

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 8 June 2006

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**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.

## APPROPRIATION BILL

### APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

### APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL

### DUTIES AMENDMENT (ABOLITION OF STATE TAXES) BILL

### STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL

### STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

**Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.**

### SNOWY HYDRO CORPORATISATION AMENDMENT (PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF SALE) BILL

**Bill received and read a first time.**

**Mr SPEAKER:** I advise the House that I have received a written authority from the Hon. Ian Cohen, MLC, advising that the honourable member for Monaro will have carriage of the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Parliamentary Scrutiny of Sale) Bill in the House.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: Under Standing Orders 251 (1) and 251 (2), I seek that the bill be read a first time and the second reading be given immediately. If the honourable member for Monaro were so interested, one would have thought he would be in the Chamber. Standing Order 251 states:

- (1) When the message from the Council forwarding a public bill ... the bill shall be read a first time without question put.
- (2) The second reading may be moved forthwith...

I seek to have both occur.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would not selectively edit the standing orders. Standing Order 251 (2) states:

The second reading may be moved forthwith ...

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** But Standing Order 251 (1) does not.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Standing Order 251 (1) states:

When the message from the Council forwarding a public bill for concurrence is reported, the bill shall be read a first time without question put.

The bill has been read a first time. Standing Order 251 (2) states:

The second reading may be moved forthwith or made an Order of the Day for a future time.

That is precisely what has happened.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** So despite the fact that the honourable member for Monaro has been on the radio saying—

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

## **RESTORATION OF BUSINESS OF THE PREVIOUS SESSION**

### **Firearms Amendment (Good Behaviour Bonds) Bill**

#### **Motion by Mr Richard Torbay agreed to:**

That, following the message from the Legislative Council in relation to the Firearms Amendment (Good Behaviour Bonds) Bill, the second reading of this bill be restored to the business paper as an order of the day.

## **FIREARMS AMENDMENT (GOOD BEHAVIOUR BONDS) BILL**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [10.05 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This is not a large bill—indeed, it has only three pages—and this will not be a long speech. However, although the bill is small, it has significant potential to rectify a large basic injustice visited on a particular group of citizens and, in fact, burdening them with a double jeopardy of punishment under illogical and bizarre circumstances. The bill is the work of the Hon. John Tingle, MLC, in the other place, and I am happy to have the job of presenting the bill to this House. It is worth noting that in the other place both the Government and the Opposition supported the bill—it was carried 28 votes to 4.

The bill seeks to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to reduce the conditions under which the issuing of a good behaviour bond automatically—the key word is "automatically"—means that a licensed firearm owner is automatically deprived of the licence, and of legally owned firearms. This applies even if the offence that led to the bond may have absolutely no relationship, connection or relevance to ownership or use of firearms.

It has been astonishing to see the negative spin put on this bill by some sections of the media, but I will deal with that later. It is an oddity of the Firearms Act that it includes this reference to good behaviour bonds, which is normally dealt with under the Crimes Act. This effect of the Firearms Act, in the case of good behaviour bonds, is not widely known, and I have heard of a number of cases where firearms owners, before a court on quite minor matters, have been happy to accept a good behaviour bond, only to discover quickly that their firearms licence is gone.

The first case that came to my attention some years ago was that of an elderly farmer on the South Coast. This man was described as a quiet living, almost reclusive person who had never had as much as a parking ticket in his life and was a very moderate drinker. One afternoon he went to a nearby town to shop, met some old friends and had a few drinks at the club. On the way home he was breathalysed and he came in with a medium range prescribed concentration of alcohol [PCA]. As he had never been in trouble before he went to court and was given a 12-month good behaviour bond. He was surprised when the next day local police came to his farm and told him his firearms licence was revoked and he had to dispose of his firearms immediately.

What seems to me to be unbalanced about this provision is that when a court issues a good behaviour bond in lieu of a tougher penalty it is effectively stating, "Well, you've done the wrong thing and committed an offence. But the court feels it was probably an isolated incident, and so we're going to give you a chance to demonstrate that you are normally a law-abiding citizen. So the court is giving you a bond to be of good behaviour for a set period of time. The bond should be a reminder to you, during that time, that you did commit an offence; but it's also an opportunity for you to show you can behave and observe the law at all times." Yes, the bond is a punishment, but it is also an opportunity to demonstrate rehabilitation. So, when that person was given the bond, he accepted that as his punishment for being silly enough to drink more than he should have drunk. Then, lo and behold, a day later he discovered that there was a second punishment—the revocation of his firearm licence. In his case, it deprived him of the firearm he had used until then to control rabbits, foxes and other vermin on his farm—a firearm that is not, and never has been, a threat to anyone else.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Ironically, they did not take his car.

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** As the honourable member for Mount Druitt said, they did not take his car! If this is not a case of double jeopardy—two punishments for one offence—what is it? Given that his offence did not relate in any way to a firearm, or improper use of a firearm, or any act that gave cause to believe that he might do something wrong with a firearm, the imposition of a second punishment is utterly illogical. I take the view that it is even worse, because it applies to only one category of citizen: the law-abiding, normally inoffensive, legal firearm owner. Firearm owners are bound by many restrictions, covenants, expensive licences, tight storage requirements, suspicion that they are all potential homicidal maniacs, and a media-generated public suspicion and disapproval which applies to no other legitimate sport. The honourable member for Mount Druitt might interject on this point, but imagine a motorist who, given a bond for medium range PCA, was told the next day that his golf clubs were to be confiscated as punishment, and his fishing licence was being revoked, just for good measure!

**Mr Richard Amery:** Or his lawn bowls.

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** Or even his lawn bowls. The golf clubs of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition might also be in trouble in that case. What a public outcry there would be then; but it would be no less illogical than the effect the current law has on firearm owners. That is the serious point that I am making. Firearm owners are regarded with instant and abiding suspicion by legislators, the media and the public, so it seems whatever is done to them must be for the public good. What an appalling injustice that is. I know many people would say that double jeopardy is not only necessary but also a good thing; and that golf clubs and fishing licences are not a potential danger to the community, and so the allegory does not hold up. Well, people are welcome to their opinion, but it is ill founded when natural justice is taken into account.

Of course, revocation of a firearm licence in some circumstances is not only justified but also inevitable. When a person has used a firearm to threaten or wound someone other than in self-defence, or to rob or assault someone, his licence should be taken away—indeed, we would expect his firearms be removed. In severe and deliberate cases, perhaps the person should never be allowed to own a firearm again. But, of course, someone given to that sort of firearm violence is hardly likely to be bothered or deterred by the law from obtaining a firearm illegally. By definition, firearm laws bind only law-abiding people. That sort of penalty is justified in some other instances, including a case of deliberate physical assault without a firearm or a weapon of any kind other than the human fist, which is one of the most used weapons. The perpetrator of that offence should not have access to firearms.

In the drug trade, which is closely linked to the criminal use of illegal firearms, a person convicted of an offence involved with that who for some reason is given a good behaviour bond should certainly not have legal access to firearms. Although, again, it is doubtful that anything would deter such a person from obtaining and using a firearm illegally. The bill seeks to limit the automatic disqualification of persons subject to good behaviour bonds from holding licences or permits and from dealing in firearms. The bill will disqualify only a person who has been convicted of an offence involving the possession or use of firearms or other weapons, or an offence involving a serious assault, or a drug-trafficking offence.

I turn to the detail of the bill. Schedule 1 limits the disqualification of persons subject to good behaviour bonds from holding firearms licences or permits, or from dealing in firearms. Schedule 1 [1] amends section 4 of the Firearms Act, by inserting in section 4 (1) the definition of "drug trafficking offence" for the purposes of the Act. Honourable members will notice that the definition specifies eight offences as provided in the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 relating to a prohibited plant or a prohibited drug. The section is quite specific.

Schedule 1 [2] inserts into section 11 (5) (d) of the Firearms Act 1996, relating to general restrictions on the issue of licences, the additional definition "as a result of being found guilty of an offence relating to the possession or use of a firearm, or any other weapon, an offence involving the infliction (or attempted infliction) of actual bodily harm on another person or a drug trafficking offence". Schedule 1 [3] makes a similar amendment to section 29 of the Firearms Act in relation to general restriction on issuing permits. Schedule 1 [4] amends section 44A of the Firearms Act by inserting similar provisions to those just mentioned. I am well aware that some honourable members of this House will see that as a softening of the Uniform National Firearms Laws brought in after the Port Arthur massacre. That is not the case at all; and it is not what some of the media chose to present, as an extremely distorted view of this bill, after it passed in the other place, by 28 votes to 4, with both Government and Opposition support.

The media made a number of extraordinary and inaccurate claims. It claimed that the bill "would give guns back to convicted criminals". That is rubbish and untrue. The bill specifically deals with bonds given for minor offences—not for major crimes—and it does not propose giving guns back to anybody. The bill proposes not taking firearms away as a double punishment when it is not justified. The media claimed also that the bill would allow someone who had breached an apprehended violence order [AVO] to apply for a firearms licence for the first time. A quick check of the law would have shown that people who have had an AVO taken out against them are disbarred from holding a firearm licence for 10 years. There was much more in the same extraordinary vein in the public debate, but it seems obvious that some journalists who wrote those stories had not read the bill. I urge them to read the bill.

The bill is not about the sorts of things claimed in those misleading stories. It is an attempt to remove the injustice of a double jeopardy from the Firearms Act—a double jeopardy that applies selectively to a specific group of citizens, as I mentioned previously. The intention of the bill is to remove that double jeopardy where it occurs because of a minor offence or an offence quite unrelated to the ownership and use of firearms. An obvious injustice of this type brings all law into question. It is not unreasonable to try to correct such an injustice.

I emphasise that nothing in the bill affects the discretion of a court to order the revocation of a firearm licence as it sees fit. That is a very important point. At present, the court has no discretion, no say in the matter; it is an automatic revocation, taken out of the court's hands regardless of how the court might view the legal seriousness of the offence. I understand that the Government has foreshadowed some amendments to the bill designed to clarify the wording of some definitions of the offences mentioned in it. The Government has discussed those with the author of the bill, the Hon. John Tingle, and he has agreed to them. I indicate on his behalf that I will not oppose these amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Richard Amery.**

## **SNOWY HYDRO CORPORATISATION AMENDMENT (PROTECT SNOWY HYDRO) BILL**

**Bill introduced and read a first time.**

### **Second Reading**

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER** (Orange) [10.19 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The proposed sale of Snowy Hydro was a rushed fire sale of an iconic State asset to fill Labor's budget black hole without adequate safeguards. I have spoken to people in my electorate during the past few weeks and they agree that the Snowy Hydro is as iconic as the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Try to sell those and see what will happen. With one eye on an election war chest, New South Wales Labor pushed through the deal without community consultation or debate in Parliament. People all over the State, and indeed the nation, were shocked at the arrogance of the Iemma Labor Government, especially when they started to realise the implications.

Labor refused to provide sufficient detail on issues such as how the proceeds would be spent and what safeguards would be put in place. Many unresolved issues could not be debated in Parliament, including lack of certainty in water rights for irrigators, particularly along the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers. With Labor's track record on public-private partnerships such as the cross city tunnel, Parliament and the public could not have any confidence that future regulations would not be skewed in favour of the private company.

There were overriding environmental concerns. After New South Wales Labor corporatised Snowy Hydro, a scientific committee was supposed to have been set up under the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to report on environmental flows in the Snowy River. Labor agreed to do this in 2006 only as a public relations stunt after public pressure from The Nationals, the Liberals and the community, amid outrage over the sale. There were also financial concerns. The Labor Government's rationale for the sale was that it did not want to use taxpayers' money to fund the expansion of Snowy Hydro. Nevertheless, Labor admitted that if it met its own targets of 28 per cent for environmental flows in the Snowy River, it would expose taxpayers to a potential payout of hundreds of millions of dollars compensation to a privatised Snowy Hydro.

There would be job cuts in local communities. Labor said there will be no job cuts but would not guarantee this in legislation. The honourable member for Monaro was quoted in the *Cooma-Monaro Express* on

Thursday 12 January that he was "not concerned about a loss of jobs for the region". While the honourable member arrogantly dismissed the concerns of his constituents in Monaro, the Liberals and The Nationals continued to fight the sale. There was no indication of safeguards for the provision of the location of company headquarters until 17 May 2006 amid the furore of Labor's sale. It took an agreement with the Victorian and Federal governments that headquarters would remain in Cooma. This was five months after the Premier announced the sale.

New South Wales Labor wanted to maximise its profits rather than reflect the concerns of taxpayers about overseas ownership caps. The Premier and Minister Della Bosca announced no ownership safeguards in announcing the sale on 16 December 2005; instead they relied on the Federal and Victorian governments to remain the largest single shareholders in Snowy Hydro Limited. There were many unresolved land rights issues for towns such as Jindabyne, which is landlocked by land owned by Snowy Hydro.

A number of unresolved issues comprehensively demonstrate that the sale of Snowy Hydro was rushed and The Nationals were correct to oppose Labor's fire sale. Indeed, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition is the only political group with any credibility on this issue. New South Wales Labor wanted to flog off this asset at bargain basement prices to fund its election prospects. The Greens voted with Labor to corporatise Snowy Hydro under the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997, which led to this rushed privatisation attempt. Federal Labor leader Kim Beazley did not speak out about the sale to fall into line with the New South Wales Labor Party.

It took leadership from Coalition members of Parliament such as The Nationals Kay Hull, Liberal Gary Nairn and, crucially, the Prime Minister, who put into Federal Government policy the strong opposition on the sale from the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Opposition. So-called Country Labor members such as the honourable member for Monaro and the honourable member for Murray-Darling refused to recognise the concern of their communities in Labor caucus and Parliament. The Liberals and The Nationals in New South Wales were the first to highlight the issue. The Leader of the Opposition unearthed the sale in question time late last year and The Nationals have been very vocal in their opposition to the sale.

The community had every right to be concerned that this iconic, taxpayer-owned asset was going to prop up Labor's electoral prospects. New South Wales Labor has squandered unprecedented wealth of this State and delivered a big budget deficit. Labor's priority was not about fixing services or delivering infrastructure, but rather following Graham Richardson's mantra of "whatever it takes" in order to win the 2007 election. The Minister for Finance was doing the dirty work of the Treasurer in flogging off this iconic State asset to deliver an election war chest to the Premier.

Treasurer Michael Costa admitted after the sale was scotched that none of the estimates in his first—and last—budget on Tuesday was relying on the Snowy sale, saying, "The budget papers are at the printer. I do not have to change one number as a consequence of this." Instead, we can only presume that the proceeds of the sale of this taxpayer-owned asset would be thrown at Labor's electoral prospects. If Labor could not buy the election by selling off the family silver, it planned to dig its way out of a budget black hole over the next 12 months by returning the State to surplus after the election by selling this asset. The New South Wales Labor Party is hell bent on privatising this iconic Australian asset to fill its budget black hole. New South Wales Labor has not put this sale off. Last Friday the Minister for Finance, John Della Bosca, revealed on radio 2GB that the sale of Snowy Hydro was certainly not off Labor's long-term agenda. Phillip Clark asked him, "Are you still going to do it?" The Minister said, "Well, not right now..."

For all these reasons, to reflect community concerns and to ensure that future governments cannot flog off this iconic State asset, I have today introduced the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Protect Snowy Hydro) Bill to protect Snowy Hydro forever. I propose that the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 be amended by inserting after section 5 the following section:

**5A Disposal of shares in Company requires approval of Parliament.**

Shares in the Snowy Hydro Company held by the State of New South Wales must not be sold or otherwise disposed of unless the disposal is approved by resolution of each House of Parliament.

Therefore, it has to be approved by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. I call on all Labor members, in particular Country Labor members, especially those in the House this morning, to reflect the concerns of their communities and to vote for these important safeguards that will ensure Snowy Hydro can never be sold off without adequate debate or community consultation. I commend this vital bill to the House.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL** (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [10.28 a.m.]: I move:

That this debate be now adjourned.

**Division called for and, pursuant to sessional orders, deferred.**

## **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) [10.29 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the second reading forthwith and progress through all remaining stages at this sitting of the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Parliamentary Scrutiny of Sale) Bill.

This bill has been referred to this House by the Legislative Council. The suspension of standing and sessional orders will reflect essentially what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition tried to achieve earlier: that debate on this bill occur.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.29 a.m.]: Honourable members who visit the Snowy region could not help but be impressed when they see those drowned valleys and those remnant and majestic snow gums standing dead amongst the water. The snow gums are majestic but they are also pathetic. They are pathetic because they represent a past that was denuded, deluged and drowned. It is apposite that I start with that analogy. Last week the honourable member for Monaro ridiculed a great scheme—a scheme that advanced this country and, more importantly, brought many generations of settlers to it. The honourable member for Monaro has been drowned, deluged and left behind by the progress relating to this matter. Today the honourable member for Monaro is trying to do exactly what he voted against 18 hours ago.

**Mr David Campbell:** Point of order: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is not debating the motion that is before the House; he is wandering all over the place and referring to a range of other issues. He has not yet referred to the motion to suspend standing and sessional orders; he is simply debating the bill. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the motion.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has not breached the standing orders yet.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** What members of the public hate most about politics are the games that people such as the honourable member for Monaro play. This motion would not have been necessary if Government members had agreed yesterday to an amendment moved by Opposition members to another motion for the suspension of standing orders. That amendment would have enabled the bill introduced by the honourable member for Orange to be taken through all its stages yesterday. Yesterday the honourable member for Monaro voted against that amendment. This motion would not have been necessary if Government members had agreed to allow the bill introduced by the honourable member for Orange to be taken through all its stages today.

The Minister for Regional Development, who is in the Chamber, opposed the Opposition's amendment. In a moment we will have a division not only on this motion but also on that motion. The honourable member for Epping has proven time and again that if good ideas come from the Opposition or from Independents they are not good ideas unless they are badged by the Government. The honourable member for Monaro picked up the Greens bill belatedly. Because the Greens bill is convenient to his political purposes, private members' day has again been suspended, as I predicted yesterday afternoon, in order to facilitate the passage of this bill. The way in which this bill is being handled goes to the heart of the credibility of the honourable member for Monaro.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** What credibility?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** As the honourable member for Bega said, what credibility? When I was referring to the drowned snow gum analogy the honourable member for Bega thought I was referring to the honourable member for Monaro as deadwood. The honourable member for Bega might say that, but I would not. What has the honourable member for Monaro said since last Friday, when the Prime Minister and Mark

Vaile saved the Snowy and when Gary Nairn, who had been lobbying furiously in Federal Parliament, achieved a win for Monaro? The honourable member for Monaro has taken every possible position in relation to the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited. He was amongst the first to apply for the prospectus but he is the last to put the public interest first.

Today we are not talking about the public interest; we are talking about the political interests of the honourable member for Monaro. The only time he was galvanised into action was when Opposition members moved a motion in this House to introduce a bill to ensure that John Della Bosca could not flog New South Wales's 58 per cent share of Snowy Hydro during the winter recess. Yesterday afternoon the honourable member for Monaro voted against a measure that would have achieved exactly what he is seeking to do this morning. That sort of political gamesmanship destroys credibility in politics. The honourable member for Monaro has no credibility.

If it were the intention of a Liberal-Nationals government to sell Snowy Hydro Limited, Peter Cochran, Peter Webb and, I dare say, David Madew would have stopped it dead in its tracks. The honourable member for Monaro was not able to do so. This Government is not proceeding with its proposed fire sale of Snowy Hydro because the Prime Minister, and not the honourable member for Monaro, stood in the way. I am keen to get out of this Chamber because we are about to unveil a statue to St Thomas More, the patron saint of statesmen and politicians. The honourable member for Monaro will not be there because his patron saint is St Jude—desperate and lost causes. His desperate and lost cause is re-election next year.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mr Thomas George:** Point of order: My point of order relates to dishonourable conduct in this House.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** What are you referring to?

**Mr Thomas George:** The honourable member for Monaro just displayed a hand action to me. I would like a copy of the footage to enable me to take further action.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** Order! There is no provision in the standing orders to deal with that. The only action I saw and heard was the honourable member for Lismore shouting and waving his hands around.

**Mr Steve Whan:** To the point of order: The honourable member for Lismore is correct. I apologise to him, and to the House, for making a gesture that I should not have made in the House. The gesture was probably not appropriate anywhere, other than perhaps on a footy trip. I sincerely apologise to the honourable member for Lismore. He riled me up, as he does on a number of occasions.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** Order! Having resolved that issue I now call the member for Monaro to deal with his bill.

**SNOWY HYDRO CORPORATISATION AMENDMENT (PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF SALE)  
BILL**

**Second Reading**

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro) [10.38 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is a great pleasure for me to introduce the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Parliamentary Scrutiny of Sale) Bill today.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: I am loath to interrupt the honourable member for Monaro, but a deferred division is to be called.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** Order! On the advice of the Clerk, the division will occur subsequent to this debate. The suspension that has just been agreed to has two consequences. The first is to suspend standing and sessional orders, and the deferred division would have been dealt with under the sessional orders. The second consequence of the passage of the motion is that the House will deal forthwith with

the bill, which the honourable member for Monaro has the carriage of in this House. On that basis the House must deal first with the bill.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It is a great pleasure for me to introduce this bill today. I thank Greens member Mr Ian Cohen for introducing the bill in the other place.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: There is one big question. Why would—

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** Order! The honourable member for Bega will resume his seat. If that behaviour is repeated he will be called to order. The honourable member for Monaro has the call.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** It is clear that Opposition members do not want to debate this issue. I am sure all honourable members are aware of the things The Nationals have been doing over the past few weeks, many of which have been designed to fail. Last night The Nationals in the upper House tried to delay consideration of the bill until today so it would not be dealt with during this parliamentary session. That revealed to the people of Monaro and those who care about the Snowy the true feelings of members of The Nationals in relation to this issue. I wish to go into some detail in this second reading speech because of a number of stories that have been told. Most importantly, today I want to talk about the fantastic community effort that went into saving Snowy Hydro.

The Government will support this legislation today because it and the Federal Government heard the community through many voices. The bill will ensure that any future proposal to sell New South Wales shares in Snowy Hydro must be agreed to by both Houses of this Parliament, unless the sale is to the Commonwealth. I will refer later and in more detail to the provision relating to the Commonwealth. First I want to comment on the campaign to save Snowy Hydro from privatisation. At times debate last night in the upper House was an orgy of self-congratulation. It has often been said that success has many fathers. A number of people claimed credit for saving Snowy Hydro from privatisation but they missed the real heroes in this issue—the people at the victory rally in Cooma whom I spoke to on Sunday. The community of Monaro, the State and Australia rose up and said they did not want the Snowy Hydro privatised and sold off. They made it clear that people power would win the day. I admit that at times I was worried that people power would not pick up enough steam to win the day. I have been urging for people power for some time. I want to refer to the heroes of the fight to save Snowy Hydro.

[Interruption]

The constant interjections of members opposite show that they are more interested in scoring political points than recognising the great efforts of the community. I will refer to several people by name. Obviously I will not be able to mention all those involved, and some I will miss. Hundreds of people wrote letters to the editors of newspapers and thousands turned up to the rallies. Many people spoke at the rallies. Acacia Rose and Lee Taylor-Friend co-ordinated many of the public demonstrations in the Snowy. They were committed from day one and ran an amazing campaign. Vicki Wallace, representing the Snowy River Alliance, was involved with Acacia and Lee. Vin Good, a former commissioner of Snowy Hydro, voiced strong opposition from day one and provided a great deal of information about the future development of Snowy Hydro.

