

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 22 September 2005

ABSENCE OF MR SPEAKER AND MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER

The Clerk announced the absence of Mr Speaker and Mr Deputy-Speaker.

The Chairman of Committees (Mr John Charles Mills) took the chair as Acting-Speaker at 10.00 a.m.

Mr Acting-Speaker offered the Prayer.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): I acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Eora people.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT AND MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (ETHANOL BLENDED FUEL) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 15 September 2005.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [10.00 a.m.]: This private member's bill is aimed at stimulating the market for ethanol-blended fuel by requiring the New South Wales Government to take the lead in putting E10-blended fuel into its State fleet of some 24,500 vehicles because of the many benefits that come from ethanol-blended fuel. Prior to my second reading speech being interrupted last week, I was speaking about the other countries around the world that pursue ethanol very strongly. Recent developments show that other countries are certainly going down this track. I wish to quote from an article in the *Lloyd's List Daily Commercial News* of 31 August 2005 under the heading "New Zealand targets 3% use of biofuel". It reads:

The New Zealand Government is setting up a sales target for biofuel after months of consultation with oil companies, the automobile industry and biofuel producers.

The Government is focusing on promoting bioethanol blended with petrol, and biodiesel mixed with diesel.

An Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority report issued yesterday (Tuesday, August 30) said 3% of New Zealand's petrol needs could be met from bioethanol from forestry waste, straw and waste paper.

Transport Minister Pete Hodgson said biofuel could help improve the security of transport fuel suppliers and other health and emissions benefits.

Biofuels are already used in Australia, US, most European countries and Canada.

Biofuels are a success in these markets as fuel and vehicle manufacturers have endorsed their use.

So New Zealand has cottoned on to what The Nationals in New South Wales have been saying for a long time. I am informed that Thailand is also moving down this track strongly, and that PTT Public Company Ltd, which is Thailand's largest oil and gas company, is planning to import 18 million litres of ethanol. So that country is certainly taking up the benefits of ethanol. There may be opportunities for Australian ethanol producers in terms of exporting the product, but first we must establish a marketplace to encourage investment in the ethanol industry in Australia. Also, I quote from a news release issued by General Motors in Scottsdale, Arizona, on 2 August. It reads:

General Motors today announced that it would provide E85-capable Chevrolet Avalanches for use in 28 member states of the Governors' Ethanol Coalition, a bipartisan group of governors devoted to the promotion and increased use of ethanol. The announcement was made today at the Renewable Fuels Association's annual National Ethanol Conference.

In the United States of America vehicles are being driven around with a fuel blend of 85 per cent ethanol. Obviously the United States has seen the many benefits of ethanol-blended fuel. So even as we speak, developments are occurring in other jurisdictions that are going down this track.

I now turn to the provisions of the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethanol Blended Fuel) Bill. The object of the bill is to amend the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 to require the use of ethanol-blended fuel in cars owned, leased or operated by the Government of New South Wales or that are part of a public sector remuneration package. It is a very simple bill, with two main features. Schedule 1 [1] inserts new section 130A, which requires the Public Employment Office, when determining employment conditions and benefits, to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, any petrol-driven motor vehicle that is part of a remuneration package uses fuel containing at least 10 per cent ethanol.

Schedule 1 [2] inserts new section 143 (2), which provides that regulations are to establish a scheme to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, all petrol-driven motor vehicles owned, leased or operated by the Crown, a public sector service or State-owned corporation use fuel containing at least 10 per cent ethanol. It is a very simple but powerful bill. It sends a message to other motorists and fuel producers that one of the largest fleets in the State, if not the largest fleet, is getting behind a product that is extremely beneficial to the State in so many ways.

Mr Gerard Martin: Why won't the Federal Government do it?

Mr Joseph Tripodi: You should sort this out with your Federal colleagues first.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Minister for Roads and the honourable member for Bathurst continually want to debate Federal issues in this Parliament. They do not want to talk about what the New South Wales Government can do to promote the uptake of ethanol.

Mr Joseph Tripodi: You can't buy it in this country.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The reason you cannot buy ethanol in this country is that your Government has not promoted it. It is being produced in Manildra and Gunnedah.

Mr Joseph Tripodi: It is because of your friends in Canberra, mate. You're a fool.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! The Minister for Roads will cease interjecting. He will have an opportunity to speak in the debate at the appropriate time.

Mr ANDREW STONER: For the Minister's information, the Federal Government has established a biofuels target of 350 million litres by 2010. It has moved to limit the ethanol blend—

Mr Joseph Tripodi: You should just withdraw the bill.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Minister wants me to withdraw the bill. That is because the Government does not want to do anything to promote ethanol use. The Minister is happy to see people die of lung cancer, he is happy to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, he is happy to see regions struggle for employment and economic benefits, and he wants me to withdraw the bill. He is a joke!

Mr Joseph Tripodi: You should sort out your own party.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Today the Prime Minister is to make an announcement about ethanol, mate. So stay tuned. But what can you do? You can get behind this bill and require the use of ethanol-blended fuel in State vehicles. Are you going to do it? Are you going to support The Nationals bill? No. You just want to play politics. You are absolutely pathetic, Joe. Unlike the bill that has been put forward by a couple of Independents at the Federal level, which would require ethanol to be imported to Australia, The Nationals bill proposes a realistic scheme that will promote market acceptance and promote the availability of ethanol-blended fuel. From that point on, the industry will be able to invest because it will have some certainty as a result of knowing that the Federal target of 350 billion litres by 2010 will be achievable. That is what we need to do in New South Wales and that is the challenge for the Government.

I call for a non-partisan approach to this issue. I have spoken of the many environmental benefits of ethanol as a result of huge reductions in greenhouse gases and the public health benefits of a 30 per cent to 50 per cent reduction in cancer-causing particulates as a result of the 10 per cent ethanol blend. I have spoken also about creating employment in Australia instead of exporting jobs to foreign oil-producing countries. I have spoken about regional development benefits of establishing ethanol plants throughout country New South Wales

and the benefits for farmers in having a diversified market for their products, and I have stipulated what those products will be. I have also spoken about reduced reliance on foreign oil cartels, which will assist in either reducing or placing a cap on fuel prices in Australia. I am not interested in playing politics. I note that the honourable member for Kiama has made many public statements in support of ethanol.

Mr Joseph Tripodi: We like the idea. Get your guys in Canberra to co-operate.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Will the Minister for Roads support this bill? This is New South Wales legislation.

Mr Joseph Tripodi: We cannot buy something that is not available.

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is available. Has the Minister spoken to people in Manildra?

Mr Gerard Martin: Yes, we have.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Plenty of ethanol is available, but the New South Wales Government will not show any leadership. The honourable member for Kiama, Matt Brown, was quoted on Wollongong Wave FM radio news on 9 September as saying, "Ethanol could be the answer to high petrol prices", and he also said, "Ethanol is back on the agenda." It is on the agenda because The Nationals put it on the agenda, and it is up to members of the New South Wales Government to support it. All they have to do is indicate their support for this bill. I understand also that Bill Shorten and the Australian Workers Union strongly support ethanol because the union can see its many benefits. Government members should stop playing politics and stay tuned to the news when today the Prime Minister will make a strong statement in support of ethanol, consistent with the other strong support that the Federal Government has shown, including taxation benefits for ethanol. But for the New South Wales Government, the challenge is to actually do something, for a change, instead of playing politics. Government members should support the bill.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Joseph Tripodi.

PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT (SUPPORTING JOBS AND SMALL BUSINESS) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Ms PETA SEATON (Southern Highlands) [10.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In introducing the Pay-roll Tax Amendment (Supporting Jobs and Small Business) Bill 2005, I join with all my Liberal-Nationals Coalition colleagues in challenging each and every Labor Party member to join us in reducing payroll tax on hardworking businesses in our State. The object of this bill is to amend the Pay-roll Tax Act 1971 to increase the tax-free threshold for payroll tax from \$600,000 to \$850,000, with the increase to take effect on 1 July 2007. The legislation offers the chance to support legislation that will exempt 4,500 businesses from having to pay payroll tax at all, and a reduction of up to \$15,000 for each of the 22,000 businesses that are liable for payroll tax. This will create jobs, improve our State's competitiveness, and support small businesses, which are the backbone of our economy.

The New South Wales economy should be the strongest, the fastest growing and the most competitive in Australia. Making New South Wales again No. 1 will take hard work, good policy, and discipline with government spending—by a new Liberal-Nationals Coalition government. It is the responsibility of a New South Wales government to create the environment for businesses and families to work hard, prosper, and secure the future for themselves and their children. The people of New South Wales should be free to make their own choices and create their own opportunities. I believe government should be as small, efficient and effective as possible, with its role limited only to functions that cannot be performed better, or more appropriately, by business or the community.

Government should respect the fact that every dollar of tax it spends is not its own money. It is money that is spent on behalf of the hardworking businesses and citizens of our State, which is where it comes from. Governments should be constantly looking at opportunities to drive down taxes and return money to businesses,

individuals and families to use at their discretion. A dollar in the hands of a citizen is better spent than a dollar in the hands of government—certainly this New South Wales Government—and government should impose on itself the highest level of rigour and performance testing to ensure that government waste and duplication is eradicated and savings are put back into essential front-line services that are expected by citizens and the needy, and into tax relief in order to promote more jobs and economic activity.

Under Labor, New South Wales is the highest taxing State and relies heavily on payroll tax—a tax on jobs—to produce revenue to pay for bloated, non-productive bureaucracy, which in many cases creates obstacles for decent hardworking business owners. This is not an easy tax to tackle. Forecast revenues in the 2005-06 budget are \$5.11 billion—around 31 per cent of New South Wales tax revenues. In future years, Labor forecasts revenue on the current system of \$5.4 billion in 2006-07 and \$5.8 billion in 2007-08. This represents an increase of approximately \$700 million in two years. The Coalition is determined to tackle and reduce payroll tax, despite Labor's refusal to do so. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition will rebuild the New South Wales economy by increasing the payroll tax threshold from \$600,000 to \$850,000, matching that of Queensland, which will improve New South Wales's interstate and international competitiveness.

The Coalition has listened carefully to the advocacy of key business groups in New South Wales and has responded to their call to cut payroll tax. Australian Business Limited [ABL], in its publication "New South Wales Mid Term Report 2005", set out an action plan that it wants government to tackle to promote business growth in this State, which included cutting the growth in government expenditure. Growth in expenditure is putting additional taxation pressure on New South Wales businesses and making them uncompetitive against Queensland and Victoria. ABL also called for the commencement of a four-year program to cut payroll tax, further investment in infrastructure, and negotiations with the Federal Government to develop a simplified and a unified workplace relations system. I am proud to say that the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has agreed to do that and has already announced its policy.

ABL also asks government to return the benefits of workers compensation scheme surpluses to businesses in the form of lower premiums. The performance of the scheme has improved in recent years and the benefits should be passed on to businesses. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition agrees and has announced a policy that will result in a 10% reduction in workers compensation premiums. ABL asks government to engage constructively with business on labour force and skills issues and suggests that government should establish and implement a coherent strategy to address the current skills crisis and future skills needs. Again, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has agreed and has taken the first important step of appointing a shadow Minister who is responsible for skills.

As a matter of urgency ABL says that the Government should review the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000, with particular focus on reforming the duty of care. The current application of duty of care is having significant unforeseen consequences, including many smaller businesses giving up on occupational health and safety because compliance is too difficult. ABL also asks the Government to amend the draft workplace fatalities legislation by adopting the Australian Business Limited five-point plan. I am pleased to say the Liberal-Nationals Coalition opposed the Government's appalling workplace fatalities legislation, which would have seen impossible penalties applied to many business owners who genuinely want to see safety improvements in their workplaces, but the Government simply was not prepared to strike a fair balance in that legislation. Payroll tax deduction was a key plank for ABL's recipe for the health of the New South Wales economy. The Coalition has listened and has acted.

In ABL's mid-term report card they continued the push for the Government and Opposition to tackle payroll tax. This measure has been called for consistently by the Illawarra Business Chamber [IBC], which does a great job advocating for business policy in both the Illawarra and the Southern Highlands. With ABL, the IBC has been highlighting the competitive disadvantage New South Wales businesses suffer against rival States, and have undertaken studies on business cost relativities. The former IBC Chief Executive, Tim Lewis, noted in a press release of January 2005 that:

For every \$100 of payroll tax collected per person in NSW in 2004, only \$83 was collected in Victoria and \$55 was collected in Queensland.

I compliment the incoming IBC Chief Executive, Mark Grimson, for continuing the campaign on behalf of Illawarra and Southern Highlands businesses, along with Terry Oakes-Ash and other members of the Southern Highlands business chambers, in continuing the campaign to reduce payroll tax. An analysis of statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics by Australian Business Limited on 1 August 2005 also revealed that New South Wales Government taxes and charges cost New South Wales businesses \$2,627 for every person they

employ. According to ABL's research, on average, New South Wales employers are paying \$1,100 more per employee in payroll tax and workers compensation premiums than Queensland. New South Wales businesses paid, on average, \$2,627 in payroll tax and workers compensation charges per employee—71 per cent higher than Queensland's \$1,533 and 19 per cent higher than Victoria's \$2,202.

Labor has left the door open for Queensland and Victoria to raid New South Wales jobs and investment. The only persons happy with the high tax regime and uncompetitiveness in New South Wales is the New South Wales Premier and the Premiers of Queensland and Victoria. It is interesting to note at this point the comments made on 26 August by the Minister for Small Business, who is also the Minister for the Illawarra. The ABC Illawarra reported the Minister as saying that the New South Wales Opposition's promises to cut payroll tax if it wins power would do little to help the State's businesses. He made the nonsensical assertion that the cuts would only put pressure on other infrastructure. He further insulted businesses and payroll taxpayers by saying:

Less than 10 per cent of businesses in New South Wales pay payroll tax, so the overwhelming majority of businesses in New South Wales pay no payroll tax at the moment, and make no mistake, every dollar of income that the Government does not receive means less hospitals, less schools, expenditure in the Budget.

That may be the way it is under Labor, because it could not manage a chook raffle, let alone a \$40.6 billion budget. The Premier cannot even tell us what Labor's deficit is. The Government gets money, spends it and wastes it—then puts its hands back in the pockets of businesses and families to grab more. It is an insult that the Minister for Small Business and the Minister for the Illawarra in this place can so dismiss in this way businesses that pay payroll tax. He simply does not understand the impact that payroll tax is having on the very group of people for whom he is meant to be advocating.

Sound economic management and responsible spending, combined with the Coalition's approach which includes performance benchmarking of the activities of government—and which any business would recognise as a sensible way to measure performance and outcomes—means waste and duplication can be cut, front-line services beefed up and tax reduced. While the Labor Minister rejects the Liberal's payroll tax policy, the Illawarra Business Chamber has welcomed the scheme, saying it will take the pressure off local business and generate more jobs and economic growth for the region, according to the ABC radio report. Other business groups have welcomed the Liberal-Nationals Coalition policy initiative, including the New South Wales Chamber of Commerce. The Chief Executive Officer of the chamber, Margy Osmond, said of the policy:

Our latest survey of business across NSW in July showed that more and more small businesses are getting caught in the payroll tax net as their wage bill grows in line with inflation. The changes proposed by the Opposition would protect many of these businesses and provide an incentive for them.

The Coalition also received support for the plan from ABL, the Hunter Chamber of Commerce and the Real Estate Institute of NSW, because they know it will give their members relief from the State's tax burden. There is no doubt we need to reduce tax in New South Wales. In the past decade New South Wales has slipped backwards. New South Wales is the highest taxed State, with the slowest economic growth and the slowest rate of job growth of any State, and New South Wales has been described as a "significant drag on the national economy".

[*Interruption*]

Are the Government members going to back this bill or not? New South Wales competitive advantages have been taken for granted by a lazy and incompetent Labor Government that has squandered a decade of boom times. Despite record revenues and more than \$8 billion of windfall tax income over the past 10 years, Labor has increased taxes, introduced new taxes and plunged New South Wales into deep deficit. Instead of being the economic powerhouse of Australia, after 10 years of Labor the economic growth rate in New South Wales has fallen from 4.8 per cent in 1995 to 2 per cent in 2004-05. This economic growth rate instilled New South Wales as the worst performing State in Australia for 2004-05, even behind South Australia at 2.5 per cent and Tasmania at 3.2 per cent. This trend is set to continue, with economic growth in New South Wales forecasted to be 2.75 per cent for 2005-06, making New South Wales the second-worst economic performing State, just ahead of South Australia at 2.5 per cent.

The Labor Government's mismanagement has delivered New South Wales the lowest employment growth of any State. In the quarter for year-ended June 2005, employment growth in New South Wales was 1.7 per cent, compared with Queensland at 5.6 per cent, Western Australia at 5.3 per cent, Victoria at 3.6 per cent, South Australia at 3.1 per cent and Tasmania at 2.8 per cent. We are doing worse than Tasmania. That is

appalling. New South Wales employment growth of 1.7 per cent is half that of the national rate of 3.4 per cent. Last year, more than 80 per cent of new full-time jobs in Australia were created outside New South Wales. The unemployment rate increased from 4.8 per cent in July to 5 per cent in August, with 9,000 more unemployed in New South Wales. More people became unemployed than were added to the employment ranks in New South Wales in that period.

The trend estimate for total dwelling units approved in New South Wales also shows a lacklustre economy falling for the past six months, whereas in Queensland the trend estimate shows rises for the past six months. New South Wales has been embarrassed by Victoria and Queensland in new dwelling commencement figures, a continuing legacy of Labor's crippling high taxes, which have created investor uncertainty in the New South Wales building and property sector. Yet the Premier continues to refuse to rule out new taxes or tax increases. New South Wales has now experienced five quarters of decline in dwelling unit commencements in New South Wales and that decline can be traced back to Labor's vendor tax in 2004. But the long overdue abolition of the vendor tax will not fix the building downturn unless Labor also cuts other State taxes to make New South Wales more competitive.

That is why we want to reduce payroll tax. New South Wales dwelling commencements have dropped from 11,995 in the March quarter 2004, to a low in the June quarter of 8,475. Victoria, with its 10,318 commencements, and Queensland with its 9,342 commencements, each outstripped New South Wales, which had a paltry 9,076 in numbers of new dwelling commencements in the June quarter. The drop in New South Wales is double the drop in other eastern States, with New South Wales dwelling commencements declining by 3,520 since the March quarter 2004, while Queensland dropped 1,493 and Victoria dropped 1,078 in absolute numbers. Smaller States are outstripping the performance of New South Wales on raw numbers, and this is directly related to the very poor tax relativities between New South Wales and its competitors. Yet, at a time when New South Wales ought to be cutting business and other taxes by reining in wasteful expenditure, the Premier is fuelling fears of new or increased taxes because he will not reveal the extent of the deficit, and refuses to rule out to tax hikes.

Raising the tax-free threshold on payrolls from Labor's \$600,000 to \$850,000 will encourage business to invest and give greater financial incentive to employ more staff. This is a win for business in New South Wales, because under the Liberal-Coalition policy, which this bill would make law, 4,500 businesses would be exempt from paying payroll tax and more than 22,000 businesses will receive tax cuts of up to \$15,000. Raising the payroll tax threshold to match Queensland will deliver a \$282 million boost to businesses in 2007-08, providing a significant incentive for businesses to remain in New South Wales and not consider moving, or be forced to move, north

Under our policy, payrolls of less than \$850,000 would pay no payroll tax; a business with total taxable wages of \$1 million will pay only \$9,000, whereas under Labor they would pay \$24,000; a business with total taxable wages of \$1.5 million will pay only \$39,000, whereas under Labor they would pay \$54,000. That would give businesses in New South Wales a real competitive edge against Queensland and that is why I expect the Labor member for Tweed to vote for this bill: he knows that business in his area desperately needs to be able to compete. Queensland makes a great deal of its higher threshold and lower rate, but the Liberal-Coalition policy will make New South Wales an even more attractive business jurisdiction than Queensland.

What Queensland does not often advertise is its reducible threshold. This gives Queensland an effective rate of about 6.4 per cent, higher than the current rate in New South Wales. Even with Queensland's tax rate of 4.75 per cent being lower than this State's 6 per cent, New South Wales businesses are still better off under the Liberal-National Coalition policy, because of Queensland's deduction system where for every \$3 of total taxable wages above the threshold, the threshold is reduced by \$1, and once total taxable wages in Queensland exceed \$3.4 million there is no entitlement to a deduction.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORATES AND ELECTIONS AMENDMENT (PROHIBITION ON VOTING BY CRIMINALS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 June 2005.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [10.30 a.m.]: In my brief contribution to this debate I am delighted to say that I oppose this silly, illogical and monumentally irrelevant bill. The substance of the bill is actually not much. What is objectionable is the extreme rhetoric, unsubstantiated claims and outright falsehoods of the

honourable member for Davidson when he moved the bill. The bill delivers far less than his rhetoric; the provisions of the bill simply do not match the extremism of his speech. I will deal first with what the honourable member for Davidson purports to be the philosophy, such as it is, behind the bill. He claims that the right to vote is a privilege which should be denied to those who have no respect of the law, that is to those who have no respect for the rights and property of other citizens.

He is quite wrong about that. Voting is not a privilege; voting could be regarded as a privilege only in non-democratic societies where eligibility to vote is determined by property qualifications or connections with, for example, a university. It may well be that the honourable member for Davidson would be profoundly comfortable with such an electoral system and such a society. Regrettably for him, that is not the society, nor the electoral system, of contemporary Australia—we have, in case it has escaped his attention, a democracy. Voting is not a privilege, it is a duty, an obligation. It is such an obligation that if one does not vote without a specified excuse, one will be fined by the criminal justice system. In various cases that could lead to incarceration.

To describe as a privilege something that if one does not do it, one is dealt with by a court, shows a degree of confusion and incomprehension of the plain words of the English language on the part of the honourable member for Davidson that is really quite frightening. Voting is an obligation because in this country we place a very high premium on obtaining representative structures, that is, parliaments that represent the electorates. That is why voting is not a privilege, but an obligation. So the honourable member for Davidson was wrong on the theory. I refer also to the internal contradictions within his arguments. The principle is that people who do not respect the rights and property of others should not get the vote; those are the words of the honourable member for Davidson. Why then does he limit the prohibition on voting only to the time of the sentences that people are serving? Clearly they are the same people, whether serving a sentence or not. The provisions in the bill do not match the logic of what he said.

The point I make on this issue is quite simple: The bill as moved by the honourable member for Davidson does not match his rhetoric. He is attempting to deceive people that the bill goes a lot further than it actually does. Much of his second reading speech seems to be a repetition of slogans that have but a tenuous connection to the bill. Another illogicality is that the bill does not seem to extend to people on a bond or on a suspended sentence. If one supports the arguments of the honourable member for Davidson, logically one would have to extend the provisions of the bill to those categories. But he does not do that, because there is simply no intellectual justification or adequacy in his argument.

Another illogicality is that as the bill is expressed it applies to people on remand. The rationale given for that is that people who have broken the law should not be allowed to vote. Yet he applies that principle to people who are held on remand, people who, by definition, might not be convicted and, therefore, according to the logic of his argument, should not be included in the bill—but they are. That is yet another internal contradiction in the drivel he put up. I turn now to specific comments he made in his second reading speech about myself and other honourable members. He said that I would oppose this bill because I get the benefit of votes from criminals. The honourable member for Davidson is, of course, a fool. On his own figures there are 704 people imprisoned who could vote in the Fairfield-Liverpool area.

The honourable member for Davidson dishonestly inferred that there were only three members of Parliament for that area—myself, the Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Youth, and the Minister for Roads. In fact, the number is seven; the figures he quoted related to the council areas and not to the electorates. In my view he quite dishonestly misrepresented the figures that are clearly evident from the Department of Corrective Services surveys. In addition, if he thinks that one-seventh of 704 votes would affect the result of a State election in Liverpool, he is more than just a fool, he is electorally illiterate. However, his argument is lacking more in substance than in that obvious mathematical point.

Anecdotally, people convicted of criminal offences are less likely than most to be enrolled to vote, and if enrolled are less likely to actually vote. They are less connected to civil institutions and less likely to be prepared to be involved in electoral processes. A large proportion probably just do not vote, which, of course, makes the blustering of the honourable member for Davidson just so much drivel. He is in no position to rebut my argument, because there is absolutely no mathematical statistical evidence to support his proposition that 704 people would vote. From my inquiries and my far better research I have established that that is undoubtedly the case. Even if those people do vote, what act of fantasy allows the honourable member for Davidson to assert that they vote Labor? He cannot prove they do, but he personally asserted it in his speech and said that therefore it is established.

That is simply dishonest. The likelihood is exactly the opposite. Humphrey McQueen in *A New Britannia* famously depicted convicts transported to Australia as being motivated primarily by individual enterprise—in short, far more likely to vote Liberal than Labor. Obsessed with individual achievement at the expense of community benefit, criminals are inherently Liberal Party voters. I dare say, in the case of the honourable member for Davidson, criminals are inherently Liberal Party branch members. This bill is spurious; it was introduced to grab a few cheap headlines by a lazy Opposition bereft of substance. In that sense it is a perfect symbol for the honourable member for Davidson.

Mr ANDREW HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [10.38 a.m.], in reply: In closing debate on this matter I respond to a number of matters raised by honourable members. I acknowledge that five honourable members contributed to this debate: the honourable member for Newcastle, the honourable member for Bankstown, the honourable member for Liverpool, the honourable member for Lane Cove and the honourable member for Gosford. I acknowledge the passionate and principled support for the bill by the honourable member for Lane Cove and the honourable member for Gosford. Their contributions were far more coherent than those of the three members from the other side of the House. The contribution of the honourable member for Newcastle was light in substance; it did not even address the objective of the bill. I thank the honourable member for Lane Cove for his passionate contribution. I thank the honourable member for Gosford, who has always had a very strong view on the lack of principle in allowing identified criminals serving punishments to participate in the democratic system of electing parliaments and governments.

