

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 6 April 2006

Mr Speaker (The Hon. John Joseph Aquilina) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

Mr SPEAKER: I acknowledge the Gadigal clan of the Eora nation and their elders. We thank them for their custodianship of this land.

WATER MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (WATER PROPERTY RIGHTS COMPENSATION) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The need for this bill arises from unfinished business contained in the 1994 Council of Australian Governments [COAG] agreement on the implementation of the strategic water reform signed in April 1995 by representatives of all Australian governments, and the national action plan for salinity COAG agreement signed in 2002. This agreement has driven the water component of \$4.7 billion worth of national competition payments to New South Wales under national competition policy agreements. The agreement to separate land and water rights for the purposes of allowing entitlement water to transfer to its highest value included a commitment to establish a new form of water property right. Governments, both State and Federal, have failed to enact this commitment. Both seem unwilling to support and underpin the clear need to provide an outcome to resource over-allocation, and also the need to provide security for private investment. These outcomes will only be realized, should governments commit equally to just terms resumption of water entitlements and the need for continued study into the environmental requirements of our surface and ground water systems.

Currently, in a perverse way, governments will spend more per megalitre on gaining water through water savings than the actual market value of water, yet they are very reluctant to resume water at market values and compensate licence holders accordingly. This bill will underpin the hundreds of millions of dollars of regional investment based on water entitlements that are in place in New South Wales. I intend to quote from a submission from the Australian Property Institute to the Federal Senate, in which the New South Wales Divisional President Tom Webster issued a statement expressing concern that the collateral base for rural lending was poorly understood. He said:

The API is very concerned that rural loans where a water access entitlement is present do not have an adequate underlying security for lenders or borrowers.

That statement defines the very purpose of this bill in that there is a clear need to underpin financial transactions made to holders of water entitlements who forego part or all of their allocation for environmental or public good reasons. Mr Webster went on to say:

When mortgage valuations of rural properties are undertaken, the valuer is asked to advise on two distinct matters pertaining to a particular property, namely whether the total value is supported by the marketplace, and secondly whether the collateral being offered for the loan represents adequate security for the funds to be advanced. The Australian Property Institute considers that the New South Wales water legislation does not provide such security, and requires urgent amendment to protect both rural borrowers and lenders.

I will touch now on the national water initiative, which has been touted as containing a commitment to water property rights, yet an examination of the document confirms that the only interpretation that could be placed on the so-called property right clauses, is that there is a gentleman's agreement in place to delay discussion of the issue for another eight years. The national water initiative in fact represents a major step away from the commitment to deliver a property right over the portion of water allocated for irrigation use. There are many misconceptions relating to the concept and need for establishing water property rights, and I will attempt to allay some of these fears.

This bill does not allow greater access to water for those who have invested in this asset. The bill equally does not modify the standing of environmental water in the Water Management Act 2000. Environmental water continues to hold a hierarchy over irrigation entitlement in terms of allocation and the entitlement processes. This bill will protect the billions of dollars of investment made in land development, machinery and human resources that are repaid by water dependent production. I believe I have demonstrated a clear need for this bill, and the support from industry for the legislation is noted and welcomed.

Water entitlements are a major economic driver in north-western New South Wales, with both mining and irrigated agriculture investment dependent on water entitlement, among other factors. As I have foreshadowed, the national water initiative has not achieved the establishment of a water property right. It simply became too difficult for the Federal Government to present a strong, unified viewpoint to States such as New South Wales where there are complex issues arising from over-allocation of the resource. It should be noted that this over-allocation occurred under the overview of both sides of the House, so neither side can claim the moral high ground over this issue. The basis for a lack of Federal direction lies in the constitutional issues highlighted by the Franklin River political debate contained in part V, section 51 paragraph (xxxi) of the Australian Constitution under the heading "Part V - Powers of the Parliament." Section 51 states:

The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to ...

(xxxi) The acquisition of property on just terms from any State or person for any purpose in respect of which the Parliament has power to make laws.

The office of the member for New England has provided me with advice that the legislation in question restricted development on certain land in Tasmania without the consent of the Commonwealth Government. The State of Tasmania challenged this legislation on the ground, inter alia, that the restrictions amounted to an acquisition of its property on terms that were not just. On this point, the majority of the court decided against Tasmania. The only interest acquired by the Commonwealth in the land was the power to veto development.

It may be necessary yet to test the far more tangible impact of the removal of ground water assets for the purposes of meeting a Commonwealth agreement, the State being subject to Commonwealth penalty if it does not comply. The minority viewpoint offered in this decision by Justice Deane in the High Court is instructive on this point, and the Parliamentary Library provided advice on the decision. Justice Deane maintained that the imposition of an absolute prohibition on development should be treated as an acquisition of property, even though the Commonwealth had not acquired a "material benefit of a proprietary nature."

He said that section 51 (xxxi) should not be limited to those situations that would be characterised as acquisitions of property in private law. He said that a restriction on the exercise of property rights may amount to an acquisition of property under section 51 (xxxi) if its effect is "to confer upon the Commonwealth or another an identifiable and measurable advantage or is akin to applying the property, either totally or partially, for a purpose of the Commonwealth." In his view, both the purpose and the impact of a restriction are important: if the restriction is intended merely to adjust competing interests in resources, it is likely that section 51 (xxxi) is not involved. Similarly, if the impact is slight, section 51 (xxxi) does not apply.

The negative economic impacts of the removal of water are enormous. Quite simply, it seems the Commonwealth will not offer compensation for the removal of a water asset as they are avoiding their constitutional responsibility. The Commonwealth should have contemplated this more fully when it drew up the 1995 COAG agreement on the implementation of the strategic reform of the water industry. In this agreement they offered a water property right as an outcome of the separation of land and water and, along with New South Wales, the Commonwealth signed to this agreement. The decision to retreat from this position drove the development of the national water initiative that allowed the replacement of property rights through a cascading order of dealing with overallocation within the water-sharing plan period: Namely by seeking efficiency gains in the natural system, followed by efficiency gains being purchased from private landholders, and finally resumption. Clause 79 (ii) of the intergovernmental agreement on a national water initiative states:

- (i) where it is necessary to recover water to achieve modified environmental and other public benefit outcomes, to adopt the following principles for determining the most effective and efficient mix of water recovery measures:
 - (a) consideration of all available options for water recovery, including: investment in more efficient water infrastructure; purchase of water on the market, by tender or other market based mechanisms; investment in more efficient water management practices, including measurement; or investment in behavioural change to reduce urban water consumption;

- (b) assessment of the socio-economic costs and benefits of the most prospective options, including on downstream users, and the implications for wider natural resource management outcomes (eg. impacts on water quality or salinity); and
- (c) selection of measures primarily on the basis of cost effectiveness, and with a view to managing socio-economic impacts.

At the 10-year water-sharing plan review period the theory is that there will be risk assignment, and I refer to Clause 49 of the intergovernmental agreement on a national water initiative. Up until 2014 the risks of any reduction or less reliable water allocation under a water access entitlement arising as a result of bona fide improvements in the knowledge of the capacity of water systems to sustain particular extraction levels are to be borne by users. Risks arising under comprehensive water plans commencing or renewed after 2014 are to be shared over each 10-year period in the following way: Water access entitlement holders to bear the first 3 per cent reduction in water allocation under a water access entitlement; State and Territory governments and the Commonwealth Government to share one-third and two-thirds respectively reductions in water allocation under water access entitlements of between 3 per cent and 6 per cent; and State, Territory and Commonwealth governments equally to share reductions in water allocation under water access entitlements greater than 6 per cent. The hope is that the knowledge of the quantum of the loss will become a replacement for an actual property right. This is a remarkable juggling act in an attempt to hide from entitlement holders the fact that they still bear the risk for adjustment to overallocation.

The Water Management Act 2000 and the national water initiative contain no secure guarantees of compensation that bears relationship to the cycles of rural investment, which are measured in decades. Unfortunately, in addition to the lack of a property right in these agreements there are many out clauses for both governments on these commitments to water security. Compensation within the planning cycle in New South Wales will be offered only at the Minister's discretion. New science that challenges the thinking behind resource estimates creates a possibility that the resource share may be challenged as incorrectly assessed, and yet again the potential arises for reductions to entitlement with no compensation. The jury is still out on the national water initiative. However the prognosis is poor. It has been described by the Business Council of Australia as a confused process that lacks urgency and clear direction. This can be attributed to a lack of commitment to measuring the water resource, to offering a real property right, and to dealing with overallocation through a fair and just compensation process. If these goals are addressed the market will have security and certainty, and the environment will see a significant improvement as well.

Almost \$2 billion allocated to the national water initiative processes is at risk of not achieving the outcomes agreed under the 1995 Council of Australian Governments [COAG] along with the 2002 National Action Plan and COAG. A current example of the backwards approach to compensation is being played out in six ground water valleys across New South Wales. As many in the House would be aware, the Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Entitlement Program, which was a direct initiative of the 1995 COAG on water, currently is being rolled out. In the Namoi Valley this package has delivered very difficult news to farmers who are losing on average around 60 per cent of their entitlements. Irrigators who have participated willingly in the process and voluntarily structured their businesses around the agreed cuts to their current water entitlement of 73 per cent are rightfully in shock after being informed by the Namoi Catchment Management Authority that those who do not have a history of extraction for the period 1991 to 2000 will be cast aside in the process, with no consideration given to individual circumstances.

I have spoken to many of these people, and their stories need to be told. Robert and Anna Billingham from Kelvin in my electorate typify the people whose livelihoods apparently mean nothing to the New South Wales Government, both of whom have worked numerous jobs to achieve their dream of becoming farmers. In the late 1990s the Billinghams bought an unimproved property with a 480-megalitre ground water licence, and gradually they were able build a sustainable business growing lucerne. Despite being legally able to use all of their 480-megalitre entitlement, the Billinghams structured their business around not exceeding the 73 per cent cut and have never exceeded 120 megalitres since they commenced their business.

Recently they were told that, unless there is unanimous agreement on the process from all licence holders in their zone, their allocation would now be cut by 87 per cent, making their business worthless and forcing them off the land. Having attended many meetings through the years in good faith and having adhered to the 73 per cent agreed reduction to their entitlement, they are distressed—and rightfully so—at the situation they now face. What makes it more galling is the inequity that another irrigator in the same area has a history of extraction during the defined period, yet has not irrigated for the last five years. He has retained a massive allocation and he has been able to on sell that entitlement to another farmer. Another irrigator with the same

allocation as the Billingham's, but with a history of use in the defined decade, will be cut to 320 megalitres, yet the Billingham's face decimation. This is a hardworking couple with a young family who have done everything right.

The Billingham's have written confirmation from various government departments that they could invest with confidence, provided they adhered to the 73 per cent cut. Yet the Government seems prepared to throw their lives on the scrapheap to favour irrigators who were active from 1991 to 2000. Why? Another anomaly involves a businessman purchasing a large property that held a substantial water entitlement with a view to irrigating portions of the property to fatten lambs. This deliberate business decision was made in light of the 73 per cent cut to entitlement, and the venture was structured on that understanding. Already having spent millions of dollars to acquire the property the spectre of an 87 per cent cut looms, which would render the business unviable. The purchase was made in good faith following departmental advice, yet apparently the property no longer will be able to sustain the very enterprise for which it was bought specifically. The farcical sideshow that accompanies this process is the delivery staff being instructed not to mention the term "compensation", and the honourable member for Gwydir blaming, firstly, the Australian Tax Office and then the New South Wales Government for taxation being applied to the compensation package, which now has been redefined as the structural adjustment package.

There is a significant difference in the financial compensation provided to farmers, should the Federal Government determine to continue their stated practice of treating any compensation as income and to tax the adjustment package, which I must point out has been provided to other industries free of income tax. I welcome the initiative from the honourable member for New England, Tony Windsor, to address this issue. A media search of the former Federal Minister and current member for Gwydir in relation to the Namoi Valley confirms it was he who first introduced the term "structural adjustment", clearly in the full knowledge that any direct funding to farmers would be taxed. His legacy is one that few farmers would appreciate. It is pleasing to see support for this bill coming from a wide range of sources, and I refer in particular to the comments made by the shadow Minister for Natural Resources, Adrian Piccoli, who was quoted in the *Border Mail* on Monday 27 March 2006, saying that the New South Wales National Liberal Coalition was focused on providing as strong a property right for water as possible. He pointed out that the submission put to the Senate inquiry into water by the Australian Property Institute:

... poses a serious risk to irrigation farmers if they cannot secure their business loans using their farms and using their water licenses.

He went on to say:

The evidence given by the Australian Property Institute reinforces the need to have strong property rights for water, otherwise irrigation farming will be undermined.

He also said:

We will be solving these and other issues to provide the sort of security that farmers want, and that their bankers need, because we know that water security means jobs in country New South Wales.

I am very appreciative of the shadow Minister's support. I also acknowledge comments from the honourable member for New England, the Hon. Tony Windsor, a former member of this place, who issued a media release with the header "Draper's Water Property Rights Bill Just What the Farmers Ordered." In his release Mr Windsor stated that he was pleased to see this bill building on the just terms legislation of 1991. At the time the National Party said they had been waiting 30 years for the legislation to go through the Parliament, but they could not achieve that until a hung Parliament occurred with Mr Windsor holding the balance of power. He pointed out that perhaps that is what may be required again. I must say I like his thinking on the issue. Mr Windsor said:

The Water Management Amendment (Water Property Rights Compensation) Bill 2006 will create a crucial precedent in State legislation and reinforce a fair go for farmers who have their property rights removed for environmental and public good reasons.

I also acknowledge the contribution of the honourable member for Coffs Harbour on 20 August 1991 when contributing to the debate on the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Bill when he said:

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to this bill, which is brought to the Parliament after attempts for more than 30 years to introduce a system of just terms when Government departments or authorities decide they need to acquire land for public use such as schools, hospitals and roads ... The bill will ensure that land acquired by Government departments will now be acquired on just terms.

He went on to say:

Under existing law a private citizen has no opportunity for input or just compensation when his or her land is acquired by a government department. This bill will alleviate any fears they may have.

I think these comments can be appropriately applied to the bill I have introduced as well because it delivers equity and security for irrigators affected by Government driven cuts to their entitlements. On 12 December last year in his second reading speech on the Water Management Amendment Bill, Minister Macdonald indicated he wanted to provide security to both the environment and the irrigators. Exactly the same principle should apply to providing security to borrowers and lenders. In that speech the Minister tried to justify the use of the historical data from 1991 to 2000 to determine allocations as trying to ensure that water "stayed in the hands of those who need it most."

He stated that "Those who rely on their water will retain it in a larger proportion whilst those who are not as dependent", that is, those who do not have the same level of history of use, "will face larger reductions." Try telling the small irrigators like the Billingham's that they do not rely on their water to the same extent that the long term irrigator who inherited a farm from his father. Why should the Billingham's be penalised for working hard and saving money to establish a business that did not start until this nonsensical decade of use was enshrined as the only determinate of allocation?

Representatives from the New South Wales Farmers Association have met with me this week in the Parliament after having time to consider the bill. They informed me that it echoed their policy on water, and they were happy to give it their endorsement and support. I look forward to hearing where the parties stand on this bill. This is an opportunity to stand up for irrigators, who are being affected by Government decisions that are not of their doing. Irrigators accept that water is a finite resource and it must be used sensibly and at sustainable levels. They do not accept that their financial negotiations with banks and other lenders should be jeopardised by a Government initiative to separate the value of land and water.

I am regularly in contact with farmers who are now facing the very real prospect of having to renegotiate their loans with financial institutions but not necessarily having the underpinning collateral to justify those loans. The situation arose because of government decisions to which they were not party and it is causing them enormous concern and potentially great hardship in rural communities. This bill seeks to safeguard the future of farmers, to give them security and acknowledge the impost that government decisions place upon farmers.

This is one of the most important factors facing people in country communities and I hope that the concerns of farmers are taken into account in this significant reform process. The meeting I had with the New South Wales Farmers Association yesterday assured me that it was prepared to work towards the same end as that proposed by the bill. Investment in rural and regional areas is under significant threat unless something is done to address this issue and I am concerned about the devastating flow-on effects unless corrective action is taken.

Mrs Dawn Fardell: Dubbo and Narromine would be affected.

Mr PETER DRAPER: Dubbo and Narromine would certainly be affected, as the honourable member for Dubbo has so rightly pointed out, and I welcome the support of the bill. Indeed, all Independent members have indicated support for the bill. I call on all members of the House, particularly those from rural, regional and coastal areas, to support this extremely important bill. I would be pleased to discuss any aspect of the bill and its implications with the honourable members. I am sure meetings could be organised between representative groups backing the bill so that an informed decision can be made about what the bill can offer to farming communities in rural and regional New South Wales. I urge honourable members to consider the needs of farmers for security and equity and to give this bill the support that it deserves. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr David Campbell.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

JURY AMENDMENT (MAJORITY VERDICTS) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 October 2004.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [10.30 a.m.]: The Government opposes the bill. As

members opposite well know, the Government introduced the Jury Amendment (Verdicts) Bill last night. With the greatest respect, the debate on this bill is somewhat superfluous. The Government bill was the subject of extensive consultation with the legal profession and members of the judiciary. The same cannot be said of the Opposition bill now under debate. The Government bill differs from the Opposition bill in a number of important respects. Firstly, under the Government bill the jury must have considered their verdict for a reasonable time, being not less than eight hours, before a majority verdict may be returned. In the Opposition bill the minimum time period is only six hours.

This is an important difference. The minimum eight-hour requirement means that juries will generally have to deliberate for more than one day before a majority verdict can be returned. Experience has shown that, whilst jurors may become frustrated and angry, if given an opportunity to calm down and come back to deliberate with a fresh mind, a jury may well be able to reach a unanimous verdict. Secondly, the bill provides that a majority verdict may be returned by a majority of 11:1 or 10:1. In contrast, the Opposition bill only provides for a majority verdict of 11:1. The Government's bill reflects a more realistic understanding of the problems of retaining all 12 jurors in lengthy criminal proceedings.

These days it is not uncommon for a juror to be discharged well into the proceedings because he or she is no longer able to serve and for the jury to continue with only 11 jurors. In fact, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research study on reasons why juries may be hung indicated that length was a key factor, meaning that the loss of a juror in these very cases is highly likely. The Opposition's bill does not address this point. There are other differences, but I trust members opposite take the point. The Government has introduced a thoughtful and workable scheme that reflects the fine balance required on this issue. As I indicated, the Government opposes the Opposition's bill.

Mr ANDREW TINK (Epping) [10.30 a.m.], in reply: The Government has finally introduced a majority verdicts bill after having spent the better part of the past decade ignoring previous Opposition bills in 1996 and 2000. In recent days the Government has been caught out lying in advertisements. The Government would have had the public believe through widespread announcements on the radio that legislation for majority verdicts will be introduced so that one juror will not be able to hold up an entire case. Among other people, Ray Hadley has rightly poured scorn on the whole advertising campaign.

The point I make is that the majority jury verdicts claim just says it all. The Government had not introduced a bill when the advertisement was cut, and there was no bill when the advertisement was run. Indeed the shadow Attorney General, the honourable member for Gosford, Chris Hartcher, made that point quite effectively and has made a complaint to the Australian Advertising Standards Council Ltd relating to deceptive advertising. The reality is that the jury bill referred to by the Minister for Water Utilities during this debate has been introduced only as a result of the bill I introduced having been called on for debate.

I understand that the very long delay in the Government's bill being introduced was caused by the Labor Party clearly being unhappy with it. Sections of the Australian Labor Party caucus are very unhappy about the terms of the Jury Amendment (Verdicts) Bill. The Attorney General, who is the Minister responsible for the Government's bill, must feel a little uncomfortable because he is a very senior member of the Left in caucus. I do not doubt that a number of members of his faction are very unhappy about the Government's bill, and with him. That is not my problem. The point I particularly want to make is that the person who has been leading the interference during my decade-long attempt to introduce a majority verdicts bill is no less a person than the current Premier, Morris Iemma. On 17 April 1997, Morris Iemma spoke very strongly against majority verdicts. He stated during the debate on the Opposition's Jury Amendment (Majority Verdicts) Bill:

The Government opposes the bill. The question of majority verdicts in criminal trials is a question of the utmost importance. Some time ago the Governments set in train a process to ensure that, if and when this item of reform is addressed, it is done in a thoughtful and considered way ...

That statement, which knocked on the head on behalf of the Government an Opposition majority verdicts bill, was made nine years ago by the current Premier. He stated that the matter was under consideration, but it has taken the Government nine years to introduce its bill. During that time, the Opposition has introduced private members bills that have forced the Government to bring its legislation to this Parliament. The first Opposition bill was the Jury Amendment (Majority Verdicts) Bill, which was introduced in 1996. The second was the Jury Amendment (Dissenting Juror) Bill, which was introduced in 2000. The third is the bill that is before the House, the Jury Amendment (Majority Verdicts) Bill, which was introduced in 2004.

The current Premier stated in 1996, "There is no need for undue haste in regard to this matter." If he had paid any regard whatsoever to the findings of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research over the years and the findings of the other groups and bodies that have inquired into and made recommendations relating to

majority verdicts, he would have understood that in the past decade, since he knocked on the head majority verdicts, a number of trials would probably have had different outcomes for victims of crime and those involved in the legal process. Moreover, had the current Premier not run a campaign of interference a decade ago, the jury system would have had greater support. In 1996, the current Premier also stated:

Unanimous verdicts have been a fundamental feature of our criminal justice system for many decades. Regrettably, the nature and timing of this bill does nothing other than demonstrate the complete opportunistic manner in which the Opposition has brought this Bill forward.

The fact that the current Government has now accepted majority verdicts would lead any objective person to anticipate an apology from the Premier, Mr Iemma, for not introducing a majority verdicts bill and for not encouraging through caucus majority verdicts being enshrined in the New South Wales statute books long before today. South Australia has had majority verdicts since 1927, which is 79 years ago. Nine years ago the Premier was talking about undue haste in relation to a legal measure that had then been in force in South Australia for approximately 70 years. Has the South Australian criminal justice system run off the rails? Was it widely said that South Australian defendants were not getting a fair go or that the South Australian criminal justice system was crippled? No, it was not. At that stage it did not suit the purposes of the current Premier or the Government to acknowledge what was manifestly obvious—that a very conservative Australian jurisdiction had had majority verdicts for decades.

An examination of the jury systems in most jurisdictions in the English-speaking world and in most other States of Australia would have made it pretty obvious to the Premier and anybody else who wanted to seriously consider this issue on behalf of the Government that majority verdicts had been in place for decades in just about every other jurisdiction in Australia, except Queensland. Majority verdicts have been in force in the United Kingdom—in Scotland the requirement is a bare majority of eight to seven out of a panel of 15. The concept is well entrenched. Nine years ago the current Premier tried to convince everybody that the proposition had not been given careful thought and that the measure was opportunistic, and that is just ridiculous.

The Government's approach to this matter is a good demonstration of politics at its worst because it represents knocking on the head an idea whose time had come for the sake of not being able to stomach a bipartisan approach to a good policy initiative. That rich vein is evident in the Premier's approach to legislation even to this day. Although I never stated that the Opposition's proposal was perfect, it should have been regarded as a starting point to a constructive debate on a bill that could easily have been amended on a bipartisan basis to accommodate the Government's intentions. Instead, the Government has continued with an approach to policy making which is basically: concede nothing, agree to nothing, make sure that everything done is yours and yours alone, never give anybody else any credit for anything, and never give an idea any life for its own sake, make sure that the Government owns the idea—that is the sole purpose—and if the Attorney General cops a bit of flak from his left-wing mates, we will not mind the advertisement being cut and getting out before we finalise the paperwork.

It will be a matter of permanent record of this House that the advertisement represented a pack of lies in relation to majority verdicts. It was only when a number of people who were led by the current shadow Attorney General pointed out the flaming obvious—that the advertisement put one proposition but the Government had not followed through to do what had been promised—that last night there was a great rush and a scuttling down the stairs, two steps at a time, to suspend standing orders to introduce the Jury Amendment (Verdicts) Bill. The bill was not even introduced in accordance with the due processes and procedures of Parliament. It is ironic that 10 years ago the Premier spoke about not introducing a majority verdicts bill in haste to adopt a practice that South Australia had been successfully managing for approximately seven decades, yet, having been nailed by an advertisement that is untrue, the Government has rushed legislation into this Chamber, taking the stairs two at a time and falling over itself, to suspend every applicable standing order to introduce a bill immediately. Last night the reality in the Chamber suddenly matched ex post facto the claim in the advertisement.

I have outlined these matters because I want the House to have a permanent record of the way in which the Government has acted. The Government is responsible for a decade of wasted opportunities to introduce majority verdicts. I do not want to discuss on this occasion particular cases that would have been finalised differently if an 11 to 1 majority verdict had been reached. Those cases may well come before the courts again. I do not know, but all I can say is that if the Premier more than a decade ago had gone along with a good idea whose time had well and truly come, many defendants, victims of crime, juries and everybody else involved in the legal process would not have had their time and emotional resources wasted and retested in courts. So there were wasted opportunities. The Government's bill is an eleventh hour rush of blood to close a policy issue that was becoming untenable from the point of view of any reasonable observer of the justice system. However, it is

no credit to the Government that it happened in the way it did. Indeed, it indicates that after a decade in government, playing catch up on such a basic policy, it is time the electorate pushed Labor out at the next election. No credit should be given to the Government for its majority verdicts legislation. It is much too late for that.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 31

Mr Aplin	Mr Kerr	Mr Slack-Smith
Ms Berejikian	Mr McTaggart	Mr Souris
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Tink
Mr Draper	Mr Page	Mr Torbay
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

Noes, 52

Ms Allan	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Amery	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Ms Andrews	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Mr Barr	Mr Hunter	Mr Price
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	Ms Tebbutt
Miss Burton	Ms Meagher	Mr Tripodi
Mr Campbell	Ms Megarrity	Mr Watkins
Mr Chaytor	Mr Mills	Mr West
Mr Collier	Ms Moore	Mr Whan
Mr Crittenden	Mr Morris	Mr Yeadon
Mr Daley	Mr Newell	
Ms D'Amore	Ms Nori	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Fardell	Mr Oakeshott	Mr Ashton
Mr Gaudry	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Corrigan

Pair

Mr Debnam

Mr Martin

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Bill: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [10.50 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the introduction forthwith, without notice, of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment Bill up to and including the Minister's second reading speech.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.51 a.m.]: The Opposition opposes the suspension of standing orders. Today is private members' day. There are 1,223 motions on notice and, at this rate, we are likely to get through them at the start of the next millennium. The Government has had hours, even days, to get this bill through. Last night the House rose at 9.33 p.m., an indication of the lack of productivity the Howard Government is trying to address elsewhere. The Government could easily have introduced this bill last night without interfering with the private members' business that was to be debated today.

On notice for today are orders of the day for bills ranging from the Jury Amendment (Majority Verdicts) Bill—introduced by the honourable member for Epping but objected to by the Government only because it did not have the Attorney General's name on it—through to the Protection of Agricultural Production (Right to Farm) Bill, which the honourable member for Ballina has tried to have debated in this Chamber for years. Also on notice for today are the Fisheries Management Amendment (Catch History) Bill proposed by the honourable member for Bega; the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethanol Blended Fuel) Bill, put forward by the Leader of The Nationals; bills dealing with pay-roll tax, family impacts, freedom of information, open government and disclosure, Careel Bay protection—an important issue in Pittwater pursued by the shadow Minister for Planning; and an issue of great importance in the Ryde electorate, the Royal Rehabilitation Centre.

The Opposition simply does not understand why, when we get so little time for private members' legislation in this Chamber, that we have to be interrupted by a Government that gave itself a couple of hours off last night. If it had properly planned its parliamentary program, it could have ensured that the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment Bill was introduced last night without impacting on today's program. On notice are motions ranging from the important issue of the sewerage connection to Dangar Island, which the honourable member for Hornsby wants to raise, through to an issue relating to the northside storage tunnel that the honourable member for Willoughby wants to raise.