Max Talbot and David Hain spoke at the various rallies and kept up a constant campaign to ensure that the proposal to sell the Snowy Hydro was defeated. The mayors of the local shires, Richard Wallace and Roger Norton, put their positions forcefully at the rallies. Angel John Gallard from the Snowy River Alliance and chairman of the Dalgety Progress Association introduced passion into the debate, particularly about the Snowy River. Craig Ingram, the Independent member for East Gippsland, was a consistent and hard campaigner. As honourable members would know, he was elected on a platform to save the Snowy River. Doug Nicholas organised the letter from many prominent Australians. The *Cooma-Monaro Express* and the *Summit Sun* ran a constant campaign to save the Snowy Hydro. In particular, the *Cooma-Monaro Express* ran a scathing editorial about the failure of Gary Nairn to turn up at one of the rallies. I will refer to Gary Nairn later.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Repeat the words you said about him on Sunday.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I will. The honourable member for Bega should have the courtesy to listen to my contribution. I suspect the strongly worded *Cooma-Monaro Express* editorial had a biting impact. I credit the *Cooma-Monaro Express* and the *Summit Sun* on the success of their campaigns. The *Snowy River Echo* consistently put forward the case against the sale of Snowy Hydro. Unusually for me, I congratulate Alan Jones.



Some of my colleagues are nervous about that; he has had a go at me on a few occasions. However, his phone poll had a big impact. I also mention John Laws for his campaign. Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan, who had a strong profile in opposition to the sale, also deserves mention.

At the rally on Sunday I offered my congratulations to Gary Nairn, and I did so genuinely. He told the crowd that he had worked quietly behind the scenes to stop the sale of Snowy Hydro. Unlike me, he felt that he was unable to state his opposition publicly. Perhaps as a backbencher I am able to do that. I have known Gary for a long time, and I take him at face value. As I said, on Sunday I congratulated him on his efforts. I also put on the record my congratulations to the Electrical Trades Union [ETU] representatives Neville Betts and Bernie Riordan on their efforts. They played a strong role within the Labor Party to try to change the decision. The ETU strongly represents the workers at Snowy Hydro, and it took up a number of their concerns. I had spoken with the ETU representatives about the stance they would take at the State conference, which will be held this weekend.

Last night in the upper House the Minister for Commerce spoke about the history of the proposed sale and the decision not to sell, his discussions with Nick Minchin, and the legal advice received by the governments. I refer honourable members to that speech as to the various roles of Federal Ministers and members in the process. Why was Snowy Hydro so important to the people of Monaro? The Snowy Hydro is an icon in Australian history. One hundred thousand people from 30 countries worked on the project. The scheme started with the vision of Bill McKell, the then Labor Premier. When he became the Governor-General he worked with Ben Chifley to get him to use defence powers to get the project under way.

The facts and figures about the length of the tunnels and the size of the dams are well known. It was a massive engineering achievement. More importantly, the scheme captured the imagination of the people of Australia. To this day, when people talk about nation-building projects they always mention the importance of the Snowy scheme. Snowy Hydro is important not only to the people of Monaro, but its significance is probably felt most strongly in that area. Many people who live in the Monaro area worked on the Snowy scheme or are descendents of Snowy workers. Frank Rodwell was at the rally on Sunday dressed in his Snowy hard hat and carrying his sledgehammer. He had written letters to the newspaper displaying his passion for the Snowy.

Last night in the upper House various members provided a history of the campaign to save Snowy Hydro. I want to put on the record my version of the history. There are different versions because many people played various roles. I believe some matters need to be put on the record in this place. This morning we heard The Nationals try to rewrite history and tell a lot of lies about the campaign. One of the key factors is that The Nationals have shown consistently, in Monaro and here, that they are more interested in point scoring than in getting a result. The Nationals have said in the House that they opposed the sale from day one. I can prove that that is wrong. During debate on a bill earlier today The Nationals said that I had said I was not worried about jobs. Again, they took my words out of context.

I said I had guarantees on jobs and that those guarantees were given and repeated by the Federal member Gary Nairn. Apparently, The Nationals suggest he was lying. I opposed the sale from day one. It is true that I first found out about the sale courtesy of an Opposition question to Parliament. I remember the day very well. It is emblazoned in my memory. An Opposition member took a point of order and said, "Premier, the member for Monaro is looking rather wan." He was probably right. On 2 December 2005 I issued a press release in which I said:

The member for Monaro Steve Whan will not support any proposal that involves privatising Snowy Hydro.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** But you did, through caucus.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I will refer to caucus in a moment. We hear continuous lies from Opposition members. At the time I made it clear that I would not support the sale of Snowy Hydro. At no stage did I support it—at all, ever.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch):** Order! Honourable members on both sides of the House will come to order.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** On 18 December 2005, after the Government announced its intention to sell Snowy Hydro Limited, I issued another press release to say that I remained:

... totally opposed to the sale of the NSW Government's ... share in Snowy Hydro ...

I continued:

I am bitterly disappointed that the NSW Cabinet took this decision without giving the Labor Caucus or the NSW Parliament the opportunity to have a say.

The next point is particularly relevant to this debate. I then stated:

Unfortunately, the Corporatisation legislation passed in 1997—

which, for the benefit of honourable members opposite, is six years before I was elected to this place—

means the NSW share can be sold without any reference to Parliament.

On the same day I referred to the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Parliamentary Scrutiny of Sale) Bill, which is why I am so pleased to move the second reading today. On 1 March 2006 I issued a press release highlighting the action I had taken in the Labor caucus. My colleague the honourable member for Wallsend moved in caucus a motion about the sale of Snowy Hydro. It had support but, unfortunately, we did not have the numbers on the day. But at least we made the effort. I gave the people of Monaro a commitment that I would not vote for the sale of Snowy Hydro, and I did not vote for it at any stage. Unfortunately Opposition members have lied blatantly about that. The Coalition paid thousands of dollars for a letterbox-drop of leaflets that sought to mislead people about the procedures of the House.

We debated in this place an urgent motion about Snowy Hydro that was initiated by the Government. The Leader of The Nationals and the Leader of the Opposition declined to participate in that debate. They were too gutless. It is true that the next day I voted against debating the same issue, in favour of debating petrol prices. But that does not mean that I voted in favour of the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited—and it is totally dishonest to claim that it does. On the previous day The Nationals in the upper House had also voted against debating an urgent motion on the sale of Snowy Hydro. What a bunch of absolute hypocrites! But members opposite did not put that in their press releases, because it was not convenient to share that information.

Members of The Nationals claim to have opposed the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited from day one. Let us consider the facts. The truth is that for many, many months The Nationals did not offer an opinion on whether Snowy Hydro should be sold. They called for a delay but not for a halt to the sale. In his question to the Premier of 2 May 2006, the Leader of The Nationals sought a guarantee that 100 per cent of the funds raised from the sale would go towards rebuilding the State's infrastructure. He did not seek a guarantee that Snowy Hydro would not be sold; he was interested only in where the money would go. The Nationals candidate for the Monaro electorate in the upcoming State election has revealed his position. He has also claimed that he opposed the sale from day one. But if that is true, why did he say during the 7.00 a.m. news on ABC Radio 2CN on 4 March 2006 that he was not opposed in principle to the privatisation? On 11 April I was interviewed on the ABC Radio 2CN morning show about the sale of Snowy Hydro, and The Nationals candidate phoned in to the program. According to the program transcript, I said:

This is a person on the other end of the line who has actually said he is not opposed in principle to the sale.

The interviewer then asked:

Is that true David? David Madew is that true?

David Madew replied:

I would like to see a full and frank debate on this before we went to any kind of market on this.

David Madew refused to say that he opposed the sale of Snowy Hydro. So when did his position change? He attended the Cooma meeting at which 300 other people were also present. I spoke at the meeting and repeated that I had opposed the sale from day one. I have also said that in the House on many occasions, contrary to The Nationals' claims. My position has been consistent throughout.

The Nationals candidate for Monaro did not speak at the Cooma meeting. The honourable member for Bega was there also but he did not speak. Several other members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals, including an upper House electoral candidate, were in attendance but they also did not speak. Greens members spoke and stated their opposition to the sale of Snowy Hydro but State Coalition members were silent on the issue. The only Coalition speaker at the Cooma meeting was the Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Gary Nairn, who said he supported the sale. He has told us subsequently that he was working secretly behind the scenes but,

in the spirit of good Cabinet solidarity, he could not tell his electors what he was doing. I accept that. I will leave it to his constituents to judge him.

So when did The Nationals' position change? I suspect it happened on 5 March or thereabouts. I must raise another interesting point. Last night in the upper House the Hon. Melinda Pavey said The Nationals opposed the sale of Snowy Hydro since day one. Yet David Madew wrote recently to the *Snowy River Echo* to say—and, remember, he was only preselected in March—that he had managed "to change party policy for the NSW National Party to now that we oppose the sale of Snowy Hydro". Who is telling the truth? Someone is obviously telling lies about this issue but I do not know who it is. I suspect that The Nationals in New South Wales decided that it was in their interests to oppose the sale of Snowy Hydro when the Hon. Melinda Pavey wrote a press release for The Nationals candidate for Monaro—

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** He can write his own press releases. He's not like you.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The honourable member for Coffs Harbour says that The Nationals candidate writes his own press releases. Perhaps the honourable member can explain why on 5 March 2006 I received an email from the Hon. Melinda Pavey—she accidentally sent it to me instead of David Madew—that said:

revised media release—for urgent distribution—see you tomorrow you good thing ...

The Hon. Melinda Pavey told The Nationals candidate to say in the press release:

I don't have half hearted opposition to the sale—I oppose it wholeheartedly ...

I accept that from then on The Nationals candidate for Monaro—outside this place I call him Moaning Madew—opposed the sale of Snowy Hydro. I would have welcomed his support if he had worked actively to oppose the sale, but instead he launched his political campaign. We must ask: If The Nationals actively opposed the sale of Snowy Hydro, why did they attack only me and not those who supported the sale? Why, when they called on me to cross the floor, did they not call on Gary Nairn to do the same? Why did they not call on New South Wales Senators from The Nationals to cross the floor of the Senate? None of them did so. But The Nationals in New South Wales did not mention that fact because it did not suit their political agenda to do so.

The Coalition is guilty of hypocrisy on this issue. The Leader of the Opposition has still not stated in this Chamber his opposition to the sale of Snowy Hydro. I remember distinctly the news report on Friday night of last week about the ditching of the Snowy Hydro sale. The reporter made a comment along the lines of, "Peter Debnam saved his strongest comment on the Snowy sale until after the decision had been changed." It would be interesting to know whether the Prime Minister telephoned the Leader of the Opposition and said, "It's all right, Peter, you can come out and oppose the sale now." On 22 April 2006 ABC finance news reported the consistent position of the Leader of the Opposition on the sale of Snowy Hydro. The report stated:

State Opposition Leader Peter Debnam says he will not reveal if he supports or opposes the sale until the NSW Government explains how it will spend the money.

What did they say last night in the other place? They said they have been opposed to the sale since day one. However, on 22 April 2006 he would not reveal whether he supported or opposed the sale. I have congratulated Mr Nairn, and I believe what he has told me. However, I wonder why he signed a letter dated 30 May to the local newspaper supporting the sale. The Nationals probably spent thousands of dollars sending postcards around the electorate, not to encourage people to oppose the sale but to attack me. Why were they not campaigning to oppose the sale? The Nationals saw this not as a principled campaign against the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited—as I and many of my colleagues did, even if they were not able to make the same public comments I did—but as a campaign opportunity. They simply tried to raise spurious points.

The Leader of The Nationals failed to participate in the lower House debate on the Snowy Hydro Limited sale. He will no doubt give us a spiel today about how he was opposed from day one and was just champing at the bit. The Nationals then tried to run a range of distraction campaigns. They said at a rally a few weeks ago that Steve Whan could stop this sale. Apparently I am a very powerful man in the Government. I would love to think I am. They said I could simply move a private member's bill and get six of my friends to cross the floor. Their counting is not very good, because six of my friends would not have done it.

**Mr Thomas George:** You wouldn't have six friends.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The honourable member for Lismore loves to insult me, but he is right on this occasion—I probably did not have many friends for a while. However, I certainly had some stalwart colleagues all the way along and I appreciate their support. Interestingly, The Nationals tried to make an issue of the fact that I registered for a prospectus. Certainly, at 6.41 a.m., when I had just woken up, my explanation on the radio probably was not clear. That is why I called back and clarified myself. I registered because I felt it was important to see all the financial information that was available.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey, the upper House member supposedly responsible for the Monaro, also registered for a prospectus. There is a great deal of hypocrisy from The Nationals on that point. They voted against debate on the Snowy Hydro Limited sale in the upper House and then paid thousand of dollars to bag me for voting against an urgency debate in this place when we had already debated the issue. I am on record three times in this place opposing the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited, which is certainly better than the Leader of The Nationals' record.

The terms of reference for the upper House inquiry have been amended, and I welcome that move. They now quite appropriately allow the inquiry to examine the future needs of Snowy Hydro Limited. The Nationals stated in some of their dishonest propaganda that I opposed the inquiry. That is demonstrably untrue. If they were to look at *Hansard* they would see that when we debated and passed an urgency motion about Snowy Hydro Limited, after a bit of work from me the Government accepted an amendment to welcome the inquiry. The Nationals accusation is demonstrably false.

The upper House inquiry is still very important because it can examine the scheme's capital needs and discuss some of the issues that have been raised. One of the myths I want to demolish is that the Snowy scheme is not well maintained. That is not true; it is extremely well maintained and the entire infrastructure is in extremely good condition. Snowy Hydro Limited wanted the capital to be able to expand. As the Hon. John Della Bosca has often said, it wanted the capital to expand into other areas of power generation, and that is still a challenge. I will make a brief submission to the upper House inquiry, in which I will suggest that it consider Snowy bonds. Many people have spoken to me since the decision not to proceed with the sale and have said they would like to buy bonds to support the scheme. It is an old-fashioned concept, but it would appeal to many people in Australia.

The bill is what the people of the Snowy region have requested, and there are two aspects to it. First, it provides that any future consideration of the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited must come before both Houses of this Parliament. That is the same safeguard as is in the Federal legislation, despite the Federal Government's original advice. The exception to that would be if the corporation were sold to the Federal Government. That is a sensible position because, as a number of speakers in the upper House confirmed last night, and Minister Della Bosca also confirmed, the Federal Government has the capacity to provide the capital funds that the corporation needs—it has the \$17 billion accumulated from last year's budget.

However, importantly for me, it is also what the people of the Monaro requested. A motion was passed unanimously at the meeting held in Cooma on 20 April, which was attended by hundreds of people. Presumably some members of the Coalition supported it, because they were in the audience. The motion called for Snowy Hydro Limited to be bought by the Federal Government. This legislation is a perfect recognition of what the people of the Monaro requested. Speakers at the rally in Cooma and at the victory rally called for the same thing, as did Bill Heffernan and many others.

Minister Della Bosca also raised ongoing issues with the management of Snowy Hydro Limited. Each of the governments has a one-third say on the board, and in his view that hampers the decision-making process. If the Federal Government were to take over the States' shares, that issue would be resolved. That is only one option. As I have said, I would like to suggest that bonds be issued. The bill offers the Coalition the chance to do as it has been saying it would do: vote for the bill to demonstrate that it supports the community's wishes.

The Snowy River is now being effectively rescued by one of the most historic environmental programs ever implemented by an Australian Government. By law the Governments must deliver a 21 per cent flow to the Snowy River—that is, 212 gegalitres a year—by 2012. This Government is committed to that agreement. In the many conversations I have had with Minister Della Bosca he has confirmed that progress is being made. He and this Government are obviously committed to that target and, eventually, to increasing the flow to 28 per cent, which is 282 gegalitres a year. That is a significant achievement and it will go down in history as one of the greatest environmental achievements in this country.

One of the controversial issues on which this debate has focused is the Mowamba River. I will very briefly deal with that because the fact that the sale has been defeated does not end the debate. In the question-and-answer booklet I circulated in the Monaro I stated:

... in order to start the process of rehabilitation of the Snowy River the Government has agreed to advance a portion of the water down the Snowy River by shutting off the Mowamba Aqueduct and allowing the flows 'advanced' down the river to flow down the Mowamba River

At the time the Snowy Water Licence was negotiated those involved saw the return of water down the Snowy River as the aim. The Mowamba was seen only as a mechanism for flows to be advanced.

Allowing water to flow over the Mowamba Aqueduct was not some sort of political stunt; it was the only way water could start flowing down the Snowy River in advance of the works on the Jindabyne Dam.

Unfortunately when this scheme was put forward those planning it did not consider the health of Mowamba River or the impact of having an unregulated tributary on the Snowy below the dam.

At the time the plan to re-commission the aqueduct was not hidden but it probably was not explained because it was not the point of why most of the work had been done.

I wanted to put that on the record because the Mowamba River issue became wrapped up in the debate. That issue has not been finally resolved but I know that the Dalgety community in particular will continue to work towards a resolution, and I will continue to work with them. The subject of the water flow to Dalgety was another issue that, for political motives, The Nationals attempted to suggest was linked to this debate. The Nationals tried to suggest that Dalgety was not getting enough water. It was certainly the case that at the time the new water intake was set they needed a higher flow, and the Government moved to remedy that.

The daily water flows below the take-off point are available each day on the Internet, so everyone can see what the flow is. Unfortunately, The Nationals candidate suggested on radio that the water flow was not strong enough, that it was evaporating before it got to Dalgety—this was after the increased flows had been set. The Internet web site showing the actual flows demonstrated that that was not so. The Dalgety community can be assured that this Government will continue to work in their interests to make sure that the hugely significant increased flows of the Snowy River are pushed down the river.

In conclusion, I commend the bill to the House. This is what might be called the final stage in a victory for the community. The community worked hard to mount a massive campaign, which took a few months to get up and running, and I applaud their efforts. I would like to place on record the fact that after the Prime Minister announced his decision, the New South Wales Government decided to halt the sale. I noted a number of contradictory comments by Opposition members of the Upper House. One that stood out was that the Opposition sought to credit the New South Wales decision with being, in part at least, due to the Government having listened to the views expressed by the community. I would like to think the decision was principally due to the realisation that the sale should not proceed because of massive community opposition to it. In my own way I played a part in that by taking an honest position to the electorate at all times. I did what I said I would do: I worked within the Labor Party and the Government to try to have the decision reversed, and at the end of the day the decision was reversed.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Thank God for Gary Nairn and the Prime Minister!

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The Leader of The Nationals said, "Thank God for Gary Nairn." Gary Nairn said he also worked from within government and did not cross the floor. He worked from within his party and within government, as did Bill Heffernan, because they felt that was the best way to operate. I did the same thing, and I did it with honesty. I put forward my community's position, but the credit for this fantastic turnaround is due to the New South Wales Government, which listened to the voice of the people. The reason the bill is before the House today is to secure the future of Snowy Hydro in accordance with the wishes of the community. I hope that the Opposition will support the bill and not resort to its usual practice of silly political point scoring. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [11.13 a.m.]: The air in this Chamber today is rank with the stink of hypocrisy! Today we have seen one of the greatest acts of political hypocrisy ever seen in any Australian Parliament. After having voted on at least three occasions during the past six months against motions moved by The Nationals to halt the sale of Snowy Hydro, the honourable member for Monaro is now tagging onto a Greens bill requiring parliamentary scrutiny of any future sale.

Weeks ago the honourable member for Monaro was challenged to introduce a private member's bill. The Nationals and communities right around New South Wales were desperate to try to stop the sale because they knew the Labor Government was hell-bent on selling Snowy Hydro Limited no matter what. What did he do? Absolutely nothing! No private member's bill, no motion, and no questions. There was absolutely nothing—nada, zilch, zip—from the honourable member for Monaro, but today he has been so hypocritical as to jump onto a Greens bill. Why today?

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** I wonder why a Greens bill?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Why a Greens bill? I will come back to that later. Why today? I know why, because last Friday the Prime Minister pulled the rug from under those opposite. On Friday morning, after taking a pizzling—an absolute pizzling—from Alan Jones, the Premier was saying, "Oh, well. Er. Er. Well, they pulled the rug out from under us so now we can't sell it. Darn it!" That was the Labor Government's position as of Friday. In fact, when John Della Bosca was asked on Philip Clark's radio program, "Are you still going to do it?" he replied, "Well, not right now." That was Labor's position. All the way until Friday the Government was desperate to sell, and there was not one peep from the honourable member for Monaro up until now. Today, in this Parliament, is the first occasion on which this member has spoken out against the sale of Snowy Hydro—not via his own bill but via a Greens bill! Shame on you!

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order: The Leader of The Nationals said I have not spoken out until today. That is a patent lie, it is insulting, and the parliamentary record shows it is a blatant lie.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! There is no point of order. I remind the honourable member for Monaro that he has a right of reply.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Today the honourable member for Monaro has decided to tag on to the Greens bill to protect Snowy Hydro after months and months of toeing the Labor Party line and meekly agreeing to the sale. For the past three months at least he has sat on his hands and done absolutely nothing in this place. Today, after the proposal was scuttled by the Prime Minister, supported by the Federal member for Eden-Monaro, Gary Nairn, the honourable member for Monaro, political opportunist that he is, has tagged onto a Greens bill. It was this Labor Government that pushed and cajoled the Federal and Victorian governments into selling their shares in Snowy Hydro Limited. It is only now—when Labor no longer has a choice, when it has been absolutely snookered, when the whole deal has fallen over thanks to the efforts of the Federal Coalition and the State Nationals and Liberals—after it has been scuttled that we have heard one word from the honourable member for Monaro. Only days before the sale was scuttled the honourable member for Monaro was still selling the message that people power could not stop the sale. He was telling people it could not be stopped.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** He was buying shares! He was wanting to buy shares.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I will come to that. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour points to a very pertinent issue: the honourable member's interest in the sale. Finally, the honourable member for Monaro has been dragged kicking and screaming into action in this House. He has been drowned, deluged and left behind, and he has grabbed onto a Greens bill as if it were some kind of lifebuoy floating down the Snowy River. The electorate will never forget that while people were out protesting against this issue and fighting this rushed fire sale by the Labor Government, the honourable member for Monaro did not utter one word of protest in this Chamber. He was busy weighing up how many shares he could buy. On ABC South East radio on 24 May he admitted he had registered for a prospectus, he admitted that he was considering buying shares in Snowy Hydro Limited, but he was unsure whether he could afford them. He said:

I haven't made a decision on whether or not it's appropriate for me to buy shares if I can afford 'em. I don't know how much it'll cost ... I guess I'm not sure that I'll end up buying shares or not.

That demonstrated a strong position on the part of the honourable member for Monaro in opposition to the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited! Not a peep out of him in here, but he was registering for a prospectus and considering the purchase of shares! What we have seen from the honourable member for Monaro today with this gross hypocrisy is a failure at every step, up to this point of the parliamentary process, to support the mass public opposition to the sale of Snowy Hydro. I will just go through a chronology of events.