The objective of the proposed legislation is to stop those who are serving punishment for breaking the law from participating in the electoral process. The bulk of people who are serving punishment in one form or another are still allowed under State law to participate in the privilege of electing members of parliament and governments. Only approximately 5,000 criminals who are serving time for the worst offences are denied the right to vote. Some 13,000 other offenders are serving punishment in one form or another—in prison, on parole, on weekend detention, periodic detention or home detention—all of whom are able to preserve the privilege to vote, notwithstanding they have not respected the laws of the State and the rights of other people to live their lives without having crimes committed against them. We believe very strongly in this legislation because it will deny some 13,000 criminals and offenders the right to vote and the right to influence the outcome of state elections.

I note—it was raised, I think, by the member for Bankstown—that there are moves by the Federal Government to go down this same path. These moves have been thwarted for some years by the nature of the Senate. I understand the Federal Government, with its ascendancy in the Senate, is looking at reintroducing its legislative proposals to deny criminals the right to vote in Federal elections. In that respect I commend them. Criminals should not vote; they should influence the outcome of the democratic process. They have committed crimes against citizens or the community and, as punishment for that, they lose certain privileges and rights, and that should include the right to vote. That applies to varying degrees in a number of overseas jurisdictions. In the United Kingdom, no prisoner has the right to vote and anyone serving a sentence is removed from the electoral roll. The same principle applies in New Zealand. It is a principle that we believe should apply in New South Wales.

Clearly, there are members of the Labor Party, and by virtue of their position the entire Labor Government in this State, who want those 13,000 criminals to vote, whereas we believe they should be denied the right to vote. There is one clear reason for Labor members' view: most of those people are going to vote Labor. The members for Liverpool and Bankstown cited international covenants on civil and political rights, treaties which may well apply in their minds. However, those members did not justify or explain why or how those treaties apply to different laws and rights—

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of Order: The member for Davidson just dishonestly said that I referred to international treaties in my speech; I did not. He was out of the Chamber when I made my contribution so it is no surprise that he is now misleading the House in relation to what I said. If he had been here, he might have heard it.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! Although the honourable member for Liverpool may be correct, that is not a point of order.

Mr ANDREW HUMPHERSON: If the member for Liverpool was not listening, I advise him that I mentioned that the member for Bankstown referred to the international covenant on civil and political rights.

Mr Paul Lynch: You said that I did.

Mr ANDREW HUMPHERSON: The honourable member for Liverpool can take a point of privilege later on if he wishes to do so. The member for Bankstown cited that covenant and he believed that principle should apply to the right to vote. He did not explain in his contribution why different laws apply in different States of the Commonwealth, or why there are differences between Federal and State laws in relation to the right to vote. If he believed there was a simple principle, he would have explained it. He would also have advocated allowing all criminals to vote in this State, and neither he nor the member for Liverpool advocated that directly. It was open to them to suggest that the law should be changed to allow anybody who is a criminal—anyone who is serving punishment, anyone in jail—to have the right to vote.

One factor influenced the members for Liverpool and Bankstown in supporting the right of criminals to vote. The assessment by the member for Liverpool in his recent contribution was inaccurate. There is clear evidence that most criminals—the people who would lose the right to vote under this legislation—come from Labor-held electorates across the State. I note that the area the member for Liverpool represents has the highest number of inmates in the prison system, 704 at the July census. Approximately three times that number of people who come from that area would be denied the right to vote. We are talking about several thousand people who come from the Liverpool, Fairfield and other electorates being denied the right to vote.

The typical trend in those areas is that 85 per cent of those people vote either for the Labor Party or similarly minded candidates. If 85 per cent of people in the Fairfield-Liverpool area vote Labor, it is reasonable to conclude that the 2,000 to 3,000 criminals who come from that area would similarly vote Labor. So it is no surprise we heard such a contribution from the member for Liverpool and a similar one from the member for Bankstown, who represents the area with the fourth highest number of criminals in the State's prison system. These people have one clear aim in relation to this legislation—to block it—because they want to continue to be the beneficiaries of criminals voting Labor. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: The member for Davidson is either a fool or a liar, or both.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! That is not a point of order.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 27

Ms Berejiklian
Mr Cansdell
Mr Draper
Mrs Fardell
Mr Fraser
Mrs Hancock
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Mrs Hopwood
Mr Humpherson

Mr Kerr
Mr Merton
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Piccoli
Mr Pringle
Mr Richardson
Mr Roberts
Ms Seaton
Mrs Skinner
Mr Slack-Smith

Mr Souris
Mr Tink
Mr Torbay
Mr J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner

Tellers,
Mr George
Mr Maguire

Noes, 44

Ms Allan
Ms Andrews
Mr Barr
Mr Bartlett
Ms Beamer
Mr Black
Mr Brown
Ms Burney
Miss Burton
Mr Corrigan
Mr Crittenden
Ms D'Amore
Ms Gadiel
Mr Gaudry
Mr Greene

Ms Hay
Mr Hickey
Mr Hunter
Ms Judge
Ms Keneally
Mr Lynch
Mr McBride
Mr McLeay
Ms Meagher
Ms Megarrity
Ms Moore
Mr Morris
Mr Newell
Ms Nori
Mr Oakeshott

Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Pearce
Mrs Perry
Ms Saliba
Mr Sartor
Mr Scully
Mr Shearan
Mr Stewart
Mr Tripodi
Mr Watkins
Mr West
Mr Whan
Tellers,
Mr Ashton
Mr Martin

Pairs

Mr Armstrong
Mr Constance

Mr Price
Mr Yeadon

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

RURAL COMMUNITIES IMPACTS BILL**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 16 September 2004.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.56 a.m.]: I oppose the Rural Communities Impacts Bill. This Government is committed to advancing the interests of people in rural and regional New South Wales but it does not believe that the proposal of the honourable member for Oxley represents the best way to achieve that. The honourable member's bill recommends the preparation of rural communities impact statements for all legislation, statutory rules or instruments proposed by a Minister or a Government member. Those statements are then to be tabled in Parliament. There are a number of problems with this proposal. The first is that rural communities impact statements are already prepared as part of Cabinet proposals which have clear economic and social impacts in rural areas. That means the needs of rural communities are considered throughout the policy process.

Where an impact statement shows room for improvement there is a chance to develop a solution to deal with the issue before it goes to Cabinet for discussion and debate. I suggest that is a far more sensible solution than that proposed by the honourable member, who simply wants to tack on an impact statement at the end of the process once bills and instruments have been drafted. This Government believes it is appropriate that the impact of policy on rural communities is considered throughout the policy making process, not only when a bill is introduced in the House. Furthermore, the Government understands that rural communities impact statements are only one of the many ways to engage rural communities and to take their concerns into account when making policy.

We know that no-one understands the needs of rural communities as well as the people who live and work in them. That is why front-line rural agency staff prepare the bulk of the rural communities impact statements. Sadly, the Opposition does not appear to share the Government's view. It does not believe that people living in rural communities should have a say in the issues that affect them. In fact, Opposition members have gone so far as to seek to enshrine in legislation that rural communities impact statements be prepared by a new unit in the Cabinet Office. That is just another example of how out of touch with reality Opposition members are.

Not only will this be an additional burden on the resources of Cabinet Office; it means that rural communities impact statements will be written by people in the city and not by staff of agencies that deal face-to-face with rural communities on a daily basis. Because of the Opposition's already declared intention to sack some 30,000 public servants, this is a sneaky way of putting in place a regime to ensure that those people in rural communities who are writing rural communities impact statements will not be there to write them in the future. If enacted, this bill will require the diversion of significant resources because of the level of detail in the analysis proposed by this bill and the widening of the scope to include statutory rules and planning instruments.

This also has the potential to create significant delays in processing matters. In many cases these resources will be spent in duplicating existing procedures. The Government believes those resources would be better spent delivering services to rural communities, as they are now. There is also an apparent anomaly in the bill, in that it will require impact statements to be prepared only for matters proposed by Ministers or Government members, not private members bills proposed by Opposition and crossbench members. Not only is this inconsistent, it raises some real concerns about the level of scrutiny the Opposition wishes applied to its own legislation. The Government is concerned that this bill contains a number of provisions relating to planning. First, the likely impact on rural communities must be determined before a proposed State environmental planning policy [SEPP] is recommended to the Governor; second, the likely impact on rural communities must be determined before a regional environmental plan [REP] is made; and, third, the likely impact on rural communities must be determined before a local environmental plan [LEP] is made.

These proposals will have serious implications for the legislative framework governing the planning process. The bill proposes a stand-alone Act that will have both a procedural and a process effect on other Acts. This would include the plan-making provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000. However, the bill does not propose to amend the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act so that all procedures relating to plan making are contained within the one Act. This will result in a lack of clarity in the legislative framework, and has real implications for the Department of Planning and local councils. Furthermore, the bill provides no detail on how local councils will be able to seek or obtain rural communities impact statements from the Cabinet Office, or on how this process fits in with local planning processes or procedures, including draft LEPs and accompanying documents being endorsed by an elected council before public exhibition.

The bill indicates that a rural communities impact statement will be required for all SEPPs and REPs, regardless of whether they apply to rural areas or deal with issues that affect rural communities. A rural communities impact statement will also be required for all LEPs for non-metropolitan areas. The bill defines which councils are designated as being in metropolitan areas for the purposes of the bill and it does allow exemptions with the agreement of the Premier. However, the bill is unclear on the method the Minister should use to determine whether the policy will have a likely impact on rural communities. Furthermore, in terms of the requirements for SEPPs, the rural communities impact statement is to be publicly exhibited with the draft SEPP.

Under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, the Minister currently has discretion about whether a draft SEPP will be publicly exhibited, and therefore exhibition does not occur in every case. The proposed provision may have a significant impact on the Minister's ability to introduce a SEPP urgently, if required. Effectively, these additional requirements for rural communities impact statements prepared by the Cabinet Office will add another layer of process, procedures and assessment to plan making and other decision making—another level of bureaucracy. They will also complicate the planning legislative framework. In many cases, this could impose an unnecessary burden, with no discernable benefit over existing process.

The Government is also concerned that the bill is not clear about the consequences of non-compliance with any of its provisions. It simply proposes that the Presiding Officer of the House report on non-compliance. This could lead to increased uncertainty for communities and developers by increasing legal challenges to both environmental planning instruments and statutory rules, such as regulations. The statutory protection given to environmental planning instruments after three months under section 35 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act will not apply to these procedures. This is yet another example by the mover of the bill to give these matters the appropriate consideration. Although the Government is proud of its track record on consulting rural communities and taking their concerns into account when making policy, there is always room for improvement. That is the reason the Government has proposed the preparation of regional strategies for key priority areas in New South Wales as part of its planning reform package.

As part of developing the regional strategy, a strategic assessment will be undertaken to help identify constraints and opportunities, and test the impacts of various alternatives or scenarios for development in rural and regional communities. This is a practical way of addressing the ongoing need for consultation with rural communities to ensure that they are not unfairly affected by development. The existing practice for the preparation of rural communities impact statements is part of a larger framework of engaging rural communities in the decision-making processes that affect them. The Government is proud of its record in this area and will continue to work across the board to make sure that the voices of rural communities are heard in government. I oppose the bill.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [11.05 a.m.]: I extend an invitation to the honourable member for Tweed to get out of the surf and come and have a cup of coffee with people in some of the country towns and local rural communities. The necessity for the Rural Communities Impacts Bill has been brought about by the economic hardship being experienced in country and rural communities. I am pleased to speak on it. The honourable member for Tweed has merely said that he will not support the bill. If the Opposition disagrees with any bill, it moves amendments in Committee. The Government should do the same and the Opposition will consider those amendments. To simply say that the bill just will not work is not good enough. The Opposition has listened to the concerns of rural communities. Indeed, I remind the honourable member for Tweed that former Premier Carr said:

I want to make sure that the potential economic impact of any changes is fully understood before State Cabinet makes a decision.

That has not happened with many decisions that affect country, regional and coastal New South Wales. The native vegetation legislation has had an adverse impact on this State. This week the Australian Bureau of

Agricultural and Resource Economics released statistics that show rural communities in this State have suffered loss in production of \$1.3 million. Naturally, that has an adverse impact on the economies of country and regional New South Wales. It is ironic that in the last few weeks the Government abolished the vendor duty, the dumbest tax introduced into this State. We know that the introduction of the vendor duty had a severe impact in the city and, indeed, the whole State. I know it had a major impact on rural and regional areas. But how was the impact measured?

It has been alleged that the Government has mechanisms in place to deal with such matters. Therefore, the Government should have realised the adverse impact of such a tax when it introduced the vendor duty. Clearly, that mechanism for monitoring the vendor duty, payroll tax and so on is not working. The honourable member for Tweed, in particular, should be aware of the impact of the vendor duty on his electorate. Businesses in the north of the State have had to compete with their counterparts in Queensland, which does not have such a tax. Businesses in those regions are suffering because the Government was not prepared to accept the economic ramifications of its decisions. I note that the Government is adopting yet another Opposition policy and will reintroduce the threshold for land tax from 1 January 2006. However, the people of New South Wales will have to pay that tax for this financial year. If the mechanism is in place, why did it not pick up the ramifications of the Government's changes to the land tax? Once again the Government does not realise and appreciate the impact of the land tax on coastal, regional and rural New South Wales.

Opposition members have experienced first hand the economic downturns and the impact of the Government's decision on rural, regional and coastal New South Wales. This bill provides us with an opportunity to rectify that. It will tie up not only this Government but future governments. For example, the Government has decided to close the hospital at Coraki—I am pleased to see the honourable member for Clarence in the House today—which will have an impact on the community based on the lower river. Was an impact statement done on that decision? No. The hospital is being closed because of financial and budgetary reasons; that is the main driving force. Where is the mechanism, which the honourable member for Tweed said is already in place, to deal with the associated problems?

My area has the Northern Co-operative Meat Company based at Casino and the Cassino RSM pig processing plant based at Booyong. Sadly, a few weeks ago the company withdrew its boning services. Why? There are two or three reasons. One reason is a problem with the supply of bacon pigs to the plant. Why is there a problem with supply? A big percentage of the production comes from Queensland. Producers in Queensland can freight 240 bacon pigs on a double-deck semitrailer. Most producers freight their pigs in that way. However, once the trucks hit the New South Wales border they can only carry 200 equivalent sized pigs legally; the trucks must offload 40 pigs before travelling for about 60, 70 or 80 kilometres in New South Wales. Why? If they do not offload the pigs the truck driver and the trucking company get fined.

The transportation of pigs into New South Wales from Queensland is a major problem and a major cost to producers and the trucking companies. Hence, Queensland producers have decided that it is cheaper to freight the pigs within Queensland and therefore will not supply pigs to the Booyong processing plant. That is a problem for the Northern Co-operative Meat Company because it loads containers for export throughout the world. The co-operative is a proud company with a proud tradition in terms of the product it exports around the world. There is also a problem with exporting the product. Although containers have the capacity to hold many tonnes, the problems with tonnage on New South Wales roads means that containers are loaded only to two-thirds of capacity. As a result, containers shipped around the world are carrying only two-thirds of capacity of product.

In Queensland the same containers are packed to 100 per cent capacity. Shipping containers packed to only two-thirds capacity around the world is a major cost to the industry simply because of 80 kilometres of road transport in New South Wales; once the containers hit the Queensland border they can carry 100 per cent capacity without any problems. Those two issues are having a major impact on employment in our region and indeed throughout the State because other abattoirs are experiencing the same problem. I repeat: If the mechanism to which the honourable member for Tweed referred is in place, why is that problem not being addressed? These problems are having an impact not only on the State economy but also on the nation and on production in New South Wales. The Government needs to address these problems. I could go on at length about the problems associated with country and regional areas that are being impacted by the Government's decisions.

I praise the Leader of The Nationals for introducing this bill. Previous to this bill, the honourable member for Ballina, the Shadow Minister for the North Coast, introduced a bill providing for a cross-border

commission. However, the Government voted down that bill because it does not believe there are any cross-border issues. The Rural Communities Impacts Bill gives the Government an opportunity to support country and regional New South Wales. The bill provides for the establishment of an assessment unit to co-ordinate all rural community impact statements not only for this Government but for future governments to adhere to. It is important for the bill to be seen in that light. It means that there will be a unit to consider the economic and social impacts, both good and bad, on areas outside Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong of decisions made by this Government and future governments, regardless of their political persuasion. That is important to the future of country and regional areas.

I compliment the Leader of The Nationals on introducing this bill. I hope that all honourable members will support it, although the honourable member for Tweed indicated that the Government will not. I remind the honourable member that last week his local newspaper reported that the Tweed Chamber of Commerce or a representative of Tweed businesses called on the State Government to address the anomalies across the border to stop the flow of businesses from New South Wales to Queensland. I made a generous offer to the honourable member: When he gets out of the surf and takes time off, I will be happy to take him west of Murwillumbah and into the rural communities that have been impacted by the Government's decisions. I would take him to Woodenbong, Urbenville and Bonalbo, all of which have been impacted by what happened in the timber industry. I have not had time to talk about the timber industry today.

I am more than happy to take the honourable member to those rural communities. I want him to speak to people in rural communities to explain how the control mechanisms put in place by the Government are helping those communities in their time of need and alleviating the impacts of the Government's decisions, which have resulted in the loss of employment in those areas. The Government's decisions have a flow-on effect in country areas. Once families move out there are fewer children, including students, which has the flow-on effect of fewer teachers, and reduced income coming into the communities. And the flow-on effects continue. I ask the Government to reconsider its opposition to this bill. If there are points it does not agree with, it can move amendments. That is what we do. I implore members of the Government to reconsider their decision to vote against the bill because it is very much needed in rural, regional and coastal New South Wales.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [11.20 a.m.]: I oppose the Rural Communities Impacts Bill because it is simply a smokescreen for The Nationals' failure to stand up for regional New South Wales. The honourable member for Tweed made clear the technical flaws in the bill. The honourable member for Lismore suggested we should move amendments. We will not do that, because we are already doing the job. We already have rural community impact statements as part of the Cabinet process. The process suggested by The Nationals would tack on the statements after the Cabinet decision had already been made. This Government conducts the rural impact statement before the decision so Cabinet can take it into account before it makes its decision. That is the right way of doing it.

We already undertake this important process in rural New South Wales. It ensures that when we make decisions we are fully cognisant of the impact on jobs, the economy and rural New South Wales. It is not something The Nationals have invented. The Nationals are introducing this bill because they have to cover for becoming powerless in the Federal and State coalitions and for not standing up for rural New South Wales. They are not being proactive and putting forward policies to help rural areas. They are simply rolling over when the Liberals—State and Federal—tell them they want to introduce a policy.

I take the honourable member for Lismore to task for his gratuitous comments about my colleague the honourable member for Tweed—he referred to him getting out of the surf and things like that. It is a bit rich coming from The Nationals, most of whose members represent the North Coast of New South Wales. That is why we often call them the North Coast Nats. The honourable member for Tweed has spent a lot of time in rural New South Wales with Country Labor members, talking to councils and communities and listening to what is going on in rural areas. If The Nationals were listening they might have been out in the community last week when we were trying to get them to support us in opposing the sale of Telstra, something that will have a serious detrimental long-term impact on rural telecommunications services in New South Wales. Yet again, they did not have the courage to stand up on that. Rural impact statements are important and they should not be treated lightly as a stunt, as we are seeing from The Nationals. We need to see rural impact statements as proposed by this Government, which are backed up by policies that help rural and regional New South Wales. That is the revealing point about The Nationals.

Mr Thomas George: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The honourable member is critical of The Nationals and has said that this is a stunt. This bill was introduced in 2003 and it has taken the Government this long to have it debated.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr STEVE WHAN: It is a very long-running stunt, but stunt it is.

Mr Thomas George: I would have thought you would have more respect for the people of country New South Wales.

Mr STEVE WHAN: We hear some absolute hypocrisy from the Coalition, and we have seen it today from The Nationals. The honourable member for Lismore strayed from the leave of the bill and talked about tax issues, which the Liberal Party has been talking about. People in rural New South Wales are telling me that they want services delivered. Surprise, surprise, to deliver services we have to raise taxes. Services in rural New South Wales will not be delivered with the Coalition's policy, which would result in a \$16 billion black hole. The Nationals are impotent and we are seeing this measure to try to hide some of their impotence.

What would happen if the Government's rural impact statements were in place when the last Coalition Government was in office, when it sacked 2,000 teachers? The impact of that on the rural New South Wales community was massive. It was a disgraceful sacking exercise by that Government. There were no rural impact statements and The Nationals rolled over and let it happen. Where was their rural impact statement when they closed the Cooma railway line? Country New South Wales has found its real voice is Country Labor. We hear a lot of pious comments from The Nationals, but they are silent on so many issues of importance to rural New South Wales when they are told by John Howard they should just roll over and accept it.

I have already mentioned Telstra. It was a disgrace that The Nationals rolled over, laid on their backs and agreed to the sale of Telstra. This week, when we raised in this place the detrimental impact that petrol prices were having on rural New South Wales, The Nationals voted against even discussing petrol prices in this place. What a sellout of country New South Wales. They did not worry about rural impact statements. They did not want to embarrass John Howard by voting with us to tell him that he should send a representative to today's petrol prices summit. John Howard does not give a damn about what The Nationals think because, under pressure from the media and perhaps this Parliament, he has sent a representative to the petrol summit. Even when The Nationals are doing their best to back the Liberals, they are dumped by them. The same happened with the GST. We have seen nothing from The Nationals on the Howard Government's failure on issues such as bulk-billing. Where is the rural impact statement on—

Mr Thomas George: Point of order: I ask the honourable member to advise the House of the ramifications of the Government's payroll tax.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr STEVE WHAN: We see from these spurious points of order that The Nationals are sensitive about these things. Payroll tax raises a big slab in funding for this Government. It is a major part of our revenue. There are three or four major parts of revenue in New South Wales and they are all opposed by the Opposition—so it says. It tells its communities that it does not support payroll tax, land taxes or any tax. Where do the services come from? Services in rural New South Wales would disappear under the policies of this Opposition.

Where is the rural impact statement that The Nationals insist on to cover the fact that the Federal Government has failed to train enough doctors and nurses to staff medical services in rural New South Wales? Where is the rural impact statement about the fact that one nursing school was closed recently by the Federal Government? Where is the rural impact statement about AusLink and the fact that the Federal Government has failed to put a single cent into upgrading the Barton Highway, a major national highway between Canberra and the Hume Highway, and the Murrumbateman bypass, which has been sitting on the backburner since this Federal Government came to office? There are no rural impact statements.

Mr Thomas George: Did you make a phone call?

Mr STEVE WHAN: I have made a number of statements on it. The honourable member for Lismore spoke about the impact on hospitals. This Government has shown its commitment to rural hospitals by rebuilding 50 or so rural hospitals. I have raised before in this House the absolute failure of the Coalition when it was in office. It held the seat of Monaro for 15 years. In the past 50 years it did not rebuild a single hospital. The Cooma hospital was rebuilt by Labor. Queanbeyan and Bombala hospitals are being rebuilt by Labor. Delegate hospital was rebuilt by Labor. It is more than just words; it is about doing things. It is Country Labor that is

actually out there and doing things. What about the rural impact of the failure of the Nationals and Liberals when they were in government in New South Wales to do anything about improving water and sewerage in the Monaro electorate? Why was it that when I started working with the Labor Government Nimmitabel still was not getting enough water? Adaminaby had waited 40 years to get its water supply. It now has a fresh water supply. Why is it that Captains Flat did not have a clean water supply?

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

POLICE NUMBERS

Debate resumed from 15 September 2005.

Mr ANDREW TINK (Epping) [11.30 a.m.]: This motion is utterly astonishing because it purports to congratulate the Government on something that it should be condemned for. The motion is completely and utterly wrong. It talks about congratulating the Government on continuing with its commitment to record police numbers and to helping to keep the people of New South Wales safer. In fact, there are not record police numbers. There were record police numbers at the time of the 2003 election. Since then police numbers have declined by a figure in the order of 500. Far from record police numbers, police numbers are at least 500 short of where they should be and where they were promised to be at the time of the 2003 election. This is a Government with very serious form in this area. For as long as I can remember—going back to the time when I was shadow Minister for Police—the Government would always ramp up police numbers at election time and then let them run down once the election was over.

Since this matter was last before the Parliament we have had a mini-election of sorts and the Government has been given a huge kick by the electorate, not least for these sort of tactics. We can see it particularly in Macquarie Fields and Liverpool. Each command has 14 fewer police than at the time of the 2003 election. Since the election the number of police in those two commands has dropped by a total of 28. That is not a small number for that community; it is a very significant deficit. Last week the Premier had the hide to skite in this Chamber that police numbers were up in Macquarie Fields and Liverpool: they had been put back up in each case by two. What he did not say was that the numbers were up by two on the number that had been reduced by 14 in each case since the election. So the deficit since the election in those commands in the Macquarie Fields area is still a massive 24 police.

Therefore, it is not surprising that on Saturday the people of Macquarie Fields gave the Government a big kick with an almost 13 per cent swing against it for the sorts of lies and nonsense which the member for Strathfield continues to peddle in this Chamber. She ought to take on board the Macquarie Fields result and acknowledge that the sort of nonsense she goes on with is wearing very thin in the electorate. People are awake to it and they will not tolerate it any longer. If she has not woken up to it she should have a good look in today's *Daily Telegraph* articles relating to Macquarie Fields and how a couple of people cannot even go into their house. The house has been completely and utterly trashed. They are saying as far as Eucalyptus Drive and some of the other areas are concerned, "We cannot as reasonable law-abiding people continue to live in this area. We cannot carry out our normal lives in this area because our homes are not safe to go into. We cannot go into them."

Ms Virginia Judge: Point of order: The member of the Opposition has breached Standing Order 84, as set out in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly's *Standing Rules and Orders*, by which he is obliged to refer to members by their titles or by their electorates. He has referred to me as "she". I would like to be referred to as per the standing rules and orders. I ask you to rule on that.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! I remind the honourable member for Epping that he should refer to other members by their appropriate titles.