The Opposition opposes the motion because, once again, it is an indication of why the Labor caucus decided, sensibly, not to put the current Minister for Police into the premiership: he cannot run the business of the House. The Government acts only when it is forced to. The House is about to have a three-week break for Easter—and not even the good Lord had that long a break over Easter! The House agreed to give us an early night last night. The Opposition opposes the motion because it is simply an outrageous misuse of private members' day.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

[In division]

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: The honourable member for Pittwater has changed his seat on two occasions during the division.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I uphold the point of order. I order the honourable member for Pittwater to return to the seat he was in when the doors were locked.

Ayes, 49

Ms Allan	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Amery	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Ms Andrews	Mr Hunter	Mr Price
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	Ms Tebbutt
Miss Burton	Mr McTaggart	Mr Tripodi
Mr Campbell	Ms Meagher	Mr Watkins
Mr Chaytor	Ms Megarrity	Mr West
Mr Collier	Mr Mills	Mr Whan
Mr Crittenden	Mr Morris	Mr Yeadon
Mr Daley	Mr Newell	
Ms D'Amore	Ms Nori	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gaudry	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Ashton
Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano	Mr Corrigan

Noes, 33

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

Pair

Mr Martin

Mr Debnam

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Motion agreed to.****CRIMES (SENTENCING PROCEDURE) AMENDMENT BILL****Bill introduced and read a first time.****Second Reading**

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.05 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Bob Debus: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment Bill on behalf of the Government. The object of the bill is to amend the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 with respect to sentencing for crimes committed against public transport workers or community workers, such as surf lifesavers. Public transport workers provide a vital service to the public and are sometimes exposed to circumstances where their personal welfare is at risk. They are at risk for no reason other than that they are doing their job, a job that involves an important public service. Angry, frustrated and sometimes drunk individuals have in the past assaulted drivers who are merely doing their job.

During 2005 there were a number of occasions when transport workers, specifically bus drivers, were assaulted. The transport union raised the matter with the Government and called for heavier penalties for those who assaulted transport workers. Similarly, surf lifesavers give up their summer weekends to patrol our beaches. They perform a life-saving public service at no cost to beachgoers. It is simply beyond the pale that these unpaid, selfless individuals should be exposed to any threats to their person. The bill therefore recognises the particular roles these workers play in our society and the amendment explicitly recognises the aggravating factor that applies to workers in these frontline occupations.

Section 21A (2) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act provides for aggravating factors which are to be taken into account by the sentencing judge. Section 21A (2) (a) provides the following as an aggravating circumstance at sentence: the victim was a police officer, emergency services worker, correctional officer, judicial officer, health worker, teacher, community worker or other public official, exercising public or community functions and the offence arose because of the victim's occupation. Surf lifesavers fall under the definition of "community worker", but the use of the word "occupation" may imply that the victim is remunerated for his or her duties. In many cases, lifesavers do voluntary, unpaid work and may have a Monday to Friday occupation unrelated to voluntary lifesaving.

Schedule 1 [1] of the bill therefore amends section 21A (2) (a) so that it reads "and the offence arose because of the victim's occupation or voluntary work". This clarifies that community workers, who may be

exercising public functions that are so beneficial to our society on a voluntary basis, will be protected by this provision. The common law has long recognised the circumstance of aggravation where an offence is committed against people in certain occupations that are, for whatever reason, more highly exposed to criminal activity.

For example, service station attendants and convenience store operators work at night and are often alone and therefore more vulnerable to robbery. This principle of law has been codified in section 21A (2) (1), which provides the following as an aggravating circumstance at sentence: the victim was vulnerable, for example, because the victim was very young or very old or had a disability, or because of the victim's occupation, such as a taxi driver, bank teller or service station attendant.

Item [2] amends section 21A (2) (1) to add all front-line public transport workers to the examples given of vulnerable occupations. Item [3] makes consequential amendments to the table in part 4 of division 1A of the Act to mirror the amended wording of section 21A. The transitional provisions of the bill provide that the amendments apply to the determination of a sentence for an offence, wherever committed, unless the court has convicted the person being sentenced of the offence, or a court has accepted a plea of guilty and the plea has not been withdrawn before the commencement of the Act. These are small but important amendments. Volunteer community workers such as lifesavers should receive as much protection as community workers who are paid for their contribution; and transport workers, who should not have to put up with being assaulted for doing their job, deserve the additional protection of the law as well. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION (RIGHT TO FARM) BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 30 March 2006.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [11.11 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the Protection of Agricultural Production (Right to Farm) Bill. This is another outstanding private member's bill from a member of The Nationals—in this case the Deputy Leader of The Nationals, the honourable member for Ballina, Don Page. Over many years members of The Nationals have been listening to their constituents in rural areas, particularly their farming constituency, in relation to the right to farm. The issue has grown in importance with the recent sea change and tree change phenomena, as they are called by the social demographers. People from urban or metropolitan environments are moving into rural environments because they love the feel of living in country New South Wales. But often they are unaware of what it is like to live in the country. In particular, they are unaware of the operations of farms surrounding or neighbouring the properties they purchase.

All too often members in country electorates receive complaints from both sides of the argument. The former urban dweller who has moved into the area may complain about the noise of a tractor starting early in the morning, roads having cattle dung on them that splashes up and dirties their vehicle, or animals such as roosters making a noise. These issues affect the quality of life of the new residents. On the other side of the argument, the farmers make the valid point: "We were here first. This is a legitimate agricultural activity. These tractors, animals or chemicals are part and parcel of our earning a living on the land." Because this issue has grown in importance The Nationals have introduced this very sensible and practical bill to try to resolve these conflicts.

The Protection of Agricultural Production (Right to Farm) Bill is really based on the premise of let the buyer beware. Potential buyers of rural properties should be aware of the existence of agricultural production in their neighbourhood. The bill will ensure this by providing for rural land use notices to be given to purchasers of land adjoining or adjacent to rural land, and for those notices to be taken into account in any subsequent proceedings by such purchasers who might seek to limit or prohibit the use of that rural land for rural purposes. So it is really quite a simple process. Councils will issue the notices to potential purchasers as part of the normal property purchase process so that problems do not arise.

Just this week the honourable member for Orange told me that the *Western Central Daily* reported the case of a farmer at Spring Hill, 12 kilometres from Orange, who, after a complaint from a neighbour, was ordered by police to stop baling hay at night. The police officer said he felt fairly low about having to do it but under the present law he was compelled to issue the order. That is a recent case in the Central West. A case in my electorate involved people from the city who liked the rural lifestyle, so moved to the country and bought a nice, shiny four-wheel drive—even though the roads in the area were paved.

Dairy cattle in the area have, of course, to cross roads to get from one paddock to the other or to go to the milking shed each night. If there are substantial herds of dairy cattle, which farmers have to have since deregulation, droppings will be deposited on the road. When the new country squire in his nice, shiny four-wheel drive splashes through the fresh manure it goes all over the car, and of course he complains that the cows should not be on the road. I have had many such complaints.

People buying into an area should understand that cattle crossing the road are part of a legitimate farming practice and anyone living in that part of the world must accept it. So let the buyer beware. Let land use notices be issued to remove the potential for conflict and to protect farmers in their legitimate pursuit of making an honest living off the land. The notices would do a lot for harmonious relationships between neighbours in country areas, whether they come from the city or the country. Farmers need to spray their crops and weeds. People may not want to live next door to a property where chemicals are used and if they know about the operations on the property before buying they may look elsewhere. That is really the point of the bill.

I commend the bill to the House. It is very practical and it has the support of the New South Wales Farmers Association, which has been pursuing the right-to-farm issue for many years. The bill is also supported by many councils. The Port Macquarie-Hastings Shire has its own right-to-farm policy. This bill would formalise it and achieve consistency across the State. I look forward to the support of all country-based members for this very sensible measure. Any member hailing from non-metropolitan New South Wales would have to agree that this proposal is not only sensible but necessary to deal with an emerging issue and support our farmers, who have had a pretty rough trot with drought, the pressures of global trade, and increased costs for fuel, fertiliser and so on.

This is a little measure of support, and I certainly hope that all country-based members will support it. I would be extremely surprised if the Labor Government opposed this bill. There is no valid reason to oppose it and it would be sheer bloody-mindedness to do so. It would be another demonstration to rural communities, which already feel disenfranchised by this Government, of its Sydney-centric philosophy. I commend the bill to the House and look forward to the support of all honourable members.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [11.21 a.m.]: I support the Protection of Agricultural Production (Right to Farm) Bill, which was introduced by the honourable member for Ballina, the Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Don Page. I place on record my congratulations to him and thank him for dealing with this age-old and major problem in country areas. A number of speakers, primarily from this side of the House, have contributed to the debate and raised concerns that are a constant issue in country and regional New South Wales.

The intention of the bill is to give landholders who reside on land zoned as rural across New South Wales the right to carry out legitimate activities permitted within that zone without harassment or complaints from neighbours. The most common complaints relate to noise, dust, odours and chemical sprays. The matter is addressed by requiring a vendor under a contract for sale of land adjoining or adjacent to rural land to attach a rural land use notice to the contract. A notice is to be issued by the local council and attached to the contract before it is signed by or on behalf of the purchaser. If such a notice is attached, the purchaser is taken to have been given the appropriate notice.

The bill also provides that a rural land use notice can be issued as part of any other notice issued by a council in relation to a proposed land sale. This means that it is possible for a council to issue the notice as part of, for example, a section 149 certificate. This will help reduce costs to councils. This is not a guarantee of the types of activities that can or cannot be undertaken on a neighbouring rural property, but, rather, advice about its current rural use. The notice is proof that the purchaser has been advised that his or her neighbour is located on rural-use land and undertakes associated rural activities.

We hear of people making sea changes or tree changes. They move from the city and purchase land in country or coastal areas. I recently received a complaint from a landholder who purchased an old mill site at Grevillia. The purchaser was very critical of the fact that the mill had been left in a poor state of repair. He was also very critical of his neighbours because they run cattle, and—guess what?—the cattle go down to the creek for a drink of water. He objected to his neighbours letting their cattle walk into the water to get a drink. I asked him where else they were going to drink, and he said he did not know but that they should not be polluting the creek. I told him he had a lot to learn and pointed out that he had bought rural land and that he might think about whether he expected every farmer to stop letting cattle go to the water to drink, which they have been doing since forever.

Concerns have also been expressed to me about the macadamia industry. Many farmlets of one, two or four hectares have been subdivided from original landholdings and sold off. People buy these farmlets and when they move onto the land they hear a tractor start up. What is that noise? It is a tractor, believe it or not! They ask why their neighbours are working at all hours. Did not these people see the macadamia trees everywhere around them and realise that a processing industry operated on adjoining properties?

If they are disturbed by the tractor, they will certainly be disturbed by the harvest! After macadamias have been harvested they are taken to sheds on the property and dehusked. That creates a problem for the new landholder. No-one told him that the shed was there and that that was what went on. The landholder goes to the council, the local member and the Environment Protection Authority to complain about the noise generated by the industry next door to his recently purchased property. The council then tries to resolve the issue. An innocent party has bought a two-hectare block in the middle of a long-established macadamia processing area, and the council is caught in the middle. When the new landholder inspected the property before purchasing it, there was no noise. All of a sudden, when he moved in it became a problem.

A landholder wrote to me about an industrial estate. Honourable members might wonder whether this is relevant to the debate. Industrial estates in most towns are designed to centralise particular activities. The landholder said he bought land adjacent to an industrial estate but did not think there would be a problem because the neighbouring shed was used by a removalist as a storage facility. Unfortunately, the removalist sold the shed to a steel fabrication business. The landholder was caught out because he bought his property on the basis that the shed was opened only two or three times a week and he was landed with a steel fabrication business that operated six days a week. People sometimes purchase properties not knowing the local area. They are unaware of what is happening in the neighbourhood. I strongly believe that this bill will allow buyers to be made aware of what they are purchasing.

Similar problems happen in country New South Wales around saleyards. Land around the old saleyards at Casino was sold for housing development. People who have moved in over the past five years have started complaining about the noise generated during sales at the yards, which have been there for about 60 or 70 years. One person wrote to the newspaper stating that their baby learnt to say "moo" before it learnt to say "dad". Honourable members might laugh, but that sort of thing happens when people purchase properties when they are unaware of associated activities. The noise might not be coming from an adjoining property. If the new landholder's property is adjacent to a valley, some unbearable noise could come from two kilometres away.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

BROOKLYN AND DANGAR ISLAND SEWERAGE CONNECTION

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Minister for Utilities has acknowledged the time frame for commencement of sewerage connection to the Brooklyn and Dangar Island residents as the beginning of 2005;
- (2) notes that Cowan will be left behind as a metropolitan community without sewerage connection until at least 2008; and
- (3) urges the Minister to enable connection of Cowan to an appropriate sewerage system in a parallel time frame with Brooklyn and Dangar Island.

Notice of this motion was given on 3 July 2003, and on 6 April 2006 I note that very little progress has been made with regard to the connection of sewerage to Brooklyn and Dangar Island. The residents of Brooklyn and Dangar Island are disappointed about the Government's inaction on this issue. The residents were informed by Sydney Water officials that the first sod for the establishment of the sewerage treatment plant would be turned on 1 April. Obviously that was an April Fool's joke, because nothing happened on that day. I have been informed by the residents, who spoke to Sydney Water officials, that Minister Sartor has not yet signed off on the project. On numerous occasions I have asked the Minister's office to verify this, but I have had silence from the Minister's office. That is also extremely disappointing.

I want to go back in time a little to provide the historical background to this matter. The community of Brooklyn was settled in 1889 when the railway was built across the Hawkesbury River. In 1914 the residents of Brooklyn were given pan service, as on-site sewerage was not allowed. Brooklyn was the first community in the area to go on pan service during World War I. However, Brooklyn was the last community to have the pan service replaced with pump-out, which was only installed in the early 1900s.

Brooklyn and Dangar Island were put on the priority list for sewerage connection in 1997, along with 16 other communities. Sydney Water came to that conclusion due to the close proximity of the community to a major waterway and the obvious pollution concerns that would arise from continued pump-out. The residents rejoiced in that decision and anticipated that sewerage would be connected by 2001. That was not to be the case. In 2000 the environmental impact statement was displayed for public comment. In 2001 Whitehead and Associates Environmental Consultants Pty Ltd was commissioned by Sydney Water to investigate alternative on-site systems for Dangar Island. The results from that consultation recommended against permanent on-site systems.

In 2002 Patterson Britton and Partners was commissioned to undertake a thorough review of all feasible options for servicing Brooklyn and Dangar Island. Later in 2002 these options were considered. The review included potential sewerage reticulation systems and the location of the new treatment plant. After that lengthy planning process Sydney Water gave a completion date of 2005. Sydney Water stated that the consultation process regarding the preferred service solution would commence in August 2003 and that following that consultation another environmental impact statement would be undertaken. Sydney Water also stated that the planning approval process would occur in late 2004, with construction to commence early in 2005.

The history of sewerage connection to Cowan follows similar lines, except that Cowan was placed on the extended priority program, which was estimated to be four years behind Brooklyn and Dangar Island. Construction was anticipated to begin between 2005-06 and 2008. It is extremely important to these communities that Sydney Water holds firm to the committed dates and honours its commitment in the 2003-04 budget, but obviously that has not occurred. The residents are unsure what the cost of the pump-out will be week to week, and no amount of monitoring or budgeting will account for the inconsistency in amounts charged. Many residents are paying more than \$100 a week for pump-out. In this day and age, that is simply not good enough. The environmental impact of pump-out could be even greater than we imagine, particularly given that the mighty Hawkesbury River lies adjacent to these river communities. Many residents of the area have expressed their extreme concern about this. A media release from Sydney Water dated 29 July 2002 and headed "Sydney Water and Hornsby Council working together for Brooklyn and Dangar Island" reads:

Sydney Water and Hornsby Shire Council representatives met last week to advance efforts to protect the environment around Brooklyn and Dangar Island on the Hawkesbury River through the provision of a high quality sewerage system ...

I ask members to take note of the date of the media release: July 2002. The media release continues:

Investigations into the infrastructure options are likely to be concluded by late 2002, when detailed consultation with the community will recommence.

It is now 2006 and, as I said, the first sod has not been turned to commence the construction of the sewerage treatment plant. Sewerage connection to Cowan and Galston is also obviously implicit in this debate. The small community of Cowan will obviously be left behind when Brooklyn and Dangar Island are finally sewered, and Cowan residents will then be at the mercy of pump-out charges. The community of Cowan sits on top of a ridge, which means that any sewerage outflow will flow down towards the precious Berowra Creek. The news that Brooklyn and Dangar Island will finally have their modern sewerage system has rung a hollow sound for Cowan and Galston residents, who, it seems, will have to wait another three years to have the same privilege. It appears that they will have to wait until 2009 or 2010 to even have their sewerage connection commenced.

I have many documents and letters on this issue because over the years the Government has made a massive number of promises in relation to it. At the beginning of my parliamentary career I raised the fact that a number of major environmental studies had been done on the Hawkesbury River and all of them recommended top-priority sewerage connection to Brooklyn and Dangar Island to ensure the health of the river. However, to this day, this tired and lazy Government has taken no notice of those studies and the area remains unsewered. The present system has faulty and leaking pipes, and raw sewage is being pumped into the Hawkesbury River. Obviously that is not conducive to a healthy aquaculture. Indeed, a couple of years ago the river was rated "F". At that time I said that stood for "filthy".

During the 2003 election campaign the Government paid a lot of attention to this issue. I organised a public meeting with local residents in Cowan because I was extremely concerned that Cowan was on the stage two program. The residents said they wanted the completion date to be brought forward to before 2010. During the election campaign the Coalition gave a commitment to have sewerage connection commenced in 2004. Unfortunately for Cowan, we had to continue under the Labor Government, whose inactivity is breathtaking, and that poor little community is still in doubt as to when it will be connected to the sewer.

I thank the residents of Cowan, who, in a metropolitan area of a major city of a first world country in 2006, continue to put up with not having the sewer. There has been no end of excuses as to why that is the case. I believe the main reason is that Sydney Water is a major cash cow for the Government. Huge dividends go from Sydney Water into the general government coffers to bump up the top-heavy bureaucracy and the inefficiencies that we have learned about in every single portfolio. Hence Brooklyn and Dangar Island, as well as Cowan and Galston, which is soon to be incorporated in the Hornsby electorate, are left behind because of the Government's inefficiency and waste of money.

The residents of those areas ask not only where their sewerage connection is but also where all the money has gone in these bumper times of funding and income to the Government. About 18 months ago I led a delegation to Minister Sartor, who had carriage of the Utilities portfolio at the time. The delegation included a card-carrying member of the Labor Party from the Brooklyn-Mooney Mooney branch who strongly supported my sentiments and those of the local residents. We discussed the issue with Minister Sartor, but after the meeting the Labor Party member stated she did not have any faith in the Minister fulfilling his promises. That has proved to be the case, because sewerage connection to these areas has not commenced.

I call on the Government to support this motion. It must make sure that the necessary documentation is signed off and that the first sod is turned for the Brooklyn-Dangar Island sewerage works, so that the residents are no longer subject to exorbitant pump-out costs and the inconvenience of shutting down Brooklyn Road, which is not a wide road. The Government must address the danger to the Hawkesbury River environment and the fact that Cowan is being left behind. I thank Tom Richmond, Bob Davis, Lyn Quilty, Jerome Gomez, Ian Best, Tim Stewart and many others for their ongoing fight to get the Government to come to its senses and look after the Hawkesbury River and the residents of Brooklyn and Dangar Island.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [11.40 a.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting paragraphs (2) and (3) and inserting instead:

"(2) notes that:

- (i) development approval has been granted for the project, and
- (ii) the Government has consulted with the community on the project and likely construction timetable.

I start by condemning the honourable member for Hornsby for wasting the time of this House on an issue that she clearly already know the answers to. If she does not know the answers, what has she been doing? She certainly has not been representing her electorate. She should know the answers because the New South Wales Government has conducted an extensive community consultation process about this sewerage scheme. But, rather than participate in the process and help to deliver the best outcome for the residents of her electorate, the honourable member for Hornsby chose to boycott that consultation.

Mrs Judy Hopwood: Point of order: I believe the Minister is misleading the House in relation to my activities.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! A claim of misleading the House cannot be the basis of a point of order.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: It is quite clear that the honourable member for Hornsby chose to boycott the consultation process. She is now trying to publicly cash in on the efforts of the New South Wales Government by chiming in at the eleventh hour on a scheme that she knows the Iemma Government is delivering. We got a history lecture from the honourable member: she talked about 1889 and 2002. Let us talk about what is happening today. If she had not boycotted the consultation process she would know that this scheme is well progressed. The extensive community consultation has included community information sessions at both Brooklyn and Dangar Island, a number of community newsletters, a detailed report on Sydney Water's preferred servicing strategy, and a dedicated Sydney Water hotline and email address to answer inquiries from residents.

Following this extensive consultation, a representations report was forwarded to the Department of Planning for consideration following due planning process. The honourable member for Hornsby should be welcoming the Government's policy of consulting with the community. I can announce today what the honourable member for Hornsby should have known was the next step: that formal approval has been granted

for a \$56 million scheme to provide sewerage services to Brooklyn and Dangar Island. The scheme forms part of the New South Wales Government's Priorities Sewerage Program.

The Brooklyn and Dangar Island Sewerage Scheme will provide improved sewerage services to around 500 properties in the two villages located on the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney. The sewerage scheme will ultimately form part of a regional sewerage scheme, with residents north of the river at Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point in the Gosford City Council area linking in to the new system. The scheme will result in a number of significant benefits to the local environment and the local community. The honourable member for Hornsby is trying to shift the blame, but she boycotted the consultation. If she had been involved she would have known what was going on. The scheme will particularly benefit the health of the Hawkesbury River with a modern reticulated sewerage system, and a state-of-the art sewage treatment plant at Brooklyn, replacing on-site sewage treatment systems and septic tanks. In addition, the residents of Brooklyn will no longer be required to pay septic tank maintenance and pump-out fees when they connect into the new system.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! There is too much interjection. I remind the honourable member for Hornsby that she has a right of reply.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I am pleased to inform the House that the new sewage treatment plant will incorporate tertiary treatment of effluent and high-level disinfection. Subject to final agreement, Gosford City Council will deliver the Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point scheme at a later time, connecting the system into the new Brooklyn sewage treatment plant. The honourable member for Hornsby should also know that this outcome for the residents of her area, delivered by the Iemma Government, has come after much input from local residents.

Sydney Water originally placed an environmental impact statement on display for a gravity sewerage scheme in Brooklyn and Dangar Island. But after taking into account a number of issues raised by the community after the comprehensive consultation process, the Government modified its proposal. The project was delayed because the community wanted to do something different. We went and talked to the community, we listened to the community, and we changed the scheme—while the honourable member for Hornsby was boycotting the process; she was missing in action.

The modified proposal includes a low-pressure sewerage system with reduced environmental impact. In addition, the opportunity arose for a regional scheme to include customers from Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point. Preliminary work on the Brooklyn and Dangar Island sewerage scheme is expected to start this month, with connections available from late 2007. I have asked Sydney Water to work closely with the local community to minimise disruption during the construction phase. Sydney Water will also implement a comprehensive environmental management plan to ensure that the environmental impact of construction is minimised.

I note there have been calls to provide sewerage services to Cowan in conjunction with the servicing of Brooklyn and Dangar Island. But the sensationalist and alarmist claims by the honourable member for Hornsby that Cowan will be "left behind as a metropolitan community" without sewerage connection are examples of the type of rubbish we have come to expect from the members opposite. Instead of a sensible discussion we get that type of rubbish and an obvious lack of understanding of engineering principles. Sydney Water investigated the possibility of a sewerage scheme incorporating Brooklyn, Dangar Island and Cowan, with a pipeline linking the three villages to one of Sydney Water's Hornsby sewage treatment plants. That is something the honourable member for Hornsby should have known.

However, Sydney Water's investigations have concluded that due to the considerable distance between the Brooklyn and Dangar Island villages and Cowan, and the further distance to the existing treatment plants, that would not be a viable or practical option. Given the Government's preference for a regional scheme incorporating villages from both sides of the Hawkesbury River with a local treatment plant at Brooklyn, it is, therefore, appropriate that Cowan be serviced independently with a locally appropriate scheme.

The New South Wales Government has commenced initial planning investigations for servicing Cowan. Technical studies have been undertaken to determine the environmental and public health risks associated with existing on-site sewage management practices. That will enable Sydney Water to investigate locally appropriate and sustainable wastewater solutions for the area. Community consultation, environmental impact assessment and technical investigations will be undertaken to identify a preferred servicing option. Detailed design work will be undertaken once a preferred servicing option has been approved and relevant environmental plans and conditions of approval have been obtained.

The honourable member for Hornsby must know by now that these things do not just happen in an ad hoc manner. Her behaviour is a reflection of what happens on the other side of the House. The Opposition has no plans or policies. Opposition members just yell and scream; they interject, they try to talk over the top of Government members and they wait for one of their mates to prompt them from stage left or stage right. But they do not have any plans and they do not understand that a system such as this cannot be provided in an ad hoc manner, and it certainly cannot be provided sensibly when the local member boycotts the public consultation process. The best environmental and social options must be put forward for consideration by the community.

The Priority Sewerage Program targets urban areas that are serviced by on-site wastewater systems such as septic tanks. The program progressively addresses the potential environmental and public health risks associated with failing on-site systems. Since the program commenced in 1997, sewerage connection has been made available to more than 2,300 properties at The Oaks, Oakdale, Belimbla Park, Coalcliff, Stanwell Park, Stanwell Tops, Otford and Jamberoo. Brooklyn and Dangar Island are next on the list. The Iemma Government is delivering services to householders under the Priority Sewerage Program. The \$56 million scheme to provide sewerage services to Brooklyn and Dangar Island is only one tangible example of that.

In her reply I expect the honourable member for Hornsby to explain to the House and to her constituents why she boycotted the consultation processes. I expect she will acknowledge that a Labor Government has allocated and will spend \$56 million on these works, commencing later this month. I look forward to the honourable member for Hornsby acknowledging this \$56 million project. I am confident that once she goes back over her notes of the history lecture she gave us earlier about 1889—

Mr Michael Daley: She won't even win pre-selection.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I note the interjection from the honourable member for Maroubra that clearly it was a hysterical outburst to prop up her preselection vote in Hornsby. David Clarke is coming to get her, but she should be positive. The honourable member for South Coast did not have the numbers for the shadow front bench vacancy. The honourable member for Hornsby should be positive. If she is positive with her preselection voters and says that the Government has made this \$56 million commitment, she will be all right. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [11.50 a.m.]: What an extraordinarily vindictive attack by the Minister. As usual the Government, when in trouble, resorts to lies and deceit. With pleasure I support the motion moved by the honourable member for Hornsby and, in fact, I support everything that she does. I doubt that there is member in this place who is more enthusiastic and committed to her electorate. I doubt that anybody would be able to replace her in representing the people of Hornsby. The motion deals with two areas of interest to me as the member for South Coast, even though the provision of sewerage schemes to residents of rural areas falls far short of those provided to their city counterparts.

The first part of the motion deals with time frames for the commencement of sewerage connections. I could talk all day about the Government's failure to meet promised time frames for sewerage connection schemes. Even with the best intentions of my local water authority, Shoalhaven Water, all too often the State Government lacks the determination to assist. That results in outrageous delays in long-awaited projects. The second part of the motion relates to Cowan. I want to refer to the village of Currarong, which is still waiting to be connected to the sewerage, despite various promises being made since 2001. The Minister has a hide to suggest that the Government's record on sewerage connections is good. In his contribution he lied and talked about boycotting community consultation. He is a joke. I turn now to the upgrade of the Milton-Ulladulla sewerage scheme, which is happening at present.