Since Labor announced the sale of Snowy Hydro in late 2005—only after the Opposition asked whether Labor was going to sell it and the Premier squibbed out of it and said it was an equity-raising proposal—it did not make any announcement until, and only when, it was sprung by the Opposition. But since late last year the honourable member for Monaro failed to support a Nationals parliamentary inquiry into the sale and failed to introduce any inquiry or legislation.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Untrue.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** It was debated in the upper House, so the honourable member had no input whatsoever. He failed to introduce any inquiry or legislation of his own via a private member's bill to halt Labor's fire sale to fill a budget black hole. I know The Nationals candidate in Monaro had said to him for weeks, "Go on, put in a private member's bill." He is an outstanding Nationals candidate and is in the gallery today. And what did the honourable member for Monaro do? Absolutely nothing. It was only after the Prime Minister knocked the sale on the head and only after the Greens introduced a bill that he has decided, "Okay, I can get onto this and I will not lose my endorsement in the Labor Party because I will not have to cross the floor."

He is a wimp. The former member for Monaro, Peter Cochrane, crossed the floor; he voted with his feet and he voted for his constituents, but not this bloke. On at least four occasions in this House he has been given the opportunity to cross the floor and vote for his constituents in Monaro and he has not once taken that opportunity. He has waited for this Greens bill as some kind of lifebuoy to jump onto so he does not have to cross the floor and does not lose his endorsement within the Labor Party. That is what this is all about. How serious can this guy be about representing his constituents who just hated the idea of this sale? Did the honourable member for Monaro ask the Premier a question about the sale? No. I think he has asked a few dorothea dixers, but not about Snowy Hydro. He failed to organise community meetings, he failed to organise a community rally, he failed to table a petition in the House against the sale.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** His first press release was 1 March.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** As the honourable member for Bega points out, his first press release about it was 1 March. When he realised he was in trouble he went quiet for at least four or five months. After we sprung the Government there was not a peep from him. On 1 March he was boxed in and thought he had better say at least a few words to his electorate, even though he was not saying anything here in the Parliament. He failed to instigate a parliamentary debate giving all sides the opportunity to express their concerns. He personally voted against debating the issue on at least three occasions when urgent motions were brought into this place. Even yesterday, when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition moved a motion which would have allowed debate forthwith on the private member's bill of the honourable member for Orange, which is designed to ensure a proper parliamentary debate of any future plans of this lot to flog off Snowy Hydro, he voted against that. The hypocrisy stinks.

The honourable member for Monaro made his first speech in the Parliament on this issue six months after becoming aware of the sale. It is only after the Prime Minister listened to the public and decided not to go ahead with the sale and the honourable member for Monaro heard that the Labor Government had rolled over on this that we have heard any word from this bloke, because he realised he could speak up here without losing his Labor Party endorsement. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour rightly points out that there is a strong connection here between the Greens and the honourable member for Monaro.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** An interesting connection.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** A very interesting connection. In fact, it comes about as a result of the Greens preferences, which pushed him across the line in the last State election. A Greens candidate by the name of Moore contested the 2003 election, and the preferences went to the honourable member for Monaro—2,081 preferences to bolster his vote and get him across the line. There is a little bit of a deal happening here. He certainly owes the Greens; they got him into the Parliament, and he wants them to keep him in again. We all know it is a very marginal seat. In fact, John Stanhope called him "a marginal member in every sense of the word". So there is a very strong connection and it is interesting that today he is jumping onto a Greens bill—a Greens bill of all things! He will not support The Nationals bill, which was introduced into this place yesterday and read a second time today, but he will support the Greens bill because he has got a few friends in the Greens.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** And how many hectares of national parks?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** It is a coincidence that the budget brought down on Tuesday announced 21,000 new hectares of national parks.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Ah ha!

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Ah ha! Here is the pay-off. This is "You scratch my back, I will scratch yours. You give me preferences, I will support your bill. I will give you 21,000 new hectares of national parks." It is the old "parks for preferences" deal that has been going on in New South Wales for too long under this Labor Government, and the honourable member for Monaro is the recipient of that cosy, albeit questionable, arrangement. Are the protestations of the honourable member for Monaro here today going to have any impact at all? I suggest not, because despite the fact that the bill would require both Houses of Parliament to approve a future sale of Snowy Hydro by any government, the fact is that it has been on the Labor Party's agenda since 1997.

The Labor Party introduced the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 with a clause in it that excluded the Labor Party from having to bring privatisation back to the Parliament. That was a sneaky little clause, and the honourable member for Coffs Harbour reminds me it was done with the support of—guess who?—the Greens! So this bill is another piece of hypocrisy. The Government supported the Corporatisation Act, and it supported not having to bring privatisation back to the Parliament in 1997. Now it thinks, "Maybe we had better plug that hole." It took The Nationals to draw attention to that issue. Here we have hypocrisy on all sides and also a cosy relationship between the Greens and the Labor Party, and particularly the honourable member for Monaro, who desperately needs those preferences. The honourable member for Monaro was on radio this morning saying he had taken his private member's bill to caucus.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** When?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** That is a good question. We understand that caucus met on Tuesday morning. We do not have a private member's bill from the member at all, so if anyone is being disingenuous about this it is the honourable member for Monaro—no private member's bill, no caucus meeting.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** The leaks from caucus tell us he did not even raise it.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Exactly. The leaks from caucus tell us it has not been raised at all there, so he is being very disingenuous, if not dishonest, in the media. It is well and truly on this Government's agenda. This bloke has only protested after it was too late, after the sale has been knocked on the head—until after the next election. One thing is sure: John Della Bosca is out there saying, "We are not going to sell it right now." When is the Government going to sell it? After the next election. On 25 March it will be back on the agenda. The Government needs money; it has trashed the State economically—

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** They won't be here.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** They will not be in government. But if Labor does get back into government it will be back on the agenda. Today the honourable member for Monaro has become the de facto Greens member in the Legislative Assembly by jumping into bed with the Greens and sponsoring the bill. The bill is a piece of hypocrisy from both him and the Greens. The privatisation of Snowy Hydro has been on Labor's agenda since 1997 when it introduced the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Bill with the support of the Greens. It is still on Labor's agenda, as revealed by John Della Bosca when questioned by Philip Clarke. It is clear that if Labor is re-elected on 24 March next year the privatisation of Snowy Hydro will be back on the agenda, again without a peep from the honourable member for Monaro.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** It is mentioned in the budget papers.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** It is still in the budget papers; it will not go away under Labor. The honourable member for Monaro sat there for more than six months without a whimper while his Labor colleagues went about flogging off Snowy Hydro. He did not say one word of protest in Parliament; he did not move one motion or introduce one bill. It was only in his electorate that he tried to make a hero of himself.



**Mr Andrew Fraser:** A lion in the electorate, a pussy in the House.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I was going to say a tiger in Monaro but a pussycat in Macquarie Street—a wimp in Macquarie Street. Now that the decision has been taken away from his Labor mates, we finally hear a little peep out of him, and then only on a Greens bill in exchange for the preferences that pushed him across the line last time. People will see through his two-faced political hypocrisy. His shameful performance today will go down in the annals of political history for all the wrong reasons.

**Mr PETER BLACK** (Murray-Darling) [11.30 a.m.]: I support the honourable member for Monaro—and I support him 100 per cent! The Leader of The Nationals, the canine faction of the Liberal Party, spoke about gross hypocrisy. Today he has been responsible for unqualified, monumental hypocrisy, and I shall give a few examples. Last night he was in bed with the Greens in wanting a sperm bank in our gaols. What outrageous hypocrisy!

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat.

**Mr PETER BLACK:** He talks in this Chamber about the cross city tunnel and desalination plants, but he has never talked about Snowy Hydro. One thing is certain: we are not ready to be in opposition and Opposition members certainly are not ready to be in government, especially judging by the performance we have seen today. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour should remember the 2002 National Party conference, which was held at Broken Hill—and rightly so because 2002 was the Year of the Outback. A little brown paper envelope was pushed under my door and I reckon it was given to me by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Point of order: I accept that it was a paper delivered by me but it had nothing to do with this bill.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! The honourable member for Murray-Darling should be given an opportunity to develop his argument.

**Mr PETER BLACK:** It has everything to do with this bill because what used to be the cocaine-sniffing North Shore yuppies have merged with the six-fingered people with only one set of grandparents between them. We have the cocaine-sniffing yuppies on the one hand and the canine faction on the other. We are talking about a national icon, Snowy Hydro, which was established by Labor.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Point of order: I ask you to remind the honourable member for Murray-Darling that there are schoolchildren in the gallery. If the member is going to rant and rave like this, he should do it to the camera so that all of New South Wales can see what he does in this House every single day. He should let the world see how he behaves in this Chamber.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! The Leader of the Opposition has made his point. I remind honourable members on both sides of the Chamber that they should be on their best behaviour when the gallery is full of people watching and listening to the outcome of this interesting debate.

**Mr PETER BLACK:** The honourable member for Coffs Harbour delivered a paper under my front door, so he claims, to say they should separate in opposition. They are falling over miserably now.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order: The honourable member for Murray-Darling has not even mentioned Snowy Hydro. I ask that you direct Sir Les Paterson to return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! That is the third point of order in less than a minute. There is no point of order.

**Mr PETER BLACK:** The Nationals are now down to one bark and 11 whimpers. They are in a Coalition and they are dominated by the Liberal Party, and that has led to their sell-out over Snowy Hydro. It is as simple as that. I will deal with the Coffee scheme before I return to Snowy Hydro. Jim Small, the former member for Murray, which now comprises most of my electorate, promoted the Coffee scheme for the diversion of the Clarence River into the Darling River, but Ian Causley, the then member for Clarence, sank the idea. The Nationals have never supported diversion of water from coastal streams into inland streams.

**Ms Katrina Hodgkinson:** Point of order: Loath as I am to ask that the member return to the leave of the bill, it is about Snowy Hydro, not about some coffee club, and I ask that you ask him to speak to the bill.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! There is no point of order. A point of order has been taken every 30 seconds or less. That does not give the honourable member for Murray-Darling time to develop an argument.

**Mr PETER BLACK:** The honourable member for Burrinjuck is very kind. I will bring the debate back to Snowy Hydro, after having pointed out that it was The Nationals that sunk the Coffee scheme, which was for the diversion of water from the Clarence River into the Darling River. If the honourable member for Burrinjuck had been around then, she would have supported me on this matter. I shall refer to the events of last Thursday, when I chartered a flight down from Broken Hill to Deniliquin to attend two meetings about Snowy Hydro. John Della Bosca travelled down from Sydney, which, interestingly, was a shorter distance, to also talk about Snowy Hydro.

At the first meeting we were very well received by the irrigators, who were looking forward to moving into the Murray-Darling, away from the honourable member for Murrumbidgee. I shall return to him later. We received a good reception. Arising from that meeting was a consultative committee on how to manage the water. That committee comprised members of Snowy Hydro and peak bodies representing the irrigators. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee is now entering the Chamber, on call. One needs only to mention a genetically modified goat and in he comes. The first meeting was good, but the second meeting was even better. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition nods his head. I spoke to the 150 people who attended the meeting and they gave me a good hearing.

I said that the Snowy had to be sold and that it had to be sold to the Commonwealth Government, full stop. There was a slight difference of opinion over this, and that is on record. I am still absolutely in favour of the sale of the Snowy, but it must go to the Commonwealth because it is an Australian icon. I am not with Nick Minchin on this. He said on the front page of the *Adelaide Advertiser* that everyone was in favour of the sale of the Snowy. I am not with John Howard. I am with Country Labor and all of regional and rural New South Wales. We are in not in favour of selling Snowy Hydro to majority interests overseas. That is not on and was never on.

I must commend Kay Hull, the Federal member. She has 10 times the intestinal fortitude of John Cobb, who voted for the sale. John Anderson and Mark Vaile also voted for the sale. Kay Hull was the deputy mayor of Wagga Wagga while I was mayor of Broken Hill. She said she would introduce a private member's bill in the Federal Parliament, but the wheels fell off because there was to be a cap of 35 per cent on foreign ownership and a cap of 10 per cent on general ownership, which was a sensible measure. After the meeting, when I said that Snowy Hydro should be sold to the Commonwealth, on the Thursday John Howard said that Snowy Hydro was no longer going to be sold and the phones started ringing. John Della Bosca left a voicemail on his phone or something. That is how they communicate. Nick Minchin should know better. His cousin, Eric Minchin, is an arts patron and founder of the Brushmen from the Bush. The bottom line is that the phone calls started coming through. And guess what? We will not be selling it.

If there is one hero in this equation it is Kay Hull. I will say this bluntly: I will recognise members opposite when they do their job. I will always recognise them when they do their job. In this case I am acknowledging a Nationals member who did more than her job. She crossed the floor in a serious debate on the impact of the sale of Telstra on Western New South Wales and to support my rice growers in relation to exceptional circumstances. She has done a superb job—and this is coming from Country Labor to a Federal Nationals member. Contrast that with John Cobb, who is weak and miserable. He will not survive in Parkes; he will be beaten at the next election. He will go, like members opposite.

I turn to the consultative committee. Apart from forming the consultative committee, I believe we have a way to go forward. For reasons known only to the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, The Nationals were floating around; they were confusing a sale of water with the Snowy Hydro sale. No such thing! We hold the water licence. New South Wales would never give up the water licence. We hold it, we deliver on it, and we work in consultation with the irrigators for it. When I say "irrigators" I am not unmindful that some water must go into the environment. We achieve two ends. We are working with the irrigators to get a solution on water. At eight o'clock this morning I had a meeting with irrigators in the Country Labor caucus room. We talked about a way through. The first meeting of the consultative committee will be held in August. I have faith that we will work through some of the problems with supply of general security water, including early supply for rice growers.

Power is another issue relating to Snowy Hydro. In the House on Tuesday we debated nuclear reactors; I contributed to that debate. Two great apparatchiks on level 8, Kirsten Andrews and Kimberley Rankin, were confused because we do not know what The Nationals are saying about nuclear reactors. Are they for or against them? We have the same situation in relation to Snowy Hydro. The New South Wales Nationals belatedly differ from the Federal Nationals. The Federal Nationals signed off on the sale: we have to get rid of it, we have to privatise it for all sorts of reasons, which I will come to shortly. The New South Wales Nationals chose to be absolutely hypocritical and seized an opportunity for the worst of venal purposes. The fact is that Snowy Hydro must expand.

Years ago the Premier of South Australia, Premier Tonkin, dropped out of a deal that would have connected the Snowy Hydro scheme to South Australia. Atomic reactors may or may not be appropriate for South Australia. For Snowy Hydro to remain competitive it must be able to generate peak power in sufficient quantities against many other reactors or generators that will come on stream. Snowy Hydro has already spent \$500 million on purchasing gas-fired generators in Victoria, and it has also bought a retailer. It also wants to expand into Brisbane and Tasmania, all because we signed up to a national grid. Snowy Hydro will lose its earlier precluded, as it were, status and face the open market.

Surely we as Australians must think seriously about Snowy Hydro and its icon status. We should think seriously about the fact that the Chifley Government established Snowy Hydro, and that the National Party would not allow the Coffee scheme to go ahead from the Clarence River and the River Darling. We need to think carefully about what we as Australians have, and why we should not be selling out overseas. Members opposite want to sell Telstra overseas. Indeed, they want to sell overseas everything they can get their hands on. Snowy Hydro must be kept in Australian hands and the way to do that is to give it to the Commonwealth. New South Wales cannot afford to spend 58 per cent while it has only one-third of the say on building power stations in other States.

I want any money we have to spend on infrastructure to be spent in New South Wales. I want piping channels in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area [MIA]. I wonder what the honourable member for Murrumbidgee will say about that. I want to spend money on piping in the MIA for all the right environmental and economic reasons. Why should we be investing in power stations in other States? I do not want New South Wales to spend money in other States because it owns 58 per cent of Snowy Hydro. We have only one-third of the say, yet we are responsible for 58 per cent. It is illogical that New South Wales should be spending money in Queensland and Tasmania, and looking at what can be done in South Australia. It is complete nonsense, given the emergence of the national power scheme.

I return to water. The water will stay in New South Wales. There is no way we will hand the water to the Commonwealth. It is not on! We will not put our irrigators or red gum forests at peril. We will not put anything at peril. In conclusion, I should say that the irrigators in the southern Riverina look forward to being represented by me and to losing the honourable member for Murrumbidgee. [*Time expired*]

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [11.45 a.m.]: I arrived at Parliament House this morning expecting to debate the sensible bill of the honourable member for Orange. Lo and behold, the Labor Party, including the honourable member for Murray-Darling and the honourable member for Monaro, voted down an amendment that would have allowed the honourable member for Orange to introduce his bill. After the honourable member for Monaro voted against that amendment yesterday, guess what he did? He went straight to his office and issued a press release calling on the Labor caucus to support the private member's bill that he intended to introduce.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Where is it?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** That is a good question. What private member's bill will the honourable member for Monaro introduce? He will not introduce a private member's bill. Will he or won't he? This morning on ABC South East radio the honourable member for Monaro was in full flight, saying that he called on the Premier, John Della Bosca, and the Labor caucus to support and vote for his private member's bill. What do we learn at 10.30 a.m. today? The honourable member for Monaro is the lower House member sponsoring Ian Cohen's bill—

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** A Greens bill!

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** —which is a Greens bill. Obviously, it is sensible and reasonable legislation. However, the honourable member for Monaro—he is a little grub—having voted against the

introduction of the honourable member for Orange's bill, approached Ian Cohen last night and said, "Please let me sponsor your bill in the lower House because I've got a political headache. Why do I have a political headache? Because I have been playing silly, pathetic political games in relation to Snowy Hydro since its sale was announced in this Chamber at the end of last year." Frankly, I would sooner back quiet achievers such as Gary Nairn, who gets results, than noisy non-performers such as the honourable member for Monaro, who has done nothing more than play silly, pathetic political games. If he had a spine he would have introduced a private member's bill in a previous sitting week.

Now that the rug has been pulled out from under his feet and the feet of the Premier and Della Bosca, suddenly he is the sponsor of a private member's bill that would result in parliamentary scrutiny of the great sell-off that the Premier and Della Bosca wanted to inflict on the people of New South Wales. The honourable member for Monaro is dishonourable. He has ratted on his community time and time again in this House. When he is in Monaro he makes out that he is doing all these wonderful things.

The honourable member for Monaro is a disgrace. The fact that he did not have the guts to introduce legislation in this place weeks ago and put the whole thing to bed then shows how duplicitous he is. Having voted yesterday against an amendment that would have enabled the honourable member for Orange to introduce his bill, he went to the upper House to plead with Mr Ian Cohen to allow him to be the sponsor of this bill in the lower House. He will be judged on that; the people of Monaro will judge him on that. They also know that in 1997 it was the Greens in the upper House who supported the corporatisation legislation that gave the Minister the power to dispose of the shares as he or she saw fit. To her credit Ms Sylvia Hale was out working in the community, so Mr Ian Cohen sponsored this bill, and Mr Ian Cohen was the Greens MLC who voted for the bill in 1997. The Greens are trying to reposition Mr Ian Cohen, and the Labor Party is going to try to reposition the honourable member for Monaro.

The interesting point that the honourable member for Monaro said on ABC South East this morning was that he was seeking caucus approval. The question is: Does he have caucus approval to sponsor in this place a Greens bill from the upper House? We know there has not been a caucus meeting this morning. That is further evidence that the honourable member for Monaro is orchestrating a stunt with his Greens colleagues after the horse has bolted. Where was this gutless wonder a couple of weeks ago? He was spending his time making a lot of noise, a lot of claptrap in the media, but the big issue is whether he could influence the Premier and the Minister for Finance in the same way that Federal member Gary Nairn influenced the Prime Minister. If you mark him on that score, guess who fails? The Premier and the Minister for Finance probably do not even know who the honourable member for Monaro is. They probably think he is a silly little boy in Monaro whom they will cast adrift knowing he is a oncer—c'est la vie.

Let us make some other points about what the honourable member for Monaro could have done. I am going to blow my own trumpet in the same way as the honourable member for Monaro does every second day and compare what I have been doing on the marine park issue with what the honourable member for Monaro did on Snowy Hydro. When the marine park issue came up I organised public rallies and public meetings. How many meetings did the honourable member for Monaro organise in relation to Snowy Hydro? Zero.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Point of order: I ask that you draw the honourable member's attention to the substantive question before the House. It has nothing to do with marine parks. While he is on his feet he might tell us why the Coalition went to water over the privatisation of Telstra.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! The honourable member for Bathurst is now debating the question. He will resume his seat. This is a second reading debate, and projects of national significance other than Snowy Hydro may be referred to in the debate.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I also make the point that I have been tabling petitions, organising public rallies, and speaking in Parliament about the marine park. The honourable member for Monaro did not organise one petition, ask one question, or speak in any debate—although he managed to vote on three occasions not to bring debate on Snowy Hydro before the House. Yesterday, in the greatest act of hypocrisy we have seen, he voted against an amendment that would have allowed debate on legislation that would empower Parliament to act on the disposal of shares in Snowy Hydro. Then he issued his press release and ran to the upper House to plead with Mr Ian Cohen. What a disgrace! It will be interesting to see what happens when we finally get to vote on the motion to adjourn debate on the bill introduced by the honourable member for Orange, which will be, hopefully, in the next 10 or 15 minutes. Will he have to get caucus approval to support that motion? It will be interesting to see whether he supports it.

While there has been a lot of politics played this morning, it is important that we acknowledge the community players who were involved in doing the work the honourable member for Monaro was not doing. They were the people who were organising rallies and petitions—not the honourable member for Monaro, who was as per usual being a mouthpiece and the noisy non-performer he is. These were people such as Acacia Rose, Roger Norton, Richard Wallace, Vicki Wallace, Vin Good, Max Talbot, David Hain, David Madew and John Gallard. These people were doing the work—collecting petitions, organising rallies and being active in the community. The honourable member for Monaro was quick to get onto the ABC and make noises, but he did not achieve a thing.

It will not be forgotten—and the people of Monaro are sensible enough to know this—that their member waited until after the Prime Minister pulled the rug out from under the feet of the Premier and the Minister for Commerce before trying to sponsor a bill to protect the Snowy. He has had six months to do something and he did not do a thing. It would be interesting to know when the honourable member for Monaro came out in opposition to the sale. I think I might have beaten him to the punch. That goes to show that the honourable member for Monaro should not be talking about lying. He is only talking about himself when he utters that word. He failed time and again to represent his constituents in the New South Wales Parliament.

The people of Monaro will have a clear choice at the next State election. They will have a choice between David Madew, who is in the House today, and the honourable member for Monaro, who has no influence with his party leadership. There is no point in voting for the honourable member for Monaro, because he cannot get the Premier or the Minister for Finance to change their minds. It is even more interesting that the Country Labor faction has not been able to achieve anything. It did not even back the honourable member for Monaro.

The honourable member for Bathurst has not been heard anywhere in this debate. We know his view on privatisation because he loves the old Telstra shares, in the same way that the honourable member for Monaro likes the shares of the Snowy. We know full well that at 6.45 a.m. on 24 May he said on ABC radio that he would be buying shares. He reserved shares through a prospectus. He registered and admitted on radio that he was going to do it. I regarded that issue so seriously that I felt the need to contact the Australian Securities and Investment Commission about the honourable member for Monaro, because time and again he—

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Point of order: It should be pointed out that the duty Opposition upper House duty member for the seat of Monaro also applied for the prospectus.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** That's a lie.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** That is the absolute truth.

**Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills):** Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. There is no point of order. The honourable member for Bega has the call.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Being the largest Telstra shareholder in Parliament, the honourable member for Bathurst does not have a point of order. My point is that the honourable member for Monaro went on radio and was encouraging people to buy shares in Snowy Hydro. That shows the lack of experience and credibility of the man. Steve Whan was having confidential and private meetings with the Treasurer, the Premier, and the Minister for Commerce.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Insider trading.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** It amounts to insider trading. The honourable member for Monaro had those confidential meetings, and then trotted off and sent signals to the broader community. He is incredibly naive and inexperienced. I took the appropriate action and followed the matter up with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. The commission has informed me that since the sale will not take place it will not investigate the matter. If the honourable member for Monaro wants to follow through on his inappropriate remarks, I am sure he will do so.