Mr ANDREW TINK: I will refer to the member for Strathfield as the member for Strathfield. I am astonished, given all the other things that have been raised in this debate, that she seems to be obsessed with a point such as that. It suggests to me that she has no interest in the fact that police numbers are going south. She has no interest in the fact that her motion is a nonsense. She has no interest—

Ms Virginia Judge: Point of order—

Mr ANDREW TINK: I am sorry, Madam Acting-Speaker. I withdraw the "shes" and I insert in lieu thereof in each case "the member for Strathfield". I will say again that the member for Strathfield ought to be

more concerned about the substantive issues in the motion. It is not a debate about whether it is "she" or "the member for Strathfield"; it is a debate about police numbers. I would have thought that the people of Macquarie Fields and perhaps even the people of Strathfield, for that matter, would be— [*Time expired.*]

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE (Strathfield) [11.36 a.m.], in reply: The object of my motion is to congratulate the Government on the police response to community needs in terms of results.

Mr Andrew Tink: Point of order: The honourable member for Bega jumped and ought to be allowed to participate in the debate.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! When a member seeks the call, he or she must attract my attention so that I know that member wishes to speak. The honourable member for Strathfield attracted my attention and was given the call. Unfortunately, that is the decision I have made.

Mr Andrew Tink: Let me put it on the record then that the member for Strathfield has been so done over in this debate that she will not even—

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat.

Mr Andrew Tink: You will not let the honourable member for Bega participate in the debate. You want to close off a debate that has gone south for you.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. If he does not do so, I will direct that he be removed from the Chamber.

Mr Andrew Tink: You want to close off a debate that has gone pear shaped. That is what you want to do.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! the honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. If there is another outburst like that he will be removed from this Chamber.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I rose at the same time as the member for Strathfield, who raised a point of order and then stood up and exercised her right of reply. I find that completely unacceptable. I rose to speak in the debate, an important debate, a debate which is about declining police numbers.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! There is no point of order. As I said earlier, when members stand and seek the call, they must attract my attention so I can give them the call. Unfortunately, I gave the call to the honourable member for Strathfield.

Mr Andrew Constance: You are running scared. That is denying—

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! The honourable member for Bega will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREW TINK (Epping) [11.38 a.m.]: I move:

That the honourable member for Bega be now heard.

The House divided.

Ayes, 30

Mr Barr
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Cansdell
Mr Constance
Mr Draper
Mrs Fardell
Mr Fraser
Mrs Hancock
Mr Hartcher
Mrs Hopwood
Mr Humpherson

Mr Kerr
Mr Merton
Ms Moore
Mr Oakeshott
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Piccoli
Mr Pringle
Mr Richardson
Mr Roberts
Ms Seaton
Mrs Skinner

Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Tink
Mr Torbay
Mr J. H. Turner
Mr R. W. Turner

Tellers,
Mr George
Mr Maguire

Noes, 40

Ms Allan	Ms Hay	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Andrews	Mr Hickey	Mr Pearce
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hunter	Mrs Perry
Ms Beamer	Ms Judge	Mr Sartor
Mr Black	Ms Keneally	Mr Shearan
Mr Brown	Mr Lynch	Mr Stewart
Ms Burney	Mr McBride	Mr Tripodi
Miss Burton	Mr McLeay	Mr Watkins
Mr Corrigan	Ms Meagher	Mr West
Mr Crittenden	Ms Megarrity	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Mr Mills	
Ms Gadiel	Mr Morris	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gaudry	Mr Newell	Mr Ashton
Mr Greene	Ms Nori	Mr Martin

Pairs

Mr Price	Mr Armstrong
Mr Yeadon	Ms Hodgkinson

Question resolved in the negative.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): Order! The speaking time of the honourable member for Strathfield having expired, the question now is: That the motion be agreed to.

The House divided.

Ayes, 41

Ms Allan	Ms Hay	Ms Nori
Ms Andrews	Mr Hickey	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hunter	Mr Pearce
Ms Beamer	Ms Judge	Mrs Perry
Mr Black	Ms Keneally	Mr Sartor
Mr Brown	Mr Lynch	Mr Shearan
Ms Burney	Mr McBride	Mr Stewart
Miss Burton	Mr McLeay	Mr Tripodi
Mr Corrigan	Ms Meagher	Mr Watkins
Mr Crittenden	Ms Megarrity	Mr West
Ms D'Amore	Mr Mills	Mr Whan
Ms Gadiel	Ms Moore	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gaudry	Mr Morris	Mr Ashton
Mr Greene	Mr Newell	Mr Martin

Noes, 29

Mr Barr	Mr Humpherson	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr Souris
Mr Constance	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Stoner
Mr Debnam	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Tink
Mr Draper	Mr Piccoli	Mr Torbay
Mrs Fardell	Mr Pringle	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Fraser	Mr Richardson	Mr R. W. Turner
Mrs Hancock	Mr Roberts	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hartcher	Ms Seaton	Mr George
Mrs Hopwood	Mrs Skinner	Mr Maguire

Pairs

Mr Price
Mr Yeadon

Mr Armstrong
Ms Hodgkinson

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

SIR ERIC WOODWARD MEMORIAL SCHOOL NURSE POSITION

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.56 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the exceptional care and teaching provided to the severely disabled students of the Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School;
- (2) notes the concerns of parents that the nurse who is currently present for almost the entire school day will, in the future, be part of a community plan that will consist of referral services; and
- (3) calls on the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Disability Services to ensure that a nurse is centered at the Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School for the health care needs and observation of students.

The motion, which was placed on the notice paper more than 2½ years ago, raises a serious issue that has been of great concern to the parents of the 17 students at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School since 2001. It is an absolute disgrace that the issue has not been resolved in that time. I call on the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Disability Services to make an announcement today regarding the status of the nurse position at the school. Hopefully, the parents will be assured that their children will be well looked after by the full-time presence of a nurse at the school. To date the Government has not addressed parents' concerns about the school nurse being part of a community framework involving referral services, which would mean that there would not be a nurse on site.

I raised the issue in the form of a motion because of the distress I have felt during the past few years regarding the excessive time taken to resolve the matter. I consider it to be a total insult. Two sets of parents who love their children have provided to the Coalition legitimate reasons why a nurse should remain at the school full time. The parents are spokespeople on behalf of the 15 other sets of parents, and concerned relatives and friends. The parents and members of the school council have been tireless in their work and vigilance to ensure the full-time presence of a nurse at the school. I thank the parents for their efforts on behalf of their disabled children.

The parents have also had a barrier built between them and the decision-makers, the respective Ministers, regarding the issue. That is totally unacceptable, given that they are the parents of some of the most severely disabled children in the State. It is simply not good enough that parents are kept in the dark whilst bureaucrats either ignore their concerns or fail to be up front about what is happening in relation to the nurse's position. To this day there is an arrangement where for two days of the week a registered nurse is employed and for three days of the week agency staff come in. The permanent nurse resigned at the end of last year and there has been a failsafe sort of position since then, which still has not given any confidence to the parents that the presence of a nurse five days a week at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School is going to continue.

Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School is located at St Ives with 17 severely disabled students. The school was told the position of a school nurse would be a community position, which will effectively remove from the school the position presently paid for by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care [DADHC], and the nurse in that position will then, in future, cover a number of schools. The students require a nurse to be at the school for all of the school hours. The Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, stated in a letter, after many parental and other protests, that the nurse would stay until the matter was resolved. I will refer to that correspondence in a moment. The current nurse has resigned and, as I said, has been replaced by agency staff. The position has not been advertised and the question is: what will be happening for the rest of this year and what will be happening next year?

I visited the school for a Christmas pageant and I am totally convinced that the students at the school are the most severely disabled students attending a school that I have encountered. They have very little verbal ability and many have multiple medical problems. I refer to a letter dated 16 August 2002 from Peter Reily, the

then Director Disability, Metro North Area, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. The letter was written in answer to a letter from Mr and Mrs Lenert, who were very much Trojans in this matter, in which they asked many questions in relation to the position of the nurse. In his letter Mr Reily says:

I need to inform you no information has been provided because no progress had occurred.

That was in 2002. I inform the House this morning that no progress has occurred to 2005, and we are nearly in 2006. I would like to know what on earth these two departments and the two Ministers are trying to do for parents who are already concerned about the welfare and health of their young people who attend the school. Nearly six years later, these families are still in the same position. I quote from a letter dated 16 October 2002 from the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, who was then Minister for Community Services, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Juvenile Justice and Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth, in which she said:

I am advised that DET has successfully managed the health care needs of children in other schools and hence, the current discussions between DET and DADHC are exploring the issues surrounding these arrangements.

The Minister says that the two departments are discussing the proposed changes with the affected families—and obviously they are still discussing the proposed changes with the affected families. I am informed an independent body from Health has now been called to assess the students' health and welfare needs and whether they need a nurse on-site at all times or whether another arrangement could be made. It is appalling that the situation has come to this because every one of the students has been assessed by his or her own medical practitioner and those medical practitioners have categorically stated that these students need to have a nurse on-site at all times.

These students are required to take medication; they have percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy [PEG] feeds, which are quite complex. If the PEG tube falls out, what happens then? Many of the students suffer from epileptic fits and there have been anxious times waiting for an ambulance. The students obviously need to have somebody who is a registered nurse on site. In a letter to Ms Deonne Smith, the Regional Director, North Sydney Region, Department of Education and Training, Ms Anne Lenert, the then president of the school council, states that the Ombudsman's office was informed that the parents were complaining about the delay in the department making a decision in relation to this matter. This letter is dated 22 November 2004—obviously the parents are still waiting. Mrs Lenert goes on to say:

We have been waiting to have this issue resolved for over three years now and feel that the department should treat this matter as a priority.

Which, obviously, the department has not done. There is also a letter dated 11 January 2005 from Chris Woodgate, the Regional Director of DADHC, to Mr and Mrs Rob and Kim Allan, which states that at a meeting it was agreed to formalise a joint request to the Department of Health to conduct an independent review of the health care plans and requirements of the students at the school, and the letter refers to the consent of the families, amongst other things. So a decision still had not been made at that stage.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has also raised this matter twice as a matter of urgency in this House, and I refer honourable members on the other side to those speeches. I reiterate that tossing the issue around between DADHC and the Department of Education and Training is totally unsatisfactory. The parents want to know what is in store for their young people who have severe disabilities and complex health issues, and they want a strong commitment to the policy that that a nurse will remain. As I have already said, whilst the arrangements at the moment are marginally satisfactory with a piecemeal working week for two sets of nurses, the school really wants to have its own on-site nurse—a nurse who will get to know these students and their complex issues.

These students are verbally impaired, so if something goes wrong with their medications—and one student has the intrathecal administration of medication—they cannot tell anybody what they are feeling at the time. If something goes wrong with, for example, the intrathecal administration of a very complex drug there could be a crisis and the possible need for an ambulance to be called if there is not a nurse on site to assist with medical care. These students need adequate medical care on site at the school.

Ms TANYA GADIEL (Parramatta) [12.06 p.m.]: Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School at St Ives provides individualised educational programs for students with an intellectual disability. Many of these students also have fragile medical and health conditions. The school currently caters for 18 students from the northern suburbs, the North Shore and the northern beaches areas. The school is fully accessible and features a sensory

garden, which is easily accessible for students with little mobility. The students at the school generally have high and complex support needs requiring managed health care plans. The plans are developed and reviewed in consultation with parents and are based on the advice provided from medical personnel.

Students at Sir Edward Woodward Memorial School experience a quality educational program in a caring environment. At the end of year 12 they will have achieved accreditation for the Higher School Certificate, having completed outcomes and content from the lifeskills syllabuses of the Board of Studies. Each year, and as required, parents are invited to meet with teachers and therapists to develop each student's learning support plan and identify goals for the student at school, home and in the wider community.

Mrs Judy Hopwood: Point of order: My point of order is in relation to relevance to my motion. My motion is dealing with the health needs of these young people, not the learning needs.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is no point of order.

Ms TANYA GADIEL: The achievement of communication skills is a high priority. There is a wide range of support mechanisms at the school. For example, the disability program consultant assists the teacher in development and implementation of individualised education programs. The support teacher's vision and hearing provide specialised support to students and their teachers. The support teacher transition develops transition plans and makes links with providers for students to post-school programs. In addition, speech and occupational therapists from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care [DADHC] consult with teachers on the communication, positioning and other physical needs of the students on a referral basis.

Therapists involved with the students also attend and contribute to planning and review meetings throughout the year. The full-time teachers aides (special) at the school undertake health care procedures training as part of their professional learning. Some students require regular observation and procedures such as tube feeding and regular timed administration of medication, as outlined in the managed health care plan. The Department of Education and Training northern Sydney region currently provides funding for an additional teachers aide (special) at the school. Assistive technology enables students to access all curriculum areas and provides them with opportunities to develop skills for independence and autonomy.

Students enjoy a number of programs that have educational and therapeutic benefits, including regular hydrotherapy sessions with a therapist from DADHC, and participate in a very successful program at the Riding for the Disabled Association. Teachers provide a wide range of activities to develop students' gross and fine motor skills. Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School enjoys strong support from its parent body and from members of the wider community. The parents appreciate the high level of care their children receive while at school. For many parents the support of their child's health needs is a most important and demanding aspect of daily life. The school's ability to maintain this high quality care throughout the day is of great comfort to the families concerned.

Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School currently has access to nursing services provided by DADHC. Two nurses work on separate days for four hours per day. From a school perspective, the nurse undertakes a range of health procedures that otherwise would be undertaken by teachers aides. This allows the aides more time to support the educational program. On occasions serious health issues arise that could result in a student requiring hospitalisation. The school has agreed health care plans developed in consultation with the parents and the nurse as well as the principal. These plans identify emergency care procedures and are endorsed by the parents. This is important to the parents as emergency medical attention may introduce procedures that are outside normal health care routines. The Department of Education and Training, the Department for Ageing, Disability and Home Care and NSW Health are committed to providing for the best health care needs of the students at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School. All three agencies will continue to work with parents to ensure appropriate levels of service.

Mr ANDREW HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [12.12 p.m.]: I support the motion. The school itself is in St Ives, in the electorate of Davidson, but the parents and students come from a much wider area because of the nature of the students' disabilities. The care and support students receive at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School is excellent. The staff provide a great deal of compassion and support, and the involvement of the parents in the school and the support they provide is second to none; it is quite extraordinary. I support the call for a nurse to be constantly present at the school during school hours. That is the strong wish of the parents.

I also commend the honourable member for Hornsby. A number of her constituents have drawn her attention to this problem. She has been a passionate advocate for the parents and students over a number of

years. This motion was placed on the notice paper two or three years ago and to this point it has not been resolved. As the honourable member for Hornsby clearly indicated, the departments cannot resolve the problem, notwithstanding the rhetoric of the government representative who just spoke. The lack of compassion from the relevant departments has been quite disappointing and has left parents almost despairing.

I note the comments of the honourable member for Parramatta, who presumably was acting on behalf of the Government. She read word by word a typed and prepared speech given to her by the department. I think if she had taken the time to read it in advance she would have either put it aside or rewritten it. It seemed to focus predominantly on a number of issues that are unrelated to this motion. She talked about the garden, the pleasant surrounds of the school, the number of places, education programs, parental involvement and the variety of activities. It barely touched on the purpose of this motion, which is the need for constant health care for the students. In the context of this motion and the seriousness and passion felt by parents and staff at the school, her contribution on behalf of the Government was gratuitous and bordered on insulting. Parents certainly appreciate the care given by staff, but not the lack of care that seems to be coming from the Government.

There are 17 or 18 students at the school whose parents and families are deeply involved in supporting the students and staff. This matter has been unresolved for four years and clearly needs to be finalised. A full-time nurse is needed on site. She should be there for every school hour, not just for four hours or a lesser number of hours as the Government sees fit. Having a pool nurse as part of a community framework is not an adequate substitute for what these students need. Their level of disability is severe and their needs are constant. Given the number of students and their levels of disability it is absolutely essential to have a nurse present at all times. That is supported by each of the students and their medical practitioners, who have indicated that each student's needs are high and, as a group of 18, they need hour-by-hour medical care five days a week.

The Minister, by her inaction, clearly agrees with the model that the Government is seeking to impose on the school. It is a very uncaring approach that does not understand the students' needs and their degree of disability. A number of schools around the State have students with disabilities, but the severity of disability of students at this school is extraordinary. It is time for Ministers to take responsibility and not keep palming it off to DADHC or the Department of Education and Training. The matter must be resolved. The people who have been forgotten for four years are the students themselves.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [12.17 p.m.]: This motion is extremely important. Nothing is more important to parents than their children. When children have issues and disabilities parents expect the State Government to provide a support structure so that those students can achieve their maximum capacity for learning and the outcomes of which they are capable. Focus should always be on the ability rather than the disability. We have moved that way as a society. Schools such as Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School stand out in the way it goes about supporting families and children with disabilities.

This school has a very proud history. It is well known in the community for the work it does for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who enter school expect and are entitled to have support networks and structures both inside and outside the school. When a parent of a child with a disability fronts up to school on the first day it is pretty forbidding. I have spoken to many parents of children with disabilities. When they arrive at school they are looking for the support that anyone in the community would like them to have, not just from educationalists but from others who can provide immediate support within the school community. Obviously there is a range of disabilities and children will need different support services.

It should be the aim of any government to ensure that such a school has the support of a full-time nurse who can provide the ongoing connection with the necessary services and who can get to know the family and their children in a holistic way. In my area, on the northern beaches, there are two schools for children with disabilities. One is the Fisher Road School and the other is the Arranounbai School at Allambie Heights. I have dealt extensively with families and parents at those schools and I know how critical it is that they have a place to go to that is far more than just a school. It needs to be a centre where the heart reaches beyond simply education and addresses all the needs of families who are struggling to support their children. And, sadly, it usually is a struggle.

Often children in families where there is a child with a disability do not get the support they need when their parents are focused on constantly having to battle to get the necessary support services for the child with a disability. The Government's role is to ensure that the whole family is supported, and it is critical that the Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School has a nurse who can continue in the position. We want to achieve the best outcome, not just for individual students with disabilities but also for the whole family. Families should not have

to seek out services and referrals. The provision of the nurse to facilitate only some of those referrals is very much a second-rate answer.

The Coalition would like to see this Labor Government actually put into action the promises that it makes. This newly badged Government is, unfortunately, showing all the old traits of the Carr Government. On his very first day Premier Iemma announced that he was going to put a new focus on disability and mental health issues—indeed, all issues that the community wants addressed. However, we are now seeing that that was all empty rhetoric. On behalf of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition, I call on the Premier to ensure that the nurse who is at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School continues in the role and that the school has all the support services necessary to make these families' lives as satisfactory as can be achieved. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [12.22 p.m.], in reply: I ask members of the Government to show compassion and acknowledge the safety issues of their policies with respect to severely disabled children. These children suffer from chest infections, brittle bones and high temperatures. They are largely non-verbal and have great difficulty communicating. They deserve to have a person who can make clinical decisions based on sound education. Although I acknowledge the great role undertaken by teachers aides, they are not registered nurses.

Only yesterday one parent expressed concern that if the percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy [PEG] inserts fall out from the feeding tube of her son Thomas, the teachers aide is unable to replace it. That could happen. Thomas is the young student who has an intrathecal administration of medication. Also, if the tube does not work for some reason, Tom is unable to communicate that fact and serious complications could occur. These children need a registered nurse who can get to know them and their idiosyncrasies, not agency nurses. Indeed, the agency nurse at the school was given a letter from the pay office informing her that her services will no longer be required after the end of September.

I call on the Government to inform the parents of Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School what is planned for next term. This urgent matter needs a commitment by the Government, which says it cares about disabled people, although its track record is not great. Parents need the reassurance of a full-time nurse, in a permanent position, at the school. We are dealing with the lives of 18 vulnerable young people—some of the most vulnerable in the State—yet there is a dispute as to who should pay for the services of the nurse. At the moment the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care is paying, but it does not want to. The Department of Education and Training should be paying but it does not want to either.

This dispute has been going on since 2001, with only piecemeal services being provided to the students. Parents are not assured of future health care for their children. They want their disabled children to attend the school full time, but are very uneasy about the absence of a registered full-time nurse to care for these children with very sensitive and complex health issues. Indeed, they may be forced to take certain actions because of this untenable situation. The honourable member for Parramatta gave a wonderful speech, although she did not take up her allocated time and largely dealt with the educational needs of the students. The parents will be alarmed when they read that contribution from a Government member on this important issue, which they have fought tooth and nail since 2001.

I implore the Government and whatever Minister is benevolent enough to finally make the positive decision to keep the nurse at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School. This is not reinventing the wheel. Other schools have full-time school nurses, such as the Hunter School, which has students with orthopaedic problems. Those students have needs, but the students at Sir Eric Woodward Memorial School have many needs that require a nurse on site at all times. On behalf of the students and parents of this very special school, and on behalf of Uli Lenert and Tom Allan, two students related to the school, I ask Government members to vote with the Opposition on the motion.

Mr TONY STEWART: Pursuant to Standing Order 157, I ask that separate questions be put on paragraphs (1) and (2), and on paragraph (3).

Paragraphs (1) and (2) agreed to.

Question—That paragraph (3) be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 32

Mr Barr	Mrs Hopwood	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humpherson	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr Souris
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr Stoner
Mr Debnam	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Tink
Mr Draper	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Torbay
Mrs Fardell	Mr Piccoli	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Fraser	Mr Pringle	Mr R. W. Turner
Mrs Hancock	Mr Richardson	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hartcher	Mr Roberts	Mr George
Mr Hazzard	Ms Seaton	Mr Maguire

Noes, 42

Ms Allan	Mr Hickey	Mr Pearce
Ms Andrews	Mr Hunter	Mrs Perry
Mr Bartlett	Ms Judge	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Ms Keneally	Mr Sartor
Mr Black	Mr Lynch	Mr Shearan
Mr Brown	Mr McBride	Mr Stewart
Ms Burney	Mr McLeay	Mr Tripodi
Miss Burton	Ms Meagher	Mr Watkins
Mr Corrigan	Ms Megarrity	Mr West
Mr Crittenden	Mr Mills	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Mr Morris	
Ms Gadiel	Mr Newell	
Mr Gaudry	Ms Nori	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Greene	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Ashton
Ms Hay	Mrs Paluzzano	Mr Martin

Pairs

Mr Armstrong	Mr Price
Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Yeadon

Question resolved in the negative.

Paragraph (3) negatived.

Paragraphs (1) and (2) of the motion agreed to.

SOUTH SYDNEY PUBLIC EDUCATION

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY (Heffron) [12.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House acknowledges the Government's achievements in revitalising public education in South Sydney through:

- (1) the creation of Alexandria Park Community School, a facility educating students from kindergarten to year 12 across two campuses.
- (2) the development of strong links between Alexandria Park and the local community.
- (3) increasing enrolments in public education in South Sydney by over 100 students since 2002.

This motion recognises the revitalisation of public education in South Sydney, and congratulates the New South Wales Government on the decisive action it has taken to ensure that children in South Sydney have access to improved educational opportunities and better resources and facilities. In 2001 the total number of students in the Alexandria, Redfern and Waterloo public schools and at Cleveland Street High School had fallen to approximately 250. Indeed, enrolments in South Sydney fell by 86 per cent between 1977 and 2001. The New South Wales Government took strong steps to arrest declining enrolments by committing \$7 million to create

the Alexandria Park Community School. These four schools—Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria and Cleveland Street—were amalgamated to form a preschool to year 12 community school.

Concept plans for refurbishment and new facilities were developed with and endorsed by the community for the two campuses: one on Park Road at the former Cleveland Street site that houses the preschool to year 8 students, and one on Mitchell Road at the former Alexandria Public School site that houses years 9 to 12. The development application for these campuses was approved in 2002. The new school opened its doors in 2003, and with its opening public education in the inner-city area received a huge boost. Some 337 students from kindergarten to year 12 enrolled, and these students, their teachers and parents had access to the best facilities and educational opportunities. Out-of-date facilities were replaced by state-of-the-art ones, and new educational initiatives were in place to attract families to public education.

The junior campus upgrade included refurbishment of 22 existing spaces to provide classrooms, science laboratories, design and technology rooms, seminar rooms; refurbishment of existing practical learning areas for industrial and visual arts; a new lift to provide improved access to teaching and learning facilities; external landscaping to enhance the school's entry and image; and upgrades to bus arrival and pick-up areas.

The senior campus has also been rebuilt, including a library, fitness laboratory and performance workshop, teaching kitchen facilities to provide tourism and hospitality training, a visual arts workshop, a multimedia workshop, a science laboratory, staff facilities, administration facilities, a new cafeteria, landscape works, an upgrade to existing external courtyards to create a new assembly area and a tiered outdoor learning area. There is no way these state-of-the-art facilities could have been provided without the amalgamation plan. Low enrolments at the individual schools would have seen local kids miss out on having the best. Alexandria Park Community School, with higher enrolments, delivers an expanded range of teaching and learning opportunities. These include sporting opportunities, performing arts initiatives and academic programs. I would like to look at some of the opportunities that Alexandria Park Community School has delivered to the students in South Sydney.

Partnerships with universities and TAFE New South Wales would give students more subject choices. An opportunity class has been established in the primary school and the selective stream in the secondary school has attracted enrolments from the immediate local area and beyond. A particular plus is that Aboriginal students now compete for and gain places in these classes. The school offers innovative educational programs including a middle school structure to support students through the transition from year 6 into year 7. There are strong programs in art, music, drama and dance, and an Aboriginal studies program. The school has a strong literacy focus and, to complement and support this, students are also able to study the Aboriginal language Wiradjuri. The vocational options are available to students in the secondary school, and the school is actively working to expand accredited vocational learning opportunities and outcomes.

Other innovative programs include the Racing to the Top Program, which is run in conjunction with TAFE New South Wales and provides 15-year-olds to 18-year-olds with the opportunity to build and maintain a remote-control car, learning about small engines and auto mechanics in the process. Racing to the Top is a program that will not only teach people practical skills in engine maintenance, but also encourage young and old to come together in a common activity. I was pleased earlier this year to visit Alexandria Park Community School with the Minister for Community Services to speak with students about the benefits of the Racing to the Top Program.

