent problem of fruit fly infestation in Wagga Wagga and the towns of Lockhart, Holbrook and Tumbarumba. The residents of Holbrook wrote to me expressing their concerns that the town has not had a baiting program for a number of years. The residents took their case to the local shire council and spoke to Peter Daley, the general manager, who in turn approached the Department of Agriculture to inquire whether the department would partner it in a program of baiting and information for the residents of Holbrook. Unfortunately, the response was that the Department of Agriculture could no longer support programs for these towns because it was concentrating only on exclusion zones, which is basically the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area [MIA].

As many members of the House would know, the MIA is located about 150 kilometres to the south-west of Wagga Wagga. For many people throughout the electorate the pleasure of growing fruit, tomatoes, et cetera—those little, simple pleasures that people enjoy—can no longer be enjoyed because of regular fruit fly infestation. I ask the Minister to find his way clear to provide funds in conjunction with the local councils, and to publish information in the local newspapers at the appropriate time to try to control the fruit fly problem. It may not seem of huge importance to some honourable members, but if we are to develop horticultural industries around the towns of Holbrook and Tumbarumba, which already have a vibrant viticulture industry, and Wagga Wagga and Lockhart we must do some work to try to reduce the incidence of fruit fly.

How will we attract investors to horticultural industries in our area and produce income for the electorate and the people who depend on it if we cannot control fruit fly? Following the response of the Department of Agriculture, the council wrote to Mike Shanahan, who first raised this issue in the *Holbrook, Billabong & Upper Murray Chronicle*. The department offered to support the community through awareness activities, but it must go further. If the Government is serious about providing an atmosphere in which to develop horticultural industries it must solve the endemic fruit fly problem. I will put forward a couple of initiatives and seek the Minister's response. First, it is important that funds be found to reinstate the baiting program. Second, promotion is important because it enables home gardeners and the general public to understand their responsibilities in controlling fruit fly. Third, the department can embark upon programs to reduce fruit trees. In some towns and villages fruit trees have been allowed to deteriorate.

The Minister could initiate a plan through the Work for the Dole Program to remove and dispose of fruit trees for pensioners who are unable to do it themselves or who no longer require them. Removing fruit trees would reduce the risk of infestation and assist people such as Mike Shanahan and Max Clark, two keen gardeners who first raised this issue and who have taken the time to encourage others in the community to raise this with me. The horticultural industry has huge potential, which I want to develop. I ask the Minister to respond positively to my suggestions. If he cannot do it within this budget year I suggest a staged application. I am more than happy to work with him to ensure that the necessary resources are provided to the council so that people can once again enjoy the benefits of gardening and horticulture.

### LILES OVAL, REDHEAD

**Mr MORRIS** (Charlestown) [2.15 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a good news story relating to Liles Oval, at Redhead. On Sunday 22 June I attended the opening of the new amenities block for the sporting grounds at Liles Oval. The day was sunny and warm, and many community representatives attended to celebrate this very significant achievement for the community. Redhead is nestled on the coast and enjoys a village-type atmosphere with a strong community spirit that improves the area and quality of life for all. The project was initiated by the Redhead Dudley Committee and supported by all sporting codes that use facilities within the region. The new amenities block consists of a canteen, change rooms and storage facilities for use by all sporting codes that play at the Redhead sports grounds. The sporting community of Redhead and Dudley have been working progressively at improving the quality of sporting facilities and opportunities through a range of sports-related programs.

The Redhead Dudley Committee, in conjunction with various sporting codes, has been eagerly pursuing funds to construct the amenities block for some time, and it is pleasing to see it come to fruition. The project was supported across two tiers of government with both State and local council funds allocated on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Fundraising activities within the community were undertaken to assist in completing the works. Local businesspeople donated prizes for a major raffle. The works were staged over a number of financial years, and often completed by local trade persons who supported the community's access to sporting facilities. These works were completed, either at cost or at no cost, to enable the funding to go further. The real

credit for the work must go to the various members, sporting representatives and community volunteers who contributed many hours and resources. There are far too many to list. However, I acknowledge Mr Neil Bowd and Mr Danny Plunkett, who oversaw the project to completion. Both men contributed an enormous number of hours to pursuing funds, and they also co-ordinated the works generally.

The contribution of the State, through the Sports and Recreation capital assistance program, was matched by Lake Macquarie City Council and demonstrates yet another example of what can be achieved through partnerships across government levels. This demonstrates the commitment of the Government to assist the community with its projects. Today the sports centre at Redhead offers a high level of facilities to the sporting community, and I am sure the community asset will be well used. Sporting opportunities for our youth are fundamental to an individual developing and shaping as a community member. I am very proud of the Redhead-Dudley community for recognising these benefits and continually striving to improve facilities for all.