The campaign was won last week by community pressure, but the decision resulted from influence placed on the Prime Minister by Gary Nairn. The decision was made at a meeting last Thursday. At the time the Premier and the Minister for Commerce had completely shut the door on the honourable member for Monaro, and he has paid a price. In sponsoring the bill, the honourable member for Monaro looks too tricky by halves. He should have introduced the bill weeks or months ago. Now, after the horse has bolted and the sale is off, he sponsors it.

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER** (Orange) [12 noon]: In speaking to the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Parliamentary Scrutiny of Sale) Bill I say at the outset that it is a great pity that the honourable member for Monaro, Country Labor members, and the Government did not support my bill. Although the two bills are similar, those members did not have the courage to support mine. They snuck in the back door and sponsored a bill from the upper House. In doing so, the honourable member for Monaro has got into bed with the Greens because he knows that if he is to have any chance at the next election he will need their preferences. I wonder what his father thinks about his actions over the past couple of weeks—why he did not go out and support the campaign against the sale of Snowy Hydro, why he did not listen to his constituents, why he did not present petitions? Rather than fight for his constituents, he took the easy option. He saw that a financial gain could be made and applied to buy shares in Snowy Hydro.

The honourable member for Monaro spoke about the condition of Snowy Hydro. Whilst it is 40 years old and most of the equipment is probably past its use-by date, it is generally in good condition. However, it needs money for upgrades. It does not matter how well-maintained equipment is, parts wear out and machinery has to be upgraded to modern technology standards. The honourable member for Monaro said that Snowy Hydro is committed to gas-fired generation in Victoria. I do not know whether that is a good move. I do not know how far down the track that proposal is.

I am aware that the Government has placed enormous pressure on Snowy Hydro now that the sale has been called off. The Government is taking steps to get Snowy Hydro to borrow millions of dollars so it can pay a special dividend to the Government. I ask the honourable member for Monaro to comment on that. How can Snowy Hydro borrow money for gas-fired generation in Victoria and to upgrade equipment if it has to borrow millions of dollars to pay a special dividend to the Government because the Government has been denied its war chest?

Many years ago before electricity authorities were corporatised, I was a board member on Ophir Electricity. The honourable member for Bathurst would know that Southern Mitchell Electricity was forced to borrow millions of dollars to pay the Government a dividend. Southern Mitchell Electricity should have been able to put the money into infrastructure and upgrade the lines. The electricity consumers in the Central West are still paying the cost of that organisation being forced to borrow money to pay dividends, as equipment has not been properly upgraded over time. The same impost will be placed on Snowy Hydro Limited now that the sale will not go ahead. The Government will extract money from it by way of dividends.

When the sale was first put on the agenda in this House in 1997 The Nationals and the Liberal Party voted against it. The Nationals and the Liberal Party voted against the first proposal to privatise or flog off Snowy Hydro. Country Labor members are jumping up and down. Why did they not support my bill? Yesterday they had the opportunity to do so. Why did they not support the community by opposing the sale? I am sure the honourable member for Bathurst would have been approached by members of the public—as I was—when he walked down the streets of Bathurst, to urge him not to allow the sale of Snowy Hydro because it is an Australian icon. He would have known the feeling of the general public.

The honourable member for Monaro said he was concerned the public debate took some time to get going. That is common when dealing with emotive issues. People did not believe that the Government would sell Snowy Hydro. It was not until the last minute—when people started to realise the Government was so cash-strapped it was hell-bent on selling Snowy Hydro—that they rose up and voiced their concerns. This morning during my speech to introduce my bill, I raised concerns about environmental and financial issues. Those concerns have not been addressed. The Government has already spent an estimated \$30 million on the share float and legal costs. How much more money is the Government responsible for now that the sale will not go ahead? I am sure that part of the dividends Snowy Hydro will be forced to pay will go towards paying the legal costs the Government has incurred from that abortive legislation.

Many people are concerned about water rights, and the Government has said it will not sell them. With the involvement of a private company, how can water rights be guaranteed? Over the past couple of years ski resort operators have put money into cloud seeding. They maintain that the project has been successful and has resulted in greater snowfalls. The snow ultimately becomes water in spring. Who owns the water? Is it the ski field operators, Snowy Hydro, or the private operator? If the Government is re-elected in 2007—and I am sure it will not be—the sale of Snowy Hydro will be back on the agenda. The Government will consider its re-election as an endorsement to once again try to sell Snowy Hydro. Many issues remain unresolved and the general public are still uncomfortable about the situation.

The honourable member for Murray-Darling ranted and raved this morning. He also sat on the fence on this issue. He said he was against the State Government selling its share, but not if it sold it to the Commonwealth Government. He tried to make himself sound very good: He was against the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited, but he would approve its sale to the Commonwealth Government, knowing that it would not buy it. The Commonwealth Government has stated time and again that it is not interested in extending its financial stake. It is all very well to sit on the fence like an Independent member, who can say anything and make it sound good. The honourable member for Murray-Darling sat on the fence, saying he was against the sale unless the corporation was sold to the Commonwealth Government, knowing full well that the Commonwealth would not buy it.

This bill is similar to my bill, and I call on the Government to support my bill when it is debated. Mine is a good, straightforward bill that guarantees no sale of Snowy Hydro Limited unless the sale is supported by both Houses of Parliament and it reflects the community's wishes. As the media has highlighted over the past few days, the public have had a win. That is what it is all about. The people have spoken: Like the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, the Snowy scheme should not be sold. They are Australian icons, they belong to the people, and they must always belong to the people.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN** (Bathurst) [12.11 p.m.]: I support my colleague the honourable member for Monaro.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell**: "Monairo".

**Mr GERARD MARTIN**: It depends where you come from; we mountain people have a different dialect.

**Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews)**: Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN**: That proves the paucity of material available to the Opposition. A mountain dialect is the only thing members opposite can criticise. We heard a fantastic speech by the honourable member for Monaro today in which he dismantled the credibility of honourable members opposite. Their hypocrisy shines through. Do honourable members remember the 1999 State election with the wonderful Chikarovski and Souris policy of privatising the New South Wales electricity industry, lock, stock and barrel? Not one member of the Opposition had the guts to oppose that policy. They offered a \$1,000 bribe to every taxpayer in New South Wales to vote for them on the basis that—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell**: Point of order: The bill we are debating does not mention Telstra. I know that the honourable member for Bathurst—

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

**Mr Barry O'Farrell**: There is a point of order. The standing orders say—

**Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews)**: Order! I will not accept that as a point of order. The honourable member will resume his seat. The honourable member for Bathurst has the call.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN**: Because he has been wandering in and out of the House, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition obviously misheard me. I did not mention Telstra. I was talking about the New South Wales electricity-generating industry that honourable members opposite wanted to sell. It is extraordinary that they now expect us to believe they are the great protectors of public ownership of any asset. From the beginning of the year the Leader of the Opposition, the Federal Leader of The Nationals Gary Nairn, The Nationals candidate for Monaro, and the Hon. Melinda Pavey have said that if the sale is on they simply want to see where the money will go. The honourable member for Orange talked about people sitting on the fence. The Leader of the Opposition has corrugations in his rear end from sitting on the picket fence on this issue. He got off it only last Friday, when the Prime Minister made the phone call.

A motion was moved in the upper House calling on the Government to sell Snowy Hydro Limited to the Commonwealth Government to protect it. Who was the greatest champion of that suggestion? It was Bill Heffernan, the Liberal Senator and number cruncher for the Prime Minister. When the vote was put in the other place, Opposition members scurried out the door, like members opposite have done in the past when a

contentious issue has been put to the vote and they did not want to be counted. Government members support this legislation because it has been debated in the upper House and this may be the last sitting day of this session and we want it passed. It is much easier to deal with this legislation.

The honourable member for Monaro has done a first-class job in debunking the criticism heaped on him. The honourable member for Bega's contribution was scurrilous. He has no champion in this place since members opposite jettisoned John Brogden. If he suggests that anyone is standing on thin ice, he should look at his own feet. The Opposition's attitude to this legislation is absolute hypocrisy. It is not the first time they have been outmanoeuvred or snookered. As the honourable member for Coffs Harbour says time and again, the Liberal Party of New South Wales has been out to lunch since 1988. Tim Fischer is on record as saying that. During every election campaign the honourable member for Coffs Harbour tells us how useless and lazy the Liberal Party members are, and nothing has changed.

Members opposite have sat on the fence all the way through this debate. The Leader of The Nationals has said that they would wait to see what the Premier planned to do with the money before making a decision. That was their position until last Wednesday or Thursday, when they got the message. Suddenly they got on the publicity bandwagon and started talking about the iconic status of the Snowy scheme. That is a not a reason for selling or not selling it. Its value is the important issue. It must be remembered that the State Government was always going to have control of the licence.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** So you still want to sell it?

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** No, not at all. I would like to see honourable members opposite being as fair dinkum about Telstra. I have 400 shares in Telstra, bought by my son. I am sure honourable members recall John Howard prior to the T1 sale telling the mums and dads of Australia to invest in the great icon. Of course, he has managed to halve its value. If members opposite want to talk about incompetent government management of a public entity, they should mention John Howard and Telstra.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** So you've sold them.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** No, I thought I might be able to save Telstra from overseas ownership. Then I worked out that my 400 shares out of about 100 million probably would not be sufficient. They are there for posterity because I probably cannot sell them.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** How long did it take you to work that out?

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** About 30 seconds; I am pretty quick on my feet. Throughout this debate we have witnessed opportunism and hypocrisy on the part of honourable members opposite. The honourable member for Monaro's contribution will be recognised as one of the great speeches in this House.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI** (Murrumbidgee) [12.20 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the people of New South Wales and across Australia who protested against the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited, whether they be members of Parliament, media commentators, or the mums and dads the Premier thought would buy shares. In fact, they dismantled the sale. Those people wrote letters to the editors of newspapers, telephoned their local members, and attended protest meetings. Protest meetings were held in Cooma and Jindabyne. I pay special tribute to those who turned up to the Griffith protest meeting I organised in April. More than 200 people attended to express their opposition to the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited.

I also pay tribute to the 300 or so people who came to the protest meeting in Deniliquin last Wednesday, only eight days ago. We were a bit worried about how many would turn up because it was a cold night, but people flocked to the meeting because they were opposed to the sale of Snowy Hydro. It was the act of every individual who expressed opposition to the sale that inevitably brought the deal undone. There was a cacophony of noise in opposition to the sale of Snowy Hydro, but only one person with his hands on the controls listened to that noise, and that was John Howard.

The Premier and honourable members opposite heard the noise but there was no movement from the New South Wales Government. It was the decision by John Howard on Friday morning that put the kybosh on the proposed sale. John Howard said he would withdraw the Commonwealth's 13 per cent. The New South Wales Premier and others could have continued with the sale, but they pulled out. I think the most insightful comments that emerged during the commentary on Friday were made by the New South Wales Premier. The



Premier did not say he pulled out of the sale because the honourable member for Monaro, the honourable member for Murray-Darling, or anyone else had put pressure on him. He laid the blame on one person, who I am sure would be happy to take the blame. He put the blame on John Howard. He said, "John Howard has pulled the rug on this sale."

The argument advanced by the honourable member for Monaro and others was that Country Labor or Labor backbenchers were out there fighting the good fight. Well, no-one was listening in caucus and no-one was listening in Cabinet. The Government did not pull out of the sale because of any action on the part of the honourable member for Monaro, but because of the decision by John Howard and the Federal Coalition to pull out of the sale. It was completely wrong for the honourable member for Monaro and other Labor members to say they had had an impact on the decision. I noted the comments of the honourable member for Murray-Darling about his sudden awakening and opposition to the sale. Newspapers do not lie, and it is always embarrassing for members of Parliament—

**Mr Paul McLeay:** What! What did you say?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I said newspapers do not lie.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Which newspaper?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The Deniliquin *Pastoral Times* of Friday 2 June.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Is he saying it lied?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Yes, and I take offence at that. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has respect for country newspapers. Speaking of country newspapers, honourable members may not be aware that although Labor is spending millions of dollars on advertising, it is not spending any of it in country New South Wales. The Government advertised its new fire alarm regulations in all the Sydney newspapers and probably a couple of newspapers in the Illawara, but there was no advertising in the Deniliquin *Pastoral Times*. Someone asked me whether that meant the Government cared less about the safety of people in Deniliquin than it does about the safety of people in Sydney. But that is a whole other argument.

Honourable members have heard the commentary about the proposed sale of Snowy Hydro, as I did in Murrumbidgee, a long way from Monaro. The honourable member for Murray-Darling has been wishy-washy about the Snowy Hydro issue, but there has been pretty intense debate about it in Monaro. I follow the media clippings, and from time to time I have seen the comments from the honourable member for Monaro about his involvement in the Snowy Hydro debate. It is easy to talk tough out in the electorate but difficult to act tough in Parliament or in caucus, where it really matters. We have seen no evidence that the honourable member for Monaro has really taken it to the Premier and said, "Look, mate, this is an absolute die-in-the-ditch issue and I am really going to take you to task if you continue with it." Unlike the former member for Monaro, Peter Cochran, who did cross the floor in defence of his electorate—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** He and Peter Webb and David Madew would have stood this up in court.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** That is right. When the Coalition was last in office, Peter Cochran crossed the floor, if memory serves me correctly, on an issue related to the Queanbeyan Showground. I do not doubt that the Premier of the day, the Cabinet and other members of the Coalition were probably pretty upset about it, but Peter Cochran defended his electorate. He did not just talk tough in his electorate; he voted on it. He crossed the floor and, I believe, had the decision reversed. That is an example of a member of Parliament acting in the best interests of his electorate, not in the best interests of his party. When the Premier told the honourable member for Monaro and the other Labor hacks who talk tough in their electorates to sit down and shut up, they turned like a shoal of whitebait in the direction they were told to take.

The honourable member for Monaro could have done a lot more. He said he was going to introduce his own bill and was going to get the approval of caucus "today". I look forward to hearing the honourable member for Monaro tell us in his reply exactly on what date and at which caucus meeting the approval for his private member's bill went through. This is not his bill, and on at least two occasions in the past he voted against a private member's bill dealing with this issue. The honourable member for Orange raised what might happen to Snowy Hydro in the future. My concern, and that of a lot of people, is what the New South Wales Government will do with dividends from Snowy Hydro Limited. We fear that now that the \$1.5 billion rug has been pulled

from under it the Government will seek to gouge dividends out of Snowy Hydro to fund its promises in the lead-up to the election.

The Coalition will keep a close watch on that aspect. Questions will be asked during the estimates hearings, and I warn the Premier against that course because people are awake to any financial tricks he might try to play with Snowy Hydro in order to obtain additional funds to prop up his budget and fulfil his election promises. I have fought against the proposed sale of Snowy Hydro from day one. I believe 6 January was the day on which I first issued a media release—given that I was on my honeymoon until 25 December. In November last year the Coalition exposed the Government's plans to sell Snowy Hydro, but the Government was not going to come clean at that stage. A question was asked on 30 November, and a further question was asked on about 7 December or 8 December. The Coalition, both State and Federal, has very good form in having forced a change in policy on the sale of Snowy Hydro Limited. I congratulate John Howard on having listened to the people of Australia and on forcing those on the other side of the House to do the same.

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [12.28 p.m.]: I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to contribute to this debate. In reference to the remarks made by the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, I note that I was one of the members who, on 30 November 2005, asked a question of the Premier as to the future of Snowy Hydro Limited. While the Premier indulged in some normal invective, he eventually squibbed on the answer and admitted that the Government was considering options. Of course, those options became very clear to us all during the subsequent Christmas break. Country Labor can collectively hang its head in shame in regard to this issue because, despite the announcement last Friday, Country Labor members have continued to express opinions about privatisation. Hence the need for a bill such as that introduced by the honourable member for Orange. I refer honourable members to a letter from Chris Ryan, the President of Albury Country Labor, published in the *Border Mail* of Tuesday 6 June. Mr Ryan referred to an earlier letter he had written, and stated:

The letter carried a picture of part of Snowy Hydro with the caption "The Snowy scheme sale is unAustralian, says reader".

He goes on:

This caption is misleading as never in my article did I say I am opposed to the sale of the Snowy Hydro.

At the end of his letter he says:

I am confident that Morris Iemma and his state Labor Government would use any money raised from a sale of Snowy Hydro well, to promote and create industry, wellbeing and prosperity.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Who was that from?

**Mr GREG APLIN:** That was from Chris Ryan, President of Albury Country Labor. It is unfortunate that Mr Ryan was unaware that the Premier's reaction to the cancellation of the sale was, "There go the hospitals, schools and police stations." We had not heard about those before, but, nevertheless, it made for a good story on the Premier's reaction. It was obviously news to Country Labor, who thought the money might be going into creating infrastructure, prosperity, and opportunities. In February this year I attended a meeting of the G Division of the Shires Association and I had extensive discussions with another Country Labor member, the very good mayor of Tumbarumba, Councillor George Martin, who expressed on behalf of his community great concern about the potential sale and what it would mean for residents of his shire. I took that to the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, who also spoke at that meeting. We agreed that in the southern regions of New South Wales we had every reason to be concerned about the Government's approach.

Last week Corowa Shire arranged a meeting while the Shires Association conference was on in Sydney to discuss the impending sale—as it then was—with the honourable member for Murrumbidgee, as the shadow Minister. Let me state the reasons why Corowa Shire Council was concerned and wanted to have a meeting in order to pressure the Government into reversing its position. They included the possible devastating impacts on water users, including councils and local residents, and whether private ownership would run Snowy Hydro for private profit and not public benefit; and concern about the sale putting control of the eastern seaboard's largest generator of renewable energy and the source of clean water into private ownership. The council made this important point, which is well known to all of us who live in country areas and those who live in the city who are able to appreciate the ongoing benefits of this particular magnificent industry: Snowy Hydro is an efficient, well-performing public asset that returns handsome profits to the people of New South Wales, Victoria and Australia every year. Long live Snowy Hydro.

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro) [12.32 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members who have participated in this debate. I will address a few of the issues raised by members of the Opposition.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Do we have time?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** Probably not as much as I would like, but we will see how we go. There are a number of things I want to say, but first I note that none of the Opposition members who spoke on the bill said whether they are going to support it. I hope they are, because that would be consistent with what they have been telling the community. The closest we came to any indication in that regard was from the honourable member for Bega, who said it is a sensible and reasonable bill, and the honourable member for Orange, who told us it is very close to his bill. I would take that as an indication that they are likely to support this very sensible and reasonable bill.

The Leader of The Nationals put on record a number of things that were false. First he said that I had not said a word on the matter in this place until today. Anyone who reads *Hansard* will see that I am on record three times in this place—twice making substantial speeches—speaking on the Snowy Hydro. On all those occasions I opposed the sale, put my position and, more importantly, put the position of my community. So the claim of the Leader of The Nationals is demonstrably false. He said I had been toeing the party line—again, demonstrably false, because I have stood up and opposed the sale, and opposed it within caucus, as I said in my speech. He said, I think on the advice of the honourable member for Bega, that my first press release on the subject was issued on 1 March—again, demonstrably false. In my opening speech I put on the record the dates of my press releases and I refer members to that.

People who read these contributions in *Hansard* can draw their own conclusions. If the Leader of The Nationals has to tell lies about what I have done in order to fill up his speech, it shows he is not serious about this subject. The most important error, and the biggest insult, in his contribution was when he said it was the efforts of the State Nationals and the Liberals that scuttled the sale. He did not give any credit at all to the massive community campaign. That is an insult to the people who ran that campaign. That is quite offensive to the people who have worked so hard and so successfully in fighting the sale, the people whom I honoured in my speech at Cooma last Sunday. I said to those people that their efforts had made me proud to be their representative in this Parliament. I am proud to be their representative, because they ran a campaign that was absolutely awesome. I mentioned many of them earlier.

The Leader of The Nationals asked what might happen after the next election. I might as well throw in my response to that question, as many other members have. If the Liberals and The Nationals win, will they resurrect the 1999 policy of selling the entire electricity industry, including Snowy Hydro? Disastrous policy, but there it was. Will they stand up, as many members have today, and oppose the full sale of Telstra? I noticed at the Cooma rally on Sunday one of the final speakers—I did not know him but he was not a Labor Party member—and challenged the Federal Liberals to stop the sale of Telstra now.

I would love everyone in Bega to read the contribution today of the honourable member for Bega because, for the most part, it was back to his Young Liberal days. I suppose it was like they used to say at Young Labor conferences: "Get up and have a go at the Opposition. Just get stuck into them." That was what his contribution was all about. People who read his contribution will be able to see that when the honourable member for Bega talked about silly, pathetic political gains it was a good description of his contribution. Interestingly enough, he talked about the marine park rather than the sale of Snowy Hydro, just like the Leader of The Nationals talked for ages in his contribution about the Greens and national parks. I think people who read this debate would have expected the Leader of The Nationals to at least credit them with winning the debate.

The honourable member for Bega made some accusations about insider trading and some comments about registering for the share prospectus. In fact, he lied by saying I had said I was going to buy shares. I never said that. What I said was that I had registered for a prospectus. I had not thought much about what would happen after that, but I did quickly come to the realisation that it would be inappropriate for me to buy shares, and I actually said that on ABC radio. The interview was only partly put to air, but I had gone on to talk about why, if Snowy Hydro was sold against our wishes, it was important for people in the region to make sure it was not controlled by people from Sydney and Melbourne only but that they had a voice in its control.

That is a reasonable and legitimate position to put. If the sale had gone ahead against our wishes it would have been vital that local people had a say in making sure that the headquarters, meetings, and all those sorts of things were in Cooma. I said on ABC radio that I thought it would be a conflict of interest for me to buy

shares. But it is certainly not inappropriate to apply for the prospectus, which I did. As I have said before, The Nationals upper House member the Hon. Melinda Pavey put on the record in the upper House last night that she had applied for a share prospectus.

There has been a lot of hypocrisy from the Opposition benches today. In his contribution the honourable member for Orange referred to the bill he moved only couple of days ago, and many Coalition members asked why I did not move this bill earlier. I could have asked the honourable member for Orange why he waited until the decision to sell Snowy Hydro was changed before he introduced his bill. The important thing is that the bill should pass through both Houses of Parliament. I have worked hard to ensure that caucus approved the bill, which was moved by the Greens in the other place and amended by the Government, with the support of the minor parties, to ensure it will be passed. That is the difference between what I do in this place and what the Opposition does. The Opposition's aim is merely a stunt. The tradition of The Nationals, particularly people like Peter Cochran, is glorious defeat, because then they can blame everybody else. I am not satisfied with that; I would rather deliver for the electorate.