Another innovative program that Alexandria Park Community School was quick to take up was the Making Cents Program. Students at Alexandria Park were amongst the first in New South Wales to benefit from this innovative new program, which teaches children the importance of financial management. Again, I was quite happy a few months ago to launch the Making Cents Program at Alexandria Park with the Minister for Education and Training. In addition, primary school students won a statewide science competition last year; they came first and second. The school that came third was Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School, so the students at Alexandria Park Community School are even beating some of the most elite academic schools in the State in science competitions. Although the school has been operating for a relatively short time, early reports show encouraging signs of literacy and numeracy development.

I would like to talk briefly about the success that the Alexandria Park Community School has also had in sports programming. The Alexandria Park Community School under-12 girls recently came third in the Public School Sports Association basketball competition. They were competing against schools of 800-plus enrolments. This is quite an achievement. Last year the under-14 boys rugby league team were the South

Sydney district champions. They went on to beat Matraville Sports High School and Marcellin High School, and ended up in the final, where they lost to Engadine in the Buckley Shield. Again, that was a fantastic result for a school that has had its doors open for only three years. The primary school boys rugby league team recently won the Bob McCarthy Shield. Lots of good things are taking place. Last year students from Alexandria Park Community School travelled to Japan for a cultural competition, in which they designed, wrote and performed a play called *Beyond the Fence*, which was about their lives in Redfern and Waterloo. Students aged between 10 and 13 won a gold medal at this international cultural competition in Japan.

It is important to come back to the point of the motion, which notes the increase in enrolments, which is why the State Government took the decisive action to create the Alexandria Park Community School. It is pertinent to ask: Have all these programs worked? Has the amalgamation worked? Has the emphasis on sports and culture worked? Has the provision of a community centre and community facilities on site worked? The answer is a resounding yes. The goal of Alexandria Park Community School was to attract families back to public education in South Sydney. The answer is yes, it has worked. The number of students choosing to enrol at Alexandria Park Community School continues to grow. There are now 405 students enrolled at the school from kindergarten to year 12, which is up from 363 students in 2004, up from 337 students in 2003 and up from the 250 students in all four schools in 2002. Families are coming back to public education in South Sydney.

Children in South Sydney now have access to some of the best educational resources and academic programs, sporting facilities and programs in the State. The increase in enrolments is clear recognition of the quality programs on offer at the school. I commend the motion to the House and ask the House to join me in congratulating the students, the staff and the teachers at Alexandria Park Community School and recognising the strong and decisive action the Government took in helping to create this fantastic educational institution.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [12.45 p.m.]: As shadow Minister for Education and Training I lead on behalf of the Opposition on this motion. The Liberal and National parties support the communities and families who have come together at Alexandria Park Community School. We support and encourage strong public education outcomes for the students, not only at Alexandria Park Community School but also in all of New South Wales. It is an interesting aspect of the debate that the honourable member for Heffron believes that the school has somehow improved its links with the local community as a result of the amalgamation. From what I understand, there were already strong links between the community and the local public schools prior to the forced amalgamations of the schools. The community in that area has always been a strong supporter of local public schools and had strong links with them. Unfortunately, many of those links were destroyed by the Government steamrolling them, selling them off and taking money out of public education.

I do not want to detract from our support and encouragement for the continuing links that exist, and I am sure will grow, between the Alexandria Park Community School and its local community and families. There is nothing more important than a strong public education system. The Coalition supports choice in education. However, a fair society, a reasonable society, a society that looks after all its members, is measured often by the way it approaches public education. Sadly, the honourable member for Heffron may not have become aware that public education is under stress in New South Wales. Whilst I acknowledge and accept her support for the Alexandria Park Community School, as the Coalition supports it and the community of that school, we have to be realistic. We have to acknowledge that the words the honourable member is using are not reflective of public education in New South Wales. The Liberal Party and The Nationals want to see a reversal of the running down—the weakening—of public education in New South Wales.

As the honourable member for Heffron has moved this motion, it is perhaps topical to note that only last weekend the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried the headline "Public schools losing battle in inner suburbs". I am not sure whether the honourable member for Heffron read that article. The very inner-city schools that the honourable member and others in the Labor Party like to talk about as being strengthened are not winning that battle. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

Public education in Sydney's inner suburbs is dying, with low enrolments threatening the viability of a number of schools.

Another paragraph read:

Student numbers at eight primary schools and two high schools in the east and inner west have halved in the past decade, while a further six primary and three secondary schools in the area have lost at least a third of students.

Many schools are losing numbers. Public schools highlighted in the newspaper article were Fort Street, Plunkett Street, La Perouse, Bondi, Bourke Street, St Peters and Erskineville. These are good schools with good

communities, wonderful students and excellent teachers. Something else is happening in public education at the moment that appears to be missing the focus of the State Labor Government. I remind the House that the article and others in recent weeks have highlighted the massive exodus of students from the public education system.

Ms Noreen Hay: What rot!

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The honourable member for Wollongong says that that is wrong. That shows how out of touch she is. Perhaps in the Illawarra—

Ms Noreen Hay: I did not say it was wrong. I said, "What rot!"

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: If the honourable member for Wollongong can sit there as a Labor member and say that, she should have warning bells ringing in her head. She has the same problem in her area: it is right across New South Wales. Instead of interrupting with silly little juvenile comments she should be taking part in the debate and talking about how her Government is going to support public education, because it is critical that the Government refocus on public education. As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by the honourable member for Wollongong—

Ms Noreen Hay: You do not know where Wollongong is.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I do know Wollongong. The former member, Col Markham, was a very decent member who would not have interrupted in a debate like this. He would have been supportive of getting students back into the public system. Unfortunately, the honourable member for Wollongong took his position through one more of the Government's internecine battles. Now that she has been here for a while she should listen instead of just throwing in her two bob's worth.

Ms Kristina Keneally: Point of order: I ask that you draw the honourable member back to the substance of the motion.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the member to speak to the motion and not make personal remarks about other members.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Madam Acting-Speaker, if you are going to direct me back to the context of the motion you should also ensure that Labor members, including the honourable member for Wollongong, are not calling out "What rot!" and interjecting while I am speaking. The honourable member for Heffron ought to look out. She is one of the members that the local Labor Party branches are saying are on the way out, along with the current Minister. She can laugh but she had enough trouble becoming a member so she should just settle down and listen to the debate. She should read today's newspaper. A motion has been passed which states that unless they fix up the Redfern-Waterloo issue she is gone and so is Carmel Tebbutt, and I suspect that there is more than an element of truth in that.

In the past 10 years under the Labor Government approximately 50,000 additional students have come into the education system, but there has been a net loss of about 11,000 from the public system. That tells us that while the student population is increasing overall, for some reason the public sector is missing out. We agree with the honourable member's support for Alexandria Park Community School, but her conclusion that the public education system is doing well is totally wrong, because the public education system has seen no support from the Labor Government, only amalgamations. Schools that were in existence before, with their own communities and with students that loved the schools, should have had the support and encouragement to grow. There should have been a change in the Government approach—more support for maintenance, capital works and teachers.

I remind the honourable member that up until this year when the Coalition raised the issues and put the heat on the Government to increase professional development the Labor Government had been dishing out \$27 a year per public school teacher for professional development. There are serious problems in public education. The Coalition is prepared to be supportive and bipartisan on this issue if the Government will simply acknowledge that the problems exist instead of wiping schools off the map, amalgamating schools, taking the money out, putting it into consolidated revenue and then selling them as a change for the better.

The issue for public education is quite simple: the Labor Government talks the talk but does not walk the walk. Numerous students have been lost from the public education system—11,000, as the honourable

member for Heffron does not seem to understand—and members on this side of the House are saying that it is time for a complete refocus. Last night parents from Maroubra Junction Public School were crying out to be heard. Those parents lived in the heart of the electorate of the former Premier, Bob Carr. They could not get his ear. They cannot get the ear of the Minister for Education and Training. They arrived at an estimates committee meeting last night simply wanting to give a message: we love our deputy principal, Ms Strahle, who has been acting in the position for four years. What response did they get from the Government? "We are not going to talk to you." What an arrogant, out of touch Labor Government! It may claim to be a new Government but it is rebadged arrogance personified.

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.55 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for Heffron for moving this important motion and I thank her for the great work she does in her electorate in regard to supporting public education and the needs of education in general. Having said that, I was very disappointed and surprised, if not perplexed, to hear the remarks of the honourable member for Wakehurst today. Sadly, he seems misinformed in regard to the issues that he has raised. His attitude particularly perplexes me because he has taken on the important shadow portfolio of education. One would expect that he would have done his homework before putting forward unsubstantiated and unreasoned arguments to the House.

It is a fact of life that small schools exist in the public sector and in other sectors. The majority of small schools in the Sydney area are special schools that support students with special needs. Swings in enrolments are experienced in almost all schools, and the reasons for that are quite complex. Despite claims in the media, the Sydney education region has increased enrolments this year by more than 690. This Government is clearly committed to ensuring that government schools remain the first choice for most families. Strong long-term programs are in place to increase enrolments in public schools. In recent years more than \$100 million has been spent on upgrading schools in inner Sydney, including Sydney Secondary College—Glebe, Leichhardt and Balmain—Rose Bay Secondary College, Randwick high schools, Tempe Languages High School and Alexandria Park Community School. Other schools to benefit include Matraville Sports High School and Green Square School.

In areas throughout Sydney there are examples of schools with increasing enrolments. In other areas the rate of decline has slowed appreciably. Public schools are fighting back—Government programs are making a difference. Government schools will continue to be challenged, however, to increase their enrolment share while the Commonwealth provides real funding increases—unfortunately, in a very unsympathetic way—for non-government schools. This is really impacting on the public school system. The Commonwealth continues to ignore the needs of the majority of Australian families who enrol their children in government schools. That is a tragedy.

The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics figures for school enrolments nationally show that there were 744,229 full-time students in New South Wales government schools in 2004, of which 440,309 were primary students and 303,920 were secondary students. A significant increase in enrolments on previous years is starting to emerge. The figures do not show the strong growth in government school enrolments in some areas in 2004. Inequitable formulas have been applied by the Federal Government. For five years in a row the Commonwealth Government has increased its per student grants to non-government schools in real terms while grants for government schools have only reflected basic cost indexation. That means that by 2008 the Commonwealth will provide, on average, \$5 for each non-government student compared with \$1 for each government school student.

The Commonwealth continues to ignore the needs of the majority of Australian families, who enrol their children in government schools. That is disappointing and tragic. The New South Wales Government calls on the Commonwealth to commit an equitable share of funding and resources to students in public schools and to increase the support that public schools deserve and should receive. The arguments put forward by the honourable member for Wakehurst simply do not reflect the reality. He should support public education, which has been the backbone of this great nation. The Commonwealth is recklessly trying to dismantle the public education system through its inequitable funding formula, which has been condoned by the State Coalition.

The New South Wales Coalition, through its shadow Minister, should be raising its voice. It should approach the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister, Brendan Nelson, and say, "Enough is enough, give back to our public schools what they deserve, give them equitable funding." Equitable funding would ensure that public school students, the majority of students in the New South Wales school system, get the resources that they are entitled to. I commend the motion of the honourable member for Heffron. She is aware of the benefits

of public education and the need for equity in funding. She is a leader in her community and under her leadership public education will benefit greatly.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

[Madam Acting-Speaker (Ms Marie Andrews) left the chair at 1.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

OLYMPIC PARK LIVE FOOTBALL TELECASTS

Ministerial Statement

Ms SANDRA NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation, Minister for Women, and Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development) [2.15 p.m.]: Many football fans will be disappointed because they are unable to get to Melbourne to see the Sydney Swans in the Australian Football League [AFL] grand final. Many fans unable to secure tickets for the National Football League [NFL] Wests Tigers versus St George-Illawarra game on Saturday will be equally disappointed. I am pleased to announce that a big screen for a live telecast of both games will be erected at Sydney Olympic Park just past the Novotel in Yulong Park. From 2.00 p.m. this Saturday, AFL and NRL football fans will be able to watch the two games in what we hope will be a family-friendly picnic environment.

All the restaurants and catering facilities normally available at Sydney Olympic Park will be available, and live bands will perform between the two matches. I extend my thanks to Sydney Olympic Park, the NRL, the AFL, Channel 9 and Channel 10 for their co-operation in allowing the telecast to take place so that the football fans can have a live site at which to watch their teams compete. I take this opportunity to wish the Sydney Swans all the best in their grand final encounter this weekend. I also wish all teams playing in the NRL preliminary finals the best of luck—mainly because they will need it if they hope to meet Wests Tigers next week in the grand final.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter) [2.22 p.m.]: It will be a peak weekend of football, with an Australian Football League grand final involving the home New South Wales team and a set of finals cliffhangers involving some of the National Rugby League's most passionately supported and popular teams—Wests Tigers, St George Illawarra, Parramatta Eels, and the North Queensland Cowboys. I commend all involved in the creation of a live site at Olympic Park. For all the fans who cannot obtain seats at Aussie Stadium or cannot travel to Melbourne, it will be the next best thing to being there. It will also be a long outing for those who intend to take in the AFL grand final in the afternoon and the Wests Tigers-St George Illawarra final in the evening. There will be a few tired people by the end of the night, and no doubt a number of full houses at the various rugby league clubs. Public transport is obviously the best option. My sentiments are with my childhood club, St George—and I married a girl from the Illawarra. However, as a universal good sport, I will not go into a deep depression if the unthinkable happens.

The Sydney Swans Football Club is the former South Melbourne Football Club, which started in 1874. It migrated to Sydney in 1982, but had already become known as the Swans due to the influx of West Australian players in the 1930s. Ironically, the Sydney Swans are playing the West Coast Eagles in Melbourne. The Sydney Cricket Ground is now the Swans home ground. There have been many memorable Swans victories on that ground, not the least of which was the cliffhanger two weeks ago that propelled the Swans into the grand final. The Swans premierships include 1909, 1918 and 1933. A 72-year drought could end this weekend. The Sydney Swans have unified the entire sports-loving community in New South Wales. It is the only AFL club in the State. When the Swans play a preliminary final or final, it is the equivalent of a rugby league State of Origin. It will be an epic battle amidst the history and tradition of the code. I extend my best wishes to coach Paul Roos, captain Barry Hall, and the Swans players, staff and supporters. We are very proud of the Swans' achievements, whatever the result on Saturday.

MINISTRY

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: In the absence of the Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for the Arts, who is attending the floodplain graziers conference in Dubbo, organised by the Sustainable Floodplain Graziers Association, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, and Minister for State Development will take questions on his behalf.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Report**

Mr Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, of the report entitled "Investigation into Various Allegations Relating to the Former South Western Sydney Area Health Service", dated September 2005.

Ordered to be printed.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery councillors and staff from Guam Cheon Gu City Government, Seoul, Korea. I also welcome Mr Michael Garvey, City Manager of San Carlos, California.

VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2004-05

Mr Frank Sartor, by leave, tabled variations of the Consolidated Fund receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2004-05 under section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983.

PETITIONS**Gaming Machine Tax**

Petitions opposing the decision to increase poker machine tax, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood** and **Mr Andrew Tink**.

Alstonville Bypass

Petition requesting that the Alstonville Bypass be completed by the end of 2006, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

South Coast Rail Services

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the South Coast, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Southern Tablelands Rail Services

Petition opposing any reduction in rail services on the Southern Tablelands line, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Murwillumbah to Casino Rail Service

Petition requesting the retention of the CountryLink rail service from Murwillumbah to Casino, received from **Mr Neville Newell**.

Blacktown to Richmond Night Bus Service

Petition requesting a bus service from Blacktown along the Richmond line between midnight and 5.00 a.m., received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Crime Sentencing

Petition requesting changes in legislation to allow for tougher sentences for crime, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Whale Protection in Australian Waters

Petition requesting protection of whales in Australian waters, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Anti-Discrimination (Religious Tolerance) Legislation

Petition opposing the proposed anti-discrimination (religious tolerance) legislation, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Same-sex Marriage Legislation

Petition opposing same-sex marriage legislation, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Shoalhaven River Water Extraction

Petition opposing the extraction of water from the Shoalhaven River to support Sydney's water supply, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Kurnell Desalination Plant

Petition opposing the construction of a desalination plant at Kurnell, received from **Mr Malcolm Kerr**.

Milton-Ulladulla Public School Infrastructure

Petition requesting community consultation in the planning, funding and building of appropriate public school infrastructure in the Milton-Ulladulla area and surrounding districts, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Colo High School Airconditioning

Petition requesting the installation of airconditioning in all classrooms and the library of Colo High School, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Coffs Harbour Aeromedical Rescue Helicopter Service

Petition requesting that plans for the placement of an aeromedical rescue helicopter service based in Coffs Harbour be fast-tracked, received from **Mr Andrew Fraser**.

Breast Screening Funding

Petitions requesting funding for BreastScreen NSW, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock** and **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme

Petition requesting that the distance criteria for patients to qualify for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme be lowered to 100 to 150 kilometres, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Somersby Fields Sandmining Project

Petition opposing the proposal for the Somersby Fields Sandmining project, received from **Ms Marie Andrews**.

Kurnell Sandmining

Petition opposing sandmining on the Kurnell Peninsula, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Hawkesbury Electorate Youth Transport Services

Petition requesting affordable transport options for youth in the areas of Maraylya, Scheyville, Oakville and Cattai, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Bomaderry Milk Processing Plant

Petition opposing the decision of Dairy Farmers to close the Bomaderry milk processing plant, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Recreational Fishing

Petition opposing any restrictions on recreational fishing in the mid North Coast waters, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Crown Land Leases

Petition requesting the withdrawal of changes to the rental structure of Crown land leases, particularly enclosed road permits, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Collector Bushrangers Reserve Motorcycle Track

Petition requesting approval for the construction of a motorcycle track at Collector Bushrangers Reserve, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Water-Access-Only Property Policy

Petition requesting a review of the water-access-only property policy, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Willoughby Traffic Conditions

Petition requesting a regional traffic plan for the Pacific Highway at Willoughby, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

Edinburgh Road, Willoughby, Traffic Conditions

Petition requesting a right turn arrow for traffic travelling west on Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag, turning north onto Eastern Valley Way, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

F6 Corridor Community Use

Petition noting the decision of the Minister for Roads, gazetted in February 2003, to abandon the construction of any freeway or motorway in the F6 corridor, and requesting preservation of the corridor for open space, community use and public transport, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Nowra Bypass

Petition requesting an appropriate bypass for Nowra, after community consultation, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Barton Highway Dual Carriageway Funding

Petition requesting that the Minister for Roads change the Roads and Traffic Authority's priority for Federal AusLink funding for the Barton Highway to allow the construction of a dual carriageway, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Old Northern and New Line Roads Strategic Route Development Study

Petition requesting funding for implementation of the Old Northern and New Line roads strategic route development study, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Forster-Tuncurry Cycleways

Petition requesting the building of cycleways in the Forster-Tuncurry area, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Shoalhaven City Council Rate Structure

Petition opposing a 27 per cent rate increase proposed by Shoalhaven City Council, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Macdonald River Signage

Petition requesting that the Macdonald River be provided with signage stating "4 or 8 knots, no skiing, no wash", received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE UPON ROAD SAFETY**Report**

Mr Paul Gibson, as Chairman, tabled report No. 8, entitled "Aspects of Motorcycle Safety in New South Wales—Proceedings of Seminars on Issues in Motorcycle Safety held at Sydney, Friday 3 December 2004 and Tuesday 4 May 2005, and other selected papers", dated September 2005.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

MINISTER FOR PLANNING, AND MINISTER FOR REDFERN WATERLOO PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Redfern Waterloo. Given that the Minister did not want the job and that the local community does not want him as Minister due to his foul-mouthed, arrogant and racist bullying, how can the Minister continue to have responsibility for the critical redevelopment of Redfern-Waterloo?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: As with all portfolios the Premier of the day allocates to me, I pursue them with energy and enthusiasm, and that is what I am doing in the case of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority. What is the Opposition's policy on the Block? We want to hear what the Coalition is going to do about it.

COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES

Mr JOHN BARTLETT: My question without notice is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government improving the readiness of New South Wales to respond to a terrorist attack?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I thank the honourable member for his interest in the Government's preparedness to protect its citizens against a terrorist attack. I can inform honourable members that New South Wales has been at the forefront of the national response to protecting our citizens against terrorism. For example, we have created a State counter-terrorism co-ordination command and passed the nation's strongest anti-terrorist laws. As a result of those new laws, New South Wales police have tough powers to deal with terrorist acts, which include special stop-and-search powers, tougher penalties for making or possessing terror weapons and for possessing or making explosives, and new classifications for inmates who pose a national security risk.

Other measures include Australia's first counter-disaster unit within our health system, a \$15 million plan to protect Sydney's drinking water supplies, some 70 counter-terrorism exercises planned within New South Wales government agencies this financial year, establishment of a critical infrastructure security committee to assess risks and upgrade security for our key infrastructure assets, and a record \$187 million in this year's budget for counter-terrorism measures, which is an increase of \$40 million on the last financial year. It is a strong record, but as always we must do more. That is why we are working closely with the Commonwealth, in the wake of the London bombings, to ensure that our law enforcement regime is tough and flexible.

[Interruption]

Members opposite may not be interested in this but everyone else is. Next Tuesday there is a meeting of the State Premiers and the Commonwealth, and I am looking forward to discussing the important issues of counter-terrorism with our other Australian elected leaders. The New South Wales Government will approach this meeting in a spirit of co-operation with the Commonwealth because we all seek the same goal: to protect our citizens against the threat of terrorism. The proposals on the agenda are wide ranging, so it is also important

to ensure that these proposals contain appropriate safeguards and accountabilities. Further details regarding these matters will be provided at the Council of Australian Governments meeting, and I look forward to providing an update for the honourable member for Port Stephens and other interested members on my return.

Our friends and allies overseas have built up enormous reserves of experience, and I want New South Wales police officers to learn from the best. That is why today the Minister for Police and I announced an expansion of our counter-terrorism co-operation with key American law enforcement and intelligence agencies: the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], the New York Police Department and the Los Angeles Police Department. These partnerships will allow our officers to reap the benefits of their knowledge and experience. Securing a high level of co-operation and access with these pre-eminent law enforcement bodies is a huge advantage not only for New South Wales police officers but also the people of New South Wales. It is also a reflection on the esteem in which our law enforcement agencies are held.

Under the special working relationships, we have agreed to the following. NSW Police will place an officer on secondment with the New York Police Department, a New York Police Department officer will be seconded to the NSW Police Counter-terrorism Co-ordination Command, a New South Wales police officer will be seconded to the Los Angeles Police Department, the FBI will place an officer in a legal attaché role in Sydney, and three officers from the New York Police Department will review the counter-terrorism capability of the New South Wales Police Force. This exchange of personnel will provide our police with invaluable experience and knowledge. And, of course, it will mean a safer New South Wales. Our law enforcement capacity will also involve the following measures in relation to the emergency services insignia. We will pass new measures to protect the insignia. One thing that threatens our law enforcement capacity and insults all those who wear the uniform is people using official uniforms or insignia to impersonate emergency service workers. This practice is not on and is totally unacceptable.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Murrumbidgee may find that useful, too. Anyone who tries to impersonate an emergency services worker will face the full force of the new laws that the Government will introduce into the Parliament today. Uniformed emergency services personnel hold a special position of trust in the community. Members opposite may not think emergency services personnel hold a special position of trust, but they do. When that trust is abused it deserves the full weight of the law. So the Government will introduce into the Parliament amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, which will create two new offences, each attracting a maximum penalty of \$5,500.

The new laws will contain specific exemptions for people whose conduct is authorised, those involved in public entertainment and genuine collectors. The legislation will apply to the New South Wales Ambulance Service, New South Wales Fire Brigades, the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, as well as accredited rescue units such as the Volunteer Rescue Association and the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol. Democratic governments do not like introducing these measures but we face a new kind of warfare, one plotted and launched in secret by shadowy groups who use our freedoms as a shield for their evil. Faced with that threat, we have a duty to prepare for the unexpected. That is exactly what the Government is doing, because protecting the people of this State is the first priority for all of us.

KEMPSEY DISTRICT HOSPITAL MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Premier, and Treasurer. Given the tragic murder of a patient and the bashing of three nurses in the Kempsey mental health ward in 2001, why are scheduled mental health patients being admitted overnight in a ward that is permitted to take only non-scheduled patients?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I will obtain a report from the Minister for Health in relation to the specifics of Kempsey hospital. I can tell the Leader of The Nationals that the Government has been implementing an extensive upgrade of mental health units in our acute hospitals right across the State. That is part of an investment of \$854 million in mental health services each year, representing a 9 per cent increase, and it is part of a plan to add an additional 300 beds over the next three years in mental health facilities across the State, coming after the opening of 290 beds in the past three years. That is part of our plan to upgrade not only the services but also the facilities. In relation to the specifics of the honourable member's question, I will obtain a report from the Minister for Health.

CIRCULAR QUAY FERRY ACCIDENT

Mr JOHN MILLS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. What is the latest information on Sydney Ferries?

Mr JOHN WATKINS: I would like to provide the House with an update on Monday's incident involving Sydney Ferries Corporation. I am advised that the ferry *Collaroy*, travelling from Manly wharf to Circular Quay, collided with wharf No. 2 at Circular Quay at approximately 1.15 on Monday afternoon. The *Collaroy* sustained minor hull damage and I am advised two people reported minor injuries. The cause of the crash is not yet known, but will be determined, and appropriate action taken.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Murrumbidgee will come to order.