Mr David Campbell: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The motion and amendment do not refer to the sewerage scheme at Milton-Ulladulla.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! I am sure the honourable member for South Coast was only making passing reference to the Milton sewerage scheme.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Thank you for your fine ruling. I was indeed only making a passing reference. Paragraph (1) of the motion relates to time frames. The subject of sewerage connection at Milton-Ulladulla has been around for 15 years. In the meantime local residents have had to endure a trickling filter system that was probably outdated 30 years ago. The odours emitted from that scheme permeate the entire village of Ulladulla, particularly the nearly netball courts, skating park and playing fields. The Government has done nothing during its entire term in office.

Mr Alan Ashton: Point of order: You just ruled that the honourable member for South Coast was making only passing reference to Milton. She has now spoken for a minute about Milton-Ulladulla, which has nothing to do with the motion.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! I uphold the point of order. Earlier I gave the honourable member for South Coast the benefit of the doubt. The motion is about Brooklyn, Dangar Island and Cowan.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: The motion clearly relates to the time frame for the commencement of sewerage connections in general. However, I will make further passing reference to Lake Tabourie, which was promised sewerage connection in 2005, but is still waiting. The provision of the scheme at Lake Conjola has led to a budget blow-out from \$11 million to \$70 million. Shoalhaven Council and Shoalhaven Water have undertaken effective community consultation but nothing is happening.

Mr Alan Ashton: Point of order: I remind the House that the motion reads:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Minister for Utilities has acknowledged the time frame for commencement of sewerage connection to the Brooklyn and Dangar Island residents as the beginning of 2005;
- (2) notes that Cowan will be left behind as a metropolitan community without sewerage connection until at least 2008.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! I have heard enough to rule that the point of order is upheld.

[Time expired.]

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.55 a.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for South Coast for her support for the motion. I do not thank the Minister for totally misleading the House about my activities. I have been part of the consultation process. I have represented my constituents in every possible way. I have arranged meetings and attended those meetings. The Minister should write me a letter outlining exactly what I have boycotted. He did not say what I have boycotted or which meetings I have not attended. If I did not attend any meeting it was because I was not invited. The discussions were probably held behind closed doors. The Minister is a disgrace.

My constituents have been on the list for connection to the sewer since 1997. They are on the list in 2006, and that is during the Minister's watch. No attempt has been made to establish a sewage treatment plant or sewerage connection in their area. The Minister should not smirk, because I will be telling my constituents about his actions. The Brooklyn-Mooney Mooney branch of the Labor Party will be disappointed in the Minister. They had a lot of faith in Minister Sartor, who listened carefully and agreed to meet them. This Minister has not been in the position long and we may need to organise a meeting with him. The first sod was supposed to be turned on 1 April, but that did not happen. Once again, the residents have been let down. They probably feel they will pay for the 2007 election campaign because Sydney Water has become a cash cow and will contribute millions of dollars into the general coffers.

The Minister owes it to the people of Brooklyn, Dangar Island and other areas down the track to explain why the first sod was not turned on 1 April. Was it an April Fool's Day joke on them? The Minister would not know what it is like to have to pay thousands of dollars in pump-out fees or to suffer the blocked roads of Brooklyn every time the pump-out truck came along. He is a disgrace and is letting down the side. It is about time the Government stood by its promises. It should not massage Labor electorates by giving them funding preferences in the budget. My constituents are not stupid.

They will not blame me for the lack of sewerage connections and vote for Labor. They realise that I represent them on a weekly basis and that I listen always to their concerns. They understand that I do not have the resources of the Government. They acknowledge that I do everything within my power to help them and they ask why the Government has done nothing to assist them.

Why are people in metropolitan Sydney still waiting for sewerage connections in 2006? It is an absolute disgrace. The Government is endangering the future of the Hawkesbury River and other tourism additions to the Hawkesbury River such as aquaculture. Look at the oyster situation. There are no oysters in the Hawkesbury River for a combination of reasons. The Government has let the side down. Raw sewage is leaking

into the Hawkesbury River. A combination of drought, weeds and raw sewage entering the river and total neglect by the Government saw the oyster industry go under, due to the opportunistic parasite in the river. It is an absolute disgrace.

I do not understand how the Minister can make claims about boycotts and people not doing anything, because the Government is not doing anything. I do not care what amount is cleverly written on the Minister's piece of paper; the Government has not spent any of it. The Government has not spent enough money to satisfy the people in Brooklyn and Dangar Island, although the Minister claims the Government is serious about looking after the interests of its constituents, as well as the health of the Hawkesbury River. As I said, these people are not stupid. They will not vote for Labor at the next election. They will vote for a Debnam Coalition government, because the Labor Government is totally hopeless in every portfolio area and has not delivered much of anything it said it would deliver. Everything is either over budget or behind schedule, and this is yet another example. The Government has neglected these people's sewerage connections.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: According to this morning's *Sydney Morning Herald*, there are two candidates with affiliations to the Right.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Hornsby has the call.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: In conclusion, it is an abomination when the Government uses any argument to support the fact that it is totally hopeless. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

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

Noes, 36

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

Pair

Mr Martin

Mr Armstrong

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Amendment agreed to.****Motion as amended agreed to.****YOUTH CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR****Mr PETER DEBNAM** (Vaucluse—Leader of the Opposition) [12.10 p.m.]: I move:

That this House expresses concern with the ongoing youth crime and antisocial behaviour in Maroubra and in the Wollongong suburb of Berkeley and calls on the Government to provide 24-hour police protection for local residents at least until the juvenile street thugs are brought to justice.

I gave notice of this motion on 2 September 2003, almost three years ago.

Ms Noreen Hay: I think that is the one time you visited Berkeley.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: No. It is not. I visit the electorate regularly because your constituents ask me to come back and talk to them. It is the same in Maroubra, and that is what I am going to talk about for 10 minutes. It is regrettable that every Labor member of this House has betrayed his or her community. The honourable member for Wollongong has been doing that not only since I placed this motion on notice in September 2003, but ever since she was elected in 1995. It is also regrettable that the Labor Party persists in nominating people such as the honourable member for Wollongong, who are simply party hacks and who refuse to work with the community.

The point I was going to make was that the notice paper, which is now about an inch thick, lists 1,223 notices of motions. It highlights, once again, the problem with the way this institution is being run. The New South Wales Parliament was always intended to be a clearinghouse for community concerns. The notices of motions reflect 1,223 community concerns. Why has the number of motions risen to 1,223. The reason is the refusal by Labor to address the issues. Even when we place issues on notice and say that we want to debate them, the Labor Government cancels private members' days because it is embarrassed about them.

I visited the suburbs of Maroubra and Berkeley at the request of the residents because the local Labor members simply refused to work with their communities. It is a disgrace that Labor members, especially the honourable member for Maroubra and the honourable member for Wollongong, were not doing their jobs for the community. Youth crime and antisocial behaviour is probably the number one issue in most suburbs in the metropolitan area and throughout regional New South Wales. It is an issue right across New South Wales. Wherever I go people want to talk about it. To some extent the community is resigned to not getting a satisfactory response from the Labor Government.

Why is that? The community has become resigned to that because it has seen the evidence of what the Government is likely to do about the issue. What the Government has done in the past 2¼ years is slash police numbers. I spoke about this issue in the House yesterday when I said that most Labor members of Parliament have major crime problems in their electorates, and they have remained absolutely silent on issues of major concern to the community.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is too much noise on the Government side of the Chamber.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: The major issue in all those electorates is youth crime and antisocial behaviour. The honourable member for Maroubra has not spoken in this House about the revenge attacks on Maroubra residents that took place last December. Despite the fact that the Government has stumbled on that issue time and again over the past four months, the honourable member has failed to take the Government to task. That is why his local community will take him to task in March next year. The honourable member for Wollongong will be taken to task in March next year for the same reason: she has betrayed her community.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: Honourable members will see the issue has not changed in Berkeley or in Maroubra in the past three years. Youth crime and antisocial behaviour remains the major issue, and lack of policing has become an even greater issue since I gave notice of this motion. As I said earlier, I gave notice of the motion in September 2003, and that is about when the Labor Government started to slash police numbers. It has slashed close to 600 police in this State since that time. It is little wonder communities are screaming. It is little wonder there were revenge attacks in December. The problem then was that the police simply did not have the resources to get out there and stop these Middle Eastern thugs, to arrest them and lock them up.

As a result, the Labor Government will be pilloried day after day because of its failure to give police the necessary resources. We have witnessed the joke of the current Minister for Police announcing, for the fourth time in two years, the creation of the Middle Eastern crime squad. How many times can the Government announce the establishment of a Middle Eastern crime squad and be taken seriously? Once! Dave Madden, Assistant Commissioner of Police, announced it for the first time in 2004. It was announced again at the time of the problems last year, and was re-announced in January, last week and in the past hour. The problem is that Labor will not say how many police will make up that squad.

Task Force Gain was established after I raised gun crime over a period of five months in 2003. I spoke in this House, to the media, in Auburn, in Lakemba and in south-west Sydney about the need for the Labor Government to move beyond denial and acknowledge that it has a major problem dealing with organised crime, Middle Eastern gangs and gun crime. Despite the avalanche of abuse from the former Premier, the former Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police, I continued to raise that issue for five months. It took five months before the Labor Government was finally forced, by community pressure, to establish Task Force Gain.

Task Force Gain was established with 170 officers, but because the Government began to slash police numbers in New South Wales soon after it was established, the numbers in Task Force Gain dropped from 170 to approximately 57. One of the reasons for the revenge attacks—those vicious attacks on members of the community in the electorate of Maroubra, and the vicious attacks in Cronulla, Brighton-Le-Sands and Auburn—was because the Labor Government had run down police numbers and the local members representing those areas remained absolutely silent. It is despicable! That is why local front-line police have given up absolutely on the mob on the Government benches. It is not only the police who have given up on Labor; every single department has. The first responsibility of the State Government is community safety, and the Government has failed in that regard.

I had to give notice of this issue back in September 2003 because local Labor members refused to address the issue. Yet three years later it is still an issue. The local members have failed to speak up on behalf of their communities. That has led to organised crime, drug gangs and Middle Eastern thugs running riot across New South Wales. The Labor Party is still intimidated and refusing to lock them up. The police have had enough of Labor members. They are now counting the days until the election on 24 March next year. They are not alone in that. Most public servants are now counting down to the election because they know that not only have Government members given up dealing with the issues, they have betrayed their communities. It is with some contempt that public servants, police and members of the community move towards the election.

This is another opportunity for Government members to speak up for their communities. If they do not speak today they should really be embarrassed. When I meet with their communities again in the next few months I will take the *Hansard* record of this debate to remind them. I assume somebody from the Labor Party is going to say something in this debate. No doubt the Minister for Police will rush in here and make a speech and reannounce the formation of the Middle Eastern crime squad for the fourth time in a week. But let us hear something from Labor members about a real issue. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [12.20 p.m.]: I do intend to say quite a bit about that wimpy, limp-wristed motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. If I as a backbencher put up such a weak motion and spoke to it in the terms that the Leader of the Opposition did I would be called in by the Premier and the Minister for Police and told to work harder. What did we hear from the Leader of the Opposition today? We heard about party hacks. We heard that there were 1,223 motions on notice. Thanks for that scoop! We heard about the Australian Labor Party treatment of private members' day. We heard about the pleasant days that the Leader of the Opposition had when he visited Berkeley and Maroubra. But his speech was fairly light on for statistics. The motion he gave notice of in September 2003 was an obvious attempt to have a crack at my

predecessor, Bob Carr. I am sure he would have been quaking in his boots at the prospect of having to deal with this motion—as I am!

This is an extremely curious motion, underpinned by nothing. I had cause to talk to the senior police in my local area command about the substance of the motion. When I spoke to them this morning they said that cautioning and conferencing for youth offenders at the moment is consistent, as it has been for some time, and the statistics for as late as March 2006, which in their opinion is a seasonal peak, are showing crime is trending down. The call by the Leader of the Opposition for 24-hour policing to protect the residents of Maroubra from so-called street thugs would suggest that there is some kind of crime explosion or crisis on the streets of Maroubra. In December last year there was such a problem and the Minister for Police moved decisively to give police extra powers. He implemented 24-hour policing on the streets of Maroubra and Cronulla and other areas. He locked those beaches down, especially Maroubra, with the aid of local area commander Phil Rogerson.

The Leader the Opposition might want to look at *Hansard* to see that on 15 December 2005 in this Chamber I congratulated the local area commander and the Minister for Police when I supported the move for additional police powers, as the Leader of the Opposition and his party did on that day. His attempt to paint a different picture now amounts to misleading the House. The Leader of the Opposition's speech today was a weak and lazy effort. There were no statistics. That is okay, I will do his work for him. To put the issue into historical perspective, notice of the motion was given in September 2003. When we talk about juvenile thugs and antisocial behaviour we are talking mostly about two types of crime: assaults and malicious damage. According to the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, in the year to December 2004 the incidence of both of those types of crime actually fell.

Mrs Shelley Hancock: They were probably away on holidays.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: What a brilliant effort from the honourable member for South Coast! I am talking about statistics for 12 months. I turn now to the figures for significant crime trends in the Eastern Beaches Local Area Command for the two years to September 2005. I would like the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Coffs Harbour to stop mouthing off and listen for a moment. They might learn something. What do these statistics show? Motor vehicle theft is down 42.6 per cent, steal from person is down 36.9 per cent, steal from motor vehicles is down 36.1 per cent, break and enter—dwelling is down 25.9 per cent, break and enter—non-dwelling is down 13.9 per cent, and steal from dwelling is down 8 per cent. All those police bashers on the other side of the Chamber should listen to those statistics and weep. Do I hear the question "Why is this so?" coming from the other side of the Chamber. It is because under the Labor Government the number of police officers in the Eastern Beaches Local Area Command increased from 142 in 1994, when the Coalition had the Treasury benches, to 162 in 2006, an increase of 14.1 per cent.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! I call the honourable member for Hornsby to order.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: This is hardly the tale of woe or the picture painted by the Leader of the Opposition in his wimpy and limp-wristed police-bashing effort.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! I call Opposition members to order. They will have an opportunity to take part in the debate at a later stage.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: There is no need for 24-hour police protection for residents of Maroubra to the extent called for by the Leader of the Opposition. As is the case in all areas of New South Wales, police in Maroubra are committed to reducing youth crime and antisocial behaviour. Maroubra Local Area Command and Lake Illawarra Local Area Command, which includes Berkeley, employ a number of strategies to combat these types of activities. High-visibility policing operations are conducted at known hot spots at critical times with regular blitzes by Operation Vikings. Enforcement of alcohol-free zones at Maroubra Beach, Maroubra Junction and Lexington Place is effective. Under a liquor accord with publicans in Maroubra responsible service of alcohol is promoted. Maroubra Local Area Command is involved in a statewide initiative encouraging members of the public to register their party functions at their local police station. Significantly, that strategy puts police on notice that a party is going to occur. Individuals are provided with a "Safe Party" information package outlining their responsibilities to the community and party attendees.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! I call the honourable member for Coffs Harbour to order.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Before this initiative party attendees sometimes spilled out onto the streets and caused problems with drunken behaviour. That is now trending down. Local police join forces with other agencies, where appropriate, to reduce youth crime and antisocial behaviour. The Street Beat operations target school truancy and are conducted in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training. It is a total government approach. Police work with the Department of Education and Training and other local organisations to develop programs for young people in school holiday times that keep them away from crime and off the streets. I will say more about that in a moment. Lake Illawarra Local Area Command works in partnership with the Department of Housing to place troubled youth into a supportive environment. We have to keep in mind that it is often troubled youth who are the troublemakers.

Trained youth liaison officers design crime prevention programs for young persons. If we are going to talk about juvenile street thugs, I think that definition would include young persons. Trained youth liaison officers travel around the schools. As we speak, the youth liaison officer in my electorate is at Matraville High, a significant school in the area. Officers from the Maroubra Local Area Command work with the State Transit Authority and transit police to address crime connected with the public transport system. All of the above strategies adopted by Maroubra and Lake Illawarra local area commands are helping to reduce youth crime and antisocial behaviour in their areas.

In December last year the Government introduced new powers to support police in maintaining public order. Under new part 6A of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, police now have the power in times of public disorder to declare emergency alcohol-free zones, to close down liquor outlets, to seize and detain vehicles and mobile phones, and to demand disclosure of identity. Significantly, under the new provisions, geographical areas can be locked down, roadblocks can be established, and persons and vehicles can be stopped and searched without a warrant. Those powers will assist police not only in Maroubra but also statewide to crack down on serious forms of anti-social behaviour when and where it occurs.

I will not tolerate these cheap efforts by the Leader of the Opposition while I am in this House. He comes into this place and talks down my electorate. The young people in my electorate are good people and I will not tolerate a lazy, wimpy, limp-wristed Leader of the Opposition coming into this place and talking down them or the police. I am proud of both groups and I will defend them and this Government's efforts with regard to law and order whenever necessary. I will not back away from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [12.30 p.m.]: What an interesting performance by the honourable member for Maroubra. It is pity that as a new member he is not aware of the reasons the Leader of the Opposition gave notice of this motion in September 2003. I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, because at that time he was the shadow Minister for Police and he was very well aware of issues affecting communities across the State, including in Wollongong, Maroubra and Berkeley, and, for that matter, in Albury and Corowa. He travelled far and wide and was in touch with the issues.

I again congratulate him on bringing this issue to the attention of the House in 2003, because, as we have heard from the honourable member for Maroubra, it resulted in some action. The best thing we on this side of the House can do is to prompt and embarrass the Government into action. The honourable member for Maroubra mentioned several initiatives that have been introduced since this motion was put on the notice paper in 2003. The Opposition embarrassed the Government into action and forced it to recognise this problem and to acknowledge that it must be addressed. I will leave the politics out of this for the moment and concentrate on the vexed issue that has been allowed to flourish and that was raised, because it must be addressed for the good of the people of this State. Juvenile crime and antisocial behaviour is not confined to Maroubra, the Wollongong suburb of Berkeley or, for that matter, to Kanahooka, Warrawong, Albury or Corowa, which I represent.

Ms Noreen Hay: How would you know?

Mr GREG APLIN: I have lived there. I know all about it from when I was house-sitting in that area. There are many problems throughout this State that must be recognised and addressed. As we heard from the honourable member for Maroubra, the Government deals with these issues by hiding the facts behind statistics. Having been to PACT meetings, I am only too familiar with the problems facing police officers in committing themselves to this Government's will. Statistics are the order of the day. Unfortunately, from the public's point of view, statistics alone do not tell the story. Far too many people do not report incidents because they do not receive appropriate attention, primarily because the police do not have sufficient numbers to carry out their role.

I have spoken to youth intervention and truancy officers who are hampered in the performance of their duties when they try to control young people and return them to school. Far too often they are hampered by an

unwillingness on the part of parents to play a role. That issue is one aspect of this motion and it must be addressed. Unless the Government identifies the issues and comes up with appropriate solutions, it will not get far. That is one of the problems the Opposition has overcome by bringing this to the Government's attention. It is now well and truly on the agenda.

Honourable members know that police numbers have decreased. In the Lake Illawarra area the number of officers has been slashed by 24, and I understand from the member for South Coast that five more positions will be slashed from that command. The Albury local area command had an establishment high of 156 officers—coincidentally just prior to the 2003 election—but it now has only 143, and another three are slated to be removed. It is little wonder that the public feels that no attention is being paid to juvenile crime. That is not because police officers do not want to deal with the issue; they certainly do. I have spoken to many police commanders who would like to spend more time addressing those problems. Unfortunately, they do not have the appropriate resources. That is only too obvious across the State when we see young people on the streets when they should be at school. The gang aspect of this situation is also not being addressed. The police are forced to be reactive rather than proactive. That is a serious concern to the police and they wish they could do more about it.

The other problem is that police officers are used as taxi drivers, and that is hardly their role. I received a complaint from a local area command that its officers are used to transport juveniles between detention centres. I ask the Minister for Police to address that issue and to put the appropriate people in charge of that task rather than police officers. It is ridiculous that they are used as taxi drivers. [*Time expired.*]

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.35 p.m.]: I am a little at a loss after listening to the debate. It has become commonplace for the Leader of the Opposition to come into the House and make outrageous claims without any justification. He says whatever he wants to say and then expects honourable members to defend themselves. There is clearly no defence for the Leader of the Opposition and other honourable members on that side of the House. It is outrageous that the honourable member for South Coast is trying to give me lessons on how to pronounce "Wollongong". I am the honourable member for Wollongong. The honourable member for Albury tried to say "Kanhooka" without success.

The most important issue for my constituents is that they are taken seriously. They have not invited, and never would invite, either the honourable member for Albury or the Leader of the Opposition to Berkeley to talk to them. They probably think that the Leader of the Opposition should visit his own electorate and do some work there. We know that the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Minister for the Illawarra—I repeat "Illawarra", in case the honourable member for South Coast did not get that—

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! The honourable member for South Coast will remain silent.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The shadow Minister is not here at the moment. Both honourable members have popped in to my electorate on a couple of occasions. They came in through the back door—snuck in—made some negative statements about my electorate and popped straight back out again.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is far too much noise in the Chamber.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I have invited these honourable members to come to my electorate on more than one occasion. I want them to see for themselves that Berkeley is a good, strong community, not a hot spot.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! The honourable member for Wollongong will be heard in silence. I call on honourable members on both sides of the House to remain silent.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Berkeley is not the most serious crime spot in New South Wales; quite the reverse. The people of Berkeley are good, hardworking people and they are my staunch supporters. There is no way that anyone in Berkeley, even card-carrying members of the Liberal Party, would invite the Leader of the Opposition to speak to them. They do not want to hear from him; I do not want to hear from him; no-one wants to hear from him. Nonetheless, the Leader of the Opposition comes into this place and dumps on Port Kembla and Berkeley. He got one thing right here today; he said the people will remember at election time, and the Leader of the Opposition—

[Interruption]

No, he will not, because he will not be the leader then. When honourable members opposite find a new leader, he or she will learn the hard way that the people of New South Wales do not want anything to do with the Liberal Party. Berkeley's crime rate is nowhere near the most serious in New South Wales. According to the Lake Illawarra area command figures and briefs, the crime rate in Berkeley and the surrounding suburbs has been reducing, with the incidence of some crimes reduced by as much as 50 per cent. That has occurred thanks to the good, hard work of the police there. Our police do a fantastic job. Members opposite spend their entire lives criticising police, but I commend the Minister for Police, the Lake Illawarra area command and the Wollongong area command for the fantastic work they do in reducing crime. Every single month there has been a reduction in crime in the Lake Illawarra area. Indeed, our crime figures are better than the State average. Members opposite sneak in the back door to try to say something negative about the Illawarra. The shadow Minister for the Illawarra has not said one positive word about the Illawarra.

The people of my electorate and I are offended that every time members opposite refer to young people they use the term "thugs". They refer to "Middle Eastern-looking thugs", "juvenile thugs"—everybody is a "thug". My branches are fine. Some members opposite have serious problems, but that is for them to worry about. On behalf of my electorate and the people I represent, I ask members opposite to stay out of Berkeley. We do not want them, and the people of Berkeley do not want them. Members opposite have not got one figure right yet. On behalf of my electorate I congratulate the Lake Illawarra area command; the police are doing a great job.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.40 p.m.]: What an appalling attempt at defending the Government. The honourable member for Wollongong totally ignores the fact that we have moved the motion. I assure honourable members that the people about whom the honourable member has just spoken are lining up to talk to the Leader of the Opposition and our representatives because Government members simply do not represent their views in this place. When a motion such as this is moved, all we hear from the honourable member for Wollongong is rhetoric. She ignores the fact that in 2003 the Wollongong local area command had a police strength of 232. What is the police strength there today? It is 214. And that reduction in police numbers is reflected throughout the State. Police numbers have dropped not only in Wollongong, Berkeley and other places; as reported in today's *Daily Advertiser*, the Mayor of Coolamon has complained that police are being taken to the larger cities—

Ms Marianne Saliba: Where? Coolamon?

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: Coolamon. If the honourable member for Illawarra got out and visited country areas she would learn about them. The Leader of the Opposition and the members on this side of the Chamber visit country areas, so they know about these towns. Here are the figures. Police numbers have dropped in the Wagga Wagga local area command. During the lead-up to the 2003 election 150 police were on duty. Now there are 134, which is a net loss. I can assure honourable members that police numbers there will be reduced even further because, apparently, they are four over strength. The Police Association, the communities of the Wagga Wagga region, as well as the mayor of Coolamon and others, do not believe there are enough police. They have worked out Government members.

We are now seeing a sudden influx of police officers, as the Government builds up the numbers in the lead-up to the next election, and after the election it will cut back the numbers. The reason why Government members have huge problems in their electorates is that people are sick to death of reporting crime because nothing happens. The honourable member for Wollongong said the crime rate in her electorate has gone down. What has gone down is the reporting of crime, because people have given up. They ring this thing called the Police Assistance Line. It is a magnificent filing cabinet; it is where the problems are filed but never get revisited.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is far too much noise in the Chamber. I call on members on both sides of the House to allow the honourable member for Wagga Wagga to deliver his speech in silence.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: People have given up in exasperation. When you drive through the streets, or get on a train, you see graffiti plastered all over this city and its suburbs. Why is it there? Because young people are out of control. The problem is that there are not enough police. This vandalism is happening everywhere. The owners of the buildings that are graffitied have given up reporting it because nothing happens.

The programs the Government has in place to clean off the graffiti are a dismal failure. The cost has simply been shifted onto councils, and that is a major problem.

All we have heard from Government members in this debate is excuses. They never admit that this vandalism is happening. People ring up and complain but no-one takes any notice. The Police Association agrees with me that the Wagga Wagga region needs more police. Systematically we have seen cutbacks in police numbers, and it is happening all over the State. I have just read out the figures. Do honourable members want to hear them again? In 2003 the Wollongong local area command had 232 officers. Today it has 214. What will the figure be in the next couple of weeks? The Government will simply take away more police and move them around like chess pieces, so it looks like the Government has more police when police numbers are dropping.

This election ploy that the Minister is perpetrating—and Government members are part of it, as they have been for the last 10 years—is designed to pull the wool over everyone's eyes. We want more cops, but we want them to keep their jobs and we want them there after the election. We want their numbers to be built up—*[Time expired.]*

Ms MARIANNE SALIBA (Illawarra) [12.45 p.m.]: I speak against the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I should point out on a map where Berkeley is, and perhaps also Dapto. I know he has been to the Dapto dogs once, so he will have been to Berkeley once as well. He can put those places in his family album as the places he has visited while he has been the Leader of the Opposition. The honourable member for Wagga Wagga spoke about dismal failures. The only dismal failure here is the Leader of the Opposition. Indeed, the entire Opposition is a dismal failure.

As the former shadow Minister for Police, the Leader of the Opposition should be supporting police. Instead, all he does is attack them. The police in the Lake Illawarra local area command have worked very hard, proactively, to reduce crime in the region. We have had a more than 50 per cent reduction in motor vehicle theft and a more than 20 per cent reduction in stealing. We have had a reduction in assaults and a reduction in break and enters of almost 50 per cent. Our crime statistics are better than the State average, and that is because police in the Lake Illawarra local area command are working proactively.

What we have heard today is discrimination. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about two working-class areas. He did not speak about Vacluse. As the member for Vacluse he is here to represent Vacluse, just as I am here to represent the Illawarra. As the member for Illawarra, I support my local police, and I work co-operatively with community partners to ensure that crime is reduced in the Lake Illawarra local area command. That command is involved in a number of projects. One of them is Project Energy, which targets at-risk Koori youth. This project involves government and community partners, with sponsorship from BHP, working together to get young people involved in activities. Another project is Operation Vikings, which everyone should know about.

Why do we have improved crime statistics in the Illawarra? Because our police work proactively. It is a shame the Opposition does not work proactively with police to ensure that crime statistics continue to be driven down. Rather than criticise police, members opposite should work with them to ensure they get the good results we are getting in the Lake Illawarra local area command. It is appalling that the former shadow Minister for Police raises this issue. He should support the good work of police in his electorate. The Lake Illawarra local area command is also targeting recidivists who steal motor vehicles, in order to maintain the reduction in those offences.