In this case we have achieved a popular decision to overturn the sale decision. I commend to honourable members the second reading speech of Minister Della Bosca because this process has been difficult for him. I have had many discussions with him and I know he went through significant heartache. I will not comment further on the contribution of the honourable member for Orange. Rather, I will accept in good faith his support for this cause, which I first raised in December last year. The honourable member for Murray-Darling gave a quality contribution and revealed again the hard work he does for his constituents and irrigators who were concerned about the decision. The honourable member for Bathurst referred to several issues, including Telstra, a subject that was also raised at the rally on Saturday. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee outlined numerous matters. He also had a go at me, but I shall not reciprocate because he is the only member of the Opposition who has consistently opposed the sale of Snowy Hydro.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Don't tell lies.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** The honourable member for Bega suggests otherwise, but I did not hear much from him. Certainly, his comments on a press release about me—

**Mr Andrew Constance:** What about the marine park?

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** He wants to talk about the marine park again. This bill is about Snowy Hydro. The honourable member for Murrumbidgee and I had a couple of conversations; we were pretty much in agreement and he maintained a consistent position, so I will not attack him. He asked whether caucus had approved the bill, and it has. Strange as it might seem, Opposition members do not need to know what goes on in caucus, because that is Government business. Over the past couple of days I had the task of persuading caucus to approve the bill, and if caucus had not given its approval the Government would not have supported the bill, and nor would it have supported it in the upper House.

The honourable member for Albury referred to Tumbarumba shire. I had a chat with the mayor of that shire, who attended the rally to put the position on behalf of the shire. The proposed sale of the Snowy Hydro has been a difficult process. I am delighted that it is not going ahead and that there has been a change of heart from the three governments involved. It is one of the biggest victories for people power this country will ever see, and those people deserve congratulations. I commend the bill to the House.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time and passed through remaining stages.**

#### **SNOWY HYDRO CORPORATISATION AMENDMENT (PROTECT SNOWY HYDRO) BILL**

**Deferred division.**

**Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews):** Order! The House will now proceed with the deferred division on the question: That this debate be now adjourned.

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 48**

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

**Noes, 36**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion for adjournment agreed to.**

*[Mr Speaker left the chair at 12.55 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

**ELECTORAL REFORM****Ministerial Statement**

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA** (Lakemba—Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for Citizenship) [2.18 p.m.]: In the year that we celebrate 150 years of parliamentary democracy we can be proud of an electoral system that is free, fair, transparent and independent.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Which one is that?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** New South Wales! The parties might fight like cats and dogs, but the outcomes as determined by the State Electoral Office are never in doubt. That does not mean that there is no room for further progress. We can always do a little better. Over the past two years three reviews have considered aspects of the New South Wales electoral legislation. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters was charged with inquiring into all aspects of the conduct of the 2003 election. The committee's broad terms of reference provided an opportunity for a range of issues on electoral administration, procedures, and legislation to be considered. The committee published its report and recommendations in September 2005.

The Council on the Cost and Quality of Government conducted a performance review of the State Electoral Office in 2005, and identified a number of areas where reform and legislation should be considered. In addition, the Electoral District Commissioners made recommendations in their 2004 report arising out of the redistribution conducted by them. The Government has already implemented the recommendation of the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government that the State Electoral Office be provided with additional funding to provide for more staff and increased training. The Government is giving careful consideration to the legislative recommendations made by these reviews and to a range of additional reforms proposed by the Electoral Commissioner. The Government will shortly release a consultation draft bill for public consultation. As all members would know, the electoral legislation is long and detailed. The bill will also, therefore, be long and detailed. Drafting is expected to be finalised in the next week or so.

The bill will involve largely technical and administrative changes to streamline the conduct of elections in New South Wales and improve the functioning of the State Electoral Office. As soon as the bill is available, I will ensure that each member is sent an email to his or her parliamentary email address containing links to the bill. In addition, the Government will write to other interested stakeholders, including registered political parties, and will place newspaper advertisements advising of the consultation process and inviting comments on the bill.

Because of the technical and detailed nature of the amendments, Parliamentary Counsel's office is preparing a marked-up version of the Act with the amendments included. That should assist all interested persons to understand and assess the proposed amendments. Four to five weeks will be allowed for submissions, with the final bill to be introduced early in the next session of Parliament. The legislation is about improving the conduct of elections in New South Wales. What better gift could there be in the 150th birthday year of New South Wales democracy than to ensure our electoral system is as fair and efficient as possible? I warmly invite honourable members and all interested parties to read the bill and participate in the consultation phase.

## **SOCCEROOS WORLD CUP CAMPAIGN**

### **Ministerial Statement**

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA** (Lakemba—Premier, Minister for State Development, and Minister for Citizenship) [2.24 p.m.]: I was a kid just out of primary school the last time Australia qualified for the World Cup. Like many Australians, I have waited patiently for the Socceroos return. At long last the moment has arrived. The best Australian football team in a generation is about to set foot on a World Cup pitch after a 32-year absence, an historic achievement for Australian sport. Of course, all members of this House and the people of New South Wales want the Socceroos to win, but the main thing is they are there. The Socceroos are representing our nation on the greatest sporting stage on Earth.

I hope—indeed I know—the exploits of the Socceroos in Germany will be the first of many successful World Cup campaigns as Australian football comes of age. Along with millions of other Australians I will be glued to the screen as the Socceroos give their best for their country, for their sport and for themselves. On behalf of the people of New South Wales, I say good luck to the Socceroos and thank you for ending the 32-year drought. No matter whether you win, lose or draw in the coming weeks, we are proud of you. We are behind you, and we will back you all the way.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter) [2.26 p.m.]: The Socceroos have had a wonderful build-up for this World Cup, beating Uruguay to qualify, beating the current European champions, Greece, drawing with the Netherlands and beating Lichtenstein. They are in fine form and are at the peak of their game. I strongly urge all members of the House to support the Socceroos and get behind them, as have all the Australian population. I make the prediction that Australia will beat Brazil in the first round.

*[Interruption]*

I am not asking for credit for the victory, but you heard it here first! The Socceroos have united Australia as no other team previously has done. They carry the hopes of the nation and we wish them all the very best in this World Cup grand encounter in Germany. I, for one, will be glued to the television set. I wish I were there. Presumably there will be one or two from the Government side.

**Mr John Mills:** I will carry your bags for you.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** I was just about to say that. I am prepared to carry any bags on their way to Germany. We all look forward to it. It will be a wonderful tournament, and I am sure Australia will be proudly represented and that the Socceroos will find their true form and make us proud.

### **RESIGNATION OF MR GARY O'ROURKE**

**Mr SPEAKER:** I note that tomorrow will be the last sitting day for one of our valued and long-serving procedure office staff, Mr Gary O'Rourke. As Gary commenced work in Parliament in February 1985 he is very well known to many of you, having worked in committees and in the procedure office, currently as Parliamentary Officer (Bills). Gary is leaving us to take up a position at the Commission for Children and Young People. In recognition of his many years of service to the House and its members we all extend to him our best wishes for the future.

### **PETITIONS**

#### **Pensioner Travel Voucher Booking Fee**

Petition requesting the removal of the \$10 booking fee on pensioner travel vouchers, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

#### **South Coast Rail Services**

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

#### **Oolong Rail Level Crossing**

Petition opposing the closure of the Oolong rail level crossing, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

#### **Pets on Public Transport**

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

#### **Snowy Hydro Limited Sale**

Petition opposing any future sale of Snowy Hydro Limited, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

#### **Shoalhaven River Water Extraction**

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

#### **Jervis Bay Marine Park Fishing Competitions**

Petition requesting amendment of the zoning policy to preclude fishing competitions, by both spear and line, in the Jervis Bay Marine Park, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

#### **Uniting Church Congregation Rights**

Petition supporting amendments to the Uniting Church in Australia Act (1977) NSW to ensure that the moral and legal rights of a congregation, disaffiliated from the Uniting Church, are protected, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

#### **Jervis Bay Land Rezonings**

Petition requesting a moratorium on further land rezonings within the catchment of Jervis Bay, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

**Shoalhaven Local Area Command**

Petition requesting additional resources for the Shoalhaven Local Area Command, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

**Holbrook Public School**

Petition requesting funding for the installation of airconditioning in all learning spaces at Holbrook Public School, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

**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 **Mr Steve Cansdell** and **Mr Michael Richardson**.

**Shoalhaven Mental Health Services**

Petition requesting funding for the establishment of a dedicated mental health service in the Shoalhaven, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

**Singleton Hospital Land Sale**

Petition opposing the proposed sale of Singleton Hospital land, received from **Mr George Souris**.

**Manyana Residential Land Rezoning**

Petition opposing the proposal by Kylor to rezone residential land in Manyana, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

**Community-based Preschools**

Petition 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 **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

**Shoalhaven City Council Rate Structure**

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

**The Rock/Bullenbong Road Upgrade**

Petition requesting funding for the immediate upgrade of The Rock/Bullenbong Road, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

**Forster-Tuncurry Cycleways**

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

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE****Report**

**Ms Noreen Hay**, as Chairman, tabled report No. 16/53 (No. 159), entitled "Inquiry into Public Private Partnerships", dated June 2006, together with extracts from minutes of Public Accounts Committee meetings relevant to public-private partnerships.

**Report ordered to be printed.**



**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Reports**

**Mr Allan Shearan**, as Chairman, tabled the following reports:

Report No. 4, entitled "The Right to Silence: Responses to the Discussion Paper", dated 8 June 2006

Discussion Paper No. 2, entitled "Strict and Absolute Liability", dated 8 June 2006

Minute extracts relating to the report, the discussion paper and "Legislation Review Digest No. 6", "Legislation Review Digest No. 7", and "Legislation Review Digest No. 8", and submissions in response to Discussion Paper No. 1 entitled, "The Right to Silence".

**Reports ordered to be printed.**

**COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Reports**

**Mr Kim Yeadon**, as Chairman, tabled the following reports:

Report No. 7/53, entitled "Proceedings of the 2nd National Conference of Parliamentary Oversight Committees of Anti-Corruption/Crime Bodies", dated June 2006.

Report No. 8/53, entitled "Quarterly Examination of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, January-March 2006", dated June 2006.

**Ordered to be printed.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

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**STATE BUDGET DEFICIT**

**Mr PETER DEBNAM:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given that the economic growth of New South Wales is almost zero and the ANZ Bank believes "New South Wales is going to get weaker before it gets stronger", will the Premier explain how the New South Wales economy will reach his forecast growth rate of 2.5 per cent for 2006-07, or will he now admit his budget is already in crisis?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The budget speech in reply that the Leader of the Opposition delivered yesterday was built on an illusion, a fraud.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has the call.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** He made promises he cannot keep, funded by savings he cannot make. Then he asks a question like that. Yesterday he confirmed not only his inexperience but also his incompetence. Yesterday he confirmed, with another instalment of unfunded promises, that if he ever got onto the Treasury benches our triple-A rating would get blown away. It is a fraud, an illusion that he continues to weave for the taxpayers of New South Wales. The agencies would say about the Leader of the Opposition, "Triple-A, no way." On the most generous interpretation of his performance yesterday, he has a black hole of at least \$600 million. The Leader of the Opposition can tell us what the rating agencies would say when they add yesterday's performance to all his other performances.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I am happy to answer that question. The rating agencies said they are very concerned with the Premier's inability to control costs and one year in deficit. They are now extremely concerned to learn that the Government will have a \$1 billion deficit in 2007-08.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows full well he is flouting the standing orders. He will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Now is not the appropriate time for the Leader of the Opposition to respond to questions. He may do so at another time. He will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The rating agencies said the budget strategy was entirely consistent with a triple-A rating, and that the borrowing levels were also consistent with the State's strong financial position. We paid off the Coalition's \$10 billion debt. The rating agencies said that the borrowings undertaken by State-owned corporations are prudent for investment in economic infrastructure for the people of New South Wales. They also said that the strategy behind the budget framework is consistent with a triple-A rating. From the statements made yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition, there is no way they would ever say his strategies were consistent with a triple-A rating.

Let me take the Leader of the Opposition's statements step by step. He made a range of specific promises, but he underestimated the cost. He said he would fund the promises with non-specific generalisations, and he made massively optimistic projections in achieving savings. I am prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt on some of the projections. But even taking the most optimistic view of the costings—and I note the Nurses Association has cast a significant shadow over that—they come to a total of \$769 million over four years. An analysis by Treasury and WorkCover has identified the actual cost of the package at \$890 million over four years. Either way, on their costings or those done by Treasury, the savings do not come close to covering the true costs. Yet another black hole!

The Coalition's first savings target came from the universal Opposition handbook of clichés. We could not expect anything more from Demidenko Debnam. He plagiarised Tuesday's grab from our good friend the Southern Carolina Democrat. Yesterday he plagiarised from the Opposition handbook of clichés and promises. The total government advertising budget is \$87 million. Of that, \$3.5 million is spent on public notices, including roadworks and rail line works. This is the key element: \$10 million is spent on advertising for jobs, including jobs for nurses, teachers and police. The 29,000 sackings policy has been subtly changed to 29,000 vacancies that will not be filled. Whether it is sacking 29,000 public servants or not filling 29,000 jobs, whichever way one looks at it, it is nurses, teachers or police officers who will be sacked, or nursing, teaching or policing jobs that he will not fill. Either way, the losers will be our hospitals, schools and police stations, and the people of this State who rely on the services provided by those hospitals, schools and police stations.

**Ms Reba Meagher:** And preschools.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** As the Minister for Community Services says, and preschools. Public health and community safety campaigns cost \$34 million—

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Can't you answer the question?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Just sit down and relax, there is plenty more coming. Those services include critical flu injections. Demidenko Debnam would cut the public notices for flu injections. That shows a real concern for our senior citizens and children! He does not want them to have flu injections for winter. He will also cut the healthy kids campaign.

**Ms Reba Meagher:** Now the detail comes out!

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Yes. He has shown a real commitment to reducing obesity and promoting healthy lifestyles for our children!

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Can't you answer a question about your budget? This is about your budget.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Our budget is out there, and it provides for tax cuts and infrastructure investment.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** State-owned businesses will spend \$33 million to advertise their services in competitive markets. Once those areas of savings are discounted, only \$4.5 million a year will be left to fund the Leader of the Opposition's promise of an additional \$90 million a year for preschools. He will have \$4.5 million to fund a \$90 million promise.

**Ms Reba Meagher:** Disgraceful!

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Minister says "Disgraceful!" And she is correct. It does not add up. Not only does it not add up, it is a fraud. The Leader of the Opposition would bankrupt New South Wales with \$20 billion worth of unfunded promises, and that figure is going up every day in every electorate. The Leader of the Opposition is also committed to funding the entire \$52 million a year health package by sourcing funds from the Premier's Department with yet more savings from advertising and consultancies. The entire budget of the Premier's Department is \$155 million a year. Is the Leader of the Opposition committing to abolish the Independent Commission Against Corruption, or to cut its budget so dramatically that it cannot perform its duties? Is he proposing to abolish or slash the Office of the Ombudsman? Is he proposing to abolish or slash the State Electoral Office or the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal? This is a good question for The Nationals: Is he proposing to abolish the Department of State and Regional Development? Perhaps that is where he will find the savings.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Just like his colleagues did federally.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The honourable member for Bathurst is correct. The Leader of the Opposition included all these agencies in his nominated budget for the Premier's Department. He put all of them into the Premier's Department and came up with the figure of \$156 million and said he would downsize it. He should tell us whether he is going to downsize or abolish the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal—

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** You shouldn't keep asking questions. You might get an answer.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Leader of The Nationals should ask about the Department of State and Regional Development, the incentives offered and the packages designed to create jobs in rural New South Wales.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Mr Speaker—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition can answer the Premier at a later stage.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Let us be generous to the Leader of the Opposition. Even if he were able to cut the Premier's Department budget by 10 per cent—that is after the Cabinet Office has been abolished and the Premier's Department has taken on the additional work—that would result in savings of only \$15 million a year. His final nominal source of savings would be only \$15 million. What a fraud! All he has is very generous assumptions, unspecified savings, and widely exaggerated propositions about how he would fund his promises. The savings, even with those generous assumptions, add up to only \$230 million over four years. Even with their flimsy and discredited costings, members opposite are left with a \$539 million hole in their budget. If we were to use the real costs identified by Treasury, the gap is a massive \$660 million. That kind of shortfall and fraud would blow the State's triple-A credit rating. All of this has been proposed by the Leader of the Opposition without any mention of mental health services, disability services, the environment, roads, rail, transport—

**Ms Reba Meagher:** Or families.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Or families, as the Minister for Community Services so kindly reminds me. The fraud is now exposed and the black hole of \$660 million is there for all to see. The question remains for the Leader of the Opposition: Where is the money coming from?

*[Questions without notice interrupted.]*

#### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**Mr SPEAKER:** I welcome to the public gallery Mr Tony Windsor, former member for Tamworth and current Federal member for New England.

#### **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

*[Questions without notice resumed.]*

#### **MEDICAL PRIVILEGES FOR CONVICTED CRIMINALS**

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I direct my question to the Premier. What is the Government's response to community concerns about medical privileges provided to serious and violent convicted criminals?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** In May the Government announced a ban on the collection and storage of semen specimens from serious criminals. Serious criminals being afforded this type of privilege is totally repugnant, and the Government wanted it stopped immediately. Offenders like murderers, rapists and child abductors do not deserve that privilege at public expense. The Government understood the disgust expressed by sexual assault victims and their families. It heard their voices and that is why it introduced the Correctional Services Legislation Bill. However, there has been bad news for those victims and families. The bill has been derailed in the upper House by a cynical and grubby deal between the Coalition and the Greens.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Members on the Government benches will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** This is why the Leader of the Opposition was covering his face. That means horrendous criminals like Ivan Milat and the Anita Cobby killers will still be allowed to store their semen at taxpayers' expense. What a travesty! No wonder the Leader of the Opposition covers his face in embarrassment. Just a few weeks ago the Opposition was calling from the rooftops for this bill to be introduced. What a backflip we saw last night. As soon as the bill hit the hushed, panelled Chamber of the upper House the Opposition's commitment crumbled away and they signed themselves up to another grubby deal.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** What reprehensible behaviour!

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will come to order. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** It is repugnant and reprehensible conduct. What a disgraceful backflip. It is typical of members opposite, who just a few weeks ago promised sexual assault victims and their families the world. However, last night, when they had a chance to be counted in support of those victims and their families, they voted to continue this privilege for serial gang rapists and murderers. What reprehensible behaviour on the part of an Opposition that stands for nothing!

#### SALE OF PUBLIC LAND

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I direct my question to the Premier. Now that his plan to sell Snowy Hydro Limited has been scuttled by the Federal Government, will he confirm that he intends to sell public land, including parks, reserves, and school and railway land, to cover the budget black hole?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** On Tuesday we tabled a budget, with a number of papers attached, which contains all the detail of government expenditure and revenue, and the Government's plans for the next year. Last week it was the infrastructure plans for a decade. If the Leader of The Nationals wants answers on revenue, expenditure or programs, he has to—

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** What lands are you going to be selling to your mates? I want to know what lands you are going to sell, and when.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Firstly, how are you going to fund yesterday's little performance—a \$660 million black hole? The Opposition should get up and tell us which of the capital works projects it would suspend. Which ones?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will cease calling out.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Federal member for New England is in the gallery today. Perhaps it would be the hospital at Tamworth. Your candidate is already on the record saying it should not be built. Perhaps it will be the dollars set aside to do the master planning. Perhaps it is Queanbeyan Hospital or Bathurst Hospital. Why does he not get up and tell us which capital works projects he is going to suspend, delay or abandon? Why does he not tell us which of the disability plans or mental health plans he will cut away? The Opposition's unfunded black hole of \$20 billion, and rising every single day—the Opposition added \$660 million to it yesterday—is all about a fraud. Members of the Opposition think they will get away with cheating their way back onto the Treasury benches. By the way, the last time the Opposition was here it produced six successive budget deficits and sent the State spiralling into debt, so much so that Moody's put us on credit watch.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** That is why it only took three or four grab-bag promises yesterday for a ratings agency to have a look and say, "Triple-A with you lot? No way!"

### **PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICES AND STAFFING LEVELS**

**Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN:** I address my question without notice to the Deputy Premier. What is the Government's response to Opposition threats to public sector services that support hardworking New South Wales families?

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** As honourable members are aware, the Leader of the Opposition does not stand for much, but his core promise is that he will slash 29,000 positions from the New South Wales public service. The honourable member claims he will cut only backroom staff, and only in the city. Either that plan is a hoax that will leave a gigantic black hole in the budget, or he will follow through. If he follows through with that plan, this State will go into meltdown.

Let us look at the facts. There are about 270,000 permanent full-time public sector employees in New South Wales. When you subtract those on the front line, that figure reduces to 32,000 positions. That is, once you take out all the teachers, nurses, doctors, police, firefighters, bus and train drivers, and other front-line staff, the remaining 32,000 provide functions such as corporate services, policy, administration, human resources and information technology support. They are the areas the Leader of the Opposition says he will cut, but only, it seems now, by attrition and only in the city. But there are only 32,000 people across the entire State performing the jobs that the Leader of the Opposition wants to abolish.

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** If we then subtract regional and rural positions, as the Leader of the Opposition has said that he will, we are left with 21,000 public servants. But, hang on. He is going to cut 29,000. Where will the other 8,000 come from? Where are those positions? Let us assume for a second that the Leader of the Opposition can do the impossible and he can get rid of 29,000 non-front-line staff in New South Wales by attrition. What then? What happens if those people are engaged in vital support work? Would that then have to be done by a nurse, police officer or teacher? Does it mean that the Leader of the Opposition supports nurses taking on more administration and nurses not being in wards but managing the payroll? Does he support firefighters tied to the station house and having to fix computers, police not in their cars but managing the fleet resources and depreciation figures, and train drivers taken off their shifts to plan maintenance for their trains? These figures prove that any plan to sack 29,000 public sector workers cannot be confined to Sydney and cannot be confined to non-frontline staff. We have seen all of this before from a Coalition Government. The front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 14 July 1989 marks it well: 8,000 jobs.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: My point of order is that I have actually stumbled on the Minister's proper briefing note. Here is the remainder of the wet lettuce attack from the Minister. You are a wet lettuce, mate: unappetising and unappealing.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order.

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** The remains of lunch from the mad butcher of Darnick! The *Sydney Morning Herald* of Tuesday 14 July 1989 said it all: "SRA Takes Axe to 8000 Jobs". That is 8,000 jobs, passenger and freight services, country stations, and rural and rail lines slashed by the Greiner Government, trying to fulfil a commitment just like that made by the Leader of the Opposition! In 1989 Greiner took off to the ski slopes and let Bruce Baird and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition handle that massacre. If that lot ever got back into government, I could just imagine the Leader of the Opposition escaping to the Chelsea Flower Show in London, taking a phone call from Barry as he gazed at the petunias, and confirming, "Yes, those sackings have to go ahead, Mr O'Farrell." The *Wentworth Courier* is an outstanding journal of record in Sydney's eastern suburbs. We all know it well and we read it as often as we can get our hands on it. I know I do.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Southern Highlands will come to order.

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** Recently the *Wentworth Courier* conducted a reader poll, which asked the question: "Does Peter Debnam have what it takes to be New South Wales Premier?"

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Yes!

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** I am glad those opposite think so, because they voted for him.

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** Let us test that rousing level of support with the voters of Vacluse. The three responses polled were:

1. Yes, he's a good leader with impressive policies.
2. No, he's underperforming.
3. Don't care.

His constituents voted and the result was as follows: 12 per cent thought he was a good leader with impressive policies, and 9 per cent did not care much. Finally, I can reveal to the House that 79 per cent of the newspapers readership in his electorate thought he was not a good leader and that he was underperforming.