Mr JOHN WATKINS: The chief executive officer of Sydney Ferries Corporation has advised me that there were no reports of any operating faults on the vessel that morning. The Office of Transport Safety Investigation [OTSI] is spearheading the investigation process, aided by Sydney Ferries and NSW Maritime. Late yesterday afternoon I received advice from the chief executive officer of Sydney Ferries that, contrary to earlier advice from senior managers provided to her, there had been a breakdown in drug testing procedures immediately following Monday's incident. I am advised that in accordance with normal practice NSW Police marine area command officers tested the master and engineer for alcohol following the incident. These tests returned negative results. Sydney Ferries health contractors also attended the scene and tested the engineer and one general purpose hand for drugs and alcohol. However, this left the master of the vessel and three other general purpose hands with incomplete drug and alcohol tests within the three-hour testing limit after the accident. This lapse in carrying out critical safety procedures is unacceptable.

In addition, advice was provided to the Sydney Ferries board, the chief executive officer and the Government that all tests had been carried out correctly. I can inform the House that as a result of these errors, the chief executive officer of Sydney Ferries has today acted to ensure the master of the *Collaroy* was drug tested. That occurred at midday. Sydney Ferries is now undertaking efforts to drug and/or alcohol test the three other deckhands who were not completely tested on Monday. As a result of this oversight the general manager of safety at Sydney Ferries Corporation has today tendered his resignation.

I can also announce that the Government will appoint a new acting chairman to the board of Sydney Ferries. Mr Geoff Ashton, currently the chairman of Leighton Holdings Ltd and a member of Leighton's safety committee, will join the organisation in the short term to ensure Sydney Ferries continues to focus on safety and to support the chief executive officer with the cultural and industrial reforms already under way. The current chairman of Sydney Ferries Corporation has advised the Government of his resignation, effective today. Mr Matt Taylor has played an important role in reforming Sydney Ferries in maintenance, rostering and industrial relations. The Government values his vast experience in maritime matters. However, safety standards at Sydney Ferries must now be taken to the next level.

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations currently has four investigations into incidents involving Sydney Ferries. Two of those investigations are into incidents involving the *Collaroy*, including the incident this week; one investigation involves the *Narrabeen* and one investigation is into the Freshwater class of vessel which provides services to Manly. Today I have written to the chief investigator of OTSI asking whether there is further material, documentation or information that Sydney Ferries Corporation or any other agency can provide to assist in the timely execution of its reports.

The Ministry of Transport will also liaise with the New South Wales Maritime Authority, the marine safety regulator, to provide advice on whether there has been any breach of the Passenger Transport Act or other relevant legislation due to the errors in drug testing procedures. Sydney Ferries is finalising the appointment of new general managers of operations and engineering, which will support the organisation's reforms. In addition, the Ministry of Transport will re-examine Sydney Ferries drug testing protocols and procedures and ensure that all affected parties are aware of their responsibilities. The safety of passengers and front-line transport workers is paramount in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government is committed to a safe and reliable ferry service for Sydney. That is why we have taken the measures outlined today.

CHILD SAFETY

Mr WAYNE MERTON: My question is directed to the Premier, and Treasurer. Given that there have been at least 12 attempts in the past two months to abduct children in New South Wales, two of those in the vicinity of Crestwood Public School, why has the Labor Government undermined the Safety House Program and slashed police numbers?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: As I pointed out to the House many times, police numbers are at record levels in New South Wales.

Mr Andrew Tink: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has finished only one sentence of his answer. I will not entertain a point of order at this stage.

Mr Andrew Tink: He is lying. They are down 500 since the 2003 election.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Epping will resume his seat. I call him to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Police numbers are at record levels and so is the Police budget.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will not entertain a point of order merely because a member disagrees with what the Premier or a Minister says during question time. If members disagree with what is said, they have an opportunity to raise the matter at the appropriate time. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr Peter Debnam: My point of order is relevance.

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

Mr Peter Debnam: My point of order is relevance, and I am happy to debate this with you as long as you wish. My point of order is relevance.

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

Mr Peter Debnam: I will resume my seat if you will take a point of order. Are you going to take a point of order or not? I am happy to debate this issue of police numbers in here or outside. I am happy to raise a point of order.

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

Mr Peter Debnam: I will resume my seat and I will raise a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order—

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I have not said anything.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! At this stage I cannot see any basis on which the Leader of the Opposition could take a point of order.

Mr Peter Debnam: My understanding is that I can raise a point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. He will resume his seat.

Mr Peter Debnam: I think it is straightforward.

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

Mr Peter Debnam: Is it in the standing orders that I can raise a point of order or not? It is. Is it in there? Yes.

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

Mr Peter Debnam: I will resume my seat again but I will raise another point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will listen to the Premier further before I will entertain a point of order.

Mr Peter Debnam: I will give you 20 seconds.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will stop his display of arrogance and resume his seat.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Current police numbers are 14,600 and when the Coalition left office the figure was 12,600. Police numbers are at record levels, so is the Police budget. The Leader of the Opposition does not like that but that is the truth. They are the facts—14,600. Welcome back to the Health portfolio!

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. If the Premier is going to remain relevant he has to tell the truth. He has slashed police numbers—by 553.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. On a number of recent occasions I have pointed out to members that this is question time, it is not a time for debate. If members do not like the responses provided to them by Ministers they should not question the relevance or accuracy of what has been said under the guise of taking points of order. There are other forms of the House they may use to do that. A point of order in relation to relevance—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: You, as Speaker, are ruling in favour of lying to the House.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition knows full well that it is not up to the Chair to make decisions about the accuracy of what is being said.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: You are—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I place the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on two calls to order. As I have said, there are proper forms of the House to use to debate matters and to determine the accuracy or otherwise of what has been said. Members make statements of their own volition and have to justify what is said. The Chair is not in a position to make a judgment about the accuracy of the facts and details provided. The Premier was asked a question about police numbers and he is providing an answer about police numbers. There is no point of order in relation to relevance. The Premier has the call.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour obviously does not understand the standing orders. I have made a statement in relation to points of order. There could not possibly be a basis for a point of order, unless the honourable member for Coffs Harbour wants to canvass what I have said. If he wants to do so, there is a process to be followed; it cannot be done by taking a point of order. There can only be a point of order when—

Mr Andrew Fraser: I have another point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: On what basis? In relation to what matter?

Mr Andrew Fraser: I shall tell you, Mr Speaker. I draw your attention to Standing Order 104, which states:

A Member may at any time raise a point of order relating to a breach of the standing orders or the practice of the House which shall, until disposed of, suspend the consideration and decision of every other question.

You are refusing to hear a point of order. You are in breach of Standing Order 104. It is a point of order and you want to—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. As I said, he either does not know the standing orders or refuses to understand what he has read. Standing Order 104 relates to a breach of the standing orders or the practice of the House, not to the accuracy or otherwise of what is said in the House. Members should not misconstrue the standing orders to make political points. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The numbers are 14,600 to 12,600. So clearly police numbers are at record levels, and there is a record Police budget. In relation to The Hills local area command, the figures were 87 in 1994 and are 95 in 2005. So police numbers in that local area command have increased. Police conducted a review of the Safety House Program, which highlighted social and demographic changes that have occurred over a number of years. The review recommended the retention of the program. Where communities want the Safety House Program the Government and police will work with them.

RURAL AND REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Mr STEVE WHAN: My question is to the Premier. What is the Government doing to support jobs growth in rural and regional New South Wales?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I thank the honourable member for his question and his interest in creating jobs in his local area. That is exactly what the Government's priority is. In the 12 months to August of this year employment in rural and regional New South Wales grew strongly with an additional 20,600 people gaining employment, an increase of 1.9 per cent. As a result of the policies the Government has pursued, some 6,700 positions in rural and regional New South Wales have been created since 1995—more than 4,300 new jobs and the relocation of some 2,400 positions to boost country economies. That is part of the Government's plan. For example, the Department of Corrective Services has created more than 730 positions, all in regional and rural New South Wales, including 111 in Kempsey, and a further 200 positions will be created in Wellington.

Sixty positions are involved in the relocation of the Department of Local Government to Nowra; 288 positions with the relocation of Pillar Administration, the Superannuation Administration Corporation, to Wollongong; 150 positions relocated to Maitland as a result of moving the Infringement Processing Bureau; 480 positions relocated to Gosford as part of the WorkCover relocation, with a further 18 positions to be relocated there before the end of this year; 70 positions were moved to Lithgow when we moved the State Debt Recovery Office in January of this year; and 43 positions from the Department of Commerce will be relocated to Bathurst.

That is the record in moving jobs out of the city to regional and rural communities. In energy services in regional and rural New South Wales 320 new jobs were created in 56 locations including Bathurst, Taree, Inverell, Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Tweed Heads and Broken Hill, and there are more on the way. Fifty are involved in the south of the State with the construction of the multipurpose wharf and cargo storage area at Eden, and 900 construction jobs with Corrective Services projects in the Wellington, Cessnock, Lithgow, Goulburn and Kariong. These projects will yield 570 permanent jobs. Fifty-seven jobs have gone to Tuggerah and Lithgow with the relocation of the police assistance call centres, and in January this year 70 positions with the State Debt Recovery Office were relocated to Lithgow.

Of course, that stands in stark contrast with the policy of the Opposition of killing off 29,000 jobs, many of which will be in rural and regional New South Wales. Once those jobs go, so do jobs in banks and other businesses in the local community. That is the policy. Of course that will have a flow-on effect on towns such as Orange, where the Department of Primary Industries is located. The Opposition's policy, after taking away the exemptions, would mean that the Department of Primary Industries in Orange, for example, would stand to lose one third of its almost 590 positions. And so it is in Maitland with the relocation of the Department of Mineral Resources and the Infringement Processing Bureau, which created hundreds of extra jobs in Maitland.

The Opposition's policy would result in the loss of up to one-third of those jobs—one-third of the public servants working in the town of Maitland would be sacked! Our policy is to locate these jobs in country towns. Our policy is to transfer these positions out of Sydney, while the Opposition's policy is to abolish jobs, starting with the Department of Primary Industries in Orange. One-third of the 590 jobs there would go. The only way that the Opposition could meet its target of 29,000 would be by sacking one-third of the public servants in the head offices of those departments that have been moved from Sydney to those New South Wales towns. They are just some of the jobs that would be lost as a result of the Opposition's policy of 29,000 sackings in the public sector. Of course, that would come on top of all the nurses, the police and the teachers that the Opposition would sack after they have got rid of the ones in the head offices.

GOULBURN BASE HOSPITAL FIRE ALARMS

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Why has the Premier allowed the budget crisis to put at risk patients and staff at Goulburn Base Hospital by permitting fire

alarms in wards to remain inoperable for the past 12 months, particularly as the hospital's water main is off line due to leaks?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: This year's health budget is \$10.9 billion—a 9 per cent, \$900 million increase—the biggest health budget of all time. That is the Government's commitment: more money for our hospitals—for more beds, for more nurses, and for surgery.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: Despite what you said earlier, I must point—

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Burrinjuck cannot do that.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: This is about Goulburn Base Hospital and fire alarms.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member should take a point of order in relation to the processes and procedures of the House or resume her seat.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: It is a terribly important matter.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Burrinjuck will resume her seat.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: He totally bypassed—

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for Burrinjuck will resume her seat.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: He totally bypassed the point of the question and went on with—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Burrinjuck does not like the response she has received, there are other ways of dealing with it. This is question time, it is not a debate.

PETROL PRICES

Mr MATTHEW MORRIS: My question without notice is to the Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Small Business. What is the Government doing to support families and small business in coping with higher petrol prices?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I acknowledge the honourable member's interest in the small business sector and thank him for introducing me to representatives of small businesses in the electorate of Charlestown when I was there 10 days or a fortnight ago. The price of fuel has been a high priority on the minds of fuel users across the country. Many of us have been concerned about the hike in petrol prices and the impact it has had on families and businesses in this State. Over the past three months, bowser prices have risen by as much as 26¢ a litre, an increase of more than 25 per cent. Within recent weeks prices for standard unleaded petrol have soared to \$1.57 a litre in regional areas. In December prices sat at around 98¢ a litre.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bega will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In the past 24 hours our check on petrol prices showed petrol at Werrington was \$1.22 per litre, while at Neutral Bay it was \$1.29 per litre, a difference of 7¢. But the prices at two outlets in Manly and Campbelltown show a 1¢ per litre difference. When one sees such variations in one city, it is hard to believe world crude prices are the only culprit behind high petrol prices. Whatever the cause, small business is hurting. Retailers have told me that customers are not spending in their businesses. That is because they are cutting spending as fuel prices eat into weekly budgets. That is a big problem for small businesses with tight margins, especially in the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors. Last week the Westpac Melbourne Institute Index of Consumer Sentiment revealed that the jump in petrol prices caused consumer confidence to fall 13.3 per cent in one month. That is one of the biggest monthly falls in 30 years. Nearly 40 per cent of those surveyed said they would reduce spending in other areas.

The New South Wales Government is playing its part to help motorists. In the long term, as oil production peaks based on known reserves, we have to address supply issues, because the concerns we have about prices today will only intensify in the years ahead. The New South Wales Government is committed to

investigating and using environmentally friendly alternative fuels, including ethanol. The New South Wales Government fleet of cars and light commercial vehicles is fuelled by 110 million litres of unleaded petrol every year plus millions of litres of other fuels such as LPG. Our next contract, which commences in July next year, will, for the first time, include ethanol blended fuel and other alternative fuels. The investment the New South Wales Government is making here—supporting the use of an alternate source of fuel—will be important to New South Wales fuel users in the years to come.

But that is in the future. Today, oil producers are making super profits on the back of rising international prices. That is difficult to believe when you consider that for petrol producers in Australia the cost of production has not increased. These high prices are inflating their profits and share prices, and that is being paid for out of the pay packets of New South Wales fuel consumers. The increase in inflation and the slowing of growth will affect our economy. Soaring petrol prices are a national problem and need a national solution. Yet, when we turn to the Federal Government for action, we are met with a thick wall of excuses. The Federal Government keeps telling us that it wants to take national control over all sorts of things—industrial relations, for example—yet it moves so slowly, or not at all, when a national problem occurs.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bega will come to order.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In the absence of any effort on the part of the Federal Government, others have been forced to act. Today I was able to represent the New South Wales Government at the NRMA's petrol summit, the summit that was shamefully labelled a "talkfest" by the Prime Minister. It has been amazing to hear a string of Federal Government Ministers attack the NRMA for calling this summit. The NRMA is only doing its job by voicing motorists' concerns. Unlike the Federal Government, the NRMA is doing something. Today's summit successfully brought together decision makers to act on a serious community concern. If the Federal Government could devote the energy it used attacking the NRMA to lowering petrol prices then a lot of people, and their wallets, would breathe a sigh of relief. One of the best cures for high prices is the pressure that comes from competition.

Mr Donald Page: Point of order: Standing Order No. 138. Is the Minister not aware that today the Federal Government made a major investment in ethanol. I mean wake up! Get with it, man!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Ballina knows full well that that is not a point of order.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It took weeks and weeks to get the Howard Government to agree to attend the petrol summit this morning, but its representative could not last the distance. After making a speech, off he went. He disappeared out of sight.

Mr Donald Page: Point of order: This man is lying. He is lying. I stayed there for the whole of the summit. I ask him to withdraw that comment.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Ballina will resume his seat. If he believes he has been impugned in some way there is another way of dealing with it other than by debating the matter during question time.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: In his desperation to try to cover for the Commonwealth Government, the honourable member for Ballina clearly did not listen. He was not the Commonwealth Government's representative at the summit today; he represented the New South Wales Opposition. After saying for weeks and weeks that it would not attend the summit, the Commonwealth Government sent the Federal Assistant Treasurer, Mal Brough. He made a speech and left. He did not stay until the end and did not take part in preparing the communique. I acknowledge that the honourable member for Ballina did stay until the end; he stayed until about the same time as I did. But the fact is that the honourable member for Ballina is so desperate to cover for his Commonwealth colleagues in action on this issue that he misunderstood; he did not listen.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: Mr Speaker, I take a point of order under Standing Order 139 and remind you that you said that this is question time, not a debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask Ministers not to respond to interjections. If they do, question time will become a debate across the Chamber, and that will erode the time allowed for questions.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: One of the best cures for high prices is the pressure that comes from competition. The Federal Government could spur on this competition by giving the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] and the Trade Practices Act more bite. This morning's NRMA petrol summit agreed on that very point. Last week I wrote to the Federal Government to request the ACCC to investigate why local petrol prices remained high despite recent falls in world crude oil prices. In our letter to the Federal Government we called on it to request the ACCC to establish an ongoing monitoring arm to keep track of petrol prices. That means we will not waste time by calling for inquiries, because the ACCC will have the power to act, and act quickly. The Federal Government also has the power, under its Trade Practices Act, to protect drivers. The Act should be used to protect consumers and business from predatory pricing and unconscionable conduct at the petrol pump.

Again, today's summit reinforced the position put forward by the New South Wales Government. We want to be sure that prices are fair and accurately reflect world oil prices. Two measures must be taken to help consumers who are hurting from high petrol prices. A competitive blowtorch must be put on oil companies making super profits from the pay packets of New South Wales motorists, and we must invest in alternative fuels by supporting ethanol use, as the New South Wales Government has announced. But we cannot act alone. The Federal Government needs the guts to act, to lift the pressure off families and businesses. The NRMA's initiative in holding the summit today, at which the New South Wales Government was represented, is a step in that direction.

PUBLIC HOUSING ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Mrs DAWN FARDELL: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Housing. In view of the recent hardline approach finally taken by the Department of Housing in Dubbo over the past week, does the Minister now intend to follow through with this same zero tolerance in all public housing in New South Wales?

Miss CHERIE BURTON: I thank the honourable member for Dubbo for her question, and for her support and advice in managing a difficult situation on the Gordon estate in West Dubbo. The majority of people who live in public housing are good tenants. They have the right to live in safety and comfort. Situations like the one that emerged on the Gordon estate are unacceptable. I want to make it clear that antisocial behaviour on public housing estates will not be tolerated. The Government is the landlord of last resort. As a result, many of our tenants are living in extreme social disadvantage.

The Government provides a raft of support services to tenants in need. For example, in my first week as Minister I visited the Gordon estate to announce an action plan to tailor local services to tackle the complicated issues behind crime and disorder in West Dubbo. The plan includes an education program to deter juveniles from car theft, police assistance in training security guards, a clean-up program to tackle the problem of discarded syringes, and educating the community about the treatment of mental illness and drug and alcohol patients. But if antisocial behaviour persists after all these avenues of support are exhausted, I will have no hesitation in taking action.

There are no easy fixes to the problems on the Gordon estate, which are complex and have emerged over 20 years. But I want to make it clear that the destruction of public property, and crime and antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated. I have made it clear that I will relocate or, where necessary, evict tenants who persist with antisocial behaviour. I have instructed the Department of Housing to take a zero tolerance approach to any tenants who damage their own homes or the homes of others. The Government changed the Residential Tenancies Act in 2003 to streamline our ability to seek eviction when tenants damage their homes. The reforms reversed the burden of proof: destructive tenants now has to prove why they should not be evicted.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: My point of order is that there is too much chatter in the Chamber and members cannot hear the Minister's answer. I want to congratulate the Minister on taking the hard line on this issue, but I cannot hear her. I suggest that members listen to the Minister's answer because this is a long overdue statement on public housing. Thank goodness the Government has finally adopted our policy.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition might care to tell some of the members on the Opposition front bench to stop interjecting and calling out, particularly the honourable member for The Hills, whom I have been tempted to call to order on a number of occasions.

Miss CHERIE BURTON: There is no place for vandalism and destructive antisocial behaviour on our public housing estates. Tenants who ignore this warning and intentionally damage their homes or the homes of others will be expected to pay for that damage or face eviction.

WESTERN SYDNEY ECONOMY

Ms TANYA GADIEL: My question without notice is to the Minister for Western Sydney. How is the Government supporting business, investment and jobs growth in Western Sydney?

Ms DIANE BEAMER: Western Sydney has established itself as the third-largest economy in Australia. Western Sydney is Australia's fastest-growing economy, leading the State in business investment and development and in the generation of jobs. The Iemma Government's plans will result in the creation of more than 200,000 jobs in Western Sydney over the next 15 years. There are now 80 jobs for every 100 resident Western Sydney workers, an increase of more than 10 per cent over the past 20 years. In Western Sydney the Government is delivering the infrastructure to match the growth in jobs and population. In this year's budget alone \$1.7 billion has been allocated for major infrastructure projects in Western Sydney.

The growth of Western Sydney is reflected in the growth of commerce and service industries in the region. Retailing now employs an estimated 107,000 people in Western Sydney. The Parramatta central business district [CBD] is outstripping both central Sydney and North Sydney in commercial development. Highlighting this commercial development was a move seven months ago by Macquarie Bank to open an office in Parramatta. It was the first time Macquarie Bank had opened a business banking office outside a capital city CBD, and it opened its Parramatta office with the expectation of a 25 per cent boost in business in Western Sydney. So far those expectations have already been exceeded. The bank's chief executive officer, Allan Moss, said at the time, "We felt we had to change because this is really where the action is." He was right. Macquarie Bank's business in Western Sydney is going gangbusters.

Since the Parramatta office opened, Macquarie Bank's client numbers in Western Sydney have increased by 25 per cent. Loans to Western Sydney businesses have jumped by 75 per cent. The chief of the banking division, Greg Loveday, says the bank's increase in business is a reflection of the region's continued growth. Businesses in Western Sydney accessing working capital for expansion is a sign of confidence in the Western Sydney economy. After only seven months in Parramatta, Macquarie Bank itself is expanding, taking on more staff, particularly local staff. As the chief executive officer, Allan Moss, said, "Western Sydney is where the action is."

Industry in Western Sydney is competing on the world stage. For example, Vulcanite at Bankstown has just secured a contract worth nearly \$2 million with Volvo Australia to manufacture and supply articulated gangways—also known as the bendy bits—in our State Transit Authority bus services. Until now these parts have been supplied by Germany. Western Sydney industry is providing import replacement. Vulcanite is making a \$1 million capital investment to produce the gangways. It plans to further expand its Australian market in a move to the lucrative market of the United States of America. And there is a flow-on effect. Most of the component parts for the gangways are manufactured in Western Sydney: the aluminium is bent in Mortdale, the materials are sewn in Smithfield, and local suppliers provide the nuts and bolts.

Another top local performer worth highlighting is Machinery Automation and Robotics at Silverwater. That company has just secured two new \$2.5 million contracts. With Sydney's 30,000 new residents each year, there is a huge demand for jobs in Western Sydney. The Iemma Government is providing the funding for infrastructure. The Government has relocated Sydney Water to Parramatta, bringing 1,500 jobs to the area. Police headquarters have moved to Parramatta. In the budget \$15.6 million has been provided for the Sydney West Trial Complex and justice agencies offices at Parramatta. Also, \$15.6 million has been provided for the Metropolitan Children's Court.

The Iemma Government is facilitating the development of employment lands along the M7 Westlink. This project will add \$3 million to the New South Wales economy and create more than 24,000 jobs by 2008. Today 70 per cent of Western Sydney's working residents are employed within the region, and over half of Sydney's labour force is now working in Western Sydney. The Government has announced the creation of the Western Sydney Parklands—27 kilometres long, 5,500 hectares, and slap bang in the middle of Western Sydney. The Government is creating a place where people can work, live and enjoy recreation. The Opposition goes on about Orange Grove, but it should look at the ICAC web site. Page 1 of 4 states that findings of corruption were nil—nil, zilch, nought. The House should remember that every time the Opposition brings up the subject—nothing to report, not a word, no findings of corruption.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The Minister is displaying far too much bitterness to be good for her.

Questions without notice concluded.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**Motion by Mr Carl Scully agreed to:**

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 11 October 2005 at 2.15 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Bill: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders****Motion by Mr Carl Scully agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the introduction, and progress up to and including the Minister's second reading speech, of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill.

STATE EMERGENCY AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL**Bill introduced and read a first time.****Second Reading**

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.43 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Carl Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Since September 11 and the atrocities that followed in Bali, Jakarta, Madrid and, most recently, in London, it has been clear that authorities across the world must remain vigilant in the fight against terrorism. The repeated attacks on the London transport system have highlighted the need to constantly review and update our own plans and powers, and to explore every means of keeping our community safe. Over the past four years the New South Wales Government has acted swiftly and responsibly to review and improve the State's counter-terrorism arrangements and resources. In the budget handed down by the former Treasurer, more than \$187 million was allocated to counter-terrorism measures. This is \$40 million more than in 2004-2005 and reflects the Government's commitment to protecting the community and the State's critical infrastructure.

The Government has moved to ensure that NSW Police and other agencies have the powers they need to prevent, detect and respond to terrorist strikes. This process has been assisted by the establishment of the counter-terrorism laws task force to review existing legislation and to recommend new or amended powers and offences. We cannot afford to be complacent in the fight against global terror. Potential loopholes, no matter how small, that could be exploited by those with evil intent need to be closed. Seemingly innocuous incidents must be looked at through the new prism of counter-terrorism. For example, last year official uniforms and insignia of New South Wales Ambulance Service officers were offered for sale on the Internet site *eBay*.

Concerns were raised that access to such items, whether through *eBay* or other means, could enable terrorists to easily impersonate a range of emergency services personnel, which could assist them to plan or carry out their evil work. In response to this legitimate concern, I am today introducing the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment Bill. As outlined in new section 63B, the bill creates two new offences relating to the unauthorised manufacture, sale or hire of the insignia or uniform of an emergency services organisation and the use or display of an emergency services uniform or insignia with the intention to deceive, that is, to impersonate an officer of an emergency service organisation. Each of these offences will attract a penalty of 50 penalty units, that is, a \$5,500 fine.

The new offences created in this bill will apply to those emergency services covered by the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, namely the New South Wales Ambulance Service, New South Wales Fire Brigades, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and any other agency that manages or controls an accredited rescue unit, such as the Volunteer Rescue Association, the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol or the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard. However, the new offences will not apply to NSW Police, which already has strong protection. The offences of wearing or possessing a police uniform or insignia or impersonating a police officer are outlined in sections 203 and 204 of the Police Act 1990.