The next stage of development for the site consists of car parking arrangements and further works to improve the quality of the playing field. At present car parking is minimal. The available parking requires expansion and formalisation with asphalt surfacing. Although we have the space to expand the car park, the works require substantial funding. Yet again we will see the sporting and general community come on board to assist. The playing fields are improving progressively, again through the desire and commitment of the sporting community. Congratulations to the sporting community and the people of Redhead on their continued commitment to sports development in the Redhead and Dudley areas. I wish them well for the future, and offer my support for their program of works that lay ahead.

**Mr STEWART** (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [2.18 p.m.]: I join with the honourable member for Charlestown in congratulating the Redhead and Dudley communities on the great achievement of the completion of this fantastic sporting complex and its new amenities block. Sport is a very important link within the community and one that enhances not only opportunities for sporting fixtures but also the morale and esteem of an area. Facilities such as those referred to by the honourable member are an integral part of that. It was pleasing to hear that the complex is the result of a partnership between the Government, the local council and the community.

The honourable member for Charlestown is a wonderful new local member who has already proved himself to be a tenacious advocate for his community. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads I often receive letters and representations from him. He has indicated that he is fair dinkum about doing a lot for his community. As he indicated today, working with this project is part of that. I commend him for his efforts. I commend the Redhead and Dudley communities for what they have achieved. I know that we will see a lot more happening in the electorate of Charlestown as a result of representation by such a great member.

#### **CRONULLA ELECTORATE SWIMMING POOL FACILITIES**

**Mr KERR** (Cronulla) [2.20 p.m.]: I want to speak about the provision of swimming pool facilities in the electorate of Cronulla. I understand that Sutherland Shire Council will be upgrading the Cronulla Sports Complex at a cost of \$170,000. It is extremely important in terms of accountability that the council obtain tenders for any work that is carried out so that the ratepayers get value for money. I also refer to the hydrotherapy pool that should be located at Sutherland hospital but is not. I ask the honourable member for Bankstown, the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health, to pass on my message to the Minister for Health about the need to locate the hydrotherapy pool at Sutherland hospital. It is an essential facility to so many people in the Sutherland shire, and it is wrong that the facility will not be in the hospital.

#### **SYDNEY WATER GEORGES RIVER SEWERAGE PROGRAM**

**Mr LYNCH** (Liverpool) [2.21 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to work to be carried out by Sydney Water within my electorate. It is known as the Georges River program. This is the second time in three days that I have been compelled to raise issues in the House concerning this program. This is an indication of my level of concern at the mismanagement of aspects of the program, and at the arrogant and contemptuous attitude that Sydney Water has for the people of Liverpool. The particular problem I wish to raise today is the outrageous and offensive demand by Sydney Water that it be allowed to work around the clock—24 hours a day, seven days a week—to carry out construction and excavation work in residential areas.

This applies to its proposals for parts of Elizabeth Street, Moore Street and Memorial Avenue. I cannot believe that it would try to do this in any other part of Sydney. It is utterly intolerable to argue that the sleep and

lifestyle of residents of Liverpool should be disrupted purely to satisfy either the bottom line of Sydney Water and its contractors or their engineering mania. I first heard of the lunacy of the possibility of 24-hour work earlier this year. I got hold of a letter that Sydney Water distributed to residents, dated 14 February 2003. In part, it reads:

Further to our earlier advice regarding stage one of the Georges River Program, Sydney Water and WALTER Construction Group wish to advise you of work which will commence in late February 2003 in Moore Street between Beale Street and the Hume Highway.

The work will involve trenching and pipe jacking. Pipe jacking involves digging pits and pushing concrete pipes under the roadway between the pits. Trenching will involve digging trenches in the roadway, laying new sewer pipes and then filling the trench and restoring the surface. The work is expected to take approximately 7 months to complete.

Construction will be generally carried out between 7am to 5pm on weekdays and between 7am to 2pm on Saturdays. However, Sydney Water and WALTER Construction Group are investigating the possibility of extending these construction hours in accordance with the requirements of the relevant authorities. By extending the construction hours, the time for construction will be reduced.

It would be fair to say that I was outraged by the proposition that they work extended hours. I sent a letter in response to Sydney Water, dated 21 February 2003. In part, it reads:

I would oppose in the strongest possible terms construction being carried outside of 7am to 5pm on weekdays and 7am to 2pm on Saturdays. Extending construction beyond these already lengthy periods would simply mean that more importance is being placed on bureaucratic and engineering objectives than upon the lifestyle of my constituents.

I look forward to your written assurance that this will not occur.