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** In the same forum for the *Wentworth Courier* voters also gave a clear picture of who they would prefer to lead New South Wales. Weighing in at around three times more popular than the Leader of the Opposition, as chosen by the voters of Vacluse, was Premier Morris Iemma. The Leader of the Opposition is not the only Coalition member of Parliament struggling to make an impact on his electorate. Yesterday's *Manly Daily* sought budget comment from the local members and candidates. As often as I can, I try to read the *Manly Daily*. I was interested to see the *Manly Daily* quote the well-known honourable member for Davidson—Mr David Humpherson.

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** The *Manly Daily* says, "David Humpherson". Is he any relation to Andrew Humpherson? He certainly knows as much about the State budget as the honourable member for Davidson. But, after 14 years as a member of Parliament, in the most blue-ribbon Liberal seat in Sydney, one local paper still calls the honourable member for Davidson by the wrong name—David Humpherson. How is that for a profile!

The *Manly Daily* also has more dopey comments from the Liberals' Manly candidate, Michael Baird. We all know why Michael Baird was chosen as a candidate for the Liberals in Manly. It is because Daddy has done a deal with Mr Debnam. The local branch members know that if Pete backs Junior Baird—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that he is on one call to order.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** My point of order is relevance. The only grubby deal to shoehorn someone into the job was the one done by the Minister for Transport over the Minister for Education and Training. He said, "If you don't make me Deputy Premier I'll resign." The Minister for Education and Training ought to be Deputy Premier. Everyone on that side of the House knows it, but the Minister for Transport threatened to resign.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. At least the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was able to amuse us last night. This time he was not even amusing.

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition terrorised the sleepy hamlet of Darnick all those years ago and now he is trying to do it to us. We will not stand for it. Daddy has done that deal with Mr Debnam, and how the deal goes—

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** If Pete backs Junior Baird, then Bruce backs Tony, and that means Peter Costello goes home empty-handed.

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** Wouldn't it be nice if Opposition members spent as much time backing the community as they do backstabbing each other? There is blood all over Manly Corso, and there is going to be more of it. Wouldn't it be nice if they could come up with some real and achievable plans that did not rely on the destruction of the hardworking men and women of the New South Wales public service?

### **ELECTRICITY AND WATER PRICES**

**Ms PETA SEATON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Energy. Given that the budget says, "Over the next four years, strong growth in PTE sector earnings is projected due to improved revenue growth in water and electricity sectors", will the Minister explain how this will be achieved other than by slugging New South Wales families with higher electricity and water prices?

**Mr Morris Iemma:** That is determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. What an idiot!

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: Following the contribution of the honourable member for Monaro this morning, that is completely inappropriate.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Minister for Energy has the call.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** The responsibility for determining regulated retail and distribution electricity prices in New South Wales is with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], not with the Government.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Southern Highlands has asked a question. She will listen to the reply in silence.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** Average electricity prices for households and small businesses in New South Wales continue to be amongst the lowest in Australia and the world. According to the tribunal, the average regulated residential retail electricity prices in New South Wales fell by 10 per cent in real terms between 1992-93 and 2003-04. Regulated retail tariffs act as a safety net for customers who have chosen not to enter a negotiated supply contract. The independent tribunal will continue to protect customers from sharp price rises, while ensuring electricity distributors have sufficient funds to properly maintain, and invest in, their electricity networks.

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

**Ms Peta Seaton:** Point of order: I ask you to ask the Minister to answer the question relevantly. This is not a general knowledge question about IPART; it is about how he knows that revenue will grow.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Southern Highlands knows she is out of order. The Minister is in order. He is answering the question he was asked.

**Mr JOSEPH TRIPODI:** As the shadow Minister would be aware, a \$9.1 billion investment program is under way over the next four years. A consequence of that extra investment is that it generates more income. That explains where the revenue growth comes from. As a consequence of a massive increase in investment there is more business, which means revenue goes up. I know that is a very difficult business concept to understand, but as your business grows your revenue also grows. There is one other small thing that contributes to the revenue growth of our electricity assets in this State, and that is population growth. As more people use more power, more revenue is generated. It is not very hard, and if the honourable member for Southern Highlands needs a lesson, I can arrange it for her.

### **STATE BUDGET AND CONSERVATION**

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** My question without notice is directed to the Minister for the Environment. How does the State budget set a new direction for conservation in New South Wales?

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** As part of our 2006-07 budget the Iemma Government will invest a record \$694 million in the environment. That is a 12.5 per cent increase on last year and an increase of 163 per cent on

the Coalition's last paltry environment budget, of \$264 million. This year sees the first instalment of our landmark City and Country Environment Restoration Program, which provides new funding for the environment of \$439 million over five years. The program will attack illegal dumping, restore our declining rivers and wetlands, and will provide unprecedented environment funding to councils, local businesses and community groups.

I am particularly pleased that this year \$16 million will be spent to buy environmental water from willing sellers to benefit our parched inland rivers and wetlands. That is the first instalment of the Government's \$105 million RiverBank Program. By purchasing water the Government aims to restore wetlands such as the Macquarie Marshes, the Gwydir and Lachlan wetlands, the Lowbidgee floodplain, and the Narran Lakes in our interior. This year also sees the first stage of the Government's \$80 million program to improve urban waterways, and especially to encourage the harvesting and reuse of stormwater.

Also, an additional 19,500 hectares of high-conservation value land will be added to the New South Wales national parks estate, consisting of three new parks and 21 additions to existing parks, all fully funded in this year's record budget. An additional \$12 million will also be spent this year to upgrade popular visitor facilities in Sydney's icon national parks, including at West Head in Sydney Harbour National Park, as well as in the Royal, Ku-ring-gai, Georges River and Lane Cove national parks. A further \$4 million will be spent to upgrade the national parks in Western Sydney, and \$4.4 million will be spent to improve popular national parks in the Hunter and the Illawarra.

We will see visitor facilities improved, expanded bush regeneration work, and improved fire, pest and weed management. These are just a few of the many highlights in the Environment portfolio's budget for the year. One should contrast that record with that of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition had nothing at all to say about the environment in his reply yesterday to the Budget Speech. He said not a word. It is not surprising. At the last election the Coalition was unable to publish an environment policy at all. The Coalition did not produce an environment policy before the last election.

We only know one thing for sure: The Coalition consistently opposed this Government's environment policies concerning new national parks. It went into the 1999 and 2003 elections with only one policy promising to abolish areas of national park already created. In this electoral cycle it has already committed to significantly winding back the national parks system if elected in 2007. Specifically, The Nationals have vowed to abolish the 352,000 hectares of new national park in the Brigalow region of western New South Wales.

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

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** Quite specifically, The Nationals have promised to abolish the Brigalow—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat. I call him to order.

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** The Nationals is the tail that wags the Coalition dog in these matters. Never before has there been such an explicit promise by an Opposition to wind back so much of this State's national park estate. It really is a first for New South Wales, and this is just the start. In the past the Coalition either opposed or explicitly promised to abolish, in whole or in part, other national parks. That includes the South East Forests National Park, the Coolah Tops National Park, new national parks created following north-east NSW Forestry assessments of 1998 and 2003, part of Jervis Bay National Park, new reserves created following southern forests decisions in 2005, and the proposed Yanga National Park in the Riverina. That is a short list of the promises made by those opposite to undo decisions of this Government concerning national parks.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 45. He was Finance Minister from 1984 to 1988 and he left the State with \$45 billion of debt.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I call him to order. He is not even attempting to disguise his interruptions as points of order. He is blatantly interrupting proceedings and that behaviour is clearly unparliamentary. The Minister has the call. Government members will come to order.

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** For the information of the Leader of the Opposition, back in those years the person called the Minister for Finance was responsible for the collection of State taxation. When the new Coalition Government occupied the Treasury benches in 1988, one of the first things Nick Greiner did was to congratulate the old Government on the reform of what is now called the Office of State Revenue. That is what I did, mate!



**Mr Peter Debnam:** Point of order—

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

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Not until I give a point of order.

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

**Mr Peter Debnam:** It is your choice. It is the last day of Parliament.

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

**Mr Peter Debnam:** I will take a point of order.

**Ms Sandra Nori:** Is that how you behaved in the navy?

**Mr Peter Debnam:** We know how you behave, especially in Brisbane.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is now clearly flouting the ruling of the Chair.

**Mr Peter Debnam:** I am happy to take a point of order.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat and I will give him the call.

**Ms Sandra Nori:** Point of order—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume her seat. Does the Leader of the Opposition wish to take a point of order?

**Mr Peter Debnam:** Yes.

**Ms Sandra Nori:** Go on, say it outside.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will resume her seat.

**Mr SPEAKER:** What is your point of order?

**Mr Peter Debnam:** My point of order is relevance. Not only \$45 billion, but an operating deficit of \$1.3 billion. That is what you left in 1988.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. Again the Leader of the Opposition is interrupting the proceedings of the House. The Minister has the call.

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** He is a desperate man. To return to my original theme, the Coalition has also vowed to unwind and to abandon the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park and the Batemans Marine Park. The honourable member for Bega has made it clear that he opposes a marine park on the far South Coast, a place where people can still fish, use a boat, dive and water ski but still protect the environment.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Myall Lakes will come to order.

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** In fact, the honourable member for Bega accused the Government of leaking an important zoning map showing how the marine park on the South Coast might be organised.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: My point of order is that the Minister is misleading the House.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Bega will resume his seat. The session is almost at an end and it is clear that members believe they can have some sport, perhaps in the hope of being removed from the House. If this is the last sitting day any member who is removed risks not being allowed within the precincts of Parliament for three months. Members should think seriously about their behaviour because the Chair does not have the discretion to change the standing orders. I also warn members that I will not tolerate

points of order being taken merely to disrupt the proceedings of the House. Points of order should be taken in accordance with the standing orders. Members flouting the standing orders will be called to order.

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** The honourable member for Bega, who opposes the marine park on the South Coast, has in recent weeks accused the Government of leaking an important zoning map showing how the marine park might be organised. In those weeks the honourable member for Bega publicly accused the Government of trying to divide and conquer the community through the release of this zoning map. He accused the Government of deliberately releasing the plan to pit person against person and community against community in his electorate. It was a serious allegation. The allegation unravelled on ABC Radio South East when an enterprising ABC journalist asked was it not true, rather, that the honourable member for Bega himself had leaked the map. With the smoking gun still firmly in his hand, indeed, white hot to touch, the local member rounded on the ABC journalist and said this:

I find that an inappropriate question from the ABC. I am not hiding the fact that I issued a press release that reveals the content of the map.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Did you work with the ABC?

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** I did, and I wish I had asked him the question.

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

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** We must get this straight. The honourable member for Bega accused the Government of leaking a document to divide and conquer the community, and then confessed on radio to being the man who was actually behind the document's sudden appearance. He gives opportunism a bad name.

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

**Mr BOB DEBUS:** This is a man who only a few years ago in his maiden speech showed what appeared to be serious concern for the environment. In that speech he said:

Our beaches and waterways are the best in the world and we all must work hard to balance coastal development whilst protecting these areas.

That is what he said then; now he does all he can to get in the way of the Government's sensible plan to protect the environment of the South Coast. His environmental ideals, like those of most members opposite, have evaporated. Fortunately, the draft plan for the Batemans Marine Park will be on display for three months. We can only hope that the honourable member for Bega holds his tongue until the end of that period.

### **CURRAWONG SITE OWNERSHIP**

**Mr ALEX McTAGGART:** My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Planning. What is the Government doing to ensure the transfer into public ownership of Currawong, which was offered for sale by Unions New South Wales?

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

**Mr FRANK SARTOR:** Any decision by the Government to acquire Currawong would require a resolution of Cabinet, and would have to be viewed in the context of land acquisition and dispossession by either the Sydney Regional Development Fund or the general Crown lands acquisitions that take place.

*[Interruption]*

Some dumb person made a comment. What was it?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister should not respond to interjections. He is answering the question.

**Mr FRANK SARTOR:** Do members opposite want to hear the answer? I am happy to sit down. My understanding is that, as the honourable member has alluded to, the unions have sought to sell the site. My advice to the honourable member for Pittwater is that his council should enter into discussions with the owner of

the site to resolve either future planning issues or the status and/or ownership of that site. If the council wishes to have the assistance of either my department or possibly the Department of Environment and Conservation in terms of the environmental values or otherwise of parts of that site, we would be happy to oblige.

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

**Mr FRANK SARTOR:** Pittwater Council should deal directly with the owner on the matter. As I said, we are happy to assist if the council so wishes.

#### STATE BUDGET AND WESTERN SYDNEY

**Ms TANYA GADIEL:** My question without notice is addressed to the Premier. How does the State budget better support hardworking families in Western Sydney?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will be heard in silence.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** It should be noted that we did not get a question today on the labour force figures. Do honourable members know why?

*[Interruption]*

There goes the honourable member for Southern Highlands, explaining them away because she hates any good news for New South Wales. The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures were released today. Of the 56,000 new jobs created in Australia in May, 47,000, or 84 per cent of them, were in New South Wales.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call Government members to order. I call the honourable member for Murray-Darling to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Seasonally adjusted, the New South Wales unemployment rate fell by 0.5 per cent from April to May. That is a bigger fall than that in Victoria, South Australia and our resource-rich cousins in Western Australia. I place that good news on the record.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I caution the honourable member for Southern Highlands against using month-by-month figures. I place the figures on the record today because we did not get a question on them. We have not yet had a release from the Opposition welcoming any encouraging news for the people of New South Wales because members opposite hate any good news.

**Mr Milton Orkopoulos:** Because they're malcontents.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs rightly says they are malcontents.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** On the back of these good job figures, I inform the honourable member for Parramatta that the budget backs families to the hilt. Tomorrow's front page in Penrith will say it all: "Budget windfall".

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members will cease displaying papers.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Western Sydney is a big winner from the budget, and it deserves to be because it is home to one in 10 Australians. Members opposite should listen to this because it is important. Western Sydney is the third most important economic region in this country. It is the nation's third-biggest economic region. We are delivering the infrastructure that this region needs. This financial year the Government will invest more than \$2 billion into Western Sydney infrastructure. That is \$320 million more than last year. It is a bonanza for hospitals, schools, roads, transport and our hardworking police. It will create and sustain more than 26,000 direct and indirect jobs. We are investing more than \$404 million to upgrade and maintain roads in Western Sydney.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order—

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals clearly intends to flout my earlier ruling relating to the use of props.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** The Premier was using a prop.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** That is \$2.9 million for Health, including a record \$197 million for Westmead Children's Hospital. The massive redevelopment of Auburn and Liverpool hospitals also commences this year, with \$11 million to construct new and upgraded facilities.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I place the Leader of The Nationals on three calls to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The hardworking police who are doing so much to drive down crime are also big winners, with \$10 million being provided this year to upgrade Fairfield and St Mary's police stations plus new police stations at Windsor and Granville. Education also scores a big win, with \$2.1 billion being provided this financial year to educate young people in Western Sydney, and with new schools in growth areas and upgrades to our TAFE colleges. We are also investing \$1.2 million in refurbishing Westfields Sports High School.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Westfields Sports High School is an important institution because it is the cradle of our mighty Socceroos.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Give us the score!

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** It was 3-1 this morning. Three of the Socceroos currently representing Australia—Harry Kewell, Jason Culina and Michael Beauchamp—are products of Westfields. Members opposite may not want to back the Socceroos but the Government does. A further six Socceroos came out of other New South Wales public schools. Western Sydney business has welcomed the budget. Stuart Ross, who is the Director of Industrial Services at CB Richard Ellis, Parramatta, welcomed our big infrastructure investment. He said:

To have improved essential services will also create a positive spin-off in commercial and business activity.

The Chairman of the Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board, Mr Frank Gelonesi, said:

The Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board welcomes the spending initiatives announced in the State Budget for Western Sydney.

That is endorsement from business. It welcomes this budget, as it should. The councils of Western Sydney have also given the budget an endorsement. The President of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, Councillor Tony Hay, had this to say:

I'm pleased that the proposals outlined in the State Infrastructure Plan have been backed by funding in the Budget ...

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** He went on to say:

... the State Government has done the right thing in this Budget ...

I am also pleased that additional funding has been allocated for Social Services.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Baulkham Hills to order for the second time.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Business, local government and the local media were quick to endorse the budget and back Western Sydney—which stands in stark contrast to the pathetic speech yesterday from the

Opposition. Where were the Leader of the Opposition's plans for Western Sydney yesterday? Where were his vision, his plan, his policies?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** We heard nothing from him yesterday about Western Sydney yesterday, not a word. Why no initiative, no plan, no vision, no policy? There was not a single word on Western Sydney in the Opposition's reply to the budget. Why is that? Because Western Sydney is the place members opposite drive through on the way to their chalets at Thredbo, or, in the case of the honourable member for Southern Highlands, on the way to afternoon tea in the Southern Highlands. The Leader of the Opposition claims to be the Opposition spokesperson on Western Sydney. We got a 6,000-word response yesterday. One would have thought he would have found time to say something about Western Sydney—maybe a policy, an initiative, a program, or part of a plan. But no, not a syllable, not one initiative, not one dollar.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The budget provides \$2 billion for infrastructure and services for the people of Western Sydney. Yesterday's reply to the budget by the Leader of the Opposition referred to not one cent.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** But one Liberal member of Parliament located in Western Sydney did have something to say about Western Sydney. We had to wait for Pat Farmer to say something about Western Sydney. At least Pat could be bothered to get out of bed and present some sort of plan for Western Sydney. Having seen the plan, I have to say he should have stayed under the doona. He gave us a quite bizarre plan about monorails. Pat Farmer wants to see monorails built along the median strips of Western Sydney.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Coffs Harbour to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** His plan provides for monorails on the motorways of Western Sydney and the orbital—the M5, the M7 and the M2—about 70 kilometres of monorails. That is the plan from Pat. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned good old Google. A quick search of the Monorail Society web site by the SISDE—and just to refresh everybody's minds that is the Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Democratica—shows that monorail costs an average \$US58 million a kilometre, or \$A78 million. Good old Pat wants to see \$5.5 billion spent on monorail systems along the Western Sydney motorway network.

[Interruption]

We should not get into Pat too much. At least he got out of bed and came up with a policy. He should have stuck to running, but he stuck his head up with a plan. How he propose to fund this plan? With the futures fund in Canberra? With the \$10 billion surplus from Peter Costello? Perhaps some of the \$3 billion of New South Wales taxpayer dollars cheated out of people by the GST? No. He says the State Government should fund the plan. It is another project to throw into the magic pudding of Vacluse—another unfunded, mad scheme proposal. Full marks for effort but zero for commonsense. At least Pat was having a go—unlike the honourable member for Albury.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister for Police will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** They gave him a Gregory's directory and sent him to St Marys. I am mistaken. They gave him the Gregory's but he did not go out there. However, he gave the local paper a quote. Yesterday's *Mt Druitt and St Marys Standard* says he thinks the region is depressing.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. The Minister for Energy will come to order. The Minister for Police will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** This is the nation's third most important economic region, home to one in 10 Australians, a powerhouse of industrial innovation. If the honourable member had bothered to front up to the Western Sydney Manufacturers Forum last week he would have heard how Western Sydney is at the cutting edge of manufacturing innovation in this nation. And he describes the region as depressing! As disgraceful as his comments are, at least he managed to conjure up one word about Western Sydney—which is one more than the Leader of the Opposition, who purports to be the shadow Minister for Western Sydney. He could not find his

way to the region, even if they took the Gregory's from the honourable member for Albury and gave it to him. The one word the Opposition could come up with on Western Sydney all week, budget week—there was nothing in question time about Western Sydney and nothing in the Opposition's reply—was "depressing". That says it all.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I call the honourable member for Coffs Harbour to order for the second time.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** All I can say about the Leader of the Opposition is: Gregory's in one hand, gin and tonic in the other, and a steely determination to get back to the Royal Motor Yacht Club as quickly as humanly possible, instead of having any consideration for Western Sydney.

#### **BLACKTOWN HOSPITAL STILLBORN BABY CARE PROCEDURES**

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** My question is to the Premier. Given that the Minister for Health said today that disposing of baby Angelina's body was not a gross act of negligence, will he personally apologise to her grieving family?

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I did so last week, so did the Minister, and so did the health service. I reiterate today an unqualified apology for this tragic, distressing, horrible incident that has occurred to this family. Together with that unqualified apology I indicate my determination to ensure that this never happens again to any family.

#### **RURAL AND REGIONAL POLICE BUDGET**

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** My question without notice is to the Minister for Police. How does the State budget better support policing in rural and regional areas, and related matters?

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! A number of honourable members have been called to order several times. I deem those members to be on three calls to order. I warn honourable members that if they are removed from the House today they may not be allowed to return to the precincts of Parliament for several months.

**Mr CARL SCULLY:** As I have been able to inform the House regularly, the police budget for law and order across the State has been fantastic. On a number of occasions honourable members have heard about capital works on a variety of police stations. These characters opposite keep trying to suggest we are not doing the very best for the people of country and regional New South Wales. The number of police in regional New South Wales is 4,725. I bet that is a lot more police officers than when the Coalition was in government. I want all honourable members to go forth in their electorates with the knowledge that those characters opposite are wrong whenever they utter that the Government is not doing its very best. When the Coalition was last in government there were 1,130 fewer police than there are now. In country New South Wales crime rates are falling or are stable. The police are doing a terrific job.

On related matters, the Opposition is leaking like a sieve. A document has come to my attention prepared by the Karl Rove of the Opposition. It is a good name, indeed a great name, but it should be bestowed with care. It should never have been bestowed upon him; he is a bad man. The Karl Rove of the Opposition, the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner, has prepared a document that is The Nationals campaign checklist. I am told The Nationals have been provided with a range of strategies. Strategy one: "In three-cornered contests the strategy needs to promote the value of a separate Nationals." They have a problem because the Leader of the Opposition has said on the Alan Jones program that Liberal candidates will contest every seat across the State. Four days later the Leader of The Nationals said on his local radio program:

I can tell you it won't happen ... we have an agreement with the Liberals there will be no three-cornered contests.

The Leader of The Nationals said there will be no three-cornered contests, the Karl Rove of The Nationals said to prepare for it, and the Liberals said it will happen. If they cannot put their own house in order, they should not be allowed to manage the Treasury benches. Strategy two: "Campaign headquarters should consider leaving some lights on. If electors think The Nationals are not fair dinkum, this can be a bad perception." The lights are on; nobody's home.

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

**Mr CARL SCULLY:** Hold the front page, this is fantastic! Strategy three: "Check on The Nationals booths' umbrella supplies; reorder if necessary." Next they will hand out Lady Flo's pumpkin scones. Strategy four: "Plan the management of the Voter Services Card project. Don't be like the Libs in Cheryl Kernot's seat, Dickson. They were tardy in despatching the Voter Services Card." What a happy Coalition! The Liberals were tardy. The Nationals are not an ageist party. Strategy five: "Involve younger campaign volunteers. They are usually computer literate, multiskilled and creative. Young voices on campaign office phones help the party's image."

The great strategist goes on: "Ensure that the level of coverage in each media outlet is monitored. If there are problems in gaining coverage, then the advertising strategy for that outlet may need to be refined." I wonder if that is cash for comment. Perhaps the matter should go to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Honourable members will love the next one: "Be on guard for suspicious visitors. Understand that visiting journalists have been known to leave remote microphones switched on inside campaign offices while they go about their business in a different location." It is unbelievable! The piece de resistance is one last, devastating piece of advice: "How-to-votes left under a rock is unacceptable."

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

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Point of order: At the Sandy Beach booth for both State and Federal elections Labor has no helpers and they leave their pamphlets under a rock.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I thought the honourable member for Coffs Harbour intended to take a point of order. I may have upheld it.