Clause 40 of the Rural Fires Regulations, which already creates an offence in relation to the unauthorised sale of the official uniform and insignia of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service or the

impersonation of its members, will be repealed to avoid duplication with this bill. Due to their legislative powers and position of trust within the community, members of the emergency services, whether paid officers or volunteers, have access to many of the kinds of sites that could potentially be targeted in a terrorist attack. Their distinctive uniforms and official insignia are, in the minds of the public, the sign of their trustworthiness, and thus are the key to this access. For instance, it is unlikely that an individual in an official ambulance or fire brigades uniform would be challenged to provide evidence they are responding to an emergency call.

Removing the "unofficial market" in the insignia and uniforms of these organisations will help minimise the opportunity for them to be used by those with the wrong intent. In themselves, the penalties outlined in this bill are unlikely to be a deterrent from taking part in a terrorist act. The high penalties attached to the Commonwealth Government's terrorism offences are more likely to achieve that end. However, terrorism can be unwittingly aided by the innocent, who do not see the end goal of a seemingly benign incident or chain of events. Thus, it is the case that the prospect of a \$5,500 fine could be a powerful deterrent to individuals who are not involved in terrorism from unknowingly facilitating the preparation and planning of terrorist acts.

As outlined in new section 63B (3), specific exemptions from the offences will apply where the person's conduct is authorised or if the person can establish the conduct is for public entertainment or that he or she has a reasonable excuse. This will obviously protect, for instance, members of the community who may be staging fundraising events to assist our volunteer emergency services, such as the Rural Fire Service or the State Emergency Service. It also offers protection to genuine collectors or those with a showcase of emergency services insignia who have no intention to deceive through their display. This bill also makes additional amendments to improve the flexibility of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act. The bill answers proposals put forward by the State Emergency Management Committee and NSW Police to improve emergency and management arrangements by amending section 24 of the Act to provide for the appointment of deputy district emergency operations controllers and amending section 30 of the Act to introduce more flexible arrangements for the appointment of local emergency operations controllers.

Under the Act emergency operations controllers are appointed at State, district and local levels. There are 18 emergency management districts across the State. District controllers, who are police region commanders, are responsible for controlling the responses to an emergency that affect more than one local government area within their emergency management district. Each district controller may be responsible for up to five emergency management districts. This responsibility includes chairing each district's emergency management committee, which has the task of preparing the district's emergency management plans. The amendments to section 24 will allow the district controllers to appoint a deputy to assist them with these operational and planning responsibilities. This is a sensible and practical approach, particularly for those whose emergency districts cover an area stretching some distance from their regional command headquarters.

A deputy would be a police local area commander of superintendent rank, with the relevant emergency management experience. A local emergency operations controller is, likewise, responsible for controlling the response to an emergency that affects a specific local government area. Under section 30 of the Act the local controller must be a police officer experienced in emergency management and stationed within the relevant emergency management district. However, there are times when it may be more appropriate to appoint an officer with relevant training and experience from outside the district. This may be the case particularly where a more experienced officer, who is stationed nearby but not within the relevant area, could replace a local controller on leave.

Accordingly, the bill amends section 30 to allow a local controller to be appointed from a nearby emergency management district when it is not reasonably practical to appoint him or her from within the district. Again, this is a sensible and practical approach, while ensuring that the local community continues to receive a higher standard of emergency management. The Government remains vigilant and committed to ensuring our State's police and other agencies have the powers and resources they need to respond to emergencies and, increasingly, in the war against terror. This bill is another step in the process of ensuring that our legal framework is solid and not open to exploitation. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Federal Government AusLink Program

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI (Fairfield—Minister for Roads) [3.53 p.m.]: This matter is urgent because of my concern that our State is getting a raw deal from the Federal Government under the proposed new Federal-State Road Funding Agreement, known as AusLink. In fact, this week I wrote to the Prime Minister and asked

for his intervention in a last-ditch effort to try to make the Federal Government see reason. I have specifically asked Mr Howard to ensure that his roads Minister, Jim Lloyd, gives New South Wales a fair deal by increasing our share of petrol excise to traditional levels. My motion is urgent because I cannot understand why the Federal Government is so stubbornly refusing to give New South Wales a fair share of funding, which it so crucially needs to maintain and upgrade its roads.

[*Quorum formed.*]

The Opposition will do anything to avoid hearing the truth about negotiations with the Federal Government on funding for New South Wales roads. Given the embarrassment this must be for Opposition members, I do not blame them. Coalition members will use any tactic to prevent the truth from coming to light about the extremely raw deal that New South Wales motorists will receive from its Federal counterparts. I want the Prime Minister and his Minister to face their responsibilities and do the right thing by the motorists of this State. The startling reality is that under AusLink, New South Wales will be short-changed by \$1.3 billion. The Federal Government has set aside just 12 per cent of its fuel excise revenue for major roads, down from the traditional benchmark of 21 per cent between 1987 and 1999.

Under this deal the Federal Government is walking away from its financial responsibility for the F3, the Hume, the New England, the Federal, the Sturt, the Barton and the Newell highways, which will all suffer as a consequence of the proposals currently being put forward under the AusLink agreement. Highways will be the hardest hit, despite the lame efforts of the New South Wales Opposition to promote AusLink as a good deal for the northern parts of our State. It is a raw deal for New South Wales motorists. It is an embarrassment. [*Time expired.*]

Yanga Station, Balranald

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [3.58 p.m.]: Few issues could be more important to rural communities in the west of the State than the Sydney-centric Labor Government's treacherous sale of Yanga Station near Balranald. The motion is urgent because contracts have been exchanged for the sale of an historic station that is crucial for the survival of country communities, and the Labor Government is determined to ram through the settlement within a matter of weeks. This matter is urgent because hundreds of people from the local Balranald community and district stand to lose their jobs—at least 200 timber jobs, shearing jobs, transport jobs and livestock jobs. There will be downstream effects on small businesses such as stock and station agents. These industries have been sustained by the money that Yanga Station brings into the district. Yanga helped the district to survive one of the longest droughts on record, but Labor now wants to lock it up. Significant job losses will heavily impinge on the future prosperity of Balranald and other communities such as Hay.

This matter is urgent because even local government will suffer, with the Wakool and Balranald shire councils collectively losing \$50,000 in rates per annum as a result of the sale. It is urgent because, inexcusably, the honourable member for Murray-Darling stood by and allowed this Sydney-centric Labor Government to shut down the Balranald timber industry. Once again he has failed to stand up for the people of his electorate. He says one thing in his electorate but does another thing when he is in Sydney. Although his communities are suffering under the most Sydney-centric government in the history of New South Wales, he meekly toes the party line.

This matter is urgent because the State budget is in crisis. Yet somehow the Premier can justify splurging \$30 million on Yanga Station. This alone makes the motion extremely urgent. It is urgent because New South Wales has a public transport system that is in shambles, the roads are clogged and crumbling, bridges are collapsing, public hospital waiting lists have blown out, there is a huge backlog on school maintenance, the property market is in trouble, the local economy and jobs growth are in trouble, our streets and homes are less safe than they were a decade ago, and infrastructure is run down. Yet the Government wants to spend \$30 million to appease its green mates and buy a few preferences.

This motion is urgent because New South Wales is suffering from chronic underspending on infrastructure, but this incompetent Government is hell-bent on spending \$30 million to create yet another national park. The Government cannot manage the existing national parks, which are a huge bushfire risk, and are full of feral animals and noxious weeds. Yet the Government wants to buy a new one and shut down the economy of that part of western New South Wales. This matter is urgent because the \$30 million could have been spent on constructing the new promised, but not yet delivered, multipurpose health centre in Balranald or

upgrading the maternity and operating theatre facilities at Balranald hospital. These essential projects are going by the way—

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order: The Leader of The Nationals is supposed to justify why his motion is urgent, not talk about services in country areas. I also point out that there are no Nationals in the Chamber to support their leader.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! I uphold the point of order. The Leader of The Nationals is providing too much detail of the substance of the motion. I ask him to present reasons why his motion should have priority.

Mr ANDREW STONER: My motion is urgent from a budgetary perspective: the \$30 million plus for this purchase has not been identified in any budget papers. It does not appear in capital expenditure or in the National Parks and Wildlife Service acquisitions budget for 2005-06. The motion is urgent because Balranald and district will be decimated, with the loss of hundreds of jobs.

Mr Grant McBride: Point of order: I observe that there are no Nationals in the Chamber to support their leader.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Members opposite do not want to debate the future of rural communities; they want to interrupt the debate with spurious points of order. They should watch how they go in the bush at the next State election.

Mr Joseph Tripodi: Point of order: The Leader of The Nationals has failed to identify why purchasing a farm is more important than roads in his electorate, which service the people of his electorate.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! There is no point of order. That is a failure of debating technique.

[Time expired.]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 51

Ms Allan	Mr Gibson	Mr Orkopoulos
Mr Amery	Mr Greene	Mr Pearce
Ms Andrews	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Barr	Mr Hickey	Ms Saliba
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hunter	Mr Sartor
Ms Beamer	Ms Judge	Mr Scully
Mr Black	Ms Keneally	Mr Shearan
Mr Brown	Mr Lynch	Mr Stewart
Ms Burney	Mr McBride	Mr Torbay
Miss Burton	Mr McLeay	Mr Tripodi
Mr Campbell	Ms Meagher	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Ms Megarrity	Mr West
Mr Corrigan	Mr Mills	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Ms Moore	
Mr Draper	Mr Morris	
Mrs Fardell	Mr Newell	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gadiel	Ms Nori	Mr Ashton
Mr Gaudry	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Martin

Noes, 27

Ms Berejiklian	Mr Kerr	Mr Souris
Mr Constance	Mr Merton	Mr Stoner
Mr Debnam	Mr Page	Mr Tink
Mr Fraser	Mr Piccoli	Mr J. H. Turner
Mrs Hancock	Mr Pringle	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Hartcher	Mr Richardson	
Mr Hazzard	Mr Roberts	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hodgkinson	Ms Seaton	Mr George
Mrs Hopwood	Mrs Skinner	Mr Maguire
Mr Humpherson	Mr Slack-Smith	

Pairs

Mr Price	Mr Aplin
Mr Yeadon	Mr Armstrong

Question resolved in the affirmative.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AUSLINK PROGRAM**Urgent Motion**

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI (Fairfield—Minister for Roads) [4.13 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) supports the push by the New South Wales Government to get a better deal for this State under AusLink, the next Federal-State roads funding agreement; and
- (2) calls on the Prime Minister to urgently intervene to ensure New South Wales roads receive their fair share of funding under this new deal.

It has to be a record for idiocy on the part of The Nationals when they choose to debate the purchase of a farm instead of road funding in their electorates. At the Federal level The Nationals have neglected their constituency by failing to offer New South Wales a fair deal in the funding of roads.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: For the Minister to point the finger at The Nationals when he failed to accept the offer from Warren Truss last Friday of \$30 million—

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

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: If I were the honourable member for Coffs Harbour I would resort to desperate measures too. He knows he is under pressure on this issue. He knows that his electorate has been abandoned by his Federal counterparts, because they refused to give New South Wales a reasonable deal in road funding. There was a time when 21 per cent of excise tax used to come back into the roads system of this State. Now the Federal Government is offering only 12 per cent, which means that the people of this State are being short-changed.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: I draw the House's attention to a letter from Warren Truss—

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! There is no point order. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. He is making a complete fool of himself.

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: We have a deal under AusLink, and the Federal Government is about to walk away from the Hume, Federal, Sturt, Barton and Newell highways and leave them for the State to fund. We have to pick up the bill.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order—

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

Mr Andrew Stoner: You have not heard my point of order.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): This is the last point of order I will hear.

Mr Andrew Stoner: The point of order is that the Minister is misleading the House.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat.

Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI: This is happening while the Federal Government is sitting on its fat surplus in Canberra. It has buckets of money rolling in and it will not invest it in the roads of its members' electorates. Today I call on the Prime Minister to pay some attention, because these members are incapable of getting through to their Federal Ministers. They are incapable of delivering a message to their Federal Ministers to properly fund New South Wales roads.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and motion lapsed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TWO WAYS TOGETHER PROGRAM

Ms MARIANNE SALIBA (Illawarra) [4.15 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about two books that I recently had the pleasure of launching in the Illawarra. These books were put together by a dedicated band of people involved in the Two Ways Together Program. The books are the result of a great deal of work by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Aboriginal organisations and individuals in the Illawarra. The collaborative partnership that brought the books about is part of an overall government commitment to support Aboriginal cultural heritage in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government launched its plan for Aboriginal people called Two Ways Together in 2003. It represents the Government's commitment to work with Aboriginal communities to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in New South Wales. Two Ways Together acknowledges that supporting Aboriginal heritage and culture is a fundamental part of improving outcomes for Aboriginal people, alongside traditional areas such as education, health, housing and economic development.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service recognised that it had a fundamental role to play in implementing Two Ways Together by supporting the relationship between Aboriginal communities and their country. The decision to put these books together resulted from that recognition and the books seek to make a real contribution to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Illawarra. The first book is about the history of the Aboriginal people from 1770 to 1970. Oral histories and historical research combined with the beautiful artwork of local Aboriginal artist Lorraine Brown tells an often moving story of Aboriginal people in the Illawarra. The second book documents the use of Illawarra plants and animals by Aboriginal people, alongside stories that demonstrate the spiritual and economic significance of the natural environment. Sadly, it is also apparent that the resources used have either been destroyed through land clearing and pollution or are now difficult to access due to regulation and land tenure. This is the story, of course, of Aboriginal people across Australia.

I hope that education will lead to real change. Already the books have made a difference to park management practices and perceptions of Aboriginal cultural heritage. The traditional sense of Aboriginal heritage as being only about archaeology has evolved and a more holistic landscape scale appreciation is emerging. I also hope that these books will go some way toward telling at least part of the story of the Aboriginal people and their relationship to country. I hope that they become a valuable resource for Aboriginal communities in the Illawarra and for the wider community for years to come. I acknowledge the people involved in the preparation of the books, in particular Dr Sue Wesson from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It was Dr Wesson's job to pull these books together. She gathered information from local indigenous people and communities and has presented the information in a real and understandable way. I congratulate her on the hard work that she has done.

I also acknowledge the contributions of the local Aboriginal people to the books, in particular the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation and the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council. Col Markham attended on

the night as the New South Wales Reconciliation Ambassador. As I said, it was my pleasure to launch the books. They will be a resource that can be used for many years to come. I studied Aboriginal culture in the Illawarra in my time at Wollongong university. It took me quite some time to gather information and these books would have been of real benefit to me in my understanding of the history of the Illawarra, not the more than 200 years of European settlement but the more than 40,000 years of indigenous habitation of the area. I acknowledge the contributions to the books, which will provide information on the story of the Illawarra for many years to come.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.20 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for her contribution. Having an accurate history of regions is very important. I particularly commend her for her comment that accurate history brings about understanding. I commend the work of the honourable member in this regard.

NRMA PREFERRED REPAIRER NETWORK SCHEME

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove) [4.21 p.m.]: This afternoon I raise details concerning NRMA Insurance and its new Internet-based smash repair system. I take the opportunity to acknowledge the great work done by the Motor Traders Association [MTA] in supporting its members on this issue, particularly James McCall and Greg Coli. I also pay tribute to that wonderful body of men and women that make up the repair industry and reaffirm that I stand shoulder to shoulder with them in this battle for the future of their families and their industry, for safe and professional repairs, and for the consumer. As members may be aware, NRMA or the Insurance Australia Group, and the Motor Traders Association are at loggerheads over the NRMA's new scheme—Care and Repair.

Under the scheme, when a claimant's car is damaged NRMA will take the car to a Care and Repair centre and the car will be photographed. These photos will then be posted on the Internet, where registered smash repairers will be able to bid for the jobs. The bidder with the lowest total cost for repairs will be chosen and the car will be moved to their workshop to be repaired. It is cost versus cost as opposed to quality versus quality. Under the scheme only registered smash repairers will be eligible to bid for smash repair jobs. Herein lies the problem. To date only around 400 of the total 2,100 New South Wales smash repairers have signed on to the scheme. They have voted with their feet and rejected the scheme. In fact, I am on record as saying that a repairer would be mad to sign up to such a contract.

On 12 August this year literally thousands of smash repairers, MTA representatives and members of this House gathered in Macquarie Street to protest against the changes and to tell NRMA that they simply will not join its unfair scheme. I pay particular tribute to Mr Speaker, the Hon. John Aquilina, and the honourable member for Bankstown, Tony Stewart. The NRMA's new scheme is not popular and it is not necessary, except to shore up NRMA profits. It is another cash grab, and it certainly does not seem fair. Smash repairers are overwhelmingly opposed to the scheme. The NRMA is the largest motor accidents insurer in New South Wales but it has the support of only 400 of a possible 2,000 plus repairers in New South Wales.

Under the scheme a crashed vehicle is moved not to the most convenient smash repairer or a claimant's chosen smash repairer but to a smash repairer chosen by the NRMA's computer system. Families that have traditionally taken their car to the one smash repairer for years will no longer have that choice unless their repairer makes the lowest bid. Under the scheme the Sydney metropolitan area is divided into a series of zones in which eligible smash repairers may bid. If a car is involved in an accident near one border of a zone that car could be moved across the zones many kilometres away to the "cheapest" smash repairer. The scheme makes no provision for trust, tradition, workmanship, family relationship or work history—only cost. This system may have been dubbed Care and Repair by NRMA but members of this House, IAG policyholders, the MTA and smash repairers know that the scheme will soon become carelessness and despair.

One woman NRMA customer—she does not want to be named because of fear of retribution from IAG—had her bonnet tied down by an NRMA insurance assessor. The bonnet flew back across the windscreen and roof of her damaged car. She narrowly avoided a potentially deadly second accident less than a week after being told by NRMA insurance's Care and Repair centre to drive to the insurer's smash repairer more than 30 kilometres away. She said, "They do not care that I could have had a serious accident or died." Not only could the customer have died, other people could have been seriously injured because of the shoddy service the woman received. The new insurance system is dangerous. How does taping down the bonnet of a car after an accident and requiring the customer to take it to the repairer to be fixed have anything to do with care and repair? Getting a customer to drive an unsafe and probably unroadworthy car 30 kilometres to have it repaired is ridiculous.

The problem is that the NRMA simply has no understanding of the concerns of the MTA, the almost 2,000 smash repairers who have not signed on to the scheme, and members of this House. The press release announcing the changes says it all. NRMA Insurance Chief Executive Officer Rick Jackson spends two paragraphs introducing himself and giving himself a slap on the back then goes for the throat of the MTA—juvenile tactics from a company that should be spending more time working for the public it insures. Only one paragraph later there is this revelation of the blindingly obvious from the CEO:

This issue is about competitiveness and efficiency. There are twice as many repairers per car in Australia than there are in the UK, and that's clearly not sustainable.

The truth is out in the third paragraph of the press release: they want to shut smash repairers down and are willing to use uncompetitive, robotic, unfair tactics to do so. The main aim is to reduce the number of smash repairers. What if the insured drivers of Australia decided we had one too many insurance companies? But when the NRMA proposes a reduction in smash repairers for Sydney, that is fine! The NRMA has gone about trying to systematically discredit those who have been involved in the campaign to stop this new scheme—mum and dad smash repairers, family businesses. The NRMA should apologise to smash repairers, fix their system and look after their customers. [*Time expired.*]

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL, REGENTS PARK, LITERACY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [4.26 p.m.]: I bring the attention of the House to the remarkable initiatives undertaken by Christian Community High School, Regents Park in developing the literacy skills of its student body and in sharing its infectious love of learning with other schools in the electorate of Auburn and beyond. At the beginning of 2003 the school introduced a fourth year 7 class which comprised 16 students deemed in need of literacy assistance. The program was subsequently expanded to include a year 8 class. A special education teacher was assigned to teach a range of core subjects and the students joined in with their peers for non-core subjects such as physical education and art. From the outset the program was based on the fundamental principle that pupils need to be driven by a purpose for learning and find motivation by achieving short-term goals, discovering meaning, enjoying the intrinsic rewards of enhanced self-esteem and improved literacy skills, and working to help both their peers and younger students on the same path.

For the outcome to be truly effective the students had to have fun. To begin with the teachers developed a reading corner complete with seats featuring National Rugby League teams, daily newspaper supplies and a range of books refreshed through regular borrowings from the school and public libraries. In accordance with school practice, each class adhered to a quiet time for reading each morning. As their passion and enjoyment of reading developed, the students soon took to the Premier's Reading Challenge, which they interacted with online, logging their details and accomplishments. This added element has given the pupils the opportunity to learn typing and to develop web-based skills, as well enjoying the challenge of reading all 20 books, which incidentally was met successfully by all the students.

To further enhance the learning experience teachers introduced a peer reading model based on the principle that one who teaches also learns. That has worked wonders for the students who are able to read and to sharpen one another's skills, as well as provide much-appreciated peer support. In fact it has worked so well that a visit has been planned for the third school term to South Granville Christian Community School to engage in a similar activity. But this initiative is hardly the beginning of what the school has done to date and what is planned for the future. In the brief time available to me I can only briefly elaborate on the many projects that have been undertaken, although each one is worthy of more than just a passing description.

First, in 2003 the teachers devised the idea of having students write and create their own picture books, which were then taken to St Peter Chanel Primary School. Students were assigned a small group of young pupils and sat with them reading the books they had brought along. As honourable members can well imagine, this activity greatly enhanced their self-esteem and confidence levels, and was a great learning and sharing experience for all. The program was so successful that regular "buddy reading" with the kindergarten class was carried out on Tuesday afternoons. Further to this, year 7 students made contact with a school in Bolivia through a teacher they knew and received a bag full of finger puppets. They then wrote stories and plays around the finger puppets and presented them to the students they were mentoring at St Peter Chanel school. That project not only brought delight to the kindergarten class but also improved confidence levels and helped the students to develop creative and communication skills.

Second, in October 2004, the year 7 teacher flew to Papua New Guinea, where she visited a number of schools and presented her students' picture books. The books were received with much appreciation. But the students wanted to do more, as it was brought to their attention that there were bush schools that could do with

more books in their libraries. In partnership with New Hope International they have been raising money through such activities as cake stalls for schools, not only in Papua New Guinea but in the Solomon Islands as well. The school also sends its second-hand books to those countries, and students have helped prepare shipments as large as ten thousand books for schools in the Mount Hagen area of Papua New Guinea. Furthermore, I understand that one of the special education teachers from the school is to take up a teaching position in the highlands of Papua New Guinea for a period of twelve months and it is her vision to introduce the Premier's Reading Challenge to the schools she will be working with there. It makes me proud to see a local school so incredibly motivated, creative and committed to enhancing the literacy, self-esteem and confidence of its student body.

I honour them today for going one step further in extending their passion for learning and helping others less fortunate even beyond the borders of our country. I am pleased to see the students of Christian Community High School, Regents Park, not only receiving an invaluable education but growing as young people with a heart for others and becoming leaders and educators in their own right. In closing I make special mention of Rosalie Bali and Kathryn Gallagher for being such inspirational teachers and I thank Principal Garry Brummell for his support and everyone else who has contributed to the fantastic initiatives I have spoken about today.

NRMA PREFERRED REPAIRER NETWORK SCHEME

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [4.31 p.m.]: In my contribution tonight I want to bring to the attention of the House the serious concerns raised by the smash repair industry in relation to the industry's dispute with NRMA Insurance and its parent company, the Insurance Australia Group [IAG]. There is a substantial smash repair industry both within the Willoughby electorate and surrounding suburbs. In my electorate office I have received a number of delegations of smash repairers and representatives from the Motor Traders Association [MTA] of New South Wales, who are fearful for the future of the smash repair industry. As explained to me by representatives of the smash repair industry, NRMA-IAG has introduced a web-based tendering system in which estimates to repair damaged vehicles are prepared purely from digital images on the Internet and a scope of works prepared by an NRMA-IAG employee.

I am advised that a similar system of tendering that was introduced in Wollongong in 1997 led to extreme cost-cutting measures, business closures and job losses. The Wollongong experiment particularly affected quality repairers and, most important, led to substandard repairs and vehicle safety issues for consumers and the community. Under the revised policy conditions, NRMA Insurance and IAG policyholders are refused free choice of repairer, which is typically a local repairer. Policyholders must pay an extra premium to select their repairer of choice and are then told that if, in the opinion of the insurer, that repairer's quote is not fair and reasonable, the policyholder must personally cover any difference in cost.

The smash repair industry argues that under the NRMA's new policy arrangements NRMA is using price as the only determinant in selecting its preferred tenderers, thereby risking quality and safety, as well as the viability of the industry. The industry argues that this is a bad outcome for both the industry and for consumers, who are at risk of inferior quality repairs. Representatives of the Motor Traders Association recently presented me with letters and survey responses from 21 smash repairers within the Willoughby electorate and its immediate surrounds. Between them those repairers employ 143 staff, but collectively they have had to retrench 39 staff since the old NRMA contract expired. Of the businesses in question, 15 indicated they were prepared to close if steering of work continues and the NRMA contract as planned goes ahead. I want to read onto the record excerpts from some of the letters I have received from local smash repairers. The first letter stated:

During the past thirty years we have serviced most panel and mechanical workshops in Artarmon for electrical and airconditioning maintenance. Since introduction of the WRM scheme introduced by NRMA Insurance, and the reluctance by repairers to sign contracts with NRMA Insurance, my turnover has decreased by 70%.

I have been forced to retrench two (2) tradesmen and if this dispute continues there will obviously be more to follow. My business is not directly related to NRMA, however the "domino effect" will soon cause the closure of many small businesses like mine.

Another letter I received stated in part:

I am a motor mechanic and have been in business on the lower north shore for over 30 years. I have worked closely with the body repair industry for over 35 years, doing mechanical repairs. This work constituted approximately 25% of my business.

The letter, referring to NRMA Insurance, also stated:

If they are allowed to impose these contracts on repairers the demands on proprietors of body shops will lead to failure of many shops and a decline in working conditions in the remainder, which I believe will result in lower standard of repairs lower standard of working conditions. This will in turn result in more accidents and sickness in the overworked people in this industry. A lack of training and apprenticeships will follow and must lead to high cost in the long run.