Also, hot spots are being targeted during daily Burroo operations, and continual bail compliance checks of known stolen motor vehicle offenders have helped reduce their involvement in these incidents, particularly with juveniles. The police in the Lake Illawarra Local Area Command have my 100 per cent support, as has the community. I am appalled that the Leader of the Opposition would stand here today and attack two working-class areas, two strong Labor areas. People in Berkeley would not even know who the Leader of the Opposition was. I do not know why he even bothers to go down there because he is not making any difference. The police are making a difference in our community; it is this State Government that is making the difference by providing the finances and the support that is needed for these police to do their job. My final comments are: Get behind the police. Support the police. Look after your own local communities and we will look after ours.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: I seek leave to speak in the debate.

Leave not granted.

Mr PETER DEBNAM (Vaucluse—Leader of the Opposition) [12.50 p.m.], in reply: What has just happened highlights the real problem in New South Wales. The Labor Party has tried to hijack this Parliament for its own use. The reason the honourable member for Northern Tablelands and other non-Government members want to speak is because youth crime and antisocial behaviour is the number one issue across the State. We have just seen from the Labor Party the worst possible display of Labor Party hacks whingeing, whining and carping. They have no contribution to make on behalf of their communities; they just want to play vicious, personal politics, including trying to turn the standing orders of the Parliament upside down to deny me a reply in this motion.

Government members are a disgrace and they should apologise to their communities for not representing them. The point I have made over the past three years, since I put this motion on the notice paper, is that youth crime and antisocial behaviour is the number one issue in every community. One then has to ask who is going to speak up on behalf of the communities? Government members fail to speak up. When Labor members come into Parliament they have to make a decision: they are either going to be community representatives or they are going to be apologists for the worst Government New South Wales has ever seen. Government members have obviously made the decision to be apologists for the Labor Party instead of community representatives. That is a disgrace. They should vote in favour of this motion. They can take a point of order and apologise and then they could vote for this motion.

Government members need to stand side by side with their communities and say that the level of crime in their communities is just too damned high. But they will not do it because they are Labor Party hacks who just say that the latest statistics given to them show that some figures are going down. Do members opposite know why on occasion one or two figures might go down? Because New South Wales is one of the highest crime jurisdictions in the Western world. Few jurisdictions have a worse crime problem than this State, under this Labor Government over the past 10 years. As the honourable member for Wagga Wagga said, that is why many people have simply given up on reporting crime.

The Government even put in place a glorified filing cabinet known as the police assistance line. It put in place a really solid deterrent to reporting crime! Government members have seen the stories; they can go to the police web site and look at the response times on the police assistance line web site. They can see they are simply failing to answer the damned telephones! That is a great tactic for the Labor Party because it merely deters a victim of crime from reporting it. So it has worked for the Labor Party; people have given up on reporting crime. But they are only giving up because they know that 24 March next year is approaching. That is the real issue for the community; it was the real issue back in September 2003. People knew that the Labor Party had been re-elected in 2003 and very quickly saw that the Government was going to do what it had done before—starve the community of resources. And in policing it was the most blatant act.

As the honourable member for Wagga Wagga said, in 2003 there were record police numbers in this State because the Government had adopted the Coalition policy from the 1999 election of adding a couple of thousand police. They were forced into doing that and finally they adopted it prior to the 1999 election, and progressively had record police numbers in the election year 2003. Then the Government systematically cut back on police numbers, and we have lost 600. When are we getting them back for the election?

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: With 31 seconds to go, could the Leader of the Opposition speak to the substance of the motion? He did not refer in the first instance to Maroubra or Berkeley and he is not speaking about Maroubra or Berkeley now.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to direct his remarks to the motion.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: I will refer again to the words that the honourable member for Maroubra used a few minutes ago. He said, "Maroubra does not need 24-hour policing." That is a disgrace and he should apologise today to his community. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 34

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

Noes, 52

Ms Allan	Mr Greene	Mr Pearce
Mr Amery	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Ms Andrews	Mr Hickey	Mr Price
Mr Bartlett	Mr Hunter	Ms Saliba
Ms Beamer	Ms Judge	Mr Sartor
Mr Black	Ms Keneally	Mr Scully
Mr Brown	Mr Lynch	Mr Shearan
Ms Burney	Mr McBride	Mr Stewart
Miss Burton	Mr McLeay	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Campbell	Ms Meagher	Mr Tripodi
Mr Chaytor	Ms Megarrity	Mr Watkins
Mr Collier	Mr Mills	Mr West
Mr Crittenden	Ms Moore	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Mr Morris	Mr Yeadon
Ms D'Amore	Mr Newell	
Mr Debus	Ms Nori	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gaudry	Mr Orkopoulos	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Mrs Paluzzano	Mr Corrigan

Pair

Mr Armstrong

Mr Martin

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.***[Mr Speaker left the chair at 1.05 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]***RETIREMENT OF MR STAN WOODBURY****Ministerial Statement**

Mr JOHN WATKINS (Ryde—Deputy Premier, and Minister for Transport) [2.15 p.m.]: No doubt honourable members are too young to recall that in November 1944 Sirius won the Melbourne Cup, Australia's war-time Prime Minister John Curtin suffered a heart attack from which he never fully recovered and, eight months later, a one-time New South Wales train driver, Ben Chifley, became Prime Minister. In 1944 the Premier of this place and this State was Sir William McKell, a one-time boilermaker with the New South Wales Railways Department, and New South Wales Railways was a different place, with 4,000 employees serving in World War II.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Murrumbidgee will come to order. I am reluctant to call him to order, but I will do so if he continues to behave in the way he is behaving now. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr JOHN WATKINS: During World War II a further 4,000 were involved in defence work and 1,000 women were employed to overcome the shortages this caused. November 1944 also marked the beginning of the extraordinary career of Penrith railway station manager Stan Woodbury with New South Wales Railways. More than 61 years on, Stan is hanging up his hat as the longest-serving current rail employee. He is also a 60-year veteran of the union movement, initially with the ARA, then the Australian Transport Officers Federation and now the Australian Services Union. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Mr Woodbury to the gallery, and to stand with my parliamentary colleagues to honour him for his incredible contribution to public service. Stan, on behalf of the Government and the people of New South Wales, thank you.

When Stan began his career as a junior porter at Roseville the 38 class steam engines had not long come into service, with the famous 3801 having rolled out the previous year. It is a telling indication of Stan's length of service that as he retires we are buying \$2 billion worth of new trains, including 122 outer suburban cars and 498 new suburban cars. While they are unlikely to rival the beauty of the 3801, the on-board technology, including closed-circuit television and other elements, certainly would have been unimaginable at the start of Stan's career.

Stan worked across the State, spending 32 years in rural New South Wales with his wife, Irene, and their nine children, from Grafton in the north to Bellata in the west, and Port Kembla and Robertson in the south. He returned to Sydney in 1980, working at Darling Harbour, Hornsby and Central before transferring to Penrith in 1993, where he remained. This experience has given Stan unprecedented access to his Chief Executive Officer, Vince Graham, who catches the train from Penrith station each and every morning. He has received various commendations throughout his career, including the New South Wales Service Medallion for 40 years meritorious service, which was presented to him in October 2003.

Stan's achievement is a rare feat and, sadly, it is an achievement that is unlikely to be replicated by my generation, or that of my children or grandchildren. Shortly before question time we were talking about Stan's career. He told me that he and his brother, Brian, also a station manager, have clocked up a total of 104 years service to New South Wales railways. That is an incredible family commitment. That special level of dedication and commitment to one employer probably will not be seen again. I thank my parliamentary colleague the honourable member for Penrith for ensuring that Mr Woodbury's achievements are appropriately acknowledged and I look forward to joining her and Stan at a function on Saturday to celebrate his career. I am sure all members of this House will join me in wishing Mr Woodbury good health and happiness in his retirement. Well done, Stan.

PETITIONS

Hornsby and Berowra Train Station Parking Facilities

Petition requesting adequate commuter parking facilities at Hornsby and Berowra train stations, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Bus Service 300

Petition requesting improved bus services including expansion of the 300 series bus service to adequately serve the inner city, particularly during peak-hour travel, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Murwillumbah to Casino Rail Service

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

Pensioner Travel Voucher Booking Fee

Petition requesting the removal of the \$10 booking fee on pensioner travel vouchers, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

CountryLink Rail Services

Petition opposing the abolition of CountryLink rail services and their replacement with bus services in rural and regional New South Wales, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Twofold Marine Park

Petition opposing the implementation of Twofold Marine Park and requesting full and open consultation, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

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**.

Campbell Hospital, Coraki

Petition opposing the closure of inpatient beds and the reduction in emergency department hours of Campbell Hospital, Coraki, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Breast Screening Funding

Petitions requesting funding for breast screening to allow access for women aged 40 to 79 years, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson** and **Mr Michael Richardson**.

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme

Petitions objecting to the criteria for country cancer patients to qualify for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson** and **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Sutherland Hospital Management

Petition requesting the retention of a full-time general manager and the re-establishment of a local community based hospital board of management, received from **Mr Malcolm Kerr**.

Caritas Mental Health Service

Petition requesting the redevelopment and expansion of the Caritas mental health service, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Mental Health Services

Petition requesting increased funding for mental health services, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Kurnell Sandmining

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

Newstan-Awaba Mines Extension Project

Petition opposing Centennial Coal Company Limited's proposal to extend the Newstan-Awaba mines for open-cut mining, received from **Mr Jeff Hunter**.

Community-based Preschools

Petitions requesting increased funding to community-based preschools to enable them to maintain parity with preschools administered by the Department of Education and Training, received from **Mr Jeff Hunter** and **Mr Matthew Morris**.

Drought Assistance Subsidies

Petition requesting the restoration of drought assistance subsidies for landowners in drought affected areas, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Recreational Fishing

Petitions opposing any restrictions on recreational fishing in the mid North Coast waters, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner** and **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**.

Sydney Harbour Master Plan

Petition requesting that Sydney Harbour remain a working harbour, and calling for long-term strategic planning culminating in a published master plan, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Yass Water Supply

Petition requesting funding to provide Yass with a safe and secure potable water supply, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

CSR Quarry, Hornsby

Petition requesting a public inquiry into Hornsby Shire Council's acquisition of CSR Quarry in Hornsby, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag, 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**.

Grafton Bridge

Petition requesting the construction of a new bridge over the Clarence River at Grafton, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

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**.

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**.

Oxford Street Clearway

Petition requesting removal of the Oxford Street clearway and imposition of a 40 kilometres per hour speed limit in Oxford Street, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Inner Sydney Traffic Plan

Petition requesting an inner Sydney traffic plan that would put local traffic on local roads and through traffic on arterial roads, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Bourke Street, Sydney, Closure

Petition requesting the closure of Bourke Street south of William Street to all vehicles excepting emergency services, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

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**.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

POLICE NUMBERS

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given that the Labor Government cut 600 police over the past two years and has refused to properly resource New South Wales police to allow them to arrest and lock up Middle Eastern thugs, why has he again today announced only a token squad of 58 officers to target Middle Eastern crime?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: You have to feel sorry for the Leader of the Opposition—isolated, home alone and increasingly abandoned by his own party room, who desperately want the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. But this lot opposite are so full of hate for each other, and he is so lacking in ticker, that he would not stand up to the mark. The Leader of the Opposition has been abandoned by the Prime Minister, who wanted the honourable member for Epping as leader. He has been abandoned by the voters in Pittwater, who wanted and got McTaggart. He has been abandoned by the clubs. They were not prepared to risk the \$22 billion unfunded black hole so they took the deal. They were not prepared to gamble on the most extreme and dangerous Leader of the Opposition that the State has ever had.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chair would like to hear the point of order.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: My point of order relates to relevance. The dangerous people we are concerned about are the Middle Eastern thugs the Premier will not do anything about.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I am sure the Premier was just warming to his reply.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The majority leader does that well. He would do it a lot better if he were sitting where the Leader of the Opposition sits. The Leader of the Opposition has been abandoned by the honourable member for Epping. If the Leader of the Opposition was a real leader he would have done something to help the honourable member for Epping or would have tried to keep him. That would have been a mark of leadership. But, no, in the same way he slinked out—

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the House to order. The honourable member for Lane Cove will come to order.

[*Interruption*]

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

Mr Wayne Merton: Point of order: This House has been bored witless by the Premier's answer.

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I take it that the honourable member for Baulkham Hills took a point of order relating to relevance. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Baulkham Hills is about to abandon the Leader of the Opposition as well. When David Clarke rolls him in his preselection that will be another one abandoned. The only person who has not abandoned the Leader of the Opposition is David Clarke, but more of Mr Clarke and the extremists later. The Leader of the Opposition has been increasingly abandoned by business. Remember Richard Choy at the Property Council function. The Leader of the Opposition nearly choked on the smoked salmon and the caviar when he was asked, "If you were Premier what would be your priorities for New South Wales? Can you name one?" He clammed up after he nearly choked and said, "I will get back to you later."

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. I am sure the public gallery would like to know the answer to this question. They would like to hear a sensible response about what the Premier and the Government are doing about gun crime in Sydney, because any one of the people in the gallery could be an innocent victim of a gun crime. The Premier can go on with the political carry-on at another time. But I am sure that the people in the gallery think this House is a joke.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A point of order should not be a speech. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. However, I note what he has said, and I presume the Premier is coming to the end of the preamble to his response.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Murrumbidgee might do his local community a favour and turn up to some of the traffic meetings. This morning we announced that 58 officers would form part of the Middle Eastern crime squad, a permanent squad that will take the job of Task Force Gain, which, by the way, has laid some 1,300 charges. Today the Leader of the Opposition is at it again, attempting to attack the Government. In fact, what he is doing is attacking the police.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order—

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: He was at it yesterday. Why does he not look some of them straight in the eye and tell them what he says in here?

Mr Peter Debnam: The point of order is relevance again. Task Force Gain has 177 officers. This clown has put 58 officers only into Middle Eastern crime.

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

[Interruption]

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: There will be a total of 108. An additional 50 uniformed officers will form part of the permanent squad to investigate Middle Eastern crime. Two weeks ago 750 additional police officers were announced. The Leader of the Opposition is saying that the Opposition would have 600. If it were true that the Government had cut police numbers by 600—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: You have.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: No, it is not true. So the Opposition commitment to add 600 is in fact a promise not to increase the police force by one single officer. If the Leader of the Opposition is promising 600 and it is true that we have cut 600 then his promise is zero. He would not increase the police force by one single officer. That is what he is proposing.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. I warn all members that the standing orders will be upheld. The Premier is replying to a question. I will not entertain members of the Opposition taking spurious point of order. I acknowledge that a number of the points of order in relation to relevance had some substance, but the last few points of order have been nothing more than attempts to disrupt the Premier's reply. I do not take kindly to that. I intend to give a definitive ruling in relation to points of order relating to relevance. The Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: This Government has cut 550 police and this guy is lying his head off about it. You have got to tell the truth.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is again deliberately flouting the ruling of the Chair.

[Interruption]

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

Mr Peter Debnam: Your Government cut 550 police over the past 2¼ years.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I have warned the Leader of the Opposition before that he cannot take a point of order merely because he does not like the reply of the Premier or a Minister. I remind all members, including the Leader of the Opposition, that this is question time; it is not explanation time or a debate. If members wish to raise issues by way of explanation or further elaboration they can do so when notices of motions are given.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It changes by the second. Five seconds ago he said the Government had cut the Police Force by 600. In that interjection he said it was 550. He cannot get it right from second to second. If it were true that the Government had cut police numbers by 600 where would that leave his commitment to increase the force by 600 officers? Does that mean it is a policy that involves not one extra police officer?

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: I am happy to answer that question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I told the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr Peter Debnam: He asked me a question!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition can choose to answer at another time. Ministers and the Premier are asked questions, and the House will listen to them in silence.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: An additional 2,000 police officers have been appointed since this Government came to office. The Government has also announced the appointment of an additional 750 officers, who will be available by the end of January next year. A permanent squad dealing with Middle Eastern crime will have 58 staff, including 49 police officers and an additional 50 uniformed officers. What we have just seen again today is another attack on the police. Again, the Leader of the Opposition has peddled his exaggerated and hysterical line that there is a conspiracy involving the rank-and-file police, police commanders or the leadership and the Government to go soft on crime. That is what he is saying. He has such little respect for the police that he asserts that they are so dishonest that they would participate in a conspiracy along those lines.

These are the people who risk their lives every day. They are doing a dangerous job and the Leader of the Opposition stands up in this place day after day and at press conference after press conference asserting that they are all involved in a conspiracy not to arrest, investigate or indict offenders. He always does that under the guise of attacking the Government. However, day in and day out he is attacking the police. He never offers one word of support to the police service in this State. He is always attacking. How can there be respect for law and authority in this State when every day the alternative Premier launches into an attack that undermines the authority of police officers? This Government will provide the police with the resources, powers and equipment that they need to do the job, and we will stand with them. We are on the side of the cops, members opposite are not.

ST VINCENT'S RESEARCH AND BIOTECH RESEARCH PROJECT

Mr PAUL PEARCE: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. What is the latest information on Government support for medical research?

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will answer the question.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Good planning policy is good economic policy because planning red tape is the enemy of jobs and investment. That is why in the past seven months our excellent Planning Minister has approved 134 development applications worth almost \$3 billion, creating almost 10,000 jobs, and declared almost 200 major projects worth more than \$9 billion, which are expected to generate some 9,000 jobs. There is a great story on medical research coming. Today I can inform the House about another highly significant project that the Minister for Planning has approved under our new planning laws. This project will keep the State at the forefront of medical research. I am pleased to advise the honourable member for Coogee about a massive expansion of the medical research facilities at the St Vincent's precinct in Darlinghurst. The project will create

the largest medical research institute in New South Wales and build our share of the nation's biotech industry, which stands at 40 per cent.

The St Vincent's research and biotech research project is a \$60-million capital investment, to which the New South Wales Government will contribute \$25 million, or almost half of the funding. It will be a joint venture involving the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and the outstanding Garvan Institute. This is by any measure a major investment in the future of New South Wales. The investment will bring new hope to people with cancer, heart disease, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's disease, HIV/AIDS, arthritis, asthma and diabetes. The project's centrepiece will be a purpose-built biomedical research facility to be constructed on a site in Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst, which is currently used as a car park. The building will be designed to the highest scientific and architectural standards. Work on this new eight-storey facility is expected to start later this year and to be completed by late 2007.

At that time, it will become home to 300 of the State's finest researchers and staff. This is stage one of the project, and there will be more news about the precinct much later. The St Vincent's-Garvan precinct is already the State's strongest medical research facility, with major research projects underway in developing new treatment for HIV/AIDS, MS, Alzheimer's disease and osteoporosis as well as projects to discover the genetic causes of bowel and breast cancer. It also involves the development of tests to reveal long-term risks of heart disease and cancer.

With this new facility, St Vincent's and the Garvan Institute will take a quantum leap forward. The new precinct will be a drawcard for the best scientific and medical brains from around the world. In other words, this will help to reverse the brain drain from New South Wales. This project is worthy of having been declared state significant and having been brought in under the new planning laws administered by the Minister for Planning. The project promises to deliver new medical treatments and cures. It will be a major research centre and will deliver 300 permanent positions in medical research. It is a huge win for New South Wales. It reinforces this State's role as the nation's biotech capital and brings fresh hope to those who suffer from illness and disease.

TOUKLEY AMBULANCE STATION ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I direct my question to the Premier. When he was health Minister why did he allow ambulance officers to continue working at Toukley Ambulance Station given that the Department of Commerce recommended that asbestos be removed in August 2005? Given that the Premier has known since 2004 that asbestos at the station was a health risk to staff, why was it evacuated only today?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I am advised that asbestos was first found following hail and water damage to the station in 2004 and that a three-stage remediation is being undertaken. I am also advised that the first phase has been completed and that it included testing and assessment of all surfaces at the ambulance station to ensure that any asbestos detected was intact and of little risk to staff. The ambulance service gave all staff the opportunity to work from nearby ambulance stations if they were concerned about the presence of asbestos. Service delivery was not affected.

I am advised that stage two of the remediation will commence later this week and that Toukley ambulance officers were relocated to Wyong Hospital last night. Wyong Hospital is only four kilometres or so from Toukley Ambulance Station. The ambulance service advises that Toukley staff have been fully consulted about the move, and the option of relocating to Wyong Hospital was proposed by the Toukley staff themselves. Service delivery will be unaffected regardless of the location of the Toukley ambulance service, because all ambulances are dispatched from a centralised operations centre.

Mr Carl Scully: Point of order: The Federal Liberals are allowing—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will resume his seat. I call the Leader of the House to order for the second time. The honourable member for Wentworthville has the call.

COURT UPGRADES

Ms PAM ALLAN: I direct my question to the Attorney General. What is the latest information on the Government's program to build and upgrade courts in New South Wales?

Mr BOB DEBUS: The Government's Court House Improvement Program provides for \$250 million to be spent over 10 years improving the accessibility, security and facilities of New South Wales courthouses. It is

an outstanding infrastructure investment. Already the people of New South Wales are enjoying the dividends of this unprecedented investment in our courts. In February I opened the \$5 million refurbishments of Blacktown Local Court. This month the new \$9.4 million Children's Court at Broadmeadow and the new \$11.5 million court complex at Mt Druitt will open. The new \$21.2 million Bankstown courthouse is on schedule to open soon after that.

The Government is investing in this State's future by creating state-of-the-art courthouses that are functionally efficient, with world-class security systems and first-rate technology. It is worth remembering, as I certainly do, the damage caused to our court system by the Coalition when it was last in office. Within months of attaining office, having said nothing about the issue in the election campaign, the Coalition closed 39 courts in a single day. It was a sneak attack, and the Coalition will be looking to do the same again.

Let me point out a few of the local courts that were shut down on that fateful day. The people of Burrinjuck lost the local court in Boorowa. The people of Murrumbidgee lost Tocumwal Local Court. Towns north of Sydney were not spared from the Coalition's razor gang. The voters of Myall Lakes lost the Tea Gardens Local Court. Those who live in the seat of Coffs Harbour had Dorrigo Local Court taken from them. Thirty-four other local courts were also closed. When this Government came to power in 1995 the court system was on the verge of collapse. The rebuilding of the justice system is a proud achievement of the Labor Government.

The flagship of the Government's capital works program is the Parramatta Justice Precinct. The precinct will be home to a total of 15 new state-of-the-art courts, including a world-class, purpose-built children's court. The justice precinct offices will also house a number of shopfront services, including the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victims Services, Legal Aid, and the Office of the Protective Commissioner. Western Sydney residents and the legal fraternity will enjoy unprecedented ease of access to these valuable services. I am proud to say that the justice precinct offices will be the first government building in New South Wales to achieve a five-star environmental rating.

The Parramatta Justice Precinct will be a boon to the Western Sydney economy. Our projections suggest that some 1,500 people will relocate to the precinct from Sydney by as early as October next year. By 2010 the Parramatta region will surpass Adelaide and Perth as a major population centre. I am pleased to announce that construction of the first stage of the project, the \$39 million Metropolitan Children's Court, is progressing ahead of schedule. The court should begin sitting by the end of this year or early next year.

The design of a purpose-built children's court is one of the proudest achievements of the Parramatta Justice Precinct. The children's court complex will feature six multi-use courtrooms in an environment that will be specifically designed for children. The children's court is an institution that looks after our most vulnerable citizens—our children. The philosophy of the children's court is to put children first, and it is this philosophy that guides the design of the new children's court complex. Whereas courts were traditionally designed to emphasise the severity of the court's authority, in this project we have designed a court with an atmosphere that is relaxed and reassuring for victims.

Special attention has been assigned to every aspect of the court's layout and appearance. The children's court complex will feature separate and secure rooms for parents, protected witnesses and victim support groups, as well as child play areas. A children's clinic will relocate from Sydney's central business district to provide expert independent assessments of young people who come before the court on care and protection matters. There will also be offices for the Department of Community Services, community services and counselling services. Closed-circuit television cameras will monitor the facility, and visitors to the building will have to pass through airport-style X-ray machines and metal detectors.

When it comes to courts, the Iemma Government's investment in infrastructure is unparalleled. The Parramatta Justice Precinct is an exciting project and will no doubt provide a blueprint for justice facilities around Australia and beyond. In just seven months the Government will have opened at least eight new courtrooms and two call-over courts, all of which will be situated in first-class complexes, equipped with state-of-the-art technology. While the Iemma Government's record of investment in New South Wales courts stands with a growing record of achievements for our State, the Coalition's decision to close 39 courts will remain the darkest day in the history of our justice system.

RURAL HOSPITALS EMERGENCY TREATMENT BENCHMARKS

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that NSW Health's triage statistics show that underresourced rural-based hospitals continue to fail to meet targets for treating life-threatening and serious illnesses and injuries, will it take a tragic death in a country hospital waiting queue before the Premier acts?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I assume the Leader of The Nationals is referring to triage category 1. The latest available statistics, of which the Leader of The Nationals is well aware, show that 100 per cent of triage category 1 patients are treated within the benchmark time. By way of contrast, when the Coalition last ran the hospital system the percentage of triage category 1 patients treated within the benchmark treatment time of two minutes was a long way short of 100 per cent. If the honourable member wants a run-down on the triage categories, he can get them from the NSW Health web site.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The Premier, the former Minister for Health, knows that the question refers to categories 2, 3 and 4. He should answer the question.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The question referred to critically injured patients, which are the patients in category 1. Those patients have to be treated within the benchmark time of two minutes. They are at 100 per cent. Category 5 patients are above the benchmark.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government members will stop calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: As with access block, which is at a three-year low, hospital performance in the State has been improving. It has been improving because of extra dollars, extra beds, more nurses, and more surgery being carried out. The Leader of The Nationals should be the last person to ask a question about rural hospitals. I remind him that under the Coalition Government 33 hospitals were closed, privatised or downgraded. They included Port Macquarie hospital—

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Leader of The Nationals should be the last person to ask a question about hospitals, particularly rural hospitals.

RURAL AND REGIONAL HOSPITAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr PETER BLACK: My question without notice is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier inform the House how the Government is improving hospital services for rural and regional New South Wales?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I am pleased to inform the House of the latest funding boost for regional and rural New South Wales hospitals. A funding allocation of \$2.5 million is being provided for rural surgical enhancements. All rural area health services will benefit from additional funding for equipment so that more procedures can be performed and more services provided. For example, in the Greater West an additional \$725,000 will be provided, including \$300,000 for ophthalmology equipment for Bourke and Walgett so that an extra 60 cataract procedures can be performed each year. These hospitals will also receive \$424,000 in flexible endoscopy equipment for an additional 240 procedures each year.

The Greater Southern Area Health Service will receive an allocation of \$575,000. This includes seed funding for clinical nurse consultants for Griffith high-dependency surgical patients, funding for a new rapid infuser and warming device for Wagga Wagga hospital, and \$382,000 in funding for new surgical equipment to be used in colonoscopies. In the Hunter New England area the honourable member for Tamworth will be pleased to hear that additional gynaecological equipment for Gunnedah Hospital will be provided, as well as two additional patient recovery chairs. A total of \$500,000 has been allocated to the Hunter New England Area Health Service, and that includes gynaecological equipment at Muswellbrook hospital and additional equipment for eye surgery at Moree. These are significant enhancements, building on the additional \$7 million announced earlier in the week.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Ask the AMA about it; they say it's a drop in the ocean.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for North Shore says it is a drop in the ocean. That is \$7 million for additional surgery, announced earlier in the week, and \$2.5 million announced today, on top of

\$900 million announced in the budget—a 9 nine per cent increase—and that is also on top of a cumulative increase of \$115 million for surgery. They are the enhancements that the honourable member for North Shore dismisses as a drop in the ocean.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: No, the AMA thinks it is.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Oh yes, John Gullotta from the AMA—the man you always wheel out. One day the Liberals will do the right thing by him and put him in Parliament. Maybe of those frontbenchers that John Howard wants the members opposite to get rid of—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: It is totally inappropriate for the Premier to be attacking the head of the Australian Medical Association for simply doing his job.