**Mr CARL SCULLY:** This Carl will give some advice to The Nationals. During the recess they need to take a good, long look at themselves and ask whether they are one big, happy ship or two rowboats ready for decommissioning. Is the Leader of the Opposition—whom I regard as the Damir Dokic of the State Parliament—able to continue operating those two rowboats? When we return I want to hear more about The Nationals campaign tactics. Good luck. See you in August.

**Questions without notice concluded.**

## **MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND SPORT AND RECREATION**

### **Privilege**

**Ms SANDRA NORI** (Port Jackson—Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation, Minister for Women, and Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development) [3.40 p.m.]: On a matter of privilege. During question time the Leader of the Opposition made comments that were offensive and impugned my character.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order. I include Government members in that warning.

**Ms SANDRA NORI:** I have informed the House previously that the matter to which the Leader of the Opposition refers was settled prior to trial. I ask that the Leader of the Opposition withdraw his remarks. If he is an officer and a gentleman, he will also apologise.

**Mr PETER DEBNAM:** I am happy to withdraw the comment.

## **STATE BUDGET AND WESTERN SYDNEY**

### **Personal Explanation**

**Mr GREG APLIN,** by leave: The Premier attempted to malign my reputation by suggesting I had made a comment via telephone. He would know that I visited Whalan this week and I found a notorious housing department area where many properties had been vandalised, burnt and boarded up.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a personal explanation. It is a speech.

**Mr Greg Aplin:** I ask that the Premier tell the truth. It would make a difference in this place.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Albury is not showing how his character has been maligned. He is challenging statements made by the Premier.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: The honourable member for Albury clearly made the point that the Premier said he had described Western Sydney as depressing. The honourable member is quoted in the newspaper as referring to a public housing estate in Whalan. The Premier's remarks are a clear misrepresentation.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I have no problem with that part of his contribution. The additional statements were clearly out of order.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Days and Hours of Sitting**

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

That the House meet for the dispatch of business on:

Friday 9 June 2006 at 10.00 a.m., and

Tuesday 29 August 2006 at 2.15 p.m.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

**Mr CARL SCULLY** (Smithfield—Minister for Police) [3.51 p.m.]: I move:

That at 4.15 p.m. at this sitting standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that:

- (1) the call for General Business Notices of Motion (General Notices) and private members' statements be postponed until after
  - (a) consideration of any Legislative Council messages returning bills with amendments; and
  - (b) the introduction, without notice, of the Threatened Species Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Banking) Bill, up to and including the Minister's second reading speech.
- (2) in the event that a message is received from the Legislative Council after the commencement of private members' statements, the debate be interrupted to permit the consideration of such messages.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.52 p.m.]: This suspension proves that the Minister is lazy. Having given the Parliament a week off last week and having provided for the presentation of the budget this week, he refused the Leader of the Opposition's request to allow the Parliament to sit another week. As a result, we have this end-of-session mad rush. If last week's cancelled sittings had been transferred to next week, as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, we would be doing this in the usual orderly fashion. We would have not seen bills rushed through in the past few days, an open-ended sitting this evening, and similar devices designed to satisfy honourable members opposite. I do not oppose the motion, but it proves that the Leader of the House is lazy.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

**Mr CARL SCULLY** (Smithfield—Minister for Police) [3.54 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide on Friday 9 June 2006 that:

- (1) the routine of business from 10.00 a.m. be as follows:



- (a) resumption of the adjourned debate on the motion to take note of the budget estimates and Related Papers 2006-07, with four speakers; and
  - (b) consideration of any messages received from the Legislative Council returning bills with amendments.
- (2) in the event that messages are received from the Legislative Council returning bills with amendments, paragraph (2) of the sessional order relating to Friday sittings (quorums and divisions) not apply.
- (3) at the conclusion of Government Business, the House adjourn without motion moved.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.55 p.m.]: Ditto.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

### **Membership**

**Mr SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that Mr Brown has been appointed as a member on the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety in place of Mr Tingle, resigned.

Legislative Council  
8 June 2006

MEREDITH BURGMANN  
President

## **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

### **Report**

**The Speaker** tabled, pursuant to section 78 (2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the report entitled "Report on Cover-up of an Assault on an Inmate at Parramatta Correctional Centre", dated June 2006

**Ordered to be printed.**

## **CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS**

### **Fuel Prices**

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL** (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [3.56 p.m.]: My motion is of the utmost urgency and deserves precedence because the Leader of the Opposition and his lapdogs, The Nationals, time and again refuse to stand up for New South Wales families and small business people. The latest example of that behaviour, which occurred today, is the Opposition's failure to address the most pressing issue facing New South Wales motorists with just over one day before they can look forward to a short family break. I refer to the soaring price of fuel.

The Iemma Labor Government has stood firm on this issue, raising it time and again. What do families, motorists and small business people across New South Wales get from the Opposition? Silence. The Leader of the Opposition has no problem with the Federal Government calling for an urgent debate and convening a taskforce on nuclear energy when it is the unending pain at the petrol pump that is ruining family plans for a driving holiday and the incomes of small business owners across the State. Instead of getting off their backsides and getting on the phone and demanding that John Howard apply the same sense of urgency to petrol pricing that he is applying to nuclear power sites, the New South Wales Opposition does nothing. The Leader of the Opposition is caught in a Catch-22 situation of his own making. On Radio 2GB last Sunday he said:

I just honestly don't think it's an issue that people in New South Wales will have to deal with in the short to medium term... I'd say to everybody in New South Wales—it's not an issue.

If it is not an issue, The Nationals and the Liberals should stand up to John Howard and demand that he cease his obvious distractions and poor attempts at wedge politics and give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission real power to launch a full inquiry into the petrol industry. For those reasons my motion is urgent.

### State Budget

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.57 p.m.]: The Opposition believes its motion is more urgent, not because petrol prices are not important for New South Wales families but because the sort of inquiry the Minister wants will not protect New South Wales motorists and families from petrol price increases this weekend, which is the first point of his motion. There have been 47 inquiries into petrol prices under successive Federal governments, and the Opposition cannot see how yet another inquiry will provide relief this weekend.

The important issue is the State budget, which was handed down this week, and the State infrastructure program, which was released last week. Those documents pretend to the voters of New South Wales—both in the city and in the country—that suddenly with the State's economy in the condition it is in, everything will be fixed if they simply give Labor one more go. Labor's State infrastructure program promises that \$41 million would be spent over four years and the State budget offers \$9.9 billion, allegedly over the next 12 months. It is a different magician but the same trick. It is yet another example in the lead-up to an election campaign of a budget and infrastructure plan being put together that promises all things to the entire State. However, New South Wales voters are secure in the knowledge that, as has happened after the three previous elections, nothing will materialise.

Allowing debate on our motion about the Government's infrastructure plan and its capital works budget would expose both country and city people to Labor's repeated failure to deliver infrastructure projects on time. The lazy or otherwise Leader of the House, the former Minister for Transport, produced two glossy documents in the lead-up to the 1999 election campaign. There was a city and a country version of "Action for Transport 2010". It promised everything to everyone. How much has been delivered? Too little. When it comes to infrastructure projects and their delivery, people do not need to listen to Labor, they can simply but look at its actions. There has been too little action for too long. That is why this State is in a mess.

This issue could not be more pressing. We have seen grand guarantees and promises from Labor Ministers about high-speed rail links to the Illawarra. Today's *Illawarra Mercury* indicates that that project is at a dead end. Promises about high-speed rail links to the Central Coast and Newcastle have been scrapped. The Government promised to build the north-west rail link by 2010, but this week's budget indicates that it will be delivered in 2019. Promises made prior to the last two election campaigns that the Spit Bridge would be widened have been neglected. That promise was made in 2003 by the present Minister for Police, but it simply has not happened.

Promises were made during the last three elections campaigns to build Kariong High School in the new electorate of Gosford, but they have not been honoured. Promises made about building the Berry bypass in the electorate of the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads have also been ignored. Promises made about the Nundle bridge in the electorate of Tamworth have also been unfulfilled. The long-promised Dubbo police station and the upgrade of the Parkes hospital are undelivered. Promises have been made about the Menindie Lakes scheme in the Murray-Darling electorate and, once again, they have not been fulfilled. Last week when I was in the Tweed area, all that people wanted to talk to me about was the undelivered promise to deliver the Sextons Hill deviation.

As we go into this three-month recess the people of New South Wales have a right to know whether the documents released over the past two weeks, at great public expense, the documents upon which this Government is basing its entire re-election campaign, are the same phoney documents that were released before the last three State elections. Honourable members should look to their actions, not to their words. Look to the actions of the Carl Scullys and to the actions of failed former ministers, such as Craig Knowles and Andrew Refshauge.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** They should look to the actions of the current Premier, who, when he was Minister for Health, promised in every budget the redevelopment of Royal North Shore Hospital, which the Government had the temerity to re-announce today. Look at the Government's record and you will see it does not stand scrutiny. Whether you are a city member or a country member, this is far more pressing than an issue that revolves in the Federal sphere. The public deserves the truth, which will only come out through this sort of scrutiny. That is why my motion should have priority today.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 46**

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

**Noes, 36**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**FUEL PRICES**

**Urgent Motion**

**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 move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that as we approach another family holiday, New South Wales motorists and small businesses continue to bear the brunt of soaring petrol prices;
- (2) calls on the Prime Minister to immediately direct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to conduct an inquiry into fuel prices with the same sense of urgency he used to establish a nuclear power inquiry; and
- (3) condemns the Liberal and National parties for their continuing failure to stand up to the Commonwealth for New South Wales families and small businesses.

Today I raise this issue of vital importance to families and small businesses in the State. As we approach another long weekend—shock, horror—petrol prices have risen again. We see this at every holiday period and every

long weekend; it is as regular as clockwork. The only other certainty about this issue is that the Federal Government will do nothing to stop it. It seems the only people who cannot see the problem are the Prime Minister, his Treasurer, and The Nationals. Despite repeated calls from the Iemma Government, with no support from members opposite, the Federal Government sits on its hands. The Iemma Government has been leading the charge for a full and frank investigation into petrol price collusion, but John Howard, who claims to listen to the people, has turned a deaf ear to their calls for a fairer deal.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Point of order: I draw the attention of the Minister to the speech of the Deputy Premier in this House on 22 September 1999.

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order.

[Interruption]

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Earlier today, when pressed on the issue by Canberra journalists, the Prime Minister again rejected calls to give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] more power to investigate price gouging. He seems to think there is no problem. He seems to think that a 10¢ a litre price rise overnight is not price gouging and is not collusion. It is quite clear that by his little outburst the honourable member for Coffs Harbour agrees wholeheartedly with the Prime Minister. John Howard weakly limped into the debate saying the ACCC could monitor prices in the lead-up to the Queen's Birthday weekend and beyond. He has to be kidding! As the honourable member for Georges River says, he does not care. He can monitor prices all he likes but what he will see is that they are going up. [*Quorum formed.*]

What the Minister would see if he opened his eyes and what he would hear if he listened to people is what people on this side of the House know: families and small businesses right around the State are suffering as a result of the spike in petrol prices, and it happens every long weekend or holiday period. If a family wants to go into one of the regional centres in New South Wales or just wants to go out of the city, they will have less money to spend when they get there. The Nationals do not give a damn—as evidenced by their performance just now—and the honourable member for Lismore clearly does not care less about small businesses in the North Coast and the Northern Rivers regions who will suffer as a consequence of increased petrol prices over the coming long weekend.

What we will never see is John Howard, the lapdogs in The Nationals, or the Leader of the Opposition standing up and demanding action. We will not see them taking a real stand on this issue because they do not care about motorists, they do not care about farmers, they do not care about families and they do not care about small businesses. The impact of rising petrol prices is hurting businesses and families right across the country, most particularly in regional New South Wales.

**Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and motion lapsed.**

## **DRUG MISUSE AND TRAFFICKING AMENDMENT (HYDROPONIC CULTIVATION) BILL**

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.**

### **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day discharged the order of the day for the consideration of the Legislative Assembly's message of 25 May 2006 regarding an amendment to clause 2 of the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament.

Legislative Council  
8 June 2006

PATRICIA FORSYTHE  
Deputy-President

### **PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER**

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that having considered the Legislative Assembly's message of 25 May 2006, regarding the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser, it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That the appointment of Mr Ian Dickson as Parliamentary Ethics Adviser, by resolution of the House of 1 March 2005, be now extended to 30 June 2007.

Legislative Council  
8 June 2006

PATRICIA FORSYTHE  
Deputy-President

## **PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **Reference**

**Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

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

1. That the Privileges Committee inquire into and report on:
  - (a) the draft Constitution (Disclosure by Members) Regulation 2006, tabled in the House on 7 June 2006, in accordance with section 14A (5) of the Constitution Act 1902,
  - (b) the draft amendments to the Code of Conduct for Members of the Parliament, tabled in the House on 7 June 2006.
2. That the committee, in conducting the review under paragraph 1(a), in addition to considering supplementary returns, give consideration to the feasibility of reporting changes to pecuniary interests by "exception reporting".
3. That the committee consult with the Clerk of the House to ensure a streamlined process is introduced for updating the pecuniary interests register.
4. That the committee report to the House by 3 October 2006.
5. That this House informs the Legislative Assembly that, under Standing Order 219 of the Legislative Council, the Privileges Committee has the power to join together with any committee of the Legislative Assembly to take evidence, deliberate and make joint reports on matters of mutual concern.

Legislative Council  
8 June 2006

PATRICIA FORSYTHE  
Deputy-President

## **STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL**

### **In Committee**

**Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.**

*Schedule of amendments referred to in the message of 6 June*

No. 1 Page 10, Schedule 1.10 [1], lines 10 and 11. Omit all words on those lines.

No. 2 Page 20, Schedule 1.24 [3] and [4], lines 25–29. Omit all words on those lines.

**Legislative Council's amendments agreed to on motion by Mr David Campbell.**

**Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.**

**Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.**

**CIVIL LIABILITY AMENDMENT BILL****In Committee****Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.***Schedule of amendments referred to message of 6 June*

No. 1 Page 6, Schedule 1 [11], proposed section 15B (2) (c) (i), line 23. Omit "9". Insert instead "6".

No. 2 Page 6, Schedule 1 [11], proposed section 15B (3) (a), line 37. Omit "9". Insert instead "6".

**Legislative Council's amendments agreed to on motion by Mr Bob Debus.****Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.****Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.****THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY BANKING) BILL****Bill introduced and read a first time.****Second Reading**

**Mr BOB DEBUS** (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for the Arts) [4.23 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Responding to the loss of our unique animals, plants and ecosystems—our biodiversity—is one of the greatest environmental challenges facing New South Wales today. Rates of species extinction in Australia—and in New South Wales—are amongst the highest in the world. We know the main reason for this high rate of extinction is loss of habitat, a by-product of population growth and economic development. As an example, when Europeans arrived in Western Sydney's Cumberland Plain, it covered some 274,000 hectares of open grassy woodlands. Seventeen distinct vegetation communities formed a mosaic of forests and woodlands stretching some 100 kilometres from Richmond in the north and Appin in the south. The Cumberland Plain would have been immensely productive for both Aboriginal people and numerous species of native fauna and birds that inhabited it. Unfortunately, most of Western Sydney's unique species are now extremely rare due to the massive changes caused by clearing and by changed hydrological regimes from dam construction, clearing and resultant erosion of riparian areas, irrigation, flood mitigation works and pollution of waterways.

Out of the Cumberland Plain's original 274,000 hectares of woodlands and wetlands, only about 13 per cent remains. Some vegetation communities have fared slightly better than others but all have suffered a marked reduction in range along with extensive fragmentation and degradation from weeds and pests, rubbish dumping, tracks and easements. Long gone are the quolls and bettongs. Today only the eastern grey kangaroo, brush-tail possum, sugar glider, and some bat species, could be regarded as common in the little remaining areas of good habitat. The remaining habitats in the Cumberland Plain are severely fragmented, occurring in about 2,500 small remnants across the landscape. Nearly 1,500 of these remnants are less than four hectares in size. These small remnants are not nearly as valuable for biodiversity as larger areas. Small remnants are vulnerable to degradation and not viable in the long term.

Woodland species that require large, intact habitats cannot persist in these so-called "simplified edge" environments. As remnant size decreases there is a local extinction of woodland species. Only around 80 individual remnants out of the total of 2,500 are large enough to be viable in the long term for the majority of the fauna and flora that remain. Recent surveys by the Department of Environment and Conservation, however, have found a number of key declining woodland birds hanging on in the larger, connected remnants. Importantly, these areas are not dominated by the large aggressive native and introduced bird species. Today we have reached the point where a new direction in conservation is required. To put it simply, we need increasingly to focus investment and resources on better protecting the larger patches. This is because, as I have outlined, highly fragmented landscapes pose significant challenges for biodiversity conservation.

These challenges are compounded in existing urban areas that are suited to economic development. If we are to have any chance of slowing this rapid decline, we need an innovative and practical approach to

biodiversity conservation. The present threatened species law focuses our efforts on evaluating the impact of each individual development. We need to bring our laws and approach into line with the latest science. The death by a thousand cuts, that is, the cumulative losses caused by hundreds of individual developments, must be reversed. At the same time, of course, we still need the social and economic benefits of development. Today I am proposing biobanking as a new scheme to reconcile the economic interests of private landholders with biodiversity conservation. Biobanking is intended to move the debate beyond the false choice of either creating jobs or protecting biodiversity, to one where both objectives can be reasonably met.

While the Government has led the way both on the historic reforms that ended broad-scale land clearing in 2003 and by its amendments to the threatened species laws in 2004, further reform is needed. The 2004 amendments included biodiversity certification of environmental planning instruments to improve or maintain biodiversity values and provide certainty. Certification takes a landscape approach to biodiversity, which is complemented by the bill I have introduced today. Our objective is to move biodiversity conservation beyond the unproductive and frequently caricatured battles between housing and an endangered snail or between a shopping centre and an orchid. We are bringing forward a system that creates the flexibility to allow for good development results and biodiversity conservation. In essence, biobanking creates a market that values biodiversity conservation.

The scheme will send a strong price signal that maintaining and rehabilitating bushland can produce a valuable asset rather than producing a potential future liability. Biobanking works through counterbalancing the sum of small losses at many development sites with investment into consolidated, well-maintained and secure areas where the risk of extinction is greatly reduced. Before outlining the key elements of this bill, I should say that these reforms are the product of an ongoing and extensive consultation process involving stakeholders, scientists and future participants in the scheme. Environment groups, industry groups—including mining, property developers and infrastructure providers—councils, lawyers, economists, environmental consultants, local government and catchment management authorities have all been involved in the formulation of the scheme and will have an continuing role through to the scheme's implementation. These groups will have a further opportunity to review this bill in detail over the winter recess and to put forward suggestions for sensible refinement.

The bill creates a market framework where different parties either supply or demand biodiversity credits, voluntarily exchanged at prices agreed between the parties. In practice, this means that development can proceed on one site while biodiversity values are improved in another location to offset the impact of the development. These conservation sites are called biobank sites under the bill. The bill provides the overall framework for the biobanking credit scheme. The operational details will be developed directly with stakeholders and participants, and formalised in subordinate instruments.

The biobanking scheme has four main components: establishing a biobank site on land via an agreement voluntarily entered into between the Minister for the Environment and the landowner; creating biodiversity credits where the landowner agrees to undertake positive environmental management and/or rehabilitation actions to improve biodiversity values on the biobank site; allowing such credits to be traded, once they are created and registered, thus enabling the credits to be used to offset a biodiversity impact on another site, caused by urban development; and, finally, establishing a transparent assessment methodology to ensure that the overall operation of the scheme results in the maintenance of or an improvement in biodiversity values.

Biodiversity values are defined in the bill. The scheme will protect biodiversity values but not require impacts on each threatened species to be offset. With more than 900 threatened species listed, that would be unworkable. Instead, the scheme will focus on enhancing ecological communities that provide biodiversity values and habitat for threatened species. The scheme is not, of course, intended to authorise the destruction of large and viable patches of habitat. The focus is on offsetting the sum of small losses to achieve an overall environmental benefit.

Let me give an example of how the scheme might work in relation to the creation and trade of credits. A landowner might live on 200 hectares of land at Picton that includes 150 hectares of high conservation value Cumberland Plain Woodland. The landowner could enter into a biobanking agreement to control grazing and weeds and foxes to protect the habitats and breeding of rare mammals and birds. In exchange, the landowner can sell a specified number of credits on the open market. Purchasers might include developers, the Government and philanthropic organisations. Part of the funds generated from the sale of the credits are held on trust for the landowner. The landowner receives an agreed sum each year for a defined minimum period from this fund to help pay for the management actions.

From the landowner's perspective, biobanking enables landowners to obtain income from managing their land for conservation. An important additional benefit is that the scheme sends a price signal that healthy habitat and bushland are valuable assets in the land market. Let us assume there is a developer who is proposing a new residential area near Liverpool. However, to build the houses he needs to impact on a small patch of degraded Cumberland Plain Woodland. Under the current system, the developer must undertake an extensive and sometimes costly threatened species assessment process, and potentially set aside part of the site from development. From a conservation perspective, the problem is that these remaining areas are too small to be viable in the long run, and once the development is sold there is no-one who will guarantee that the land is cared for into the future.

Under biobanking, the developer would use the biobanking assessment methodology to work out the number of credits needed as an offset, and obtain a biobanking statement to confirm the credits required and any other conditions. Then once the project is approved the developer can purchase the credits as an offset from the Picton landholder. The result is that an important development goes ahead and biodiversity is better protected—most importantly, in areas where it will be more viable in the long term. Conservation effort is shifted from small pockets of expensive land which is more suited to development onto lower priced land, where the pressure of weeds, pests species and degradation is lower.

By participating in the scheme, developers will save time and have more certainty, and our threatened flora and fauna will be better preserved. As I said, it is the Government's intention that the bill should lie upon the table for the winter break so that all interested parties might better be able to consider its implications and advise the Government of their concerns and opinions. All of that will mean that in the next parliamentary session I anticipate bringing forward a bill that will have general consensus. Therefore I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Michael Richardson.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

**Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marianne Saliba):** Order! Pursuant to the resolution, the House will now deal with General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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### **EAST HILLS ELECTORATE SCHOOLS**

**Mr ALAN ASHTON (East Hills) [4.40 p.m.]:** Some weeks ago I made a private member's statement about the desperate need for the Department of Education and Training to fund the provision of security fences at Panania Public School and Padstow Park Public School. I went into some detail about the representations I had made on behalf of those schools—the staff, parents and students—over the past several years. I am pleased that the 2006-07 budget has delivered on my demand for security fencing at those schools. Revesby South Public School will also receive a much-needed toilet upgrade. Other schools in my electorate also made gains in the record education budget delivered on Tuesday. However, some schools in my electorate—and I am sure there are schools in other electorates as well—still have needs to be met. While the budget acknowledges that through its proposed infrastructure spending, I will highlight a few schools I have visited in the past couple of weeks that are old and ageing.

A visit to East Hills Boys High School revealed the paint that was used on the school by private contractors about four or five years ago, at significant cost, is falling off the ceilings and off the walls. The contractors were one of the poorest group of workmen I have seen. I do not want this comment to be regarded too harshly, but it was difficult to speak English to the contractors who painted the property. One of the difficulties was the cost blow-out and the department had to fund the difference in cost from the original quote. Many of us are focussing on that when private operators are used. Without any proof whatsoever, I would suggest that the paint was probably watered down. I feel some members of this House and I could have got



together with a few buckets of paint from Mitre 10 or somewhere similar and done a better job. I intend to ask the department to investigate the state of that painting.