I personally have seen a decline in volume of work coming from this side of the trade and at present am reviewing my staff levels as I know are others.

The smash repair industry is calling for the introduction of anti-steering legislation which, if passed, could prevent an insurer or other institution from recommending or directing policyholders to a specific repairer or supplier. I have carefully considered the representations from local smash repairers and believe they are justified in highlighting the concerns they have raised. It is imperative that the NRMA engage in constructive dialogue to address the serious concerns in the industry. Implementation of these new contractual arrangements is not necessarily in the best interests of the consumer or of the smash repair industry. Contractual arrangements must place greater emphasis on choice and quality of service, not only on price as a sole determinant. I thank the smash repair industry in and near to the Willoughby electorate for having brought their concerns to my attention. I urge NRMA to review its processes and policy decisions through full consultation with the industry.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.36 p.m.]: I assure the honourable member for Willoughby and the honourable member for Lane Cove, who spoke about this issue earlier, that the Government understands the situation. The honourable member for Bankstown has also raised this matter. The Government is pursuing the issue and has concerns similar to those raised by honourable members.

NRMA DEPUTY-PRESIDENT MR MICHAEL TYNAN AND THE MOTOR TRADERS ASSOCIATION

Mr PAUL PEARCE (Coogee) [4.37 p.m.]: On behalf of my constituents I direct my concerns to the Minister for Fair Trading. Those concerns relate to the Motor Traders Association [MTA], which early last year set up a competitor to the NRMA road service, known as MTA Assist. This is the first time in its 85-year history that the NRMA road service has had a direct competitor across the complete range of its road service operations. At the current time the Deputy-President of the NRMA is Michael Tynan, who is a former president and currently and active member of the Motor Traders Association. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 29 January 2004 it was reported by Joseph Kerr and Anne Lampe that an NRMA spokesman had said that Mr Tynan had "regularly absented himself from board meetings whenever any potential conflict of interest has arisen".

This NRMA spokesman said that Mr Tynan had been granted leave of absence by the board while the MTA considered its roadside assistance proposal. In the same report it was stated that James McCall, the chief executive of the MTA, had said that "in all the discussions for this the MTA has absented [Tynan] from discussions and from a vote". It seems incredible that Mr Tynan can continue as Deputy-President of the NRMA when he is still actively involved with the MTA and has been reliably reported as absenting himself from various board meetings of both the NRMA and the MTA. Surely it cannot be sufficient for Mr Tynan to simply absent himself from board meetings. Every piece of information provided to him as an NRMA director, particularly in his board papers, has the potential to be used in developing the rival MTA road service.

This information could simply have been used by way of knowledge and understanding of the NRMA's business fundamentals, its marketing strategies, investment policies, staffing and logistics. More seriously, it could have involved its direct use in establishing the MTA's competitive products, services and prices. It is not hard to believe that Mr Tynan has placed himself in a position of conflict of interest and has breached his director's duties under the Corporations Act. He has arguably breached his obligations to act in good faith and for a proper purpose, and not make improper use of his director's position or of the information obtained by him to the detriment of the NRMA and the benefit of MTA Assist. This is covered by sections 180 to 184 of the Corporations Act. He may also have breached sections 191 to 195 by voting on matters in which he had a material personal interest.

How an individual can still be involved in the management of two organisations that are in direct across-the-board competition is beyond belief. By correspondence dated 28 January 2004 this issue was raised by Richard Talbot with Jeffrey Lucy, the Chairman of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission [ASIC], and that regulating body has declined to take any action. Presumably a person could be on the board of both Coles Myer and Woolworths, even though the two companies are in cut-throat competition and virtually every decision made by the two boards would have some impact on its competitor. This inaction is not surprising given the recent history of the ASIC in its handling of the controversies involving FAI Insurances Ltd, HIH Insurance Ltd and Steve Vizard, in which outrageous illegalities were ignored until shame and public opinion forced some action.

It would be a good outcome if, this issue having been raised in State Parliament, the ASIC might be again shamed into taking some responsibility for its governance role concerning company directors' conflict of interest under the Corporations Act. However, I believe this would be too much to hope for. I therefore call on the Minister for Fair Trading to see what action can be taken to safeguard the interests of my constituents and all members of the road service to ensure that this blatant conflict of interest no longer continues.

IMLAY SPECIAL NEEDS GROUP MOBILE TOY LIBRARY

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [4.42 p.m.]: The Imlay Special Needs Group mobile toy library provides services to families and preschools throughout the Bega Valley shire. Currently the group is in the process of seeking State Government funding to secure this valuable service, both now and into the future. As from October this year, the service will no longer receive funding from other sources. It is therefore important that the State Government give consideration to funding the service, and on behalf of the group I call on the Minister for Community Services to immediately implement a funding program for the mobile toy library.

The Imlay Special Needs Group mobile toy library services constituents and families not only in the Bega electorate but also in the electorate of Monaro. I have been advised that the honourable member for Monaro has also pursued the issue with the Minister. I wish to thank all the people who have written directly to the Minister and to me and other members of Parliament about the service. I also thank the large number of people who signed a petition on the matter. That petition, which contained in the order of 720 signatures, was tabled in this place last week. The Federal Government has made a contribution to the funding program. However, to ensure the success of such a service it is important that the State Government, which has responsibility for the delivery of community services, provides the necessary funding support to the Imlay Special Needs Group mobile toy library.

I wish to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of Wendy Wait, the toy librarian, who has done her level best to ensure that funding for the service is secured for the future. Wendy does a marvellous job. The mobile toy library not only provides toys and resources for families, it also provides educational resources to families as part of an early intervention approach to ensuring children and parents are well supported. The service also offers parenting workshops, again as part of an early intervention approach to dealing with families.

I note that during the last session of Parliament the Minister for Community Services announced the provision of funding for a similar service in Armidale to support 500 families with young children from the Armidale, Uralla, Guyra, Black Mountain and Walcha areas. I hope the State Government will make a similar contribution to the Imlay Special Needs Group mobile toy library to support families in the south-east of the State. A resource such as a mobile toy library plays an important part in providing learning opportunities for families in isolated, low-income areas such as the Bega Valley, where public transport is not as accessible as it is in other areas of the State. Recently I received a letter from Frances Sutherland regarding the service. She wrote:

As a mother of a young child, I cannot stress enough how important this resource is. On a fortnightly basis, the van travels to our small village of Bemboka, bringing a wealth of learning resources, and is the highlight of my son's week. A round trip to the closest regional centre takes one and a half hours, and this is a long, long trip for a small child, not to be done on a whim. The staff of the Imlay Special Needs Group are truly our saviours some weeks.

I call on the Minister to show some heart in relation to providing funding for this service. It is critical that we ensure the continuation of the service for the benefit of families in the Bega Valley shire. I hope the department will soon be in contact with Wendy Wait, the toy librarian, to progress funding for the service. We have received an acknowledgement from the Minister regarding our request for funding, but I hope to hear something more concrete than that very soon. Currently the group has 130 members, who hope that the service will be able to continue after October. On behalf of the group I call on the Minister to fund this pivotal service for families in the State's south-east.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.46 p.m.]: I assure the honourable member for Bega that the Minister for Community Services is aware of the importance of the mobile toy library in ensuring the provision of services for families in the State's south-east. However, I want to make sure we are clear about the facts. Firstly, this situation has come about because the Commonwealth Government is not willing to continue funding for the service. Secondly, the mobile toy library, which caters for families in rural and outlying areas, is run by the Imlay Special Needs Group.

The Department of Community Services currently provides \$8,688 in funding to the group to run a vacation care program in Eden. This funding is part of the \$537,000 in funding provided by the New South

Wales Government to 12 children's services in the Bega area. I am advised that all current funds from Department of Community Services children's services programs are fully committed. I am also advised that should further funds become available under this program, the service will certainly receive due consideration.

PETROL PRICES AND ALTERNATIVE FUEL SOURCES

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY (Menai—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.48 p.m.]: Constituents in the Menai electorate, like the constituents of other honourable members, are growing increasingly concerned and angry about the current and projected price of petrol. This morning I heard a radio report that families are forgoing groceries and other essential items due to the pressure on household budgets caused by the dramatic increases in petrol prices. In the lead-up to today's emergency summit on petrol prices the NRMA issued a chilling message. According to a report in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* the NRMA's summit discussion paper stated that the price of petrol would remain at at least \$1.20 a litre "but will be prone to price shocks caused by events such as hurricane damage, large-scale industrial accidents and terrorism attacks". According to the discussion paper, the rising price of fuel also has "massive implications" for the Australian economy and therefore affects the whole community. The discussion paper continues:

Adjusting to the reality of long-term higher petrol prices requires major adjustments for Australians and measures to help manage the situation. The pain of this adjustment cannot be borne by consumers alone.

But my constituents are also asking for information about alternative fuels that may be cheaper and/or provide more independence for our nation, given the volatility of our fuel supplies and prices in terms of natural disasters, war or terrorism in other parts of the world. It appears that Australia's blind reliance on imported oil has seriously jeopardised our own energy and transport needs, not to mention the health of our economy, well into the future. The Howard Government established an alternative fuels program in 1997 and extended it in 2000. Sadly and tragically, the Alternative Fuels Conversion Programme [AFCP] and the Compressed Natural Gas Infrastructure Program [CNGIP] has spectacularly failed to promote the use of alternative fuels in Australia. The imposition of fuel excise on alternative fuels in the 2003 Federal budget seriously damaged all sectors of the alternative fuels industry. Then in the 2004 Federal budget, the funding for the program was cut by more than 70 per cent.

It is inexcusable, but hardly surprising, that the Federal Government has well and truly dropped the ball through mismanagement of these programs and its lack of commitment to environmental issues. One of the latest casualties is the announcement by Sydney's natural gas distributor, AGL, that it will close its small network of compressed natural gas [CNG] refuelling stations in Sydney. One of these stations is based at Moorebank in my electorate. These refuelling stations were established with financial support from the Australian Greenhouse Office, that is, with funds supplied by the Australian taxpayers—you and I, Madam Acting-Speaker, and everyone else in this place. I am advised that as we speak, AGL is in the process of closing down the Granville facility rather than spend \$12,000 repairing a retaining wall.

My constituents, and those other Sydney-based honourable members who have converted their cars to CNG over the past eight years or so and therefore need to use these refuelling stations, are now being abandoned by AGL. Natural gas is an indigenous fuel and is in abundant supply. In other words, it offers a security of supply that is not afforded by our reliability on imported crude oil. The Natural Gas Vehicles [NGV] group is also based in the electorate of Menai. There are four operating companies in the group and they assist a number of other nations around the world to pursue energy diversity programs, not just for long-term energy security but also for the environmental and economic benefits offered by alternative fuels such as natural gas.

I was delighted to hear the New South Wales Minister for Transport say that gas-powered buses may prove a practical, economical consideration in the assessment of tenders for the next round of fleet purchases. My community is frightened to hear the prediction by world oil experts of \$US100 per barrel by the end of 2005. There are very serious consequences for my constituents in their daily lives, but also for the broader economy. I urge all levels of government and other community leaders to heed the devastating comments and statistics from the Union of Concerned Scientists in an article in January 2002 entitled "Dangerous Addiction: Ending America's Oil Dependence". The article stated:

The events of September 11 highlight the danger in continuing to turn a blind eye to our oil dependence. The instability of the Middle East makes for a situation that could change at any moment. New suppliers like Russia and the Caspian region are hardly more stable. Sixty-five percent of the world's known oil reserves lie beneath the Persian Gulf... Of the nearly 19 million barrels per day increase in world oil demand now forecast between 2010 and 2020, more than 85% will come from Middle East countries.

This is a very serious matter for us all to be concerned about. [*Time expired.*]

GREAT LAKES INTERNATIONAL TRIATHLON ASSOCIATION FORSTER-TUNCURRY TRIATHLON

Mr JOHN TURNER (Myall Lakes) [4.53 p.m.]: Tonight I am going to talk about the Great Lakes International Triathlon Association [GLITA] and its plans for an historic new triathlon in the Forster-Tuncurry area. GLITA is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation that was established in 1985 to manage the inaugural Ironman distance triathlon, and it has managed 20 events over the past 21 years. I note that the Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation, who has kindly come into the Chamber, has been to one of these Ironman events.

The Half Ironman event was introduced in 1999 by GLITA. GLITA also manages the Great Lakes Sports Foundation, which was auspiced in 2000. The Great Lakes Sports Foundation was established to promote the development of emerging sports and sports participation in the Great Lakes, and to financially support talented sports people in the achievement of their goals. The last race attracted 1,600 competitors, 2,500 helpers and thousands upon thousands of people who came and visited—a far cry from 1985 when there were 165 competitors. As we know, history has shown that the event was taken over by ING—an international organisation—some years ago and it ran the event at Forster-Tuncurry for a contracted period of five years. The event was subsequently taken by ING to Port Macquarie—I guess for financial reasons.

GLITA has decided to recreate the triathlon. It will be over the same distance as the Ironman event, and I am sure it will attract people from the Ironman event. I will be asking the Minister formally to assist GLITA to continue the dream of the ultra-distance triathlon event in Forster-Tuncurry. I emphasise again that this is a not-for-profit organisation and I note that—and I say without rancour—the Minister has given assistance to the triathlon at Port Macquarie, and I remind the House that that triathlon is owned by a company that runs the triathlon for its own purposes and for profit.

The GLITA team is reinvigorated. Jeff Brown has been made president of the club, and he has had 14 years with the event. The members of the team committee have a great deal of experience. I note that Dick Quinn has been made the race director. Dick Quinn has competed in 15 of these triathlons and he has a great deal of experience. I am sure he will be an excellent race director. There are about 2,500 volunteers for the triathlon and the event creates a significant income for the area.

Research undertaken by Great Lakes Tourism in 2005 showed that 85 per cent of triathletes stay for four to seven days; 84 per cent of triathletes have indicated that they will come back to Forster-Tuncurry for a holiday outside triathlon time; and 77 per cent of triathletes have an annual income in excess of \$50,000. Forster-Tuncurry is only a three-hour drive north of Sydney and is ideally located. The Ironman course runs through two national parks, passes two major lakes systems, and is in a significantly non-urban area. There has been feedback from competitors. Chris McCormack, a famous triathlete, said:

It will always hold a special place in my heart, and is arguably one of the world's truly special events. I look forward to racing in it many more times over the next 20 years.

Belinda Granger said:

I love everything about this race, the town, the beach, the people, the atmosphere, the competition and the hype. Forster is a very special place to me. Every time I arrive in town I get this funny feeling - almost an uncontrollable excitement. Where else do you get to go to a beautiful place with all your best mates, hangout, go to the beach, relax and oh yeah - race an ironman.

Chris Legh, a famous athlete, said:

I can't wait to return in 2006 and to one day have my name included on the list of illustrious winners.

This is truly an event of significance—not only regional and State significance, but Australia-wide and international significance—attracting ironmen and ironwomen from all around the world. Without denigrating or putting down Port Macquarie, we do not believe that it will get the support, particularly from the volunteers, to be able to run the triathlon. Therefore, GLITA, with enormous capacity and enormous experience, will put on a great performance. But it does need assistance in view of the fact that the event has been taken from them by ING. The town is right behind the event, the council is right behind it and no doubt sponsors will come on board, but I would ask the Minister to look favourably at giving some assistance to GLITA to stage this outstanding event in the Forster-Tuncurry region.

Ms SANDRA NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation, Minister for Women, and Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development) [4.58 p.m.]: I can well understand that the

people of Forster and the local member are disappointed at ING's decision to move the Australian Ironman event to Port Macquarie. It was very much ING's decision and obviously not a decision that was influenced by the Government. ING felt that the event had outgrown Forster and it wanted to relocate it to a place that could help the event grow. ING pointed to things like a greater level of availability of accommodation, different styles of accommodation, and an airport that would make it easier for international competitors to come in, compete in the event and go home again. So ING had its own reasons and I can understand those reasons: it wanted the event to grow; it wanted the event to be held in a town that was bigger and had more access to a direct airline route and, of course, a whole range of accommodation.

I can understand the disappointment at the decision to move the event to Port Macquarie. The Government has given some support to the event in Port Macquarie, but it has also given support to the Forster event. There is a limited pot of money and we are not able to support every single event. We must look at priorities and consider what is going to give the best return to taxpayers, particularly in respect of support for an Ironman event. However, I am pleased to say that the International Sporting Events Program [ISEP] supports and funds, in part, any event that is truly international and I would be happy to consider an application for assistance. There are two intakes, the next closing on 30 September, so no doubt I will hear soon from the honourable member for Myall Lakes. It may be possible for some modest contribution to be made if the application passes muster.

BALLINA ELECTORATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [5.00 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate a number of Ballina electorate individuals, organisations and businesses that have recently received awards or been recognised for their achievements. During the parliamentary winter recess I had the pleasure of attending the Ballina Shire Business Excellence Awards at the Ballina RSL Club. More than 100 local businesses had been nominated for a range of awards, including best trades and services, community services, industry, tourism, food and beverage, retail, customer service and professional services. It was great to see the enthusiasm of the local business community and the high standards of the businesses nominated.

I would particularly like to mention Geolink and Northern Rivers Surgical Supplies, which tied for the award Business of the Year. A number of local individuals and organisations have been successful on the sporting field. Several local people were recently awarded grants under the 2005 New South Wales Country Athletes Scheme. These included Benjamin Coridas and Damien Buckley, representatives in junior rugby union; Kate Johnson, a very successful local swimmer; and Tanyan Lyndon, for his participation in Surf Life Saving New South Wales.

In other sporting achievements, local residents Ben Purnell and Brad Corbett were selected to represent Australia at the World Tae Kwon Do Championships, whilst the Ballina Touch Football Association was the New South Wales Touch Association affiliate of the year. It is wonderful that so many local residents are achieving in their chosen sport and are winning awards, but also it is good to see young people out every weekend on local beaches, at swimming pools and on ovals taking part in sport and other physical activity.

One of the great sporting ambassadors is Petria Thomas from Mullumbimby. Petria has always shown great courage in the pool and this year released her autobiography *Swimming Against the Tide*. She has been candid in her book about her struggle with self-confidence and the personal hurdles she has overcome to be one of Australia's best swimmers. She has set a wonderful example for the rest of the community and I wish her all the best in the future.

The Ballina electorate is also characterised by cultural achievements. Recently Fiona Prowse, a young footwear designer, was awarded the prestigious Churchill Memorial Trust Scholarship to study footwear design in Italy. I am sure we will hear a lot more about Fiona's achievements in the future. Two of the far North Coast's best chefs, Nathan Sherwood and Gerhard Spatz, of the Ballina RSL Club, have been recognised for their culinary skills. I have enjoyed their meals on a number of occasions and believe they are very deserving of the Clubs New South Wales chef's table gold medal award. I would also like to mention Ballina's theatre group, the Ballina Players, which this year celebrated its fiftieth successful year entertaining local residents. Last Saturday I attended the fiftieth anniversary of the Mullumbimby Ex-services Angling Club, which was a most enjoyable evening.

I turn now to community service achievements. I congratulate several people, including Keith Barry, Christopher Dewhurst, Anne Moehead, John Savage and Leslie and Doris Wilson, who all received recognition

in the Queen's Birthday honours in June. I would also like to mention the young community achiever, Emma Baldrey from Ballina High School, who last week received the Minister for Education and Training Award for Excellence in Student Achievement for her representative work with local students. I have worked with Emma on the local youth council and believe she is truly deserving of the award.

During the parliamentary recess parts of the Ballina electorate and neighbouring Lismore experienced a devastating flood. Local areas such as Ocean Shores and Billinudgel were severely affected and the Pacific Highway was cut north and south of Ballina. I thank local emergency services, council employees and community members, who worked together to assist those most affected and ensured that the community remained safe until the flood subsided. In contrast to the recent events in New Orleans, there was a strong sense of community spirit and selflessness that emerged during the flood and many worked hard and beyond the call of duty to help during that period.

I should also like to mention that Bangalow resident Frank Scarabelotti turned 108 in August and is believed to be Australia's oldest man. Frank is in good health, regularly tends his garden, walks to the Bangalow shops and takes a keen interest in current affairs. He and his wife, Nell, are valued members of the Bangalow community and I congratulate him on his longevity and full life. There are many more achievers in the Ballina electorate, some who do so quietly, and I pass on my congratulations to all those who work hard to make our community a better place.

TRIBUTE TO MR GEORGE GERTLER

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: I pay tribute to a very special person in the Canterbury electorate, George Gertler, who has owned Union Discount Retrovision in Beamish Street, Campsie, for close to 40 years. In 1967 George acquired the store, which has become very famous and loved in Campsie because it has been there for such a long time. Indeed, it has been in existence since 1918 when a Mr Arthur bought it just after the First World War. It is not the sort of store that one sees these days but is run on old-fashioned values based on trust. George is now serving the grandchildren of his first customers.

George is highly respected in the community he loves and, most important, he knows his customers and their families. He has offered a hand of friendship to many of them. In fact, I experienced that hand of friendship when I first became the member for Canterbury. George was one of the first businesspeople within the Campsie precinct to come and see me. We went out to dinner with a group of other businesspeople, which gave me a great introduction to issues relating to the Campsie business precinct, a busy shopping strip along Beamish Street that has an incredible diversity of clothing stores, food outlets, electrical goods shops, restaurants, discount stores and many other stores.

However, no other store is like Union Discount Retrovision, with its history, philosophy, and George Gertler. However, at the age of 77, George has decided that it is time to move on and do something else with his life. He has plenty of energy, and the fact that he has been running a successful business is testimony to his stamina, intelligence and longevity. He is also an extremely dignified man. I would like to give an example of his generosity and his community spirit. When George first became the proprietor of Union Discount Retrovision, people who were cleaning the store found a teddy bear—I have a photograph and it looks like a panda—which is very old and has been the store mascot. George said it has brought him considerable luck, so he has generously offered the teddy bear for auction to the highest bidder and the money will go to a registered charity. In my view, that is the mark of the man. Campsie and the Canterbury electorate will miss George and his business when he leaves. The shopping precinct will not be the same.

The difference with Union Discount Retrovision is that it harks back to a time when businesses were not simply about profit or about select shopping schemes with an interest rate of 25 per cent. George is not that sort of businessperson. In his store people can feel comfortable and ask questions because they know the owner, and the people who work there do their best for the customers. We do not see that much in retail in Australia these days. In conclusion, I thank George Gertler for his welcome to me and for his amazing contribution to the electorate of Canterbury and the local business community.

NEW LAMBTON PUBLIC SCHOOL 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN MILLS (Wallsend) [5.10 p.m.]: At 10.10 a.m. on 30 June the bell of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle, tolled 125 times to mark the 125th anniversary of the founding of New Lambton Public School. There then followed an ecumenical service of thanksgiving for the school and its service to the

community since 1880. The cathedral was overcrowded; it was standing room only. A superbly organised service followed, led by the Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Reverend Graham Lawrence. The processional hymn, *God of Concrete, God of Steel*, is fitting for a school in the State's industrial heartland.

The welcome came from the Dean. The first reading was by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor John Tate, who is a former student of the school. We then had the first of several student performances. The infant choir and prefect Lena Latham-Cannon sang the twenty-third psalm, under the direction of Mrs Murree-Allen. The second reading was by the principal, Mr Tony Negline, who is also a former student of the school. The congregation then sang the school song. I will read the song into the record because there is an important point to be made:

*New Lambton School, New Lambton School
We think of her with pride
And Mem'ries of New Lambton School
Thru' life will be our guide.
Truth, Honour, Loyalty and Trust:
High standards she has set.
Her spirit will stay through many long years
Her name we won't forget
New Lambton School, New Lambton School,
Her name we won't forget*

The theme of the address that followed was "values in public education"—values taught by the school. It is important to reiterate that, at a time when the Federal Government is criticising the public education system for a lack of values. For 125 years New Lambton Public School has proudly been teaching values. Truth, honour and loyalty are in the school crest, and added to that in the school song is the value of trust. The creative dance was most inspiring. School Captain Ashleigh Coburn and Prefect Elizabeth Masters danced "In the Arms of an Angel". We then had the offering of symbols, again with the continuing theme of values in public education. Items of learning representing symbols of school life were brought forward by students and received by the Dean. School Captain Thomas Hedges and Vice Captains Emily Matheson and Alex Kantarovski introduced the symbols. Kindergarten students brought forward toys from their play corner in the Kindergarten Hall, and with them the values of co-operation and kindness toward others at play.

Year 1 students presented the Dean with science equipment used at school, and with it the values of seeking and finding answers to problems. The ecumenical nature of the service was shown when responses came from Reverend Melbourne Nelson, Relieving Rector of New Lambton Anglican Parish; Reverend Neil Smith, Minister of the Uniting Church in New Lambton; and Father Barry Tunks, Catholic Parish Priest at Trinity Parish, Blackbutt North. Year 2 students brought forward measuring instruments and a mathematics work book, and with them the values of truth and honesty when calculating.

Year 3 students brought forward the boomerang, didgeridoo and Aboriginal flag that had been used in the unit of study on indigenous Australians, and with them the values of respect and understanding. Year 4 students brought forward symbols of music—a CD, a recorder and an ABC song book—and with them the values of interest, performance and appreciation. Year 5 students brought forward a globe of the world and an atlas that are part of their national and international studies, and with them the values of intercultural understanding and social justice. Year 6 students representing all who played sport within the school brought forward a basketball, a cricket bat, a tennis racquet and a soccer ball, and with them the values of participation and fair play.

The primary choir sang *Newcastle Morning*, under the direction of Ms Ison. The prayers for the school and its community were important for the students, encouraging them always to grasp the opportunities the school and the community provide and help them to learn what is right and to do what is good. Speaking of that, the school and its students continue to make achievements. At the recently announced winners of the annual schools web design awards the 14 Mirrors team from New Lambton Public School won an encouragement award.