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

Mr Barry O'Farrell: What have you got against Italians? Leave the Italians alone.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I am sure Professor Gullotta, like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, can look after himself.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: He is a good fellow and he is a loyal supporter of the Opposition. One day the Liberals might do the right thing by him and put him in Parliament. God knows, the Opposition could do with John Gullotta on its front bench or its backbench. And they have plenty of opportunity to look after him given the Prime Minister wants them to get rid of five members on the front bench and all the backbenchers are under preselection threat. There are plenty of opportunities to accommodate Dr Gullotta.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: He thinks you are doing a lousy job.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I would be surprised if John Gullotta got up and said, "You are doing a good job". Then we would be in trouble. If we ever got an endorsement from John Gullotta we would be in serious trouble. The honourable member for North Shore is very quick to talk about waiting lists and waiting times but members might notice there has been silence from her about what appeared in the Newcastle *Herald* earlier in the week about how patients in the Hunter are sick of waiting. The article referred to people being sick of waiting for an appointment for a general practitioner—sick of the shortages of general practitioners.

[Interruption]

The Opposition might want to stand up for general practitioners and get the Commonwealth to create more positions at universities so we can have more general practitioners.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order: My point of order is in relation to relevance. The general practitioners in the country are all working at Maitland Hospital to get—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for North Shore will resume her seat.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Patients in the Hunter wait up to two weeks and in the Central Coast often up to three weeks just to see a family doctor. Have we heard one word from the honourable member for North Shore about those waiting lists and those waiting times? Have we heard one motion from the honourable member for North Shore or the Leader of the Opposition calling on the Commonwealth? Right across the nation, health services are calling on the Commonwealth to create extra places in our universities to produce more Australian doctors, and have we heard one word from the Opposition this week about the Commonwealth's restriction on places at universities to produce doctors? Not one single word.

Yet again the Opposition has failed to stand up for the interests of the people of New South Wales, and when it comes to health care there is total silence about those waiting lists and those waiting times. It is interesting that when it involves her Federal friends the honourable member for North Shore will not stand up for the people of New South Wales. All we ever get is just silence. That is the policy of the honourable member

for North Shore. A \$2.5 million enhancement to surgical services comes on top of the \$7 million announced earlier this week, which is additional resources to the budget announcement of \$900 million, proving our commitment to improving health services in the State.

THE HONOURABLE ERIC ROOZENDAAL PARLIAMENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that yesterday the Minister for Roads made an obscene gesture in the upper House, will you demand that the Minister apologise to the Parliament and to the members today?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Yes. He already has.

BANORA POINT CARAVAN PARK

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading. What is the latest information on the Government's moves to secure and safeguard rights for caravan park residents, especially in the troubled Banora Point Caravan Park in the Tweed?

Ms DIANE BEAMER: I thank the member for Tweed for his question and for his continuing strong support for park residents on the far North Coast—especially his long fight for the safety and security of the residents of Banora Point Caravan Park. I also thank those members who accompanied me on my recent visits to residential parks and retirement villages throughout the State—the honourable members for Charlestown, Newcastle, Strathfield, Canterbury and Ballina. Unfortunately, I have to inform the House that on 29 March police were called to the Banora Point Caravan Park. That is a deeply troubled park, with a notorious history that will be familiar to many members.

The next day, 30 March, I was alarmed and shocked to see a photograph on the front page of the *Tweed Daily News*. It shows a baseball bat with a large kitchen knife taped to the end and another large knife, allegedly found in the caretaker's office. I understand police arrested two caretakers and they have been charged by the police with several serious offences. These matters are still before the courts. The police in the area are doing a great job. Regrettably, this is not the first time the park has made the news for the wrong reasons, nor is it the first time the park has been mentioned in this place either. Residents from the Banora Point Caravan Park are currently involved in a matter before the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. They have, in fact, been in the tribunal on many occasions. The residents say the Banora Point park owner is trying to close down and sell off the park. All they want is a fair deal, their rights to be upheld and respected, and the opportunity to enjoy their remaining time in the park in safety and security.

The Iemma Government has brought in strong new laws to give our 30,000 park residents just that: a safe, secure environment, with guarantees of compensation and relocation arrangements if their park is slated for redevelopment or closure. Most residential parks are wonderful places to live: there is a strong sense of community and residents look after each other. This Parliament approved amendments to the Residential Parks Act in December 2005 and the honourable members for Myall Lakes and Gosford ensured it received bi-partisan support. Thanks to these amendments, New South Wales now has the strongest set of rights and entitlements for park residents in the country.

The provisions concerning the appointment of a park administrator came into effect on 3 February 2006, ahead of other changes. As I have said, we hoped we would not have to use these additional powers. The appointment of an administrator is the last resort when we truly believe the safety and welfare of residents are being put at risk. On 14 February Fair Trading filed an application with the Supreme Court to appoint an administrator to Banora Point Caravan Park. Meetings I had with the honourable member for Tweed and park residents convinced us that this application was necessary. I believe that these latest events add further weight to that decision. The application to appoint an administrator to Banora Point Caravan Park is due back in the Supreme Court later this month. I can inform the House that Fair Trading has now made an application to the court for an expedited hearing and we will be making our arguments to the court tomorrow.

The Banora Point situation is an extreme case but one that unfortunately highlights why we need strong laws to protect park residents. The Government's reforms in this area have delivered exactly that—strong consumer rights for residents. I am pleased to advise the House that Her Excellency the Governor has proclaimed the Residential Parks Amendment Act, which comes into force this Monday, 10 April. Residents will be given greater information when they move into a park as well as increased rights and compensation

when a park is slated for redevelopment or closure. Residents now have greater rights if they leave their homes for extended medical care. Emergency services will have better access to parks and there is now a customer services code covering electricity services and charges. Residents will only have to pay a maximum \$50 a year for water availability charges. There will be fairer provisions covering rent increases and dispute resolution.

To ensure that all park residents are informed of their rights and responsibilities Fair Trading is going on the road, with a series of seminars at 23 coastal towns and regional centres across the State. The first was held last week at Tweed Heads. This seminar was attended by 130 people and was a great success. It will be my privilege to attend some of the seminars and local members will be invited as well. Next week Mr Speaker and I will be attending the seminar at Quakers Hill with fact sheets for both residents and park owners. Residential parks are a vital part of the housing sector. The Iemma Government is making sure that parks are viable and sustainable. But, more important, it is looking after the residents, making sure that they are safe and secure in great communities.

NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL PROPOSAL

Mr ALEX McTAGGART: I direct my question to the Premier. Will the Government give a clear commitment to consult with local communities and local councils when finalising a health services plan for the northern beaches in light of the decision to proceed with a new hospital at Frenchs Forest?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I acknowledge the honourable member for Pittwater's strong interest in getting the best health care outcome for his residents. With the decision to save Mona Vale Hospital and build a magnificent new level 5 hospital at Frenchs Forest, the Government will deliver the best possible outcome for all on the northern beaches, from Manly to Palm Beach, and this two-hospital policy is the one that best suits the northern beaches. I can advise the honourable member for Pittwater and Pittwater Council that there is now an opportunity to play a role in finalising the service plans for these facilities. The process will, of course, also involve the honourable member for Manly and the two councils, Manly Council and Warringah Council. In addition to Pittwater Council, Warringah Council and Manly Council will also have their opportunity to shape clinical services at these two hospitals, and, of course, the clinicians.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: I will involve them. I will be the Minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the Opposition will cease interjecting. The Premier will continue his answer.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That is not likely. One of the reasons it is not likely is that the people of the northern beaches do not know what you stand for when it comes to health and hospitals.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease interjecting. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: There are decreasing numbers of Liberal politicians in that part of Sydney. It is proving very difficult to get from them a consistent policy—some would say impossible. It is one of the reasons that Mr McTaggart is the member for Pittwater instead of a Liberal. On the morning of the announcement the honourable member for North Shore said on Radio 2GB, "I want to ask the Government: 'Will you be spending any money on upgrading those facilities?'" The answer is yes. That very day the Minister announced that a new, high-level acute hospital would be built at Frenchs Forest and confirmed that Mona Vale Hospital would remain on its existing site.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: How much money are you spending on it?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The budget papers brought down last year include money for upgrading the emergency department of Mona Vale Hospital.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: How much?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is a \$3 million upgrade of the emergency department of Mona Vale Hospital.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Exactly!

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That is exactly what the clinicians wanted and it has been expanded from a \$500,00 upgrade to a \$3 million upgrade. The Goulston work will see additional staff being provided to the hospital. The announcement involved a new, higher-level acute hospital, and the retention of Mona Vale Hospital on its existing site, including the emergency department, which will be upgraded.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Will be?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Yes.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: But you said you had \$3 million last budget.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Yes.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: What are you spending the money on?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I will come to the Opposition's position on Mona Vale a little later. On the day that the Minister announced the hospital, the honourable member for North Shore asked, "Will you be spending any money?" The answer to that is yes. As the *Manly Daily* editorialised:

As a community let us savour this. We have won a facility custom designed to serve all of us; our children and our children's children.

The *Manly Daily* got it right and this announcement got it right for the northern beaches. The Opposition has not got it right. On the same day the honourable member for North Shore was telling the media that this issue had been around for 10 years, so she has no position on the hospitals at all. The honourable member for Wakehurst said that the people of the northern beaches have been shafted because they need two hospitals. We know that they need two hospitals.

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

[*Interruption*]

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

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I understand that the honourable member for Wakehurst was goaded into doing what he did. Nonetheless, he will resist the goading and resume his seat.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: He went on to say that the Liberals and The Nationals have had a consistent policy on this, which is, that there must be two hospitals. I inform the honourable member for Wakehurst that there has not been a consistent policy of two hospitals. In August 2004 the Opposition proposed the establishment of a large, high-level hospital at Mona Vale and an upgrade of Manly Hospital. Then, just three months later, it signed an agreement for an ongoing complementary role for Mona Vale Hospital. In August Mona Vale Hospital is to be a high-level, acute level 5-plus hospital; three months later Mona Vale is to be a complementary hospital, "serving its local community".

The only thing that has been consistent has been the inconsistency when it comes to health services on the northern beaches. But the one member who did support the decision is the honourable member for Davidson, and good on him. I wish him the best in his preselection because that probably motivated his words that "Frenchs Forest is the right location for the new high-level hospital" in August 2004. Three months later the position had changed and the honourable member for Davidson was saying that Frenchs Forest is the right location. The position of Bronwyn Bishop, the Federal member for that area, has been "I will continue to fight for a high-level, level 5 hospital at Mona Vale."

Another Liberal, another position, another policy! Another Liberal, the Federal health Minister, said, "We can't take this seriously unless the Government gives a clear start and end date and gives satisfactory funding." Then moments later, on Channel 7, he did a backflip and said, "Rather than promise yet another new hospital, the State Government should upgrade the hospitals we've already got." That is six Liberal members, some with no view and others with different and contradictory views. That is what the people on the northern beaches face: One Federal member saying, "Forget Frenchs Forest. It'll be at Mona Vale"; one State member

saying, "Frenchs Forest is the right place"; another State member saying, "Well, it's two hospitals but we're not quite sure which site"; and another Liberal member from the northern beaches, the Federal health Minister—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The Premier, when he was Minister for Health, stood at Dee Why and said the hospital would be built at Dee Why. The honourable member for Manly had it at Brookvale although he preferred Dee Why.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member for Wakehurst resumed his seat the Premier would be able to continue his answer. The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I do not know what the honourable member for Wakehurst stands for. The only difficulty—

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: We have one Liberal, the Federal health Minister, saying "Upgrade both hospitals"; another Federal member, Bronwyn Bishop, saying, "Over my dead body. It'll be at Mona Vale"; one State member saying, "No, it'll be at Frenchs Forest"; and another State member saying, "No, do two hospitals." Of course, we do not know the Leader of the Opposition's position. The honourable member for Pittwater is here fighting for Mona Vale and health services across the board. We will be working with the clinicians and all three councils to configure health services for the northern beaches. While on the issue of hospitals, for the benefit of the Leader of The Nationals, the triage category one benchmark performance at the moment—

Mr Andrew Stoner: What about categories three and four?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I will come to that. The triage category one benchmark performance is 100 per cent. Under the benchmark, patients used to be treated in less than two minutes. In 1994, when the Coalition Government last ran the hospital system, the performance was 78 per cent. The latest figures show that the current performance in category two is 75 per cent. When the Coalition last ran the hospitals it was 53 per cent. The benchmark is 80 per cent.

Mr Donald Page: What's the benchmark?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I just said that it is 80 per cent. When the Coalition last ran the hospital system the performance was 53 per cent. For category one, that is, the critically injured, those whose lives are at immediate risk, the Coalition's performance was 78 per cent; the current performance is 100 per cent.

SKILLS SHORTAGES

Mr MATT BROWN: My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Regional Development. What is the State Government doing to overcome the current skills shortage in New South Wales?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I note the work the honourable member for Kiama does with me and our Illawarra colleagues on skills shortages and jobs issues, particularly in Kiama and the Shoalhaven. Ensuring New South Wales businesses have a skilled labour supply is vital to the continued growth of the New South Wales economy. Activity, growth and jobs have been Premier Iemma's top priority since 3 August last year. That is why the Iemma Government has abolished or reduced five taxes and charges affecting business in the State. The vendor duty has been scrapped, land tax thresholds have been lifted, workers compensation premiums have reduced by 15 per cent, there is payroll tax relief for businesses in areas of high unemployment and the poker machine tax has been reduced to ensure the viability of clubs.

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: What a contrast to the Coalition, which has no agenda, no detail and no plan—just a \$22 billion black hole of unfunded promises and the endless mantra, "I'll get back to you on that."

The Leader of the Opposition is fast becoming the Harrods version of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen in New South Wales politics—"Don't you worry about that." A thriving economy requires the right mix of talents and skills to meet the needs of our complex modern economy. Sydney is Australia's only truly global city, putting us in an international battle for both investment and talent. We need to be aggressive in attracting and retaining skilled and talented people. The Government's plan to open 1,300 new hospital beds, for example, was only made possible through a strong recruitment program for overseas trained nurses.

In November last year the Premier announced a major expansion of the Government's efforts to attract skilled migrants to New South Wales. This initiative is called the Drive for Talent program. This plan sponsors skilled migrants to move to Sydney for the first time. The Government has set a target of doubling the number of skilled migrants coming to New South Wales from 350 a year to at least 700. We are placing a strong focus on attracting high-value, highly skilled applicants in the fields of finance, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and information technology. Under this program, the New South Wales Government will nominate applicants with high-level skills and experience required across the New South Wales economy. This visa requires nomination by a State or Territory government to the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

The specific professionals we want to attract include accountants, financial investment advisers, medical scientists, chemists and laboratory technicians, and systems managers and designers. We are primarily targeting highly skilled people in the United States of America, Great Britain, Canada, Ireland, India and China. With the dearth of talent on the Opposition benches, as so pointedly noted by the Prime Minister, I hear that Bill Heffernan is now lobbying for a new category in the skilled migration program. He is urging the New South Wales Liberals to pick candidates on the basis of the contribution they can make, and as talented members of Parliament like the honourable member for Epping desert the ship it is no wonder he is turning his sights offshore. I digress.

The Department of State and Regional Development is also forming partnerships with recruiters, employers and universities both in Australia and overseas to secure the best graduates and professionals for businesses in Sydney and across New South Wales. The department has also developed a web site providing easy access to information about migration to the State, the occupations and skills in demand, and the available visa categories and their criteria. The Government is also targeting the one million highly skilled Australians who are currently working overseas to help them when they make the decision to return home. We are also continuing to work to attract business migrants who plan to set up a business or invest in New South Wales.

A key challenge is the need to attract skilled migrants to regional areas. Earlier this month the Newcastle *Herald* reported that an Upper Hunter mining support group had advertised for 55 tradespeople, paying salaries of up to \$100,000 a year, but the company received only 16 applications. The New South Wales Government will also sponsor skilled applicants in regional areas under the Commonwealth's Skilled Independent Regional (Provisional) visa program. This visa from the Australian Government requires the sponsorship of the State Government or a regional certifying body, and we are enthusiastic participants in that program. Through the Drive for Talent program, this Government is in a world market, working hard and working smart to bring the world's best skilled workers to New South Wales. It is another sign that the State is well and truly open for business.

Questions without notice concluded.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr John Watkins agreed to:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 2 May 2006 at 2.15 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Ground Water Entitlements Program

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [3.30 p.m.]: This matter is urgent because our western irrigators deserve to be told what their entitlements are going to be and are entitled to be confident about what compensation they are going to receive. This matter is urgent because four issues have been raised by the Namoi irrigators as matters of urgency. They are property rights issues relating to future estimates of sustainable yield. The matter is urgent because they want to know now what their trading rules and hot spot management plans are

going to be. They want to know now what the process is going to involve. They want to know now about—and I suggest this is the most important aspect and involves in particular the shadow Minister opposite—the taxation issue.

The situation is that \$110 million is on the table, being \$55 million from the New South Wales Government and \$55 million from the Commonwealth Government, but there has been absolutely deafening silence from the Opposition with respect to the taxation issue. The Commonwealth wants to tax that \$110 million, in other words take back \$47 million, leaving a total pool of \$55 million plus \$8 million coming in from the Commonwealth. This matter is urgent because the issue has to be addressed, and must be addressed with alacrity. This matter is urgent because I have been meeting with the catchment management authorities [CMAs] in the Murray, the Murrumbidgee, the Lachlan and elsewhere. All CMAs relating to the Murray-Darling and to western New South Wales are bringing down their plans now.

I have had meetings in the past four weeks. The urgency of it, to start with, is that the people of the Murray CMA want to know what finance they can approach the bank for and what is going to happen to next year's crop. At the present time there is no certainty, no surety, no nothing because the Federal Government has made no decision on the matter. It continues to obfuscate and there is absolute silence from the New South Wales Opposition. This matter is urgent because of the total failure on the part of The Nationals to support New South Wales' western irrigators. I note the shadow Minister for, I think, holidays has just walked past. He has given no indication of what he is prepared to do about the taxation issue.

This matter is desperately urgent for all of those irrigators relying upon annual crops. This matter has to be resolved over the coming short break. It has to be resolved because they must have certainty, in order to get an answer from the bank. They need to be told what they are going to receive by way of compensation and that revolves around whether the Commonwealth Government is or is not going to continue to tax them. This matter is urgent because not only must the irrigators of western New South Wales be told what compensation they are going to get, but the townspeople who rely upon irrigators need to be told whether they are going to continue to have sustainable businesses based upon irrigation.

The people of Berrigan need to be told, the people of Jerilderie need to be told, the people of Canargo need to be told and the people of Murray shire need to be told. Most importantly, so far as I am concerned at the moment the people of Wakool shire need to be told just what their entitlements are going to be. I note that the shadow Minister opposite is going to take part in this debate. I hope his 10-minute contribution will contain a clear statement about where The Nationals stand in regard to this matter and what he will tell his Federal colleagues. The people of New South Wales deserve to be told what is going to happen. The people of New South Wales deserved to be told a year ago—not now, not tomorrow, but a year ago. That is the urgency. They must be told as a matter of urgency what kind of compensation they can expect to receive. This matter is urgent.

Toukley Ambulance Station Asbestos Contamination

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore) [3.34 p.m.]: I would be astonished if there was one person in this House who did not think the life of ambulance officers, who have been exposed to asbestos when the Government knew about it, is not a more urgent matter than just about any other matter we could consider in this House. The Government has today ordered the evacuation of Toukley ambulance station. I note that the honourable member for Wyong is in the Chamber. He has accused his Government of failure in this regard. Asbestos was found in 2000. In 2004, during a flood, the carpet was contaminated with airborne asbestos and an industrial blower was brought in to dry it, blowing asbestos dust throughout the ambulance station when ambulance officers were in the building. The Government knew about it but did nothing.

On Tuesday night of this week the union passed a unanimous motion to move out of the building. They were ordered back, and it was only today that the Government agreed to evacuate the building. It is an absolute disgrace that the Premier and Ministers were able to talk in this place about the James Hardie victims of asbestos. What about their own employees? What about guaranteeing the safety of the people for whom they are responsible, ambulance officers employed by NSW Health who were exposed to asbestos dust and have been abandoned by no less than the Premier, who was Minister for Health when this problem was at its height? In 2004 when asbestos dust was found leaking from the roof through into the carpet, industrial blowers were brought in. The ambulance officers have called many times for action to be taken.

Mr Tony Stewart: Point of order: In accordance with your considered ruling of 28 March 2006, the honourable member is not principally establishing priority when arguing the motion. I remind the honourable member that this is not the time for substantive argument; it is a time to argue priority.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Don't do this to yourself.

Mr Tony Stewart: It is time to argue urgency, and that is the reason for your contribution now. You are arguing urgency only.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Although for most of her contribution the honourable member for North Shore has been putting her case for priority, she is now beginning to wander into the substance of her motion. I ask her to comply with the standing order, which provides that she must establish why her motion should have priority over the motion of the honourable member for Murray-Darling.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Thank you. I know I could not do without the helpful advice from the honourable member for Bankstown. I think he will be very embarrassed when he realises what he has done. He has said there is nothing urgent about the lives of ambulance officers. There is nothing more urgent than this House taking responsibility for debating the welfare of its own employees, ambulance officers—and, while we are about it, the doctors who work in the operating theatre. The honourable member for Bega is in the Chamber and I know he will support this motion. I have here improvement notices issued by WorkCover. It is extremely urgent that this House has an opportunity to know what is in the WorkCover notices: the fact that doctors were at risk of being electrocuted, that nurses were at risk of slipping over and patients could not get out of the operating theatre because there was not enough room for the gurneys to be brought out.

It is urgent that this House has an opportunity to discuss these matters so we can apply pressure to the Government to fix them. It is urgent that workers in our hospitals, ambulance stations and health facilities have a safe workplace, resources and the support of the Government, and that they are not abandoned, as were the ambulance officers in Toukley. It is urgent that the ambulance officers have an opportunity to see how every member of this House votes on this issue—and they will. They will know whether honourable members voted to debate this issue; the ambulance officers will know whether they stand for them by urgently debating this motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Members on the Government side are getting very vocal. They are very unhappy because I am talking about the urgency for discussion about operating theatres that are so bad that doctors are at risk of being electrocuted. Ambulance officers are working in stations that are riddled with asbestos. The Government has known about it since 2004. Nothing could be more urgent. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion for urgent consideration of the honourable member for Murray-Darling be proceeded with—agreed to.

GROUND WATER ENTITLEMENTS PROGRAM

Urgent Motion

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [3.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Government and the Commonwealth have jointly invested \$110 million in the Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Entitlements Program, as joint and equal partners, to help ensure six major ground water systems in New South Wales are sustainable for the long term;
- (2) recognises that this program provides a transparent process for the reduction of water entitlements to a sustainable level to give certainty to irrigators, and to our regional and rural communities; and
- (3) condemns the Federal Government for insisting on taxing payments made to eligible licence holders.

We have just seen another miserable performance from Opposition members. This time they did not have the courage to force a division in this matter as The Nationals would have been embarrassed by having to vote for what the Liberals wanted to discuss today, a matter of longstanding moment concerning asbestos, rather than recompense for irrigators. There was no division because The Nationals members privately agreed with us. They would love to see the Federal Nationals come to terms with this matter but they are not game to say so publicly. Once again they have demonstrated themselves to be nothing more than lickspittles to the State Liberal Party.

Four years ago that great Minister Craig Knowles shook hands with then Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson, the member for Gwydir, on a deal to provide money to the irrigators. It has taken four years for anything to be finalised. Now we find that the \$110 million to be paid out will be taxed. The deal done between Craig Knowles and John Anderson was simple: \$55 million each—not a bad sort of a deal. Now the Commonwealth turns around and not only intends to tax its own \$55 million but also our \$55 million. This means that the Commonwealth Government is giving with one hand \$55 million for structural adjustment and taking back with the other hand \$47 million in taxation. The deal was \$55 million for \$55 million—dollar for dollar.

Even The Nationals can count up to six—six dollars on the one hand equals six dollars on the other hand. One plus one plus one plus one plus one plus one. But the deal has been shot to ribbons because now we are talking about our \$55 million for the Commonwealth's \$8 million. That is not a fair deal. It is not fair for irrigators. It is not fair for constituents of the once-great Country Party. I note that its last great leader, Ian Armstrong, was not in the House today. He would have stood up for the people of western New South Wales. He would have stood up for western and southern irrigators on ground water issues. He would have said, "It is not on. We want the full amount for these people." But what do we hear from this weak Opposition, this milkweed lot, The Nationals? Only two Opposition members are in the Chamber, one Liberal and one National. That shows their interest in the issue—half of nothing.

There are six ground water systems and all of them have a history of extraction. New South Wales has been observing the terms of its joint agreement with the Commonwealth and looking at how we can best address compensation. There have been arguments about history of use. Equally, there have been arguments about recent irrigators as opposed to well-established irrigators.

Mr Donald Page: Which side do you take?

Mr PETER BLACK: I am on the side of the Murray Catchment Management Authority. I am on the side of the 78 plus 22 breakdown. I will be very interested to hear from the shadow Minister what side he is on. All he has been trying to do is blame the State Government. He has not at any stage in this debate offered to help with the catchment management authorities in the south. I support the formula of 78 plus 22 for the Murray. It is the right formula. There are arguments in the Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority and in the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority. I wonder whether the shadow Minister for holidays would even know where Lachlan is. It is too far inland, I suspect. I think he has been up to the Namoi because he has always had an interest in the marshes.

Any reductions are to be based on a weighting that takes into account the value of active and inactive entitlements. That is the answer to his question. I do not know whether he understands that. The bottom line is that the heartless attitude of the Federal Government will mean that it will claw back up to \$47 million. The Howard Government is big on talk but not big on action. It talks about leadership but is afraid to show any. This goes to the core of the issue—lack of leadership, especially by The Nationals. The Federal National Party is prepared to kowtow to Costello and say, "Mr Costello, whatever you want we will give to you." I wonder what would have been the situation in the old days with Black Jack McEwen on this issue. He would be spinning in his grave at seeing what this once-great Country Party has become. At State level we have the same scenery as we have at the Federal level: The Nationals are just an appendage of the Liberal Party.

We know they had the choice. That great Opposition tactician, the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, said that in Opposition they should have two separate parties. That proposal came to me in 2002 when The Nationals had their conference at Broken Hill. What an interesting thing for that great tactician to say! But The Nationals have decided not to have three-cornered contests. They will not stand up for irrigators in the Federal Government. That money has gone. State Nationals are not prepared to put pressure on their Federal counterparts because that would upset the State Liberals, who do not have a single constituent within the six ground water areas we are talking about. As early as 2004, more than two years ago, former Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson trumpeted that water reform was on target and said that the Federal Government was committed to having the national water initiative agreed to by June of that year.

That is a bit embarrassing for the Opposition. Seven months later, in September 2004, we were still calling on The Nationals to put an end to the anxiety of farmers and irrigators by committing funds. We have been told that we have the \$55 million from the Federal Government but that it now intends to tax the money—not just the Commonwealth's \$55 million but also the \$55 million from New South Wales. In March 2005 it was the same story. The State Government called on the Federal Government to stop talking and start spending on

all our important water projects. As the Minister said at the time, everyone was fed up with The Nationals calling meetings and holding press conferences on water but failing to produce a chequebook when it really counted.

Opposition members are going around the bush having all sorts of protest meetings. That is why the shadow Minister was absent last Thursday: he went to Deniliquin to have a meeting about water. We heard all about it at question time yesterday. The shadow Minister for holidays was AWOL from the House on the issue of water. But there was no substance or delivery for the irrigators. The Prime Minister took great pride in finally announcing this package in June last year. Remember, it was the Prime Minister who announced it, not a member of The Nationals. Maybe it is the Prime Minister who controls the cheque book and maybe federally The Nationals have no say at all.