I add that I have doubts about the competence of those making the decisions about this project if they had not resolved in their own minds the issue of whether extended hours were necessary or not before work commenced. However, Sydney Water staff and contractors in this case seem to be remarkably brave, as well as a little thick. I thought I had made my position crystal clear in my letter, from which I just quoted. Despite that, four people descended upon my office on 11 June this year to tell me that I was wrong, that I did not understand and that they really did need to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Needless to say, that discussion did not last terribly long. It says something about their priorities that of the four who came to my office one was an engineer and three were public relations and community relations people. I said that I did not have enough time in my life to waste on being lectured by them or anyone else about something over which I was not going to be persuaded and on which I had already conveyed my views in writing. It was almost as if they had not bothered to read my earlier letter, they did not understand the plain English in the letter, or they thought I did not mean it.

According to the written document they left with me, there are a number of areas in which they wish to complete night work. They want to work extended hours in Elizabeth Street at places quite close to multi-level residential units and Liverpool Hospital. That, in my opinion, is unacceptable. They also want to work extended hours along Memorial Avenue for what they claim to be the wonderful technological marvel of pipe jacking. According to the map they left with me, pipe jacking will occur in Memorial Avenue from somewhere near Grace Street to a little to the west of Brickmakers Creek. Presumably the two pits, known as the jacking pit and the receivable pit, will be located at the two ends of the pipe jacking portion. These two locations have many residential premises nearby, and 24-hour work is utterly unacceptable there.

The other portion of pipe jacking for which they are demanding 24-hour work is in Moore Street. The jacking pit that they want to operate 24 hours a day is in Moore Street, near Beale Street. This work will occur in one of the most densely populated parts of my electorate. It beggars belief that Sydney Water proposes 24-hour work there. The receivable pit is in Moore Street between George and Macquarie streets. Sydney Water has been assiduous in geeing up some of the local for-profit commercial operators in that area to support 24-hour work. These extended hours get the work done more quickly and help those businesses make more money. It is a melancholy reflection that Sydney Water seems to put the profit-making endeavours before the needs of my constituents to get a good night's sleep. Sydney Water is extremely stupid if it thinks it can benefit from manipulating business operators but ignore the wishes of residents and their elected member of Parliament. Sydney Water should start behaving properly. The lifestyle and amenity of my constituents is a lot more important than its financial bottom line and its technological fantasies.

#### **UNITING CHURCH, EBENEZER, 200TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr PRINGLE** (Hawkesbury) [2.26 p.m.]: Last Saturday, 21 June, was a significant occasion in the history of the Hawkesbury. It marked the 200th anniversary of the Congregation of the Ebenezer Uniting



Church, formerly a Presbyterian Church, the 200th anniversary of European settlement in the area, and the 194th pilgrimage back to that church. As I said in my maiden speech, this church is the oldest operating church in Australia. Some of the first European settlers in the area arrived on the *Coromandel* in 1803. They were free settlers and worshipped under a local gum tree. I am pleased to advise the House that that gum tree, allegedly, is still in existence and still very much part of the local community. It was a very loyal community back in 1803. When the Rum Rebellion came along, these people were government followers. Now they are followers of their local Liberal member of Parliament.

One of the important families in the area was the Grono family. They were early boat builders, building boats up to 200 tons. They and other local families assisted in building a simple Northumberland shire sandstone church, which was cut from sandstone along the banks of the river. The building was a school during the week and a chapel on Sunday. The name of the town, Ebenezer—which is still a simple nineteenth century village—comes from the *Bible*, 1 Samuel 7:12, where it says that Samuel set up a stone between Mizpah and Shen and gave the name to Ebenezer.

In summary, I want to acknowledge the contribution of this church to the local community over many years. The ceremony attended last weekend by me and Kerry Bartlett also had a smoking ceremony, led by Mr Christopher Tobin of the local Dharug people. I was pleased that reconciliation was very much a strong theme of the day. In accordance with the reconciliation theme, a plaque was unveiled by Reverend Alistair Christie, the Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia, New South Wales synod. I congratulate him and the local elders on that ceremony. The service was also conducted by Reverend Grant Bilby, the Minister of the Ebenezer and Pitt Town Uniting Churches. It was a particularly good ceremony. There were a number of family talks about well-known local families—the Bushell family, the Cavenough family and the Arndell family, which is also well known throughout New South Wales. Surgeon Arndell was one of the surgeons on the First Fleet. He was represented by one of the descendants of the family, Reverend Seton Arndell, who made a major contribution to the service.