There were prayers for the staff, that they could maintain their high standards and use their abilities to make a difference to the lives of their students; there were prayers for the parents, encouraging them to participate in the life of a school that seeks to continue to serve its community; and there were prayers giving thanks for the 125 years of teaching and learning at New Lambton Public School and for the way the school

continues to build full, useful and happy lives for young people. I thank the school for organising a great occasion. I recognise the achievement of 125 years of grand public education for the people of New Lambton.

ORANGE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING TENANTS

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [5.15 p.m.]: Tonight I reluctantly report an incident that occurred in Orange last night. *ABC Online* stated:

All ages involved in Orange brawl

People in central west NSW are investigating an overnight brawl in Orange involving 30 people who were armed with metal garden rakes and baseball bats.

A number of homes were damaged in the incident and one man suffered a cut to the knee.

Canobolas duty officer Inspector Andrew Johnson says police had to return to the scene twice to try and diffuse the brawl, which they say involved people of all ages.

"Its obviously an incident that's been festering for some time I would imagine to involve with the ages of 10 to 60 and it's not something that occurs every day in Orange," he said.

Thankfully, I agree; it is not an every day occurrence in Orange, and it is unfortunate that it occurred on this occasion. However, it highlights the fact that there are problems in Orange, principally in Department of Housing areas. Every now and then the problem raises its head and triggers an incident. I am not sure what triggered the incident last night; it could have been simply a small argument between two families that developed into a brawl. Time will tell, once the police carry out further investigations.

One possible trigger is the fact that many Department of Housing areas are rather rundown. Certain areas have not been maintained, including common areas, streets and footpaths, where trees have been allowed to die or have been damaged and not replaced. Some houses urgently need renovating. All of this creates an atmosphere in which, unfortunately, a small group of people make it uncomfortable for the vast majority. Some people in Department of Housing properties are not tenants; they have purchased the property from the Department of Housing. They are hard-working, law-abiding citizens who should not have to put up with this type of behaviour. Some months ago I highlighted an incident in which constituents—decent-living people—asked me to visit a specific area and view properties alongside their homes. The properties had been vacated by Department of Housing tenants for whatever reason, and had not been re-tenanted.

In this case young people, some of whom were barely 10 years of age, had moved into the properties and smashed walls and windows; they had made the properties uninhabitable. The Department of Housing must spend a disproportionate amount of taxpayers money on renovating the properties to get them to the stage that they can be tenanted. Nothing looks worse in a street than a vacant block of land where a house has been burned down or boarded up until renovations can be carried out. It creates an atmosphere that allows incidents such as last night's to occur.

As I have said, most people just want to get on with their lives. They have worked hard for many years and should not have to put up with this type of behaviour. The department and the police agree that it is a small minority. I appreciate that today the Minister for Housing said she will ensure that the department tightens up some of the conditions of tenants. She mentioned "zero tolerance". I am looking forward to the Minister carrying implementing that. I hope they are not just words. A small minority make it unpleasant in these areas for the vast majority. A small minority causes a disproportionate amount of money to be spent on one house when people living close by or alongside have never been behind in their rent but have had little done to their houses in 20 years.

TWEED ELECTORATE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.20 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House coastal developments in the Tweed. Like a lot of coastal areas, the seachange we are experiencing is driven by many factors, some of which are lifestyle choice and, obviously, our environment. This unprecedented population growth and demand on services bring a funding challenge. In conjunction with this demand for funding is the demand for the protection of our natural environment. Essentially, we need a balance between sustainable economic development and the protection of what endears us to this beautiful part of the far North Coast.

A recent practical example of this protection is the launch of the plan of management of Crown land lot 490, South Kingscliff. On the first day of spring the Minister for Rural Affairs visited my electorate to launch the plan of management. He did that at Jack Julius Park, South Kingscliff, which overlooks lot 490. The Minister and I were on the back of the same utility that served as a stage when I addressed more than 300 locals in May last year to announce that an administrator had been appointed to manage this prime piece of beachfront land. My announcement then, on the back of that utility, stripped the Tweed Shire Council of its trust management authority over the Crown reserve.

The local community and the Minister had been disturbed prior to that to hear how the sacked Tweed Shire Council had made commitments to a developer of an adjoining estate regarding the future development of lot 490 without having in place a plan of management for that lot. Essentially, it constituted a conflict of interest between the council's role as the consent authority for development and its role as a responsible trust manager. The Acting District Manager of the Department of Lands was appointed to manage lot 490, and he established a steering committee that included members of the local community, who have worked closely to find the best possible development solutions, environmental protection and community benefit. I congratulate Peter Gladwin from the progress association at Kingscliff, Rose Wright from the business community, Ian Oelrichs from the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board and Trevor Wilson from the Department of State and Regional Development, who were on that committee with officers of the Tweed Shire Council.

The plan of management is the product of abundant community consultation. A key element of that plan was the relocation of Casuarina Way, a road within lot 490. That was the initiation of the removal from Tweed Shire Council of the planning trusteeship of lot 490. The neighbouring developer, the Ray Group, has agreed to fund the realignment and the construction of the road in part of lot 490. Representing the Ray Group that afternoon were Mr Steve MacRae and Tom Ray. As honourable members would be aware, Brian Ray and his wife passed away in a tragic accident in Victoria some weeks prior to that. I commend Tom Ray for his preparedness to continue with the commitment that his father, Brian, had made to construct this road. The realignment will involve longstanding issues, including road status for safe public access to the beach areas and the improved management of the adjoining coastal and river reserves. This opens the way for expressions of interest for tenders to be advertised for the establishment of a nature-based tourism venture on the site, something the community has been looking forward to.

The Minister also attended the southern boat harbour at Tweed, which had a major overhaul this year. It received \$45,000 in State Government funds towards new public berths and sewer pump-outs. It also received some \$40,000 in assistance towards the cost of refurbishing a slipway that had been run down in that area. A grant of \$25,000 was made towards a master plan for the harbour precinct. Tom Senti, from the Tweed Economic Development Corporation, and Chris Christomous, the chair of the slipway committee, were present. Those funds are essential for the ongoing marine industry on the Tweed.

SUTHERLAND HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [5.25 p.m.]: I raise an important issue concerning my electorate. I refer to Sutherland Hospital, rehabilitation for cardiac and heart lung patients, and the educational requirements of diabetic patients. It has been established that these patients, after completing the rehabilitation programs at Sutherland Hospital—which incorporate gymnasium, home exercise and educational programs—tend to stay with the lifestyle changes and continue to exercise. For example, they walk or attend gymnasiums. All patients are referred to other community programs. Sutherland shire's general practitioners refer programs for low-risk patients, which has been an outstanding success. I refer, in particular, to the work being done in conjunction with the medical profession, the hospital and the Sutherland Leisure Centre.

There is clear evidence that with rehabilitation and maintenance programs, readmission to hospital and reoccurrences are vastly decreased. Many honourable members will know of people, some in their 40s and 50s, who have had a heart attack but have then been able to lead comfortable and productive lives. A number of miracles have occurred and have been brought to my attention. For example, one patient in the heart-lung program was listed No. 3 on the heart transplant list. After 10 weeks in the heart-lung program she was moved to No. 7 on the transplant list. After finishing the course, she was completely removed from the list and is now an active member of society. She is still exercising each day to maintain her fitness level, she has become a gymnasium volunteer through heart support and she works at her local school. That is certainly a success story.

A 67-year-old lady who smoked 40 cigarettes a day for 50 years had a number of severe illnesses. She required the use of a walking stick. With four hospital admissions in four months she had become housebound

and depressed. She had given up driving. She was referred to the heart-lung program. After completing the home exercise program and further exercise at the hospital, she was shopping on her own without carer support, and driving to Wollongong to visit her brother. She has not had another hospital admission and is doing her own housework. She now does Tai Chi once a week and attends the Sutherland Leisure Centre circuit once a week. Such programs are cost effective for people who would otherwise be using hospital facilities. The diabetics program is also an important issue. If patients can be caught and educated early enough there is a vast difference in their prognosis and the cost to the health service. There has been an explosion in the number of diabetics in hospital and community education programs. These programs must be extended.

I regretfully have to advise that with the building of the new Sutherland hospital the hydrotherapy pool has been lost. The planned gymnasium was also eliminated. The present gymnasium is part of the physiotherapy department. All the gym equipment is crowded, making it difficult for clients to use. A sizeable gymnasium is needed and, in fact, land is dedicated for that purpose. The chronic care program must be adequately funded. If it is, it will be a great investment. As I said, it will result in a reduction in demand for hospital facilities. The freeing up of those facilities would ease the squeeze in other medical services and health delivery. The people of my electorate are now not as well served with the building of the hospital as they previously were because services have been reduced.

CROSS-CITY TUNNEL

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Bligh) [5.30 p.m.]: The cross-city tunnel was promoted on the basis that it would remove traffic from Sydney city streets. However, residents in Bligh suffer the disruption and pollution around the tunnel portals in Rushcutters Bay and Darling Harbour. Residents from Potts Point, Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Paddington have written to me asking why they have to pay—whether through tolls, inconvenience or environmental impact—to generate a private profit. My constituents have experienced two years of construction impact, including noise, dust, loss of business and even damage to their homes in some cases. Now they are living with the effects of changed traffic conditions, and the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] does not expect this disruption to settle down for six months. The people who live around projects such as the cross-city tunnel must be involved very early in the planning process through genuine negotiations that recognise residents' rights. Since the planning of this project started I have called on the Government to consult the local community. When the RTA has listened, ways around problems have been found. When it has not listened, the problems have festered.

Initially, the Minister for Roads did not agree to my requests for comprehensive local area traffic management plans for all suburbs affected by the cross-city tunnel, as had successfully occurred for neighbourhoods adjacent to the Eastern Distributor. However, after much pressure the tunnel consent conditions required local traffic measures for Paddington, but only for Neild Avenue and Glenmore Road. Although the tunnel has opened, this work has not started. While Woollahra Council was hampered in developing its local traffic measures due to staff vacancies, the RTA might have avoided this problem had it included local traffic management as part of the tunnel planning process, as it did with the Eastern Distributor. Following my requests, the RTA agreed to consult local residents and business owners affected by the eastern tunnel portal, leading to some traffic management improvements in Rushcutters Bay. Again in Woolloomooloo, local residents and I had to argue against the proposed "G-loop" access to the Eastern Distributor.

In response the RTA investigated three options and listened to local residents, and came up with a better scheme allowing a right turn from William Street. This solution takes traffic off local streets and it is better than the original proposal, demonstrating that local knowledge is valuable, and that government agencies plan better when they use it. There were also important changes when the RTA agreed to my request to keep Cowper Wharf Road open to provide local access to the city. However, the RTA would not agree to my representations on behalf of local residents to keep access from Sir John Young Crescent to the Sydney Harbour tunnel.

The tunnel is now open but problems remain. I call on the Government to continue working with the City of Sydney to monitor traffic and air pollution and assess community impact; filter tunnel stacks to remove toxins and greenhouse gases from Sydney's air; ensure urgent completion of local traffic measures in Paddington; restore all construction damage and reinstate former construction sites, particularly the open space under the viaduct, which the local community values as parks; and plant additional trees along high-traffic roads to reduce the impact on nearby residents.

The problems with the tunnel are symptoms of a larger problem with the Government's failure to develop long-term transport and infrastructure plans that have community support. I urge the Government to

develop an integrated transport strategy that recognises the priority of public transport over private cars in the city, and public benefit over private profit. The policy also should support walking and cycling. The continued ad-hoc building of inner city tollways without parallel commitment to a rail-based public transport network is not compatible with Sydney's continuing residential consolidation. Without an efficient alternative to the private motorcar, investing in tollways just shifts congestion elsewhere. In the longer term, traffic will build up and cause gridlock again.

It is essential that Sydney has an integrated traffic and transport plan that includes public transport services that are regular, reliable, adequate, safe and clean, and designed to serve the changed needs of the twenty-first century—as in most other Australian and global cities; pedestrian networks that are safe, accessible and pleasant to use; safe, dedicated local cycleways linked to a comprehensive metropolitan network; a high-volume public transport system using light rail to connect train and bus routes in a synchronised manner; a ban on car parking on our parklands to return open space for recreation; and a new vision for road planning that breaks the stranglehold of the RTA over transport infrastructure. Under Minister Knowles the metropolitan transport strategy was being developed. He was, I understand, delivered a printed report. It would be a healthy start to a new, consultative approach to planning if the new Minister for Planning would release the document to the public.

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.35 p.m.]: People living in rural communities in New South Wales have the right to the same level of health care as their city counterparts. However, rural people in New South Wales live, on average, five years less than people from the more advantaged metropolitan areas. In addition, rural New South Wales faces a number of other health challenges: relatively low population growth limited largely to regional centres, increasing difficulties with attracting and retaining scarce health professionals, and a necessary concentration of some specialised health services in centres at some distance from where people live. Overall, rural dwellers have a poorer health status than their city cousins. Developing an integrated approach to human service delivery in rural New South Wales will play a major role in ensuring the future of many small rural communities.

To achieve success this approach must be supported by a significant investment in long-term planning and infrastructure resources. It is apparent that the physical infrastructure of many health services in rural New South Wales is substandard for health service delivery. An investment of more than \$3 billion over the next 10 years is required to deliver safe, sustainable and efficient health care services. Information technology has the potential to transform the way in which care is provided and to assist people to work together to achieve better health outcomes. To build a broadband network across New South Wales to realise this will require an investment of \$40 million over the next three years, with recurrent savings of about \$13.5 million per annum. People in rural New South Wales continue to be hampered by problems of long-distance travel to services and lack of public transport or other adequate travel systems.

Whilst it is not appropriate to provide specialist services in every town, access could be improved by the better use of high-speed broadband activity and the development of an effective transport system for human service delivery. Infrastructure to support a transport network would require an annual recurrent investment of \$1.75 million across rural New South Wales. The New South Wales Futures Planning Project identifies that we cannot address health needs simply by providing more health services. A co-ordinated partnership approach with Federal, State and local governments, individuals, communities, government agencies and the corporate sector is needed. This would be progressed by the establishment of a regional health authority. Policies and requirements of governments should be tailored to the capacity and needs of rural areas, decreasing bureaucracies and targeting health care to community needs.

Governments must centrally develop and adequately fund rural health authorities to deal with the specific health service needs of rural areas and develop rural-friendly approaches to health issues. There should be the development of appropriate needs-based and culturally sensitive rural health care resources with local community involvement, regional co-operation and government support. It is well established that there is a critical shortage of doctors, specialists, nurses and allied health professionals in regional areas of the State. The maldistribution of specialists in many regional areas, particularly in palliative care, geriatric medicine, obstetrics, psychiatry, dentistry and pharmacy, is attributed to issues such as remuneration, professional support, indemnity and capacity for private practice, which should be addressed. We need strategies to encourage new recruits.

Strategies with strong potential include generic training of health professionals in their first years of undergraduate degrees, maximising team-based skills development, and providing an opportunity to reduce course length; developing a new degree-level program to train multiskilled health workers with skills across a broad spectrum, including nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry; providing scholarships, incentives and payment systems that expand the number of health professional undergraduate and graduate places in rural areas, across all professional areas; and expanding the vocational education and training sector health training opportunities to maximise the training and capacity of support staff. By providing a mechanism that gives credit for training experience and on-the-job skills development, lateral entry to high professional training would become available.

Incentive programs could include those who have worked effectively for other professional groups, preferential transfers for years of rural service and supported entry and exit into rural positions. Leave loadings and incentive payments awarded to teachers, police and professionals in other sector remote locations need to be considered for health professionals. Greater flexibility could be achieved through developing alternative roles such as anaesthetic assistance, surgical technicians and multiskilled allied health professionals, overhauling the accreditation processes that reinforce professional rigidities, and reviewing professional registration and regulation. For a long time we have been aware that health services in rural and regional areas are reaching crisis point. It is time for innovative solutions and, above all, a commitment from all levels of government.

CHILD SAFETY

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [5.40 p.m.]: Tonight I raise an issue of great concern to the parents of students at Crestwood Public School, Baulkham Hills, and, I believe, to many parents in other parts of the State. Earlier today Judith Green, the parents' group president, and Jenny Maher, the co-ordinator of the Crestwood Public School Safety House Program, attended the Parliament to voice their concern about what appear to be funding cutbacks by the Labor Government that will bring about the abolition of the Safety House Program. With the spate of recent child abduction attempts, at least two of which have occurred in the Baulkham Hills area, now is not the time to scrap the Safety House Program.

I have received considerable correspondence from many parents of students at Crestwood Public School who fear for the future of the program. Our local police are completely dedicated to looking after the community, and they do an excellent job. However, the Government has to provide them with the necessary resources to enable them to provide front-line services such as the Safety House Program. Parents are concerned that the Labor Government's budget crisis could lead to the abolition of this program, which helps to protect young children. There are real fears that the funding for the program will cease within 12 months. I ask honourable members: What can be more important than the safety of our children?

Parents are entitled to an assurance that their children will be given every protection when travelling to and from school. Scrapping safety houses will only put our children at greater risk of harm. The Safety House Program provides a network of safe places for children within the community. A distinctive yellow smiling-house logo enables children to easily recognise an approved safety house as a safe place to go when they feel scared or threatened. Whilst I understand that the Safety House Program requires regular monitoring and support, I believe that is justified, particularly in view of the recent increase in the number of child abduction attempts.

A joint letter from the Crestwood Public School Principal, Garry Pursehouse, and the parents' group president, Judith Green, states that the reason given for the withdrawal of funding from the program is that there have not been enough attempted abductions across New South Wales to justify the funding. Recently the *Hills Shire Times* reported that there had been four abduction attempts in the Baulkham Hills-Winston Hills area involving young children in July and August of this year. Reports indicate that there have been 12 attempted child abductions in New South Wales in the past two months. One wonders exactly what could be meant by the words, "not enough attempted abductions". This week's edition of the *Hills Shire Times* reports that Castle Hill police are appealing for public information after a man exposed himself to a schoolgirl. In the past, children were taught to access a safety house with a smiling yellow sticker if they found themselves in that sort of similar situation. School education programs have reinforced the role the safety house plays for children.

Police and the community have worked together on the Safety House Program to make children feel safe whilst travelling to and from school. It would be a scandal if this important program were abolished due to lack of funding and resources by the Government. If there are other problems or matters that need to be addressed to keep the scheme in operation, I invite the Government to talk with community groups such as the

Crestwood Parents Group and with local police officers to resolve these issues. The Safety House Program is essential to ensure the safety of our children. I can think of nothing more horrific than a terrified child being pursued by a violent predator and having nowhere to run. I call on the Minister to urgently review the funding allocation for the Safety House Program and to give the community an assurance that the Labor Government is committed to maintaining the program.

As I said, it is a vital program for the security and safety of our young people and I am concerned that the Government may not be committed to continuing with the program. The program requires the co-operation of members of the community, people who are prepared to become volunteers, and, of course, a close association with our local police. I know that the police and members of the local community are willing to co-operate, but they need resources, and the key to the provision of those resources is in the hands of the Government. Let us not take risks with our children's safety because of a budget blow-out. I urge the Government to address its budget difficulties in other ways and not to abolish the Safety House Program.

SUNFLOWER HOUSE PROJECT FUNDING

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [5.45 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House an issue of concern in the electorate of Wagga Wagga which relates to a project of which I am the patron. It is a project of the Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales that has received unanimous community support. Our objective is to develop a project called Sunflower House, a building that the Hon. Tony Kelly, a Minister in another place, kindly arranged, through due process, to be made available to the association. The refurbishment of the building, which was derelict when it came under the control of the Schizophrenia Fellowship, is almost complete. The fellowship, with the assistance of the local Rotary and Lions clubs and other organisations, managed to raise enough money to repair the building. Many tens of thousands of dollars have been invested in the project, and students from the Riverina Institute of TAFE have been working on it.

As their local member, I am very proud of the work they have done to get this project to its present stage. The Governor of New South Wales visited the project and suggested that it was leading the way in rural and regional New South Wales in providing support to people with mental illness. At the time we applied for accommodation in Sunflower House, we also applied to the Minister for Health for funding. It is important that the Schizophrenia Fellowship receive funding to allow this project to begin. The building will be completed in late October or early November with, as I said, community support and many tens of thousands of dollars having already been sunk into the project.

The problem we have now is that almost 18 months since we first applied for funding, neither the State Government nor New South Wales Health have responded to the application. We have a building that is almost complete and a community that is behind the project. We have a desperate need for mental health support for patients who, once they have been hospitalised and released, need ongoing support to return to the work force. They need to have removed from their daily lives the revolving-door syndrome that, unfortunately, affects many people with mental illness. That is particularly the case in regional and rural New South Wales.

There are no support services in the Riverina, and Sunflower House is meant to address that situation. I appeal to the Minister for Health and the Premier. I ask them to deal with the application and to respond favourably to the Schizophrenia Fellowship application. I ask them to let the people of the region know they believe this is a worthwhile project. Funding of \$250,000 will employ three staff and allow this project to deliver services to people in the region who basically have no other support.

As members know, mental health problems affect one in five people. In other words, at some point in time one in five people will suffer a mental illness. The good news is that those people do get well, but only if support and services are provided to encourage them to return to mainstream life, so they can attain living skills, apply for work, and return to basic wellness. I despair at the lack of response on the part of the Department of Health and the Minister. Appallingly, 18 months down the track, they have not even acknowledged the receipt of the application.

I have raised the matter in the House on other occasions, and I have pleaded with and begged the Minister and the department to respond, but still no response has been received. The question must be asked: Is the Government serious about supporting people with mental health problems, particularly those in regional and rural areas? I ask the Minister and the Department of Health to urgently deal with the application, respond to the Schizophrenia Association's request, and approve the funding that is desperately needed to make this project, which is supported by the entire region, a reality.

BELMONT GOLF CLUB LTD DEVELOPMENT

Mr PAUL CRITTENDEN (Wyong) [5.50 p.m.]: I am pleased to report to the House that I have finally been provided with a copy of the purported contracts between Belmont Golf Club Ltd and the Terrace Tower group's Kalayla Pty Ltd, despite having refused to sign the outrageous confidentiality deed that attempted to prevent my raising this contract in this place. Yesterday Landerer and Company, solicitors for Kalayla, responded to my solicitor that the members of Belmont Golf Club who had signed the confidentiality deed would be released from their obligations.

Belmont Golf Club members have several reasons to vote "no" to the extension of time for this contract on 26 September. Those reasons are as follows. First, the contract itself places the club at an exposed risk to costs arising from expert adjudication from surveyors, quantity surveyors and other experts, as well as to legal action. Terrace Tower, with its \$1 billion in assets, has all the financial might. Voting "no" will effectively scuttle this potentially disastrous purported contract with Kalayla Pty Ltd, except for the first right of refusal provision. However, that is not a problem because the club is trading well under the new management. The past few months have shown greatly improved trading figures, which clearly indicate that the club can trade profitably through its core operations and meet the interest expense and other liabilities as they fall due.

Second, if Belmont golf club members vote "yes", and Kalayla is able to exercise its option to acquire the 8.6 hectares of residential land, a fee of at least \$250,000—and perhaps as much as \$450,000 if the fee is based on a calculation of 3 per cent for the first \$5 million and 2 per cent on any amount above \$5 million—may be payable to PRD Nationwide as the introduction fee for finding Terrace Tower and introducing the group to Belmont Golf Club Ltd. That is one potentiality that could lead to a financial crisis in the club, but only if members vote "yes". Third, even if long-term leases could be negotiated—and there is a great deal of doubt about that—we cannot be sure about the impact on the cash flow of the club in the long-term. Fourth, Belmont Golf Club does not have to pay for Terrace Tower's costs if the term is not extended. However, given the definition of "costs incurred" on page 2 of the residential site development option, if members vote "yes" the club may have to pay for all Terrace Tower's costs from at least June 2003.

Fifth, 1,200 playing members derive enjoyment from the club, and 26 full-time, part-time and casual employees derive income from it. We do not need to expose Belmont Golf Club to risk by voting "yes". Belmont Golf Club has had some great employees over the years, such as Fred Belle. Fred was the club's first professional player and he also worked as a greenkeeper. I well recall that my father purchased his first set of new golf clubs from Fred Belle in 1968; they were Kel Nagle's. Paragraph (c) of the recitals to the development management agreement states:

Kalayla and the Club wish to examine the feasibility of reconstructing the golf course. Terrace Tower has had over two years to put numbers on the table and this has not occurred.

I turn now to clause 5.2 of the purported development management agreement. My solicitor has asked Kalayla Pty Ltd whether, pursuant to clause 5.2, the company remains of the view that the reconstruction of the golf course with 27 holes is "economically feasible" in the event that Kalayla Pty Ltd does not increase the purchase price for the residential land. Whether the company increases the purchase price will depend on the state of the housing market at that time, I suspect. I remind Terrace Tower that page 7 of exhibit 1 sets out the following statement:

The cost of the outright purchase of the land, in all probability, will make redevelopment of the course unviable. Furthermore, to sell public land it will be necessary for the Government to make the land available via a public offering. Not only could that make it expensive, it may allow parties to acquire the land for undesirable uses.

They are the words of Terrace Tower. The safest course is for Terrace Tower to tell us exactly what the costs are. For example, the cost of construction of the entry into the club will be at least in the vicinity of \$2 million. The cost of construction of the entry from the Pacific Highway into Wyong hospital will be \$2.1 million. I can only presume that a similar cost would be incurred for the construction of the new entry from the Pacific Highway into Belmont Golf Club.

Private members' statements noted.

COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER-GENERAL
LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Membership

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba): I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

MR SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

- (1) that Mr Harwin be discharged from the Committee on the Office of the Valuer-General and that Mr Lynn be appointed as a member of the committee; and
- (2) that Mr Harwin be discharged from the Legislative Review Committee and that Ms Parker be appointed as a member of the committee.

Legislative Council
22 September 2005

MEREDITH BURGMANN
President

The House adjourned at 5.58 p.m. until Tuesday 11 October 2005 at 2.15 p.m.