It is now incumbent upon the Prime Minister to make sure that the commitment is delivered on. The Nationals have to stand up at the State level but, equally, all Opposition members of this place have to stand up to the Federal Government and say that enough is enough. They have to come good and stop this nonsense of double handling on the \$55 million. It is not on. It is a ridiculous state of affairs. Our \$55 million plus the Commonwealth's \$55 million equals \$110 million. We want the full \$110 million—not our \$55 million plus \$8 million from the Federal Government, a total of \$63 million—for our irrigators. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [3.50 p.m.]: That was a very interesting presentation from the honourable member for Murray-Darling. The Coalition will not oppose this urgency motion. With reference to paragraph 3 of the motion, I issued a press release on 11 January encouraging the Commonwealth Government to reconsider its taxation of ground water structural adjustment packages. I stated in the first paragraph:

The Commonwealth should reconsider its tax approach to the Groundwater Structural Adjustment Package announced last year, Shadow Minister for Natural Resources, Adrian Piccoli said today.

Honourable members on both sides of the House agree about the taxation implications of these structural adjustment packages based on a couple of structural compensation packages that the Commonwealth has offered in the past. Many people have compared the dairy industry restructuring package to this package and said that the ground water package should be treated in the same manner. I remind honourable members that when the gun buy-back was instituted by the Commonwealth Government—that is, when people handed back their guns in return for cash—that money was not taxed. Other precedents support the argument that this package should not be taxed. The most compelling argument is that it is compensation for the handing back of a capital asset—people's water licences—and for that reason it should not be taxed as income. I support the ground water users who are lobbying the Commonwealth Government to change the way it plans to tax the ground water structural adjustment package. In that respect, I agree with the third paragraph of the motion.

Ground water allocations have a long history. The New South Wales Government is looking to cut back ground water allocations by 52 per cent in the Murrumbidgee area and 63 per cent in the Murray area. It has said that too much water has been allocated to farmers and that the allocation must be reduced to less than half. How did we get to this point? In 2000—six years ago—the New South Wales Government was issuing tens of thousands of megalitres of ground water entitlements to farmers. Three years later, when the review process began, it found it had issued 50 per cent too much. The Murrumbidgee Groundwater Pumpers Association wrote to the Minister responsible at the time—from memory, it was the Hon. Richard Amery. His response was that too much water had been allocated in the Murrumbidgee area. His response arrived on a Tuesday and by the end of the week there were applications for 170,000 megalitres of entitlements. The following week the Minister introduced a moratorium. For some unknown reason he allowed all the licence applications to be processed. That 170,000 megalitres is about the same amount that must now be taken out of the system and it will cost taxpayers about \$6 million.

These problems with ground water and the need for this package are the result of this Government's failure and the mistakes made by a previous Minister. Until 2000 the Government was issuing licences for ground water areas that it had been warned were overallocated. It stopped issuing licences on rivers about 10 years before that, but it still felt compelled to issue ground water licences. It is now asking farmers to take the blame and to wear the loss in property value because of its mistake. For Government members to say that this situation is the Commonwealth's fault—in fact, everyone's fault but theirs—is rubbish. They should take some responsibility. We are facing this situation because of the Government's mistakes. As Minister for Land and Water Conservation, the Hon. Richard Amery stood up at Gunnedah when this restructure began and there was talk about entitlements being reduced by 50 per cent and 83 per cent in some areas, and he said there would be no compensation for any reduced entitlements in New South Wales.

Obviously there was an outcry from irrigators who had invested a great deal of money in their properties, some up to tens of millions of dollars. These people had developed their properties to take advantage of the water they had been legally allocated. To their credit, John Anderson and Craig Knowles put together a package to assist ground water users who would lose entitlements as a result of the restructuring package. I agree that the Commonwealth should examine the taxation aspect. What is the point of paying compensation if one-third or more is taken in tax? However, at the same time, the Commonwealth Government should be congratulated, particularly John Anderson and The Nationals, for putting a restructure package on the table. Had money not been offered by John Anderson, the licence holders would be getting nothing. As I said, the money is on the table, but it should all remain there.

The structural adjustment process affects the Murrumbidgee and the Murray. Farmers are absolutely furious because about two years ago the Government said it would reduce entitlements by 52 per cent on the Murrumbidgee and 63 per cent on the Murray. Letters were sent outlining the Government's policy, but some irrigators applied pressure and the policy was changed. Whatever way it is done—whether it is based on history of extraction or across-the-board cuts are applied—people will suffer. When a Government announces a policy and then changes it, people have every right to be upset. Farmers in the Murrumbidgee and Murray regions purchased properties on the basis that entitlements would be cut across the board. The Government has now changed that policy, and that change will have a big impact on the amount of water that will be available for properties. Anyone involved in farming knows that the amount of available water has a huge impact on the value of a property. Many farmers will suffer as a result of this Government's continual bungling of this ground water structural adjustment package.

After 24 March next year—after the Coalition has won government—the Labor Government's sustainable yield levels will be reviewed. Even the department has acknowledged that the appropriate science was not applied to the process. If it is determined that they are too high, the Coalition Government will ensure that irrigators have access to that additional water. If those ground water aquifers are low because of the drought, and if we get a few years of increased rainfall and the aquifers recharge, we will allow farmers to use that water. The Government has taken out of that sustainable yield level what it calls water left aside for ground water dependent ecosystems. No-one has explained what that means. We will seriously look at whether that water needs to be set aside for these ground water dependent ecosystems. If we can allow farmers to use it, we will do so, in a responsible way for the benefit of the environment, the farmers, and the jobs that irrigation in western New South Wales creates. At the end of the day, jobs are what will keep our economy sustainable.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [4.00 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to support the motion moved by the honourable member for Murray-Darling, who is a fantastic representative of many of the irrigators in western New South Wales and will be a fantastic representative of even more irrigators in the south of the State after the next election. This is an important motion because it highlights what has become form for the Federal Government. The Federal Government pretends to participate in structural adjustment packages but then tries to slug people with tax, simply for the privilege of getting a structural adjustment to help them through a difficult time. The structural adjustment package for water users is just one example.

I am sure honourable members would well remember the argument the New South Wales Government had with the Federal Government about compensation for the victims of James Hardie's asbestos, and how the Federal Government wanted to tax that compensation and make it very difficult for it to be delivered to the victims. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee referred to the dairy industry structural adjustment package and the long fight between the dairy industry, the Labor Party and the Federal Government about the Federal Government wanting to tax those payments. In that bizarre example, consumers were going to fund the package through a levy on milk but the Federal Government wanted to tax it. In other words, the Federal Government wanted to make money out of that structural adjustment package.

Here we have another situation of the Federal Coalition essentially seeking to claw back a large slab of what was an agreed amount of money to compensate these irrigators. The Federal Government wants to claw back \$47 million in taxes out of the \$110 million to achieve sustainable ground water entitlements. That is disgraceful! It shows the Federal Coalition's failure to act in the interests of New South Wales farmers. I am pleased to hear the honourable member for Murrumbidgee say that the Opposition will not oppose the motion. It is great that the Opposition is finally getting around to supporting Country Labor in standing up for rural New South Wales. But it has been a long time coming.

The Leader of The Nationals argued against the Federal Government contributing any money to rural communities on this. A couple of years ago Andrew Stoner—my colleagues will remember who he is; he is the

Leader of The Nationals—issued a press release telling us that daylight saving should be done away with because it meant there were more hours at the hotter end of the day! He is the bloke who criticised former Minister Craig Knowles for asking for a contribution from the Howard Government. In his usual tirade against the Government, he denounced former Minister Knowles' call for Federal money as a "whinge, whine and sticking out his hand for Federal money for what, under the Constitution, is a State responsibility". Craig Knowles and, fortunately, the Federal Minister proved what a dill the guy is by agreeing that the Commonwealth should put \$55 million into this process. That showed The Nationals' failure to stick up for rural New South Wales, as we have seen so often in this place over the last few years.

I am pleased that the honourable member for Murrumbidgee has backed up what he said in his press release recently: that the Commonwealth should reconsider its tax approach to the ground water structural adjustment package. I wonder whether the Leader of The Nationals is following suit. We have not heard him say anything on this. Or is it just that The Nationals are leaving the honourable member for Murrumbidgee out on his own on this, to try to convince his electors that he supports them? Instead of the Coalition flip-flopping on this all the time, the Leader of The Nationals needs to ring up his Federal counterpart and tell him not to tax this important compensation.

Recently we heard The Nationals' promise about 29,000 job cuts. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee said that will not affect country areas because they are all front-line jobs. I do not think that all people who work in the agricultural department in Orange are front-line employees, and yet they are targeted. I do not think the people who work in the head office of the Greater Southern Area Health Service in Queanbeyan are all front-line employees, but they are targeted by the Opposition. Constantly in this place The Nationals fail to stand up for regional and rural New South Wales. They did it again yesterday when they voted against debating very high petrol prices. That is why we have seen The Nationals' representation in this place go from 20 in 1988 to only 12 now. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.05 p.m.]: I do not intend to follow the path of the honourable member for Monaro or the mover of the motion in making self-congratulatory comments and knocking the Federal Government, as is so often their wont. I intend to speak more about the impact on the people whom this affects, the people in the electorate of Albury, who have been rushing to my door to express their concerns for their livelihoods, which are threatened by this restructuring—as it is euphemistically called. One has only to look at the newspaper reports over recent weeks since this so-called consultation has been undertaken. One must remember that the water-sharing plan in the lower Murray area that is the subject of this debate was shelved in 2002—for what reason we do not know. The Government saw fit to shelve the water-sharing plan then, but in haste it is now indulging in these consultations, which amount to threats to farmers that "You have to adopt a system to progress towards your financial ruin as quickly as possible because we need to have this gazetted by 1 July."

We need only look at the headlines in the local newspapers. We read that livelihoods will be washed away and that the allocation cuts could force families off the farm. "I still don't understand how they got it so wrong," says one farmer. "Income to be slashed" is another headline. "Penalised for saving water" is another. Is that not the irony of this exercise? Not so long ago farmers in the Albury electorate were encouraged to become water wise and undertake water-wise courses so they could use less water. They were efficient. They undertook these courses, they took the Government at its word, they invested in centre-pivot irrigation, and they invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in their farms—at the insistence of the Government in the interests of saving water and with the knowledge of the government departments. Yet, they were not to realise that only a couple of years later they would be penalised for saving water, for undertaking those initiatives, and that they would have their reductions cut by some two-thirds, jeopardising their existence and that of their families on their farms in the future.

This is absolutely something that needs to be taken into account. It is about more than just saving water; it is about saving livelihoods and saving the production that comes from this lower Murray region. In fact, I was so concerned about it initially that I sought meetings with the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for State and Regional Development. The Minister for State and Regional Development understands the need to save jobs in rural areas. He granted me an interview and he was most interested in the situation I put to him. I commend him for writing back to me as expeditiously as he did. Clearly, the Minister is concerned about jobs in country areas. It appears that the Minister for Primary Industries is not as concerned, however, because he has not been seen on the issue and he certainly has not replied to the farmers' letters or mine.

More than just some of the farmers are affected here. One must question the science as well. In one situation two aquifers are incorporated—the 015 aquifer and the 016 aquifer. The 016 aquifer is the one that is

subject to the reductions. However, the line that divides them is not a line drawn on hydrogeological principles; that would be scientific. It is drawn at the whim of the Government along a road: the Riverina Highway. Any scientist would know that aquifers do not automatically follow roads. However, science is quiet on the fact that to the west at Savernake there is, in fact, a granite belt that runs deep. But, unfortunately, the fact that that divides the aquifer is not taken into account in this particular plan. Science is quiet on that and groups them all together.

There is definitely a need to revisit that and to understand why the farmers have been grouped with their neighbours to the west of that particular granite belt in the Deniliquin area where a completely different form of irrigation is used. In Corowa the largest employer, QAF Meat Industries, is directly affected. At the moment it has a 1,000-megalitre entitlement. Under the current plan, which at one stage was to reduce that entitlement by 68 per cent, it would be reduced to 320 megalitres. The problem for the company is that it employs 600 people, and they contribute to the economy of this State. Their future livelihood is threatened. This issue needs to be revisited, and revisited quickly.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [4.10 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Albury for his recognition of my work in implementing the Government's policy to attract investment and encourage jobs growth in the regions. But there is a lot of talk about Federal Government assistance for rural areas. Unfortunately, when it comes to the crunch, there is little action from the Federal Government. Not content with robbing New South Wales blind on the GST, the John Howard Government is making sure that its long arms reach deep into the pockets of struggling New South Wales farmers.

The hardworking men and women in six of our major river valleys have been left high and dry by the Federal Government, a Government that has made them wait years before it agreed with the State Government on an assistance package of \$110 million. It is now trying to take the vast majority of its own share of that funding through what is a blatantly unfair taxation formula. Of its \$55 million contribution to the assistance package, which we had to drag out of the Federal Government in the first place while it was kicking and screaming, the Howard Government plans to claw back \$47 million. That is 85 per cent of its contribution. We now begin to see the level of the Federal Government's indifference to, and contempt for, rural and regional communities in New South Wales. At no point has it shown any regard for the suffering of these communities due to the imminent reduction in water entitlements.

The Howard Government dragged its feet on agreeing to put up any funding at all and now it has imposed an unfair tax formula so that its total contribution will be only \$8 million, while the New South Wales Government is contributing \$55 million. That decision will have heavy repercussions on the State's ground water users. Some of the ground water entitlement reductions will be of a magnitude that will place individual businesses under considerable hardship. Licence holders are anxious about their future and in need of the full achieving sustainable ground water entitlements allocation. And what is that great champion of the rural community, The Nationals, doing about it? The honourable member for Murrumbidgee said that he is opposed to it. We have not heard from the Leader of the Nationals and we have not heard from that big boss, the Leader of the Opposition. But I could probably paraphrase what he will say: "I will get back to you later."

There is absolute silence on the other side of the Chamber. But I have noticed a split, because the honourable member for Murrumbidgee has agreed to support this motion, which seeks to condemn the Federal Government for insisting on taxing payments made to eligible licence holders. That is the point I am making. This unfair tax will claw money back from struggling families and will mean that the Federal Government will make only an \$8 million contribution out of its purported \$55 million. On that basis the motion should be passed, and we should demand that the Federal Government refund that money.

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [4.13 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, the honourable member for Monaro, the honourable member for Albury and the Minister for Water Utilities for taking part in this debate. I note that the shadow Minister has said he will support the motion. We will put that to the test.

Motion agreed to.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CROSS-CITY TUNNEL**Reference****Consideration of the Legislative Council's message of 4 April 2006.****Motion, by leave, by Mr David Campbell agreed to:**

- (1) That this House agrees to a resolution in identical terms to that contained in the Legislative Council's message of 4 April 2006 relating to the amendment of the terms of reference and reporting date for the Select Committee on the Cross-city Tunnel.
- (2) That a message be sent to the Legislative Council conveying the terms of the resolution.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! It being 4.15 p.m. the House will now deal with General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

TRIBUTE TO MR MAX ANNOUS

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.15 p.m.]: This week is Seniors Week and today I pay tribute to an important senior man from the Canterbury local government area, Mr Max Annous, who has just been awarded the Canterbury City Council 2006 Senior Citizen of the Year Award for services to the community. The aim of the award, which is a significant one in our area, is to publicly acknowledge outstanding contributions made to the community by older people and to promote the positive image of older people who make a difference in the City of Canterbury. The award is open to people over the age of 55 who have contributed in a significant way to the City of Canterbury community. All nominees are recognised for their contribution to the local community.

I have known Mr Max Annous since I became the member for Canterbury. He totally deserves this award. He has been acknowledged for many years for the services he provides to the local community. In 2000 he received the Commonwealth Recognition Award for Senior Australians. In 2003 he was the winner of the Centenary Medal and in 2004 he was awarded the Certificate of Appreciation from the Parliament of New South Wales for his outstanding contribution to the Canterbury-Bankstown community, which, as everyone knows, is an incredibly diverse and exciting part of the city of Sydney.

One of the outstanding things about Mr Annous is his extreme generosity. His life experiences humble us. He has raised money for Wiley Park Girls High School, specifically for the volleyball team. On Saturdays he regularly hosts magnificent roundtable discussions at his dining table with local members of Parliament, mayors, local councillors, religious leaders, police and members of the business community. I am going to one of those gatherings next Saturday. He believes that sitting down, talking, sharing stories and sharing love is the way forward. He believes face-to-face communication is the way to resolve issues, and he puts that belief into practice.

Mr Annous is an incredibly humble man who certainly does not look for accolades. He is a lover and not a fighter, if I could put it that way. One of Max's outstanding attributes is his huge commitment to voluntary work, which he has done most of his life. Max Annous is from Lebanon and he joined the Lebanese Muslim Association in 1967. In 1977 time he also began helping victims of the war in Lebanon to settle in Australia. He has helped countless families to find accommodation and to settle into their new country, which they decided to call home. In some cases they were forced to do so. He still carries out that work. In 1987 Mr Annous represented the Lebanese Muslim Association on the Lebanese Police Consultative Committee. This project sought to remove misunderstandings between police and members of the Lebanese community, and the results of that work are still evident today.

Mr Annous is held in high esteem by local police and plays an important liaison role in fostering understanding between police and the Lebanese community. He is the co-ordinator of the Neighbourhood Watch Program for Area 1333. That resulted from a break-in at his own home, and instead of feeling sorry for himself, he took a proactive role. He is also on the organising committee for the hugely successful Haldon Street Festival. My community is extremely proud of Max Annous, and I pay homage to him. [*Time expired.*]

LIFE EDUCATION

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [4.20 p.m.]: I raise concerns about Life Education. I accept the valuable work of Life Education in providing drug education information to young people throughout Australia, particularly country New South Wales. Life Education is a large non-government organisation, reaching in the order of 750,000 primary and secondary school students each year. However, the Chair of Life Education, a former Labor member of Parliament, Mary Easson, must address concerns that have been raised by communities in country New South Wales that have provided financial assistance and dedicated hours of their time voluntarily.

I am advised that on Friday 17 March the New South Wales State board of Life Education met in Sydney. At that meeting the decision was made to remove the members representing the two major rural regions that cover country New South Wales. I should point out that these regions were instrumental in the implementation and success of Life Education, which was originally started by Reverend Ted Noffs in New South Wales 26 years ago. I have no doubt that the reasons behind the decision were complex and that the board must be accountable to the membership and to the wider community.

I understand that Mary Easson has been proactive in using legal technicalities to further hinder the efforts and work of the country arm of Life Education in New South Wales. I hope that my contribution will elicit a response from Life Education about its fundraising activities and other concerns I have raised. It seems that the rural regions have been propping up and financing Sydney-based branches of Life Education. The Federal Government provides funding to the States to administer the provision of drug education information to school-age children. Is it possible that the New South Wales Government wants to use these Federal funds in other ways? Does it believe that Life Education programs no longer play any part in today's society? Are drug education information resources irrelevant to Labor's ideals? If so, that philosophy would be at odds with many parents throughout the State, particularly those in country New South Wales.

I want to ensure that the work undertaken in past years continues into the future, so that kids in country New South Wales receive the necessary drug education and support to deal with the scourge of drugs, which is found in many primary and high schools. One need only look at the impact that marijuana is having on mental health to realise the necessity for this type of education. I hope my private member's statement will elicit some answers to the questions I have posed with respect to the rural arm of Life Education in New South Wales. I look forward to a response from the organisation. [*Time expired.*]

GREEK NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne) [4.25 p.m.]: I acknowledge Greek National Independence Day, which I attended on Sunday 26 March 2006 together with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship, representing Premier Iemma. On 25 March Greek National Day is celebrated in Greece and Australia and by Greek communities throughout the world. It is the anniversary of the beginning of the struggle of the Greek people for independence in 1821 after almost 400 years of Ottoman occupation and the formation of the modern Greek state. This year marked the 185th anniversary of independence, as well as the commemoration of the Day of Annunciation of Mary, a day of great significance in the calendar of the Orthodox Church. Ever since 1821 the theme of national liberation has been seen in the broader framework of spiritual liberation. On 25 March 1821 a revolution that had been painstakingly prepared for years was set in motion, disregarding the odds and the Ottoman's Empire's numerical superiority.

A series of battles and victories followed, echoing the motto "Freedom or Death", a conscious choice signifying an awakening of the human psyche to a superior dimension where death is preferred over a life of slavery. This heroic struggle for freedom is justifiably a source of great inspiration and pride to all Hellenes, providing an invaluable moral and ideological political history that younger generations can build upon. For the Greek community the Greek Independence Day celebration constitutes not only a gesture of patriotism and national duty, in remembrance of the great heroes of the 1821 revolution, it also represents their faith in instilling the same eternal values and aspirations in the hearts and minds of future generations of Greeks.

I thank the Inter-Communities Council of the Greek Archdiocese of Australia for its invitation to celebrate and share in this day at the wreath laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, which was followed by a procession down George Street to the Opera House. In particular, I extend my thanks to events co-ordinator Jack Passaris. I was particular proud to stand at Martin Place with my local area commander, Arthur Katsogiannis, and Sergeant George Adams, who represented NSW Police. They are both Greek Australians and did the Greek Australian community proud. The Opera House celebration saw the general introduction by the master of ceremonies, Mrs Amelia Katsogiannis, of the spectacular procession of Greek Orthodox parishes and communities from throughout New South Wales, Greek Australian schoolchildren, bands and dignitaries.

The Independence Day celebrations were honoured by the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia; the Vice-President of the Parliament of Greece, the Hon. Georgios Sourlas; the High Commissioner of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr Achilleas Antoniadis; the Hon. Milton Orkopoulos, representing the New South Wales Premier, Morris Iemma; the Hon. Tony Burke, Federal shadow Minister for Immigration, and the Hon. Gough Whitlam; the Consul General of Greece for New South Wales, Mr Ioannis Raptakis; and many other Federal, State and local government community representatives and of course, thousands of Greek Australians who shared in that wonderful afternoon's event. The members of State Parliament who attended included my colleagues the honourable member for Bankstown, Tony Stewart; the honourable member for Auburn, Barbara Perry; and myself as the member for Drummoyne. We were truly honoured to represent our communities at this wonderful event.

The day's events also included performances from the combined choir of the Greek Orthodox Day colleges, traditional dances by the Cretan Brotherhood dancing group, the Rallis dancing group and the Sophia Haskas dancing group. I am proud to acknowledge that 5 per cent of the residents of the electorate of Drummoyne are of Greek-Australian background. They have enriched our local community and New South Wales with their contributions to every sphere of life from the arts, history, philosophy, architecture and the business community. The Iemma Government has three Ministers of Greek heritage, namely, the Minister for Health, the Hon. John Hatzistergos; the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship, the Hon. Milton Orkopoulos; and the Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for the Hunter, the Hon. Michael Costa.

I place on record the role of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Intercommunities Council of New South Wales. That umbrella organisation represents 30 parishes and communities in New South Wales. The council organises the annual Greek Day celebrations, and it lobbies all levels of government and institutions with the objective of looking after the concerns and needs of the Australian Greek community in New South Wales. I wish the Greek Australian community well in its endeavours. I look forward to attending many of its functions in the future and celebrating its contribution to our society. The Greek Australian community is truly proud of maintaining its cultural festivals, its mother tongue and its rich history, which gave so much not only to the ancient world but to modern society. I take this opportunity to wish the Greek Australian community a happy Orthodox Easter, which it will be celebrating towards the end of the month.

MURRUMBURRAH HIGH SCHOOL FARM CLUB

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [4.30 p.m.]: With the approach of the Royal Easter Show in Sydney, the autumn show circuit in rural New South Wales areas is coming to a close. This year I have been fortunate to attend local shows in many parts of my electorate, including Gunning, Crookwell, Boorowa, Goulburn and Yass, to name a few. Local show societies do a great job in highlighting our local agricultural and pastoral industries. As I said when I opened the Yass show last weekend and the Goulburn show the weekend before, it is the many volunteers, committees, stewards, judges, exhibitors, stall holders and sideshow alley operators who work hard to make those shows a success.

I have been impressed with the cattle parading events at several of our local shows, which have featured the Murrumburrah High School Farm Club. The farm club was set up in 2000 by local stud masters David Manwaring and Harvey Jones to provide the youth of the Harden-Murrumburrah area with training in judging cattle, preparing cattle for showing and cattle parading. At the Yass show Emma Allen from year 11 at Murrumburrah High School took out the Junior Parader's Champion Award and Murrumburrah High School took out the Champion Led Steer Award. Emma also took out the Reserve Champion School Parader at the Canberra show this year, and I congratulate her on a fantastic job. I am sure she has a great future ahead of her, thanks to the experience and training she has received at the farm club.

In the past six years the Murrumburrah High School Farm Club has grown, and now involves 34 students aged 11 to 18. I note and applaud the contribution of farm assistant Bob Stewart and agricultural science teacher Jan Young in helping the club to grow. The club has its own Square Meater Stud, following a donation of a heifer in calf by the Square Meater Stud in Cootamundra in 2001. This stud herd now consists of five stud females and a young bull. The stud is managed and run by the student members, who make many of the financial and breeding decisions. As I have personally witnessed at several shows, Murrumburrah High School students work hard at local, district and royal shows. As a group they have developed an enviable reputation in the cattle sheds for being hardworking, polite and highly competent cattle people. Their reputation has had a positive effect on their future career prospects, with many students gaining work experience time with highly reputable studs.

The excellent reputation of the Murrumburrah High School Farm Club has also brought recognition from within the cattle industry. I am sure the Minister for Education and Training will be thrilled to know that this year the farm club has prepared and fed the Schute Bell Charity Steer, which will be auctioned at the Sydney Royal Easter Show this Friday. Each year a steer is prepared for sale and auctioned, with proceeds of the auction going to the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute. The auction has been running since 1997 and is sponsored by the well-known Australian wool and pastoral agency, Schute Bell Badgery Lumby. I am looking forward to attending the auction at the Royal Easter Show this Friday, and I encourage all honourable members to attend to show their support for this worthy charity.

The steer is normally prepared for the auction by specialist feeders, but this year the Murrumburrah High School Farm Club has been chosen to prepare and feed the animal. The club has two animals being prepared for the auction just in case. The frontrunner for the auction, a beautifully turned out 14-month-old angus purchased from the Roseville Angus Stud has been named Victor by the students. Victor has already taken out first prize in the medium-weight purebred steers section at the Canberra show. In particular I congratulate the Murrumburrah High School team at this year's Canberra show.

Of 19 paraders, the school won 13 ribbons, and it also took out a fourth and fifth place out of 230 entries in the junior judging section. In all, the club attends the Gundagai, Gunning, Canberra Royal, Boorowa, Yass, Sydney Royal, Harden Murrumburrah, Young, Cootamundra and Albury shows. This year Murrumburrah High School took a major prize at the Boorowa show, which I also attended, and won the Square Meaters Junior Championship at the Gundagai show. I offer my best wishes, and I am sure the best wishes of every honourable member, to Marcus Ashton, Emma Allen, Adam Manwaring, Bradley Spackman and Jamie Davis, who have all qualified as paraders for the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

The Murrumburrah High School Farm Club is an excellent initiative, particularly when one considers that the high school itself has a student population of only about 190. The twin towns of Harden-Murrumburrah have a population of only about 2,000. The achievements of the club are out of all proportion to the size of the community, which fully supports it. I commend the Harden Murrumburrah High School Farm Club for its efforts and recognise the hard work and dedication of the students, teachers, local farmers and stud operators who assist them, and of course the parents, who are always in the background but indispensable in their support. I congratulate all the 2006 Royal Easter Show Showgirls and the 2006 Rural Achievers, who are in the Parliament today at the invitation of The Nationals. They are fantastic ambassadors for each of their regions, and we want them to know that they are regional heroes, whoever ends up winning the competitions on Saturday.

WALLACIA-MULGOA CENOTAPH

Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN (Camden) [4.35 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of honourable members to a wonderful function I attended at Warragamba last Saturday, 1 April 2006. It was my great pleasure and honour to be asked to unveil a new cenotaph honouring the servicemen and servicewomen of families of the five villages of Mulgoa, Wallacia, Silverdale, Warragamba and Luddenham. This newly constructed cenotaph has as its first stage a plaque honouring all those who served in the Second World War. I was pleased to be able to ask two returned servicemen, Jim New and Jim Newton, to join me in the unveiling ceremony. I congratulate the Rotary Club of Wallacia-Mulgoa on constructing the cenotaph as a Rotary community centennial project.