Ebenezer church members are very committed to maintaining the life and property of the church for which they are custodians. Their Christian heritage is particularly important to them. They have undertaken a large number of property improvements to the church over recent years. They have replaced the church floor, carried out electrical rewiring and built a new floor in the pavilion. Repairs are currently being undertaken to church windows, and buildings are being repainted externally. Their vision includes a wish list for new toilets, repair of the church roof, restoration of some of the upstairs rooms of the schoolmaster's house and, importantly, conservation of the local bread oven.

The Ebenezer church shop is open daily for Devonshire teas. Books, craftwork and souvenirs are available. Many social groups visit the shop and I suggest that members of this House who have Probus groups in their electorates—I am sure that there must be at least half a dozen of those—might like to arrange visits to the area. The shop sells great morning teas and great lunches and is well worth visiting. I am confident that members of this House will join with me in celebrating 200 years of Christian worship in the Hawkesbury and 200 years of major contribution to our community. I congratulate all those involved in the 194th pilgrimage to the Ebenezer church. I congratulate the Uniting Church in Australia on organising the event.

### **FBI RADIO STATION LAUNCH**

**Mr McLEAY** (Heathcote) [2.31 p.m.]: I wish to recognise the birth of Sydney's newest radio station. FBI radio is about to launch Australia's first high power, public access radio station that is dedicated to Australian music. A transitional broadcast begins tomorrow to test the service. This will be followed on 29 August by a full programming schedule. The station's arrival deserves recognition for a number of reasons. First, it is committed to 50 per cent Australian content, half of which must be sourced from artists who are resident in Sydney. At a time when our culture is influenced so strongly by North American tastes and products, FBI will be dedicated to finding the most exciting and challenging emerging culture from Australia. Developing a bigger audience for Australian music and culture is a fantastic way to encourage Australians to explore, celebrate and create our own identity.

FBI has been actively supported by most of Australia's significant performers and has already helped new talent to prosper. The Vines, which have been described by the *New Musical Express* and *Rolling Stone* as the greatest rock band in the world, were discovered by FBI during a test broadcast. Second, FBI is unique and important because while cultural organisations are increasingly concentrating influence among the few, FBI has an open structure that encourages participation. Over a hundred program makers will be broadcasting from 29

August. In addition, hundreds—and, hopefully, thousands—of volunteers will be involved in the life of the station. The activism of the members gives FBI a unique and immediate engagement with emerging cultural trends because the station's members are music makers, venue bookers, artists, managers, producers, live music fans and avid enthusiasts of Australian music.

I declare an interest. I have been a member of FBI radio for a number of years. Recently I purchased a fundraising deposit. More importantly, my wife, Cassandra Wilkinson, is a founding member of the station and for seven years has been its very proud president. I recognise the efforts of all the people who have given their time, brains, energy and cash to make this important achievement. Among the founders, Lee Hubber, Ken West, Marcella McAdam and Paul Mason deserve special recognition. Paul, in particular, is a tireless champion of Australian music and public access broadcasting.

Those who kept the dream alive in the middle years of the project include Millie Millgate and the team at the Hopetoun Hotel, Kim Thomas and The Whitlams, Leo Darcy and the Metro, Niel Jonesy Jones, the lovely Ramona Burdett, Mark Sturman, Brett Oaten and all of his staff, Jake Johnson and his staff, George Crones, Caroline Lidgerwood, Michael Williams, Rachel Pepper, Michelle Rowland and all the team at Gilbert and Tobin, Jim Beatson, the late Mike Thompson, all the staff at the Community Broadcasting Association, the Annandale Hotel, Bruno Peabody, bands too numerous to mention, the excellent folks at Troy Horse, the ongoing support from the University of Sydney, and John Robertson and Pete Lewis from the mighty New South Wales Labor Council who believed in the project when their help was particularly needed.

The team that is about to launch the station deserves particular recognition. Among them are Christina, Megan, Sharon and Jacinta, who has been waiting more patiently than anyone else. Also I would like to acknowledge those who remained to serve on the current board—Tim, Michael, Tim, Julia, Andy and Danny rhymes-with-wow Yeow. I think everyone at the station would agree that Brandon Saul is the man of the hour. He is a rock visionary, rampant King Tubby fan, and just about the nicest guy in rock'n'roll. Brandon has become the patron saint of FBI. All the hard work of those involved over the last seven years has delivered a top quality station that will give Australian music centre stage. Third, the whole project has been done without a cent of government money. All funds have been raised by the true believers in the music industry—the real champions of independent music. People can still support the station—check out the web site at [www.fbi.org.au](http://www.fbi.org.au). This is great news for home-grown Australian culture. I congratulate the team. I urge everyone to tune into 94.5FM. [*Time expired.*]

**Private members' statements noted.**

**The House adjourned at 2.37 p.m. until Tuesday 1 July 2003 at 2.15 p.m.**

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