As a relatively new club, it searched long and hard, and carried out extensive community consultation, before deciding on the construction of the cenotaph as its centennial project. Of course, making that decision was merely the start. What followed was many months of planning, submissions to council and fundraising efforts. With the aid of many members of the community, businesses, councils and Rotary District 9690, many barbecues and raffles, frustrations and joy, the money was raised and work was able to begin. Community

members assisted with the Rotary club's effort, and I know that Rotary would ask me to recognise their muscle power and input.

I was pleased to hear from Rotary 9690 past District Governor Lloyd Roever that Rotary International also contributed, recognising the significance of this cenotaph to the community. On the day I was joined by other speakers, including Scott Thompson, President of the Rotary Club of Wallacia-Mulgoa Valley; Lloyd Roever, whom I have already mentioned; the Mayor of Penrith, John Thain; and, finally, on behalf of those who served, Norm Anderson from the Penrith RSL sub-branch. It was a pleasure to hear each speaker outline their contribution or to recognise the importance of the project. It was obvious to everyone present how important the cenotaph is to that wonderful community surrounding Warragamba, and to see the look of pride on all the returned servicemen and women was uplifting.

Importantly, entire families were there. It was a pleasure for me to meet not only Jim New, a Second World War returned serviceman whose name is on the plaque, but his wife, children and grandchildren, who all came to share with him the recognition of his name on the plaque for his service in World War II. Movingly, one family came and laid a bunch of flowers on the cenotaph before the ceremony closed. I also recognise the efforts of Jean Vranich the Secretary of the Rotary Club of Wallacia-Mulgoa in organising the unveiling ceremony and the great morning tea that followed. Jean did a fantastic job and I pass on my personal congratulations to her. But, like all hard workers, she was already concentrating of gathering funds to allow the completion of the cenotaph so that plaques recognising those who served in World War I, and the Korean and Vietnam wars are also added to the cenotaph.

Finally, I acknowledge all those who contributed, including the major sponsors: Rotary District 9690; the councils of Liverpool, Wollondilly and Penrith—and it was great to see each of those councils throw in for this project, as interestingly, at some stage Liverpool, Wollondilly and Penrith councils all covered those separate villages—Austral Bricks; Western Suburbs Concrete; Silverdale Landscape and Supplies; Burgess Soils; Holly Nursery; Belfield RSL Sub Branch and the Warragamba Workers and Sporting Club—and I thank that club for its hospitality on the day.

Also contributing, directly or by the work that went into researching the names of those who served in World War II were: Michael Heisse, Silverdale Wallacia Smash Repairs, Warragamba Hardware, Ditch Witch, Jimbo's Corn Hut—Mr and Mrs J Crooks, Mrs E. J. Eisunhuth, Lionel Fowler, Ross Fowler, Mrs L. Freeland, the Newton Family, Brian Wall, Denise Harding, Julia Monro, Mrs C. Hill, Mrs M. Morgan, Mrs D. Jeffree, Mrs P. Murphy, Dr Adrian Sheen and Mrs Enid Miller. It is important that those people be recognised here in Parliament for their contribution towards this wonderful project. In closing I congratulate the Rotary Club of Wallacia-Mulgoa, a relatively new club, on a wonderful and fitting contribution to its community.

SOUTH COAST SEWERAGE SCHEME

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [4.40 p.m.]: I wish to speak about matters that I attempted to include in a debate this morning in relation to a motion moved by the honourable member for Hornsby, but needless interjections and points of order from, in particular, the Minister for the Illawarra and the honourable member for East Hills, prevented me from saying the things that need to be said about the provision of sewerage schemes in areas of the South Coast. The motion this morning related to the delays in time frames for commencement of sewerage schemes and the omission of Cowan from local sewerage connection, and I could see clear parallels with my electorate of South Coast.

The augmentation of the Milton-Ulladulla scheme has been delayed for something like 15 years. It is finally happening, but because there have been so many delays, on the part of this Government in particular, the residents of Ulladulla have had to endure 15 years of a very ageing, trickling filter system, the smell of which permeates the entire village. Obviously it has outgrown its useful life and there have been delays in providing a new scheme. Discussions about Lake Conjola date back more than a decade and, once again, there are delays in commencement times—not, as according to the honourable member for Illawarra, due to Shoalhaven City Council but due to the State Government.

Mr Alan Ashton: Point of order—

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: This is a private member's statement!

Mr Alan Ashton: I know it is, and you are breaking every convention of a private member's statement.

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch): Order! I apprehend what the point of order will be. The honourable member for South Coast is certainly entitled to raise matters relating to her electorate or matters that have been raised with her by her constituents. There can be no cavilling with that. However, I should draw her attention to a number of previous rulings. In 1998 Speaker Rozzoli ruled that members may not debate one private member's statement against another on successive days. He also indicated that a member may not raise a matter in a private members' statement that is essentially the subject of a bill before the House. That related to anticipation of debate. It seems to me that it is clear from those rulings that the honourable member for South Coast cannot make a private member's statement in response to a matter that was raised this morning. However, if she related her private member's statement to matters concerning her electorate, without referring to some of the other matters, I would not have any difficulty with that.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr Acting-Speaker. I move on to the situation in Currarong, which I did not quite get around to speaking about this morning. Currarong is a beautiful coastal village in the electorate of South Coast and has a population of about 550 people. It is built around the entrance of Currarong Creek. Currarong Creek is the largest of three small permanent creeks in the area, the others being Plutus Creek and Abrahams Bosom Creek. The estuarine parts of these three creeks are places where marine and terrestrial processes interact to produce particularly sensitive and complex coastal environments. Currarong Creek is susceptible to faecal pollution from septic tank effluent and these pollutants inevitably make their way into the ocean waters adjacent to the village. These ocean waters and the tidal parts of Currarong Creek are part of the Jervis Bay Marine Park.

We have heard a great deal about marine parks over the past few weeks. There have been a great many objections to the proclamation of the Batemans Marine Park and a lot of discussion by the Minister for the Environment about how important it is to protect environments within areas such as marine parks. However we have, on the other side of the equation, a Minister who clearly does not care very much about these kinds of fragile coastal ecosystems in areas such as Jervis Bay Marine Park. The Minister is content to sit back and allow faecal pollutants to run right into Jervis Bay Marine Park because this village remains without a sewerage system that would significantly reduce such pollution. It is wonderful in many aspects to declare a marine park and try to protect these beautiful marine environments, but I say to the Minister, "You also have to put your money where your mouth is". That has not happened with respect to Currarong Creek, the village of Currarong or, in fact, Jervis Bay Marine Park.

I call on the Government today to ensure that there is priority funding for the Currarong sewerage scheme in this year's budget, or at least for the remainder of the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme. I understand that survey work has been completed. Extensive community consultation was undertaken by this Government and Shoalhaven City Council, but because the work is ranked as a priority five, it is unlikely to begin within the next three years. That means there will be continual problems with water quality issues in Currarong Creek over the next three years because of the village that has grown around the creek. There will also be pollution into Jervis Bay. The Shoalhaven Local Government Water Authority is a very professional and proactive group of men and women on all issues pertaining to water and sewerage, under the guidance of the director, John Gould, but it seems to me from my experience with these projects that the State Government never appears willing to address the real environmental concerns in our towns and villages.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [4.45 p.m.]: The honourable member has taken us on a cook's tour of some picturesque and beautiful parts of the South Coast.

Mrs Shelley Hancock: You should visit Currarong.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I have been to Currarong many times. It was certainly good to have that cook's tour but that was the only aspect of her contribution that I agree with. The honourable member eventually stated that the Shoalhaven City Council is the local water authority—not Sydney Water, not the New South Wales Government, but the Shoalhaven City Council. What she did not point out was that she was a long-serving member of that council. She was an alderman and a councillor on Shoalhaven City Council for many years but did nothing about the problem in all of that time. She did nothing about it at that time but has come into this Chamber to lambast the Government's \$910 commitment to the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme. She has condemned herself out of her own mouth for her inaction over many years as an elected representative on Shoalhaven City Council.

TRIBUTE TO MS PATRICIA DAWSON

Mr ALAN ASHTON (East Hills) [4.47 p.m.]: Tonight I want to talk about a lady, Patricia Dawson, who is a longstanding member of the Labor Party in my electorate. Pat recently retired after 40 years working in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. She began work there on 17 May 1965. Pat worked as an audio-typist. She assisted with Braille proofreading, supervised work experience students and generally assisted visually impaired students who required her help. Pat Dawson is herself vision impaired—or, as we would once have said, blind. This did not deter Pat from the trials of travelling to and from work and various other places by public transport, which included trains and buses, and also taxi. We should always remember that, regardless of whether they have a disability or what might be considered to be a handicap, anyone can play an active role in the community, as Pat Dawson did for more than 40 years.

Pat officially retired from the department on 13 January this year. She was actively involved with the Public Service Association of New South Wales. She was also very involved with what was called the Commuter Council, an organisation established under the Wran Labor Government to monitor the performance of various transport systems, especially the rail system. Pat gave up much of her time to do that and she was also a full-time carer for her elderly mother. Holding down a full-time job while caring for her ill mother for 10 years or more was a tremendous achievement. Pat joined the Labor Party in 1975, a year of some infamy that we all remember, and in the 31 years since then she has held continuous membership, holding various executive positions at the branch, State, and Federal electorate council [FEC] level. At the Banks FEC for many years she has been the political education officer, helping to organise various trips by Ministers to the FEC and the like to keep party branch members informed of what is happening. Pat's total commitment to the Australian Labor Party was recognised by the party with a McKell Award in 2005. Only a dozen or so of those awards are issued each year, so that recognition was a great honour.

Pat's experience has proved that people with a disability can make a fine contribution to full-time employment in the local community. A few weeks ago I saw the old Braille typewriters. It would have been a very demanding job to use them. Pat used to type the HSC exam papers in Braille and proofread them. Because some students do not have sight it does not mean that they are not highly intelligent and capable of passing difficult exams. But people who cannot see have a great disadvantage. Those things are not at the forefront of the minds of people seeing people with a disability go about their jobs. Two of Pat's students are now employed as proofreaders with the Department of Education and Training. One was trained by Pat herself and the other by the New South Wales Institute for the Deaf and Blind, which is housed at North Rocks.

As I said, Pat was an active unionist and is still an active member of the Labor Party. I place on record my appreciation and the appreciation of my Federal colleague Daryl Melham, my councillor colleagues Dick McLaughlin and Mayor Helen Westwood and anyone who knows Pat in the southern suburbs of Bankstown for her great commitment not only to the Labor Party and to employment but also to the community as well as to her union. As I said, people like Pat are absolute proof of the saying "do not dis my ability" because people with a range of disabilities are achieving great things in the community and making a worthwhile contribution.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY INDUCTION CERTIFICATES

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [4.52 p.m.]: Today I speak on behalf of hundreds of thousands of people employed in construction and related industries after having been approached by the honourable member for Clarence and firms in my electorate. The date 31 March signalled when all green cards and induction certificates were made invalid. Because government departments had not kept correct records over the years they were unsure which green cards were current and which were not. Anyone who applied for a green card since about 2004 was exempt from the requirement to gain a new green card but anyone who gained a card prior to that, under the new rules and regulations, had to apply to have the green card reissued—it was only a matter of applying and getting it reissued—by 31 March.

Unfortunately, as happens, thousands of people did not realise this. Even if businesses are written to or advertisements are placed in newspapers not everyone sees them. For example, one firm in my electorate has eight employees who were unaware of the requirement. They now need to reapply and undertake a one-day certificate course. The employer has eight employees being paid \$35 an hour. He will have to give them a day's pay and lose any profits that come from them. They also have to pay \$135 each for the licence. The cost to that small business alone is in the vicinity of \$7,000. On the other hand, the very diligent ex-union employees, the WorkCover inspectors, have clearly signalled that as of last Monday if they go onto a worksite and find someone without a newly issued current green card they will immediately issue a \$500 fine. The constituent

with eight employees I mentioned is a pool installer. If he had his whole team on one job the cost to him would be \$4,000 in fines and \$7,000 in lost wages to have the certificates issued. That is a total of \$11,000 that that small business would be liable for.

A number of electricians and other people in the electorate of Clarence have approached the honourable member for Clarence and said, "We did not know about this. It is only through word-of-mouth around the sites that we found out about it. What can we do?" When they contacted the department it said, "Hard luck. You have got to go out and get it. You cannot go on to a building site until such time as you have that card." To me, that is lunacy. It is estimated—I think it is probably an underestimate—that 150,000 people in New South Wales are involved at the moment. I appeal to the Government and the Minister for Industrial Relations to extend a moratorium on this issue for at least two months. Those people who are qualified who have previously done the construction induction certificate entitling them to a green card should be exempted from fines for at least two months. I am asking that the department write to every person who currently has a green card advising them that they have a two-month extension in which to have it renewed. The excuse given by the department for not being able to do this is that people may have changed addresses. Yes, they may have. But if 50,000 of the 150,000 have changed addresses that leaves 100,000 people who will not be subject to a \$500 on the spot fine.

This requirement affects not just workmen on construction sites. People do not realise that every Rural Fire Service volunteer who attends an incident—any services volunteer—and who is perhaps controlling traffic or crowds with a stop-go sign or keeping a perimeter secure is required to have a construction induction certificate or green card. If those volunteers do not have it an overzealous union official who is now employed by WorkCover could fine them \$500 each. Some people in the volunteer services have told me that they are not prepared to go and get the cards because it will cost them a day and \$135, and to what end? I want the Government to show some empathy for these union members, these hard workers on building sites. It should extend a moratorium for two months and ensure that people are not unduly penalised by a Government that does not care less. [*Time expired.*]

CENTRAL COAST BUSHFIRES

Ms MARIE ANDREWS (Peats) [4.57 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the outstanding efforts of our emergency services and the State Government's support agencies during and after the terrible fires on the Central Coast in January this year. New Year's Day 2006 will be a day that will long live in the memory of the people of the Central Coast, in particular those who reside on the Woy Woy Peninsula. Temperatures in excess of 46 degrees and ferocious north-westerly winds drove a series of fires down on Phegans Bay, Horsfield Bay, Woy Woy and Umina Beach. Nearly everyone on the coast could see the smoke, but the size and speed of these fires had to be seen to be believed. The entire area looked like an inferno. Hundreds of courageous firefighters battled the fires that day, working themselves to the point of exhaustion and beyond. The crews working in Umina Heights were drawing water out of the town's supply faster than Gosford City Council could pump it in from the surrounding dams.

Some 600 homes were directly threatened by the fires around Woy Woy. At times, in the western-most streets of Umina Beach, homes on the ridges seemed to be islands in a sea of fire—with firefighters with hoses everywhere and helicopters dropping thousands of litres of water right into people's backyards. At the end of the day the fiercely fought battles were won but, sadly, three homes were lost in Phegans Bay. Several other properties sustained damage but, thankfully, no life was lost as a direct result of the fires and property loss was kept to a minimum. Nothing can be done to replace the memories lost when a home is destroyed, but I can advise the House that help was immediately forthcoming for those families from a number of State government agencies, especially the Department of Community Services. That support will continue.

Several members of the bay's Rural Fire Service brigade had their cars destroyed when the fire swept through the street where their station is located while they were out fighting the fires. I am very pleased to say that the Rural Fire Service acted promptly and compassionately in providing temporary replacement cars until details could be worked out. In all, four major fires were burning within the Peats electorate on New Year's Day. A large fire at Mount White cut the F3 motorway for many hours, and another in Dharug National Park had the potential to present very serious problems. However, at no time were the people of the Central Coast left to their own devices. I am advised by the Rural Fire Service that task forces came from Sydney, Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains to help fight the fires, as well as additional crews from NSW Fire Brigades, from the Central Coast and from other areas. In fact, members of NSW Fire Brigades stationed at Umina were the first to respond to the call for help on New Year's Day. Extra support came from the police and other community services to help our community deal with the impact of the emergency.

It was hoped that with the easing of temperatures in the early evening things might have started to get a little easier for the firefighters, but that was not to be. At around 10.00 p.m., a ferocious southerly change passed over the coast, bringing with it winds well in excess of 100 kilometres an hour. This wind turned the fires at right angles and drove them straight towards the townships of Kariong and Point Clare. All through that long night, hundreds of members of the Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire Brigades fought to protect these towns, and even the Emergency Operations Centre at Kariong, where the firefighting efforts were being co-ordinated.

Because of those heroic efforts, no lives and further property were lost. In all, the fires burned for more than a week, testing the resilience of the community and the firefighters, but neither were found wanting. At the height of the fire operations, more than 160 front-line appliances from the Rural Fire Service, NSW Fire Brigades and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, supported by 13 aircraft, worked on the fire front. They were supported by other personnel from the Rural Fire Service, NSW Fire Brigades and every conceivable agency available.

I take this opportunity to thank, in particular, Mr Steve Marsh, the newly appointed manager of the Rural Fire Service at Gosford, who was the officer in charge of fighting the fires. I also place on the record my appreciation to Commissioner Phil Koperberg for his support. Of course, I thank Premier Morris Iemma and the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Tony Kelly, who visited the area a few days after the crisis. I also thank NSW Fire Brigades, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Police and St John Ambulance Service—which sadly lost a revered member, Mike Rozier, from a heart attack while assisting those suffering from smoke inhalation. I particularly thank the officers of Department of Community Services for their tireless efforts during the fires. Under the Iemma Government, this State is capable of meeting and overcoming any challenge and caring for all those who are affected when disaster strikes.

ALBURY BASE HOSPITAL INDEPENDENT LIVING UNIT CLOSURE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.02 p.m.]: The independent living unit [ILU] at the Diggers Road campus of Albury Base Hospital is a 10-bed rehabilitation facility established in 1987 by Dr Gerry McLaren, then Director of Rehabilitation at Albury Base Hospital. The concept was regarded as innovative and unique. It was seen as a model for regional delivery of rehabilitation services and many rehabilitation health professionals came to inspect and take back ideas to their respective hospitals.

The unit caters for amputees and other patients requiring rehabilitation outside a hospital setting. The ILU incorporates home skills in a rehabilitation unit so that the independent living ability of patients promotes their independence and is not confined simply to a detached therapy session. So effective was the facility that it was being considered for major cities. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that it has been closed by the Greater Southern Area Health Service. This model facility closed on 2 December 2005 for the annual December-January shutdown period. However, with cynical disregard for clients, staff and the AlburyWodonga Amputee Support Group, it never reopened. There was no explanation, simply a statement that an issues paper was being prepared.

More than three months later, all the packaged and tinned food, crockery and household items for 10 people, furniture, television sets and the water cooler were still there. The digital camera used for monitoring progress in rehabilitation was still in the safe, but there were no patients to be monitored. There had been no meetings with the rehabilitation staff and allied health professionals at Albury Base Hospital to discuss integrating patients from the ILU into the rehabilitation ward. Those people are the front line, delivering the services, caring for the patients and designing the program to return them to independent living.

What is behind all this? A hospital does not intentionally alienate its staff and the public it serves. There must be some far-off bureaucratic imperative at play, and one need look no further than the Government's direction to save money. Some history is relevant in understanding the current concerns. A prosthetics and orthotics unit opened at the Diggers Road campus in Albury in 1984 and was followed in 1987 by the co-siting of the independent living unit, which could be better termed as the transitional living unit. It was to cater for amputees, including many from distant regional towns, who were medically stable and who had the potential to regain full or limited mobility with the aid of a prosthesis. The ILU provided accommodation and a comprehensive multidisciplinary rehabilitation program, along with an educational program, to assist patient self-sufficiency in limb and prosthesis care and lifestyle management.

The Department of Veterans Affairs [DVA] initially administered the prosthetics and orthotics unit, but since 1998 it has come under the auspice of the area health service. On average, 80 publicly and 20 privately

funded prostheses are manufactured annually with private funding from the DVA, the Transport Accident Commission, Roads and Traffic Authority and workers compensation schemes. The unit also performs more than 250 minor and major repairs of prostheses each year. The ILU underwent some transformation over the years and catered for other patients with mobility and daily living limitations, such as stroke patients, who could be transferred from the rehabilitation ward to complete their rehabilitation program. This meant that the hospital's rehabilitation ward could accept more referrals from acute wards.

It is understood that the Government plans to sell off the land occupied by the ILU and other health and disabilities providers. It would be a profitable exercise and it would also provide a magnificent opportunity to realise plans to co-locate purpose-built rehabilitation facilities and the prosthetics unit on the hospital grounds. That was the original proposal, and as recently as 2001 the last permanent general manager of Albury Base Hospital discussed the exact location and concept with me. For those familiar with the site, it is where the plovers nest and raise their young, near to the allied health unit and with a separate entrance and parking area.

The proximity of the rehabilitation ward would facilitate patient transfer to the new unit, eliminating the need for ambulance transfer. Travel costs for the specialists would be eliminated and there would be medical cover after hours because of the proximity to the hospital. Patients could become familiarised with the unit and staff prior to transfer. The very physical detachment of the unit from the acute hospital, with all its connections to trauma, would foster the sense of independence so important to the philosophy of transitional living units in providing a suitable environment to regain physical and psychosocial skills.

That is what should be happening and what should be promoted as the way forward. Instead, there is a grim silence on the future of the now closed ILU and no talk about, let alone commitment to, the establishment of a new facility. Relocating the ILU to a ward in Albury Base Hospital destroys the philosophy of this model of care. It fails to embrace the homely atmosphere and necessarily becomes subservient to the dominant needs of the acute services of the hospital. The area health service has ripped away a unique separate identity and the community will feel its loss. As one provider commented to me, "Once we were innovators, now we are stepping back into the Dark Ages."

ILLEGAL SIGNS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.07 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a problem that affects large parts of Sydney, but particularly parts of Liverpool. I refer to the proliferation of illegally placed signs on poles. This matter has caused a degree of disquiet in the Liverpool area. Mr Wayne Prior has contacted me about this problem. The poles concerned are largely electricity poles owned by Integral Energy, particularly those along the Hume Highway. I have raised the matter with the Liverpool City Council and some action was taken. Mr Prior's letter summarises the results of that approach very well. He states:

I did notice, for a few days, an improvement shortly after you first took the matter up with Council. I assumed that a Council Ranger had removed them along a section of the road at Casula. However, it was not 100% effective because the signs were still up in the region of DeMeyrick Ave and north of there. Probably as fast as they are removed by a Ranger the culprit is busily installing the next set! Yesterday I noticed that the signage is back, as bad as ever, from Warwick Farm right through to Casula, so I think Council's efforts at removing them has lately eased off.

I had a discussion with a council officer who, in a remarkable display of frankness, said that he thought the problem had been put in the too-hard basket and that it was all too difficult. He indicated to me that he thought it was clear who was arranging for the posters and what are sometimes called "wrap-arounds" to be put up. It appears that one company is largely responsible. He said that the capacity for council to do something about it seemed fairly limited. I sought advice from the offices of various Ministers. The Minister for Local Government wrote to me as follows:

You seek confirmation as to whether council officers can take action against the organisers for, rather than the distributors of, the advertising material.

Since 1 July 1998 the control of outdoor advertising falls under the provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

Councils have powers to issue an order against the person who has "caused" an unauthorised advertisement to be displayed or the owner or occupier of premises on which an unauthorised advertisement is displayed, requiring the alteration, obliteration or removal of the advertisement.

If the order is not complied with, proceedings can be taken. In addition to instituting court proceedings, a council also has the power, in the event of non-compliance with an order, to remove unauthorised advertisements and to recover the costs of doing so.

These provisions were drafted, having regard to difficulties in observing the actual attachment of the advertisement, to hold responsible those such as promoters and venue management who benefit from increased attendance.

I also sought assistance from the Minister for Utilities, and the Minister's Parliamentary Secretary replied to me:

Where advertising has been erected without permission, it is Integral Energy's practice to contact the owners of the advertising and ask them to remove the signage. Where this is not undertaken, Integral Energy will progressively remove the signage in conjunction with other essential maintenance works on its network.

That means that Integral Energy will not do anything about the signs unless its officers happen to be carrying out maintenance work in the area, which is not helpful in addressing the problem. Having received that information I thought it might be appropriate to convey it to the council. There was a suggestion in the correspondence from the Minister for Local Government that there may be a solution to the problem. The council's general manager responded to me as follows:

I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge your correspondence to Council outlining your concerns about posters. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide an immediate solution to this problem at the present time.

Since the inception of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997, one of the deficiencies of this Act was in relation to Bill Posters. All local Councils and the Environment Protection Authority have been powerless to prevent Bill Posters being placed on power light poles.

Attempts have been made from a number of Councils to address the Local Government Association, in reflecting a legislative change that would allow action to be taken. This has occurred over the past ten years and to date nothing has been put in place.

Council has considered the use of State Environmental Planning Policy No. 64—Advertising and Signage, but implementing such a Policy would require an order to be served for each power pole.

Liverpool City Council has identified the Company responsible for placing these posters on the poles, but does not have the legislation to stop this company from continuing its activities.

Council has allocated resources to removing these posters, as soon as possible, thus minimising their visual impact and displaying potential. Unfortunately, as soon as these posters are removed, new posters replace them.

Integral Energy is the legal owner of the power and light poles and I understand that they have certain obligations to remove these posters. Council has approached Integral Energy on several occasions, and will continue to do so.

I have been keen to put all the correspondence on the record to indicate the extent of the problem. Arguably, there seems to be a gap in the legislation. The Minister for Local Government continually says that it is the responsibility of the Minister for Planning. I take this opportunity to ask the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Local Government to talk to each other about this problem and to introduce remedying legislation. It seems a bizarre situation, where everyone has identified a problem, there is a gap in the legislation, but nothing seems to have been done to resolve it.

BIOFUELS

Mr RUSSELL TURNER (Orange) [5.12 p.m.]: With pleasure I bring to the attention of the House an article in the *Blayney Chronicle*, one of the newspapers in my electorate. The article, headed "Blayney leads the way with Bio-Diesel", speaks about four local men, nearly all farmers—Ed Wilson, a great local identity who is not only a farmer but is always inventing something that is more efficient; Eric Brown and Michael Spira, local farmers in the Neville area; and Cliff Kearney, whose property is located near the biodiesel plant. Cliff is a well-known agricultural pilot who has run his own business for many years. The article reads:

Fed up with the spiralling cost of diesel fuel four Blayney farmers have decided to make their own out of used fish and chip oil.

With diesel now selling for \$1.43 a litre this cost is biting heavily into the cost of farm production with further hikes still to come as demand from China and India for all types of petroleum grows.

Cliff Kearney and Neville Farmer Michael Spira discussed this problem late in 2005 and decided that they had to do something about it. Teaming up with Ed Wilson from Forest Reefs and Eric Brown, another Neville farmer, they set out to build a distilling machine to meet their needs and also produce low-cost fuel for other farmers. With spent cooking oil they said they can produce bio-diesel at about half the price at the pump.

The technology has been around for some time but until the current price of standard diesel fuel rose to its current retail price making bio-diesel has not been cost effective.

Together the four have spent \$45,000 making their distilling plant at Cliff Kearney's property south of Blayney.

The machine has a capacity of 16,000 litres per week. There is the only substantial bio-diesel producer between Swan Hill, Adelaide, Newcastle and a plant in western Sydney.

Cliff Kearney said one of the major benefits of bio-diesel is that it will lubricate engines and runs very cleanly.

Because there is a limited supply of spent cooking oil the four plan putting hundreds of hectares of their own land down to canola planting. Their efforts have not gone unrecognised. Next week the Director of Health Sciences, Strategic Alliances & Evaluation with the NSW Department of Primary Industries, Helen Scott-Orr, will visit the plant. The department has been encouraging the production of bio-diesel. This is another example of how slowly people are recognising that there are alternative fuels to the recognised fuel sources, which, in the main, come from overseas. As has been pointed out, increasingly the cost of these recognised fuels is eating into farm profits. It has been recognised for some time that canola and other oilseeds are an alternative, particularly as far as biodiesel is concerned.

Members would recall that I have been pushing for other alternative fuels, such as ethanol, in my electorate. Again I wish to acknowledge the wonderful work of Manildra Mills in producing ethanol from wheat. I also acknowledge that through its outlets United Petroleum is selling ethanol-blended fuel that is sourced from CSR sugarcane. The two fuel outlets in Orange, Leewood Fuel and United Petroleum, maintain that 60 per cent of their unleaded fuel sales are for ethanol-blended fuels, as opposed to standard oil-based fuels. Again, that is an indication that people are slowly gaining confidence in ethanol and biodiesel. A lot of negative publicity some years ago led to the major oil producers guaranteeing on their bowsers that their fuel did not contain ethanol. Yet, in Orange there are two examples of more than 60 per cent of fuel sales being for alternative fuels. People are buying them with confidence. I congratulate the four farmers from the Blayney district and wish them success with their biodiesel plant.

MALABAR HEADLAND

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [5.17 p.m.]: I wish to speak about the Malabar Headland, which is in my electorate. This spectacular peninsula at the southern end of Maroubra beach, between Maroubra and Malabar beaches, is one of the largest and best-quality areas of native bushland left in the eastern suburbs. The headland has earned National Estate listing as one of the most important natural and cultural sites on the Sydney coast. As I said in my inaugural speech in this place, I invite members of this place to come and see the headland. When they do, they will understand how special it is.

Malabar Headland is one of the largest tracts of native bushland in good condition remaining in Sydney's eastern suburbs. Indeed, much of the bushland is remnant. It is home to a diverse range of fauna and flora, including rare species of native plants, migratory birds, and other birds seldom seen in the city environment. Of vital importance is that it has one of the largest remaining patches of the almost extinct eastern suburbs banksia scrub. It provides a unique record of our heritage. It has 43 important World War II coastal defence sites, including forts, unique gun positions, underground defence facilities and a sunken munitions railway.

However, it suffers from a number of problems, the first being that it is owned entirely by the Commonwealth as it is surplus defence land, and the Commonwealth has allowed it to fall into disrepair. The second problem is that the zoning of the entire headland poses a very difficult situation for those who would wish to protect it; it is split into two areas—the eastern and western zones. The western area is zoned for residential housing, and I do not intend to address that portion of the site today. I will speak about the eastern part of the site, which is zoned "private open space" under the Randwick local environmental plan [LEP] 1998. Private open space, at least up until a week or so ago, allowed certain permissible uses on the site, being tourist facilities, aged care facilities—strangely enough—heliports, child care facilities, and a number of other uses.

I have always considered that there was a grave potential for someone to build a tourist facility on this unique site. A few years ago in Randwick City Council I moved that the council approach the Minister for Planning to remove "tourist facilities" as a permissible use on that headland. I am pleased to say that in the last week of March the Minister for Planning approved an amendment to the Randwick LEP to remove "tourist accommodation" as a permissible land use on the Malabar headland. The 1987 Eastern Beaches Regional Plan established "tourist accommodation" as a permissible use on a part of the headland and it was apparent—in fact, blind Freddy could see—that 20 years on this sort of development was inappropriate on this significant site.

This move by the Minister for Planning—by the Iemma Labor Government—makes the Malabar headland infinitely less attractive to those who would seek to put tourist facilities and other tourist-related,

inappropriate developments on the Malabar headland. It demonstrates the commitment of this Government to the protection of the Malabar headland. In due course we would like to see the Commonwealth Government—it is strangely silent about this entire site, this very special site, which is every bit as valuable and unique as North Head—hand it over to the State Government and Randwick City Council so we can have it promulgated as a national park and public open space.

The community that lives around the Malabar headland is unanimous in this wish. I have never met one constituent who does not wish that to happen. I acknowledge that the Malabar headland has plenty of friends. This Government is a friend of the headland. I acknowledge the efforts of the former Minister for Kingsford Smith, Laurie Brereton, and now his successor, Peter Garrett, who are terrific friends of the headland, as is former Premier Bob Carr, and I also acknowledge the Friends of Malabar Headland, who do more than most to make sure this issue is never ignored. I also acknowledge all of the residents in my electorate, who, unanimously, want this site handed over. I call on the Commonwealth Government to do so.

MR PETER BOYCE BUILDING CERTIFICATION

Mr ANDREW HUMPHERSON (Davidson) [5.22 p.m.]: I raise a matter that relates to the Building Professionals Board and a private certifier at Ku-ring-gai council. A development commenced in mid-2004 at 317-321 Mona Vale Road, St Ives—a SEPP 5 development that comprised 12 three-bedroom units with approximately 20 car parking spaces. As soon as that development commenced, a number of mature trees were removed, which were supposed to be retained, and an area of some 127 square metres was excavated, which was not authorised under the approved plans from Ku-ring-gai council. A number of residents made complaints to the council, to the private certifier who is oversighting this development, and to the Building Professionals Board. Two of those residents were Mr Neighbour and Mr Ammann.

The applicant developer continued to show absolute disregard for the council and for the approved plans, notwithstanding that a development application was lodged for the retrospective removal of the trees and the excavation. Clearly, that is a bit hard to reverse. But the developer continued to develop the site—pouring concrete flooring and putting in structural steel—which went beyond the approved plans, with the intention of building six extra units there. The developer then retrospectively lodged a plan with the council for approval to build six extra units and approximately eight extra parking spaces. The council, correctly, rejected that application and, as a result, the applicant developer was forced to demolish the concrete footings.

The Building Professionals Board seemed to take little action in this regard; it considered that rectification had occurred and there was no further accountability or responsibility required of the private certifier. Yet the neighbours kept fairly detailed records of what happened and made a formal complaint. That is clearly established: they had lodged complaints back in 2004. Late last year the board wrote back to the complainants and said, "The department does not understand this allegation." Given the case I have just made out, I think it was fairly clear: the private certifier failed to do his job. The private certifier in effect condoned illegal building works and then sought retrospective approval of those works. In some respects that was not successful.

Despite that record the department elected not to proceed with any further action against the private certifier. One would think, the residents having achieved the best outcome they could in this matter, the matter could have been allowed to lapse. The review committee of the Building Professionals Board resolved there was no reasonable likelihood that the certifier would be found guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct, which I think is fairly clear on the evidence available, so the board dropped the matter. The private certifier in question, Mr Peter Boyce of Peter J. Boyce & Associates, based in Epping, wrote to the complainants threatening them with legal action and accusing them of defamation.

Those actions, in light of what I have just outlined, show that Peter Boyce is an unethical grub. Only someone who is an unethical grub of this nature would make those sorts of threats to people who have made genuine formal complaints to the Building Professionals Board. This man is unfit to practice. He has clearly condoned illegal building activity, and I call on the Minister to follow up a resolution of Ku-ring-gai council in this regard and to investigate Peter Boyce's activities in Ku-ring-gai council and other areas in which he has practised to find out how frequently he has engaged in this sort of conduct: not just authorising, condoning or not acting against building activity which does not comply with the approved plans of the relevant council, but on how many occasions he has issued letters along the lines that these two neighbours have received, threatening them with defamation action, claiming compensation, and asking for the names and addresses of their legal representatives.

Given that these neighbours have lodged formal complaints—reasonable complaints under the circumstances—I think it is disrespectful that the private certifier is able to make those threats or suggest that legal action is warranted. For starters, the Minister for Planning needs to consider whether the private certifier has acted illegally. I ask the Minister to look at the resolution of council, which is to provide legal protection for people who make reasonable complaints, and, in particular, to investigate this case of intimidation by the accredited certifier, Peter Boyce, and to look at what other activity he has been involved in. Anyone who has been affected by illegal building activity should be deeply concerned at the actions of Peter Boyce and his ilk. People who do the right thing should be protected from people such as him.

WAITARA STATION ACCESS

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [5.27 p.m.]: I am concerned about an issue of grave concern in my electorate relating to the safety of schoolchildren going to and from school in the area of Waitara station and Waitara Avenue. There is a very narrow exit from Waitara station and hundreds of school students use it on their way to and from school. I believe that this is a serious safety issue. On numerous mornings I have stood on the corner of Waitara Avenue and Pacific Highway and watched students, en masse, leaving the station.

Obviously students need to alight at the station closest to their school. The three schools serviced by Waitara station are Barker College, St Leo's College and Our Lady of the Rosary in Waitara, a Catholic primary school. Each morning hundreds of schoolchildren disembark from the train, walk along the platform, down a narrow stairway and through a tunnel before spilling out onto Waitara Avenue. It is extremely difficult for elderly people from the nearby retirement villages to battle their way through the mass of young people. The majority of these young people are well behaved, but children will be children and at times they skylark with their friends; sometimes they even wander onto the Pacific Highway. I have spoken to the school principals about this type of behaviour.

However, one incident highlighted the danger. One morning a pregnant woman was on her way to work and, as she was walking along Waitara Avenue in the vicinity of these children she was knocked over into some bushes. The Pacific Highway has a 40-kilometres zone from College Crescent down to just before Unwin Road. The students must go through two sets of traffic lights to get to school and unfortunately the 40-kilometre zone cannot be policed because the distance is too short. When I spoke to the representative of the principal of Barker College he asked for assistance, so I call on the Minister to provide some. The school suggested that instead of students being given a pass to disembark from the train at Waitara station, they should alight at Hornsby, a larger station with wider stairways, a concourse and pathways.

The other solution would be to extend the 40-kilometre zone, alter the traffic lights at Waitara Avenue and the Pacific Highway, perhaps add a further set of pedestrian crossing facilities, increase pedestrian barriers on the median strips along the Pacific Highway, clean up the laneway behind the car park that some students used in the past, which would involve them walking on a different road, or to alter the timetable so that hundreds of students do not alight at the same time, coming from both the north and the south, onto the platform at Waitara station.

It is a serious situation that a pregnant woman should be knocked into the bushes, and as this was a particularly precious pregnancy it would indeed have been a tragedy if something had happened to her or to her unborn child. The school was notified and in the course of investigations the school has spoken to the students who were involved. However, as a result of the incident I have written to the Minister and asked him to give consideration to the suggestions I have made. This is a serious matter of safety. We do not want anything to happen to our school students or pedestrians.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE LOOKING FORWARD PROGRAM

Mr JOHN MILLS (Wallsend) [5.32 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to bring to the attention of the House a remarkable program that is being developed by Callaghan College, which is a combined junior-senior college in the western suburbs at Newcastle, one of many multicampus colleges around the State seeking to improve educational opportunities for high school students. There is one that covers the electorates of Wallsend and Newcastle, and I note that my colleague the honourable member for Newcastle is at the table.

I declare my interest in that I am a community representative on the Council of Callaghan College, as is my colleague the honourable member for Newcastle. Last year the college council received a submission from the Beacon Foundation, which was established in Tasmania with the objective of doing something to help

students in about year 10 to improve their chances of getting a job. The foundation was based mainly on the comments of businesspeople who said that students who came to see them were not ready for the work force. The foundation spoke to the public sector in Tasmania and sought its assistance. The result was the establishment of the Beacon Foundation and that initiative was picked up by Callaghan College.

On 22 March I was fortunate to attend the "Looking Forward" business launch, which was attended by many businesspeople and students. The program is all about assisting students to set goals and make decisions about their future education and career choices, and I am happy to be involved. Cathy Tate, the Lady Mayoress of Newcastle, was the guest speaker at the launch. The emphasis of the launch was a community partnership between business and the education sector. The link between the business community and education needs to be developed. We had the employer launch but businesses then attends the school for a pledge signing, where students who want to take part in the program, their parents, teaching staff and businesses pledge to work together to improve opportunities for the kids.

Beacon Foundation carefully designed the program, which is not-for-profit. The idea of doing something about youth unemployment appeals particularly to people in the western suburbs of Newcastle because for many years before the establishment of Callaghan College there were lower expectations and hopes among students. Callaghan College was designed to encourage hope that kids would get a job and benefit from their education. The program is based on the idea of "No Dole". Students pledge to seek work and reject the concept of the dole for as long as possible.

According to the Beacon Foundation, students develop an increased understanding about the world of work and achieve a measurable improvement in job application skills. There is an increase in the self-esteem and ambition of students, and students can make real decisions about their future pathways. There is a strong school-wide focus on school-to-work transition, and there has been a significant increase in retention to year 11 and/or training, and there has been significant success in placing students in the work force. The connections and the relationships form that framework for success. It is personal for the kids and for the businesspeople. There are skills and business expos around the schools that expose students and businesspeople to each other. Those expos will be held at Callaghan College later in the year.

Also included is career and educational counselling, work readiness training, interview skills, authentic assessment, and work experience, which seeks to improve year 10 to year 11 transition. I commend the Beacon Foundation and Callaghan College for picking up this "Looking Forward" program as a way in which to improve opportunities for jobs for our kids.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.37 p.m.]: My colleague has outlined in detail the program being run by Callaghan College involving the Beacon Foundation. It was wonderful to attend the launch and see the young people from Jesmond campus, Waratah campus and Wallsend campus interacting with businesspeople and community leaders to positively consider the link between learning and the workplace. People from industry were able to mentor students, do critical appraisals, and ensure that students understand what the workplace is like so that they have a practical and mentoring experience of working in industry. It is a great opportunity. One could see the enthusiasm on the faces of the students who were there. Obviously they are school leaders.

As the honourable member for Wallsend said, the great thing about this program is that it is targeted at students in year 10, many of whom do not have much concept of what work life will be like. They get practical experience in the workplace, mentoring by business and community people who visit the school, and work readiness training, which is an opportunity for them to understand what a workplace will be like. That is important. As the honourable member pointed out, the program has resulted in a dramatic turnaround in Launceston, which had a critically high level of youth unemployment and worklessness—if I can use that term—and where young people looked forward to going on the dole as a career option. This positive program is dedicated to getting our youth into the work force. I commend Callaghan College and all involved.

DUBBO NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs DAWN FARDELL (Dubbo) [5.39 p.m.], by leave: On Saturday 25 March the grounds of Dubbo North Public School saw unusual activity for a weekend. The school was celebrating a major milestone, an open day, organised to coincide with the school's seventy-fifth anniversary. The school buildings were constructed in 1930, which was a troubled year in Australia. But the opening of the school in 1931 was a high point for the Dubbo community at a time when, like so many others, we needed something memorable. The first school day

that year saw the then three-room brick building throw open the doors for the first time. Dubbo's rapid growth meant that this school was needed. It started as an infants school and stayed that way for 11 years. In the first year 84 children were enrolled in classes, but by 1942 that population had grown to 172 children. So the school's role changed and it became a primary school.

Records obtained by reunion organisers tell of extra rooms being built during those early years, as headmasters and education officials came to realise that demand was increasing and space was running out. In 1948 the then New South Wales Minister for Education, Mr R. J. Heffron, visited the school to lay the foundation stone of the present buildings. The typical class of Dubbo North Public School in those early years is worlds away from what is experienced today, but former students speak of one thing that has remained the same: pride in the school. This unique history is not lost among modern-day staff, students and parents, who continue to adhere to the school motto of "Skill with Honour".

The cross-section of past students was distinctly captured at the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations. At the anniversary dinner many intriguing stories and experiences overheard that night were vivid recollections of first experiences with pen and nib, teachers' schoolyard nicknames, lessons and favourite friends. Mr Bill Kelly, a respected Dubbo businessman, told of how the headmaster's wife used to knit jumpers for the needy children. One special guest visiting the school over the past week was a gentleman by the name of Mr Lenny Bates, who was one of the first students to attend the school in 1931. At the reunion Mr Kelly also said that money was not a problem in those days as there was none. However, he could not recall any students ever breaking the law. Mr Bates passed on a number of stories of his school days as staff and teachers proudly escorted him through the grounds.

Another former student from the early days, who assisted organisers, was Ms Ida Riach. Library staff said that they were captivated by what Ida had to tell them, and her knowledge of those early days at the school was eagerly written down. Other former students at the dinner also told of vast class numbers that carried on even into the 1950s. Anywhere from between 30 and 40 children could be found sitting in one room—a very different picture to what we have today. Another highlight at the anniversary dinner was the cutting of the cake by two special guests, Mr Frank Slip and a very dear friend of mine, Mrs Levenia Howey, who is a wonderful indigenous community leader. They were two of the original students enrolled at the school when it opened in 1931.

Organisers of the reunion were even able to track down the school's original register, allowing it to be displayed to visitors, many of whom readily found the names of grandparents, uncles, aunts and other relatives on the rolls, giving them a special link to the school's history. It was not only students from days gone by who took part. Mrs Gwen Aikins and Mrs Margaret Kelly were both members of the 1950s equivalent of the school's parents and citizens association. The ladies auxiliary of the day was an important support network for the school, with both these ladies serving in the 1950s and 1960s. Over many decades Dubbo North Public School has adapted to the ever-changing face of public education, and along the way it has recorded an academic record that has stood the test of time just as well as the buildings.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs may be interested to know that there are many statistics of which the school can be justly proud. Over the past few years, and last year in particular, Dubbo North Public School recorded one of the highest percentages of indigenous students who passed through the primary classes and proceeded to year 12. Under the current principal, Heather Borneman, there are 305 students enrolled at the school this year. I acknowledge the former principal, Mr Bernie Rawson, a well-loved and respected member of our community. Also impressive for a modern-day Dubbo North Public School is the close support network of parents and friends. There is a passionate and active parents and citizens group. This year's committee consists of Michelle Ashworth, Anne-Marie Cox, Ros Spittles and the secretary, Rikki-Lee Chislett. They ensure that there is a full complement of parents on hand to supervise all excursions, sports days, swimming carnivals, school fairs and fetes.

Under the supervision of Colleen Darlington, there is also a full roster of helpers in the canteen. Also contributing to the success of the school is fundraising co-ordinator Jenni Lynch. Passionate students in years 5 and 6 recently lobbied hard for me to obtain a hall for the school. Since the school opened, Dubbo, too, has undergone major change, evolving into a sprawling, modern regional centre that still retains a glimpse of its past through historic buildings such as those at Dubbo North Public School. The seventy-fifth anniversary committee members Heather Borneman, Narelle Lloyd, Lyn Marchant, Jeanie Martin, Jenny Munro, Lindy Parry and Carol Willcockson put together an outstanding event with the help of Dubbo North Public School's general assistant Adrian Starr, who looks after the grounds. On behalf of the electorate of Dubbo and the many past students of

Dubbo North Public School, I congratulate the organising committee, parents, friends, staff and students for making the week so special for the whole community.

Mr MILTON ORKOPOULOS (Swansea—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [5.44 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Dubbo on drawing attention to the seventy-fifth anniversary of Dubbo North Public School. The event marks a great period of growth in the history of Dubbo and the growth and significance of that town to this State. The honourable member gave details of some of the many changes that we have seen in education in New South Wales and possibly the rest of the world. In the 1930s it was not unusual to have 40 to 50 students per class. Those students would be amazed to know that we have very small class sizes now. We believe that that is the best way to develop young minds. I am pleased that Dubbo North Public School has an excellent record in contributing to local indigenous education. Certainly, a record that has the highest proportion of Aboriginal kids graduating from Dubbo North Public School and going through to year 12 at the local high school is an enviable one that I would like to see repeated throughout the State. Once again I thank the honourable member.

ARMIDALE TAFE FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [5.46 p.m.], by leave: Since its establishment in early 2004, Armidale TAFE Film and Television School has become the benchmark for regional film schools. In a few short years it has established credentials beyond what could reasonably be expected from a school so young. Students have not only excelled academically but been victors where it really counts—in the marketplace. The film industry is a notoriously hard industry to gain access to for employment. Most who enter stay to have fulfilling and lucrative careers. That has resulted in a job market where few vacancies ever evolve and those that do evolve are highly sought after. The successes of the school are many. One student, Keaton Stewart, who graduated last year, achieved the State's highest score in the Diploma of Screen. He went on to gain employment at Sydney's Spinefex Productions and was part of the editing team at this year's Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Another student is now with NBN in Tamworth on a traineeship, which will lead to a full-time camera-directing position. One student has received a traineeship with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC] and others are under consideration, with one trying for a job at the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC]. Many have completed freelance jobs, including film clips for local artists and commercials, all of which have resulted in airtime on commercial television. Several graduates have set up their own companies to make film commercials and cover local weddings and other events. Students have also completed three stand-alone segments for ABC's *Stateline* program, all of which went to air. The trust that major entities such as the ABC place in the students of the Armidale Film and Television School is not blindly placed. It reflects the reputation they are achieving in the industry, a reputation for professional excellence at a level unheard of in many other institutions. It also demonstrates the resourceful nature of our emerging regional filmmakers. They have a can-do attitude and boundless optimism, all of which represents a new dawn for the rural voice of Australia.

According to its founder Steve Dobson, the Armidale Film and Television School really has become the mouse that roared. By harnessing meagre funding, mixing it with enthusiasm, optimism and a degree of the Aussie bush spirit of not giving up, no matter what, this small school has become a landmark for film and television in the bush. The teaching team, including Mr Dobson, Paul Fogo, Peter Lawless and Laslo Szabo, have committed themselves to the further growth of the school and the maintenance of a distinctive Australian voice in film and television—although it may have a slight New England lilt. Mr Dobson is an award winning cinematographer, best known as director of photography for the special effects and motion control in Baz Luhrman's smash hit *Moulin Rouge*. He has won an AFI Award as best cinematographer for the Australian feature film *Ground Zero*. He holds five ACS awards, awards from the Cannes and New York Film festivals, a New Zealand AXIS Award, and has worked on Hollywood feature films such as *Heartbreak Hotel* and holds a swag of other awards.

Peter Lawless is one of Australia's premier location managers, and most recently worked on locations for *The Matrix* and *Eucalyptus*, currently on hold. Paul Fogo was head-hunted from Massachusetts in the United States of America. He is a world-renowned documentary filmmaker specialising in work for major museums, including the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Laslo Szabo is a local filmmaker with wide experience in making films with indigenous people. In 2004 Mr Dobson was the lone hand at the new school. He tested the water with a summer school at the end of 2003 which attracted 26 students.

In 2004 a total of 27 students enrolled in the new course, and by the beginning of last year the enrolment had increased to 55 students, and more teachers were engaged. This year there is an enrolment of 67

students taking the Certificate 2 and 4 courses in Screen and the Diploma of Screen. All students who completed their first year have enrolled for a second year to complete their diploma—a remarkable record. The success of the Armidale Film and Television School is based on its philosophy of preparing students for work in the industry. Throughout their studies they work on practical projects, many of which are screened on television or used as video clips by companies, schools and individuals. Students are encouraged and assisted to acquire their own ABN numbers and acquire business skills as part of their course. This is a wonderful school, with a great record to date.

Mr MILTON ORKOPOULOS (Swansea—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [5.51 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Northern Tablelands on bringing to the attention of the House the marvellous achievements of TAFE's Armidale Film and Television School. It is often the larger institutions in capital cities around the world that achieve excellence in film and television, but it is always the case that the smaller institutions, where there is enthusiasm and a distinctive voice, as the honourable member said, can capture the essence of what film and television are about and also the messages that they are trying to relay to the broader community.

The success of the school, as the honourable member said, is measured in the number of traineeships made available by the ABC. We should encourage the BBC to take on students from the Northern Tablelands so that we will hear the distinctive voice of the Australian outback and, hopefully, of Armidale. Hopefully, the twang that we hear from Armidale is not the same as the honourable member's! I am sure the perspective and uniqueness of the Australian story will be reflected in so many of the images that are portrayed in the work of this school.

PITTWATER ELECTORATE POLICING

Mr ALEX McTAGGART (Pittwater) [5.53 p.m.], by leave: I would like to take this opportunity to speak on the issue of police resourcing in Pittwater and the implications of the possible closure of police stations in my electorate. Earlier in the day, during the debate on youth crime and antisocial behaviour, we heard much about the level of policing in New South Wales. I take this opportunity to outline the situation in the electorate of Pittwater and my position on policing. It is my considered view that co-operation and respect for each other is the best way for a community and the police to handle policing issues, and visible uniforms walking among the community is the best way to highlight police presence.

Honourable members will be aware that the local area command in Pittwater covers an area from Palm Beach to Brookvale, a distance of approximately 25 kilometres. Within that area is a police station at Avalon, which has been closed for eight years; a police station at Mona Vale, which is partially manned; a police station at Collaroy, which has been closed for 10 years; a police station at Frenchs Forest; and the local area command, which is based at Dee Why. In late January, a new area commander was appointed. I welcome Superintendent Doreen Cruickshank to the position. I have had a series of meetings with Superintendent Cruickshank and have accompanied her to Scotland Island and the western foreshores to familiarise her with the offshore area. Superintendent Cruickshank advised me today that her area command is at strength, and whilst she has sufficient resources to do the job required, she does acknowledge that you can always do with more.

I mentioned that Avalon and Collaroy police stations are closed. I have been advised that those stations, along with Frenchs Forest police station, have been placed on an asset disposal list. I am further advised that Mona Vale police station is in very poor condition and that it is manned 24 hours a day by a single officer. Both Superintendent Cruickshank and I acknowledge that this is not satisfactory, and I will be making representations for this situation to change. I would also point out that the 12-hour shift is not suitable to our local area command as many of our officers come from the Central Coast. I assume the reason for that is local high house prices and low police wages. A 12-hour shift combined with two hours travelling time is too long a day and must cause some job dissatisfaction.

Should the asset sales take place—and, I regret to say, they will take place—I would be proposing that funds from the sale of the Avalon, Collaroy and Frenchs Forest properties be allocated to upgrading Mona Vale police station, with the highway patrol being transferred from Frenchs Forest to Mona Vale and detectives being transferred from Dee Why to Mona Vale, to free up valuable accommodation at Dee Why. That would also have the effect of increasing police presence at the northern end of the beaches. Currently, policing on the northern beaches is by vehicular patrol, originating from Dee Why, which means that there is a less visible presence on the ground in the villages of Avalon, Newport, Narrabeen and Mona Vale.

Whilst I acknowledge that the serious crime rate in Pittwater is very low, there has been an increase in antisocial behaviour and graffiti, which, as we know, can be the start of entrenched delinquency. More visible policing would have the effect of reducing that. Regrettably, the most serious crime in the Pittwater electorate appears to be related to domestic violence, possibly caused by economic stress. That usually happens in the late evening or early hours of the morning, and removes police resources from normal activities such as patrolling outside hotels and central business districts, thus increasing the potential for crime and antisocial behaviour.

Whilst I acknowledge that we have a low rate of serious crime, the inevitable result of less visible policing is an increase in antisocial behaviour. That, of course, then leads to cost-shifting to communities and councils, which have to provide additional lighting, private security and bear the cost of graffiti removal. I encourage the Minister to increase advertising and publicity related to the Police Assistance Line. Unless people record antisocial behaviour, vandalism and suspicious activities, police resources are not supplied because of the lack of statistics.

I would like to acknowledge the officers and men and women of the Broken Bay Water Police, stationed at Church Point, who cover the offshore areas of Scotland Island, western shores and lower Hawkesbury and who also attend to search and rescue off the coast. I would also like to acknowledge the support of Mr Dave Waldron, who has been Acting Local Area Commander, and the strong support offered by former Local Area Commander, Denis Clifford. They have always been available and proactive in meeting with me and council officers to co-ordinate community education initiatives, such as safety audits in the central business districts, chamber of commerce meetings and high school presentations, which are all aimed at reducing crime. I look forward to a close working relationship with the Local Area Commander, the Minister and the commissioner to ensure adequate resources are available to service police needs in the electorate of Pittwater and to respond to any emergency in a timely manner. I will continue to support the men and women of the New South Wales police force. [*Time expired.*]

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I seek leave to make a private member's statement.

Leave not granted.

Private members' statement noted.

The House adjourned at 6.00 p.m. until Tuesday 2 May 2006 at 2.15 p.m.