There are termites in the library at that school. Although workmen have put in glass and done a few other things, it is not satisfactory. I am sure it does not comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We cannot allow termites to eat away part of the school even it is a 1950s structure. East Hills Boys High School was one of the first high schools outside the Tempe area. Picnic Point Public School has been writing to the department off and on for some time about a cleaning issue. The school is dealing with a company called Broadlex. I will not go into detail, but I have been informed of the results of meetings between the principal and staff and the operations manager of Broadlex. I have mentioned that in the House so that when I take it up with the Minister for Education and Training I hope to get a reasonable answer about what is going on and why there seems to be a problem with cleaning at the school.

One of the other schools in my area that I visited is Bankstown West. It is a very hot school and has an ongoing need for airconditioning. It has not received a permanent administration block, the original block having burned down about 20 years ago. I visited Condell Park school on Monday. I was pleased to be able to donate two computers from my electorate office that have been replaced. The school was grateful to receive them. I noticed while I was there that that school does not have a school hall. I know not every school has a hall, but it is an issue. I was disappointed to find that despite all the efforts of a new principal and great staff, there are only two people in the parents and citizens association. I know that has something to do with the fact that in difficult socioeconomic areas it is hard to get people to become involved as much as they would like to be.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** You should go back to teaching, and you would attract them.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** I am happy to comment that I am happy to do all I can to help my schools except to go back personally. At that school only 20 per cent of the parents are able to pay the voluntary contribution. That is sad and reflects on the socioeconomic conditions at the school. However, it is a great school and has a new principal who is doing great work. Revesby South Public School would also appreciate a security fence—what school wouldn't? The toilets at that school flood at different times. The infrastructure in many of my schools is now 50 or 60 years old. One school in my electorate is more than 100 years old and one or two are more than 75 years old. It would be silly to pretend that any amount of infrastructure spending, going back to the pre-Jack Lang days, to quote my colleague the honourable member for Mount Druitt, could always meet the needs. Not all needs can be met, but we must work on that program. I highlight those positives from the budget and raise a few small negatives that I will continue working on as the member for East Hills.

**Mr MATT BROWN** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.45 p.m.]: I commend the honourable member for East Hills for his commitment to public education and the schools in his electorate. As a former teacher he has never forgotten the vital role played by public education. Although there has been good infrastructure investment in the schools in his electorate, he also understands that the most important things in our schools are teachers and their dedication to the students. The honourable member has made Parliament aware of the wonderful work they do. He has informed us many times that the kids in his electorate are availing themselves of every opportunity offered to them because of the hard work and dedication of the teachers. I again commend the honourable member for East Hills for his continued commitment to public education in his electorate and in the State as a whole.

### KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.47 p.m.]: Tonight I celebrate the quality of public education available through schools in my electorate. I do so in the centenary year of Warrawee Public School, a school and school community I have had the privilege to represent since 1995. One of the first schools established in the area, it is located on the site of an earlier homestead "Blytheswood", which at various times was home to the prominent architect Sir John Sulman and the State's first Valuer-General, Edward Sievers. Warrawee Public School is a terrific school, and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to its teaching staff led by principal Greg Lodge, students led by captains Lauren and Daniel and a school community led by parents and citizens association president Sharon Richardson.

I also make this private member's statement in the week that Pymble Public School students visited Parliament House, and I had the pleasure to speak with them in this Chamber and at morning tea in the Jubilee Room. The quality of public education available at Warrawee, Pymble and other public schools across Ku-ring-gai is first-class. It is a matter of pride to both the schools and the community generally. The community I

represent refuses to be caught up in the diversionary ideological debates about government versus non-government schools. They happily support both. In the electorate of Ku-ring-gai 60 per cent of students attending primary school do so at government schools, with the remainder attending non-government schools.

At the secondary level the figures reverse, with 70 per cent attending non-government schools and 30 per cent attending government schools. My community understands two things: one, that it is the quality of education that is important and, two, that as taxpayers people have a right to expect some level of government support regardless of the school they seek to attend. While across the State 70 per cent of all school students attend public school and 30 per cent attend non-government schools, 80 per cent of all funding, from both State and Federal sources, is allocated to government schools. I support that funding share because, as a believer in choice, I know that parents cannot have real choice if public schools are not up to scratch. That may not be an issue in Ku-ring-gai, but it is regrettably an issue in other parts of this city and State. Equally regrettable, this year's State budget has failed to address the urgent capital works and maintenance needs of a number of schools within Ku-ring-gai. I particularly want to instance three.

For three or four years Killara Public School has had a need for more permanent classrooms. It has more demountables than permanent classrooms. The school, which is well led by parents and teaching staff, has not been rewarded for the quality of education it provides and the students it attracts. Ku-ring-gai Creative Arts High School, whose students attended question time today, has science laboratories that would make a person weep. The laboratories do not meet occupational health and safety standards that would apply to any other laboratory system in the State. With power points next to broken water basins, it is a disaster waiting to happen. The school has been told in the past to fund the replacement of the science laboratories from its existing budget. As honourable members would know, that is an unreasonable demand. The library at Wahroonga Public School still operates in the original 50-year-old temporary demountable that was provided when the school opened. That school deserves the completion of its upgrades so the students can continue to receive a quality education.

Other public schools in my electorate have a variety of needs. The high quality of education at those schools, despite their needs, is a credit to the students, the teachers and the school communities. It is about time the Government rewarded them. It is disgraceful that many schools, not only those in my electorate, have had to resort to the Federal Government's \$100 million Investing In Schools Program to fix basic maintenance issues, such as toilets, canteens, airconditioners and power upgrades, and to provide facilities such as covered outdoor learning areas. The Auditor-General has revealed that the Government has a \$116 million backlog in school maintenance and capital works projects. That is particularly disgraceful when one considers that in 2004-05, despite putting money aside to address the backlog within our schools, the budget was underspent by \$26 million.

Despite the pressing needs of schools in electorates throughout the State, the Government underspent by \$26 million funds that were set aside in the budget before last to address the problems. The Federal Government provides \$1 billion to the State Government to be allocated to public schools in New South Wales. Over the past 10 years the State Government has had access to record grants and, from property tax and stamp duty, an estimated \$8 billion up to \$20 billion, according to the latest Institute of Public Affairs review. The Government has wasted that money. Education has not been supported to the extent that the people in my electorate and throughout the State deserve.

### **YASMAR HOUSE AND GARDENS**

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne) [4.52 p.m.]: This evening I want to acknowledge that the State Government has confirmed the long-term future of Yasmar House and gardens, and ensured it remains in public hands. The whole of the historic site—2.34 hectares in the inner west on Parramatta Road, Haberfield—has been reserved as Crown land. Yasmar House was built in 1858 for Mary Louise Learmonth, daughter of David Ramsey. Mr Ramsey was one of the early pioneers of Haberfield, which is now known as the garden suburb. The State Government has been responsible for the site since the 1950s. In February 2000 the site was placed on the New South Wales State Heritage Register. The Haberfield Heritage Association was a strong advocate for that outcome. The remainder of the site, which contains the historically significant Yasmar House and gardens, will be managed by Ashfield council as the reserve trustee. That decision is a victory for the local community.

I thank Ashfield Mayor Rae Jones and General Manager Mr Ken Ginger for their commitment to this matter. I look forward to the continued partnership with the council to secure State and Federal government funds to assist with the refurbishment of Yasmar House and gardens. The council has always been available to

meet with the Minister for Lands and me, and has co-operated fully to achieve a wonderful outcome in partnership with the State Government. Approximately \$3 million is required to bring the wonderful historic house and gardens to their original glory. Ashfield council will become responsible for the day-to-day management and control of the historic section of the site. It can now develop options to restore the house and gardens, in consultation with the community and the State Government.

The Department of Juvenile Justice will be the reserve trust manager for the balance of the site, which includes two buildings. It plans to establish a staff training facility for induction and emergency response training, which will allow hands-on practical training in a "live" environment for a period of up to two years. The Principal Heritage Officer inspected Yasmar House as recently as 8 May and found the house to be in sound condition. The work undertaken by the Department of Juvenile Justice was consistent with the conservation policies of the Conservation Management Plan.

Since 2003 the house has received \$280,000 in State Government funding for upgrades, including the removal of garden beds to allow the stonework to breathe, thereby reversing damage caused by rising damp around the building; the stabilisation of the plaster ceilings; the extensive cleaning of the ceiling space; the installation of a back-to-base security system, including movement detectors; and regular security patrols to monitor the site. Further upgrades include the removal of gas heaters and the capping of supply pipes beneath the floor as a security measure; the installation of electric fans within the subfloor space to enhance the subfloor ventilation; the removal of non-original stud partitioning and built-in furniture as a conservation exercise to help realise the restoration potential of the building; the refixing and repair of marble and timber fireplace surrounds; and the repair and refixing of window shutters as a security measure.

There was never a secret plan to sell off the site, as has been asserted by the Opposition. The department developed options for the Government. The Minister looked at those options and received strong representations from me and Ashfield council to keep the site in public hands. The Minister did not look at alternative options. That is rightfully so, because this wonderful site should remain in public hands, and will for many decades to come. The Minister is well aware that as the local member I advocate strongly that the two buildings previously occupied by the female juvenile justice centre from 1994 until August 2005 should be renovated into school facilities and become part of Haberfield Public School. I extend my thanks to the school principal, Karlyne Jacobsen, parents and citizens association president Gary Merewether, and the school community, who have worked with me over the past three years to ensure that when the training facility ceases to operate on the site Haberfield Public School will be given priority.

The Italian Bi-Lingual School, which is temporarily located at the Co.As.It building in Leichhardt, has also shown a strong interest in relocating to the site. It would be a wonderful achievement if the State Government enabled both schools to relocate to Yasmar. As the local member I will continue to advocate on behalf of both schools in getting first priority to the buildings on the site. I look forward to assisting the council implement recommendations for the use of Yasmar House. It has been suggested that it be used as an art gallery and a facility for our local heritage groups. I thank the council for attending a number of on-site inspections with the Minister and me. It is a pleasure to have this marvellous site in my electorate of Drummoyne.

**Mr MATT BROWN** (Kiama—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.57 p.m.]: That is the shortest speech the honourable member for Drummoyne has ever delivered about Yasmar House and gardens. Her commitment and dedication to the project is well known within the Parliament, particularly among Government members. She has an affection for and interest in heritage buildings, and she has shown tenacity in acquiring the best use of Yasmar House and gardens for the benefit of her community. Through her work with the Government, council and community groups such as the parents and citizens association or the Italian Bilingual School, those results have been achieved. I know that through her hard work and dedication more improvements will be made to the site. I commend the honourable member for her continued interest in Yasmar House and gardens, and for the way she encourages pride in her community.

#### **MR DOUGLAS BROCK**

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [4.59 p.m.]: I refer to a long-running case between Mr Douglas Brock and the Labor Government. Mr Brock is a British citizen and is half Australian by birth. He has business interests in Tamworth and is a regular visitor to this country. He feels that he has been badly let down by the Government and its various departments over a period approaching 12 years. Up to 2000 Mr Brock had been in Australia for six years pursuing a matter in which he was the victim of alleged serious crimes committed by an Australian citizen in London in 1991. Mr Brock contacted NSW Police in 1994 to ask

for assistance in using Interpol to pass back important new information to Britain, where the matter was on record. However, he says the matter was not acted upon by NSW Police for several months and the requested actions were not taken for several years, putting his life on hold and setting off a chain of events that saw him living rough on the streets of Sydney.

Further to this is a New South Wales court finding in his favour and the findings of the Ombudsman of New South Wales following a 10-month inquiry. Mr Brock advises he was offered an ex-gratia payment of \$15,000. However, he did not accept this because he felt it was insulting given what he had been through, and given his deteriorating health and loss of income while he pursued this matter. Mr Brock had lodged a claim for just over \$400,000, which in his view was the very minimum to compensate him for the matter.

Mr Brock has had the support of various members of Parliament from both sides of politics and both Houses of the Parliament. Interestingly, since 1995 the former New South Wales Labor Police Minister, the Hon. Peter Anderson, has supported Mr Brock. I myself have written to various Ministers over the past several years on Mr Brock's behalf seeking a re-examination of his extensive files. While I received a curt letter from the then Police Minister, John Watkins, in 2004 saying that he had reviewed the files and was not prepared to re-open the matter, there was no explanation for the inconsistencies and issues Mr Brock has raised.

Mr Brock claims that as a direct result of the New South Wales Government's bungling of his case he has suffered severe health problems and the case has impacted detrimentally on his family situation. He has recently suffered a major heart attack and suffers from diabetes, which he says is directly related to "the frustrations and cover-ups deliberately placed in my way by the Carr Government, the appalling deceit of certain areas of the Police ministry and the arrogance and a suspicious lack of action in this particular case by former Premier Carr, despite many approaches by various people well known to Mr Carr". He also feels that this case negatively impacts on New South Wales' reputation abroad, particularly in terms of our business dealings and tourism.

Mr Brock feels that the people who have consistently worked against him have been those responsible for the unfortunate things that happened to him following his approach to NSW Police. Mr Brock wants a full and independent inquiry into the actions of the then Minister for Police, Paul Whelan, and his staff in this matter. He claims this office attempted to cover up his case. Mr Brock claims to have received threatening telephone calls purporting to be from NSW Police, which he reported to the then operational Police Royal Commission. Mr Brock says royal commission staff, who were previously told about the situation, advised him to be mindful of his personal safety.

In September 1995, as a result of many approaches, none of which received a satisfactory response—if any—from the New South Wales Police Minister, Mr Brock received a letter from Iain McManus, MP, on behalf of Mr Whelan. Mr McManus stated that the New South Wales Police Service was unable to assist him any further in the matter of alleged fraud and theft. Yet, Mr Brock says NSW Police knew at that time that his belongings—allegedly stolen from England—were in this country and that NSW Police had been told of this by him. Mr Brock is also unhappy with an internal investigation into the matter by NSW Police. He claims that the investigating officer shared the same office, and indeed the same desk, as the policeman investigating the matter.

Mr Brock advises that in June 1996 the perpetrator of the crimes was subsequently convicted under section 189A of the relevant New South Wales law and Mr Brock's evidence was found to be correct. Mr Brock says he approached Mr Carr personally on several occasions by letter, fax, telephone, and in person. He says that in 1995 Mr Carr told him to "leave it with me", in 1996 he told him, "I will look into it", and in 1997 Premier Carr's reaction was, "I can't be bothered with this." I call on the Iemma Government to re-examine the evidence and the issues Mr Brock has raised to ensure that he receives justice, that any wrongs that have been committed are rectified and that, if appropriate, compensation is awarded. This matter has simply gone on for too long. I ask that the new Minister for Police, the Hon. Carl Scully, re-open this case because to date Mr Brock has received very short shrift indeed from this Government.

#### **BURWOOD PLAZA PARKING**

**Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE** (Strathfield) [5.04 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an issue of utmost importance to my electorate of Strathfield. Some time ago I was approached by a number of local residents, shopkeepers, small business owners and the centre manager of Burwood Plaza who were anxious, concerned and upset by the installation of parking meters by Burwood Council in the council-owned car park at

the rear of Burwood Plaza shopping centre, on Belmore Street. Burwood Plaza is well patronised by locals. It has many fine shops and cafes, and provides not only a good range of products but also a safe, inviting and clean environment in which residents can shop, chat and connect with each other. The shopping centre is convenient to rail and other transport services. However, many residents, especially the elderly, like to drive and then park while they shop because it is difficult to carry groceries and other goods on public transport. Many families with young children also enjoy the shopping centre. Juggling prams, bags and so on means that it is often easier to take the family car.

The impact of the parking meters is significant. Many shopkeepers have suffered a dramatic decline in business because customers cannot afford the cost of parking. Westfield shopping centre, which is down the street, has free parking for up to three hours. It provides an alternative to customers, but local residents have traditionally patronised Burwood Plaza. They have advised that they like the structured style of the plaza and its ease of access. I recently received a letter from a wonderful local shopkeeper. He is a hardworking fellow who has been running his successful business for a number of years, and he is popular and well recognised by the local community. He wrote to me about his concerns and stated:

Freshworld has been in Burwood Plaza for 11 years. We have established a good business with growth every year. We have good quality and competitive prices. In the summer time we serve approximately 25,000 customers a week.

Council car park that adjoins Burwood Plaza was originally part of this plaza but was sold to council in 1992. Surely this sale would not have been approved by the owner if council were going to apply measures that would be detrimental to the centre.

Freshworld has lost a lot of business since these meters were installed. There are a lot of older people who have always parked on ground level for easy access just outside our shop. I would like to see 2 hours free parking then apply a fee. Customers feel that they are also victims of Burwood council. Hope that you can help us. I hereby give permission for Virginia Judge to table this letter in parliament.

Another constituent states:

We are podiatrists in the plaza whose patients and carerseg Wesly Home Care have been greatly effected by the parking meters in that they can no longer get a car park therefore have difficulty visiting us and doing their shopping etc

1.50 per hour for paid parking is a large % of a pensioners income.

Please help us so we help our patients.

Please note that we talked to Jackie Evans in your office explaining the situation

Jackie is one of my volunteers. I have contacted the mayor and had several conversations with him and the centre manager. I informed the manager of Burwood Plaza that hundreds of local residents were very angry and upset about the installation of parking meters. I understand that 17 concerned plaza retailers attended a meeting with the mayor, the general manager of the plaza, and the director of technical services and operations. Several retailers could not attend the meeting and sent their apologies.

The meeting allowed the attendees to express their concerns and forward suggestions about the management of the Belmore Street car park. The car park is owned and operated by the council, which installed pay-and-display meters on 16 March 2006. A number of options were discussed at the meeting. The management advised that the plaza provides three hours of free parking in the section of the car park that it controls. However, it would be great if all the hardworking shopkeepers and small business owners could operate without any burdens being imposed on their customers. We need a win-win solution.

## WATER CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [5.09 p.m.]: I want to draw to the attention of the House an issue that is important not only in the Willoughby electorate but across New South Wales, and that is the issue of water policy and water conservation. Last year, when this issue became the subject of a lot of interest and publicity, which is still the case, I distributed a survey in my electorate. I had received correspondence and emails from a number of residents concerned about the Government's proposal for a desalination plant, and the survey I distributed in the community a few months ago sought answers to a number of questions in relation to water policy. The feedback I received has been invaluable, engaging the community's opinion on very important issues relating to water policy and management.

With Sydney dams at 42 per cent capacity and the Labor Government making no attempt to find a solution, water policy is of enormous concern to many people. The public, and especially the residents of the

Willoughby electorate, feel passionate about the water crisis, as demonstrated by the number of responses I received and the detail they contained. I distributed a few thousand surveys and received at least 1,000 responses, which I have tabulated and will place on the public record. Of the respondents, 97 per cent were strongly in support of the general recycling of water, many expressed explicit concern at the lower rate of recycling undertaken by the State Labor Government, and 99 per cent of respondents supported the use of recycled water to surface irrigate recreational areas.

A large number of respondents, 91 per cent, supported the use of recycled water for domestic purposes, and 82 per cent of respondents strongly opposed the building of a desalination plant to supplement drinking water. Included in the survey was an open question to allow people to comment on specific issues in relation to water policy. Most of the respondents to that open question commented on their opposition to desalination plants. Only 18 per cent of respondents said they would consider the establishment of a desalination plant as the main solution to Sydney's water crisis. Interestingly, 85 per cent of respondents said they did not have a water tank. Only 15 per cent do have a water tank, but many said that if an appropriate rebate scheme were in place, and information were provided in that regard, they would gladly consider purchasing a water tank. So that is positive and worthy of consideration.

When it came to the issue of drinking recycled water, opinions were also varied. Sixty-two per cent of respondents stated they would consider drinking recycled effluent if they were convinced it was safe and healthy, some commenting that this has been happening overseas for many years. However, 25 per cent expressly ruled out that option. The responses to this question were most interesting. In addition to the question of a desalination plant, what concerned most respondents was the issue of recycling and the Government's lack of attention to it. I draw to the attention of the House the fact that the report of the general purpose standing committee inquiry into a sustainable water supply for Sydney released today confirmed that desalination was not the appropriate response to the water crisis we face in Sydney and throughout New South Wales. The report found that if the Government adopted good water management practices, the likelihood of Sydney ever needing a desalination plant is small.

Despite the Premier's comment that desalination has been shelved, Tuesday's State budget proves he has not given up on his plan. The budget papers reveal that Labor will spend \$43 million this year on the desalination project—that is on top of the \$58 million Labor spent on the project last year. In comparison, water recycling projects have been allocated just \$26.1 million in this financial year. After more than a decade of Labor, water recycling rates in Sydney are less than 3 per cent. That is embarrassing, given that Brisbane is at 6 per cent, and Adelaide and Melbourne are at 11 per cent. It is a shocking indictment of the Government that Sydney's water recycling rate is just over 2 per cent. It is disgraceful that the Carr-Iemma Government is responsible for Sydney Water being the only New South Wales coastal water utility that dumps primary treated effluent out to sea.

Every day more than 1,000 Olympic-size swimming pools of water are pumped into the Pacific Ocean through sewer outlets and more than 150 Olympic-size swimming pools of water are wasted from leaky pipes and mains, while every time it rains millions of litres of stormwater flow out to sea. Labor should immediately heed the call of the general purpose standing committee and the Liberal-Nationals Coalition and implement large-scale recycling for industrial and agricultural use. I thank the community for their views on this important matter, and I assure them that I will continue to represent their interests in that regard.

#### **AUBURN MEALS ON WHEELS VOLUNTEERS**

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn) [5.14 p.m.]: I would like to draw to the attention of honourable members the outstanding contribution to the Auburn community by Meals on Wheels Auburn. I recently had the pleasure of attending a lunch to mark 40 years of service by the organisation, which has been meeting the most basic of needs for members of the Auburn community. In 1966 Meals on Wheels started out by supplying meals to 50 clients per day, with the valuable support of Auburn Rotary Club, Auburn RSL, Auburn Hospital, Auburn Council, and the Department of Aged, Disability and Home Care [DADHC]. The service was well supported by approximately 200 volunteers and 100 vehicles and drivers. Many of us know of the age-old tradition of helping out with a meal or two for a family friend or relative who is doing it tough, but these volunteers provide meals for many people Monday to Friday, all year round.

They may be complete strangers, yet in providing the basic necessity of food these volunteers do far more than fill the stomachs of the people to whom they provide the service; they build relationships with some of Auburn's most isolated and marginalised members of the community. From Meals on Wheels Auburn's

beginnings, the growth of this vital service can be attributed to the vision of its founding management and volunteers. From the organisation's first president Mrs C. Perkins, the Secretary Mrs V. Sale, the Treasurer Mrs D. Gribble and committee members Mrs Barnard, Mrs Bradburn, Mrs Gibbs, Mrs Kasperowicz, Mrs Moir, Mrs Redman, Mrs A. Smith, Mrs T. Smith, Mrs D. Thompson and Mrs Vogelsanger to the volunteers that have since taken on this service, all have recognised the true worth of the project and have given more than just their time to see the organisation go from strength to strength.

The volunteers have given of themselves, their support, their encouragement, their humility, their compassion and their friendship. These selfless volunteers have not only ensured the prosperity and success of their work but worked to assist as many people as possible. Many of the volunteers, such as Delma Lloyd, who was roster clerk for five years from 1970, and Joye Long, who was weekday supervisor for 11 years from 1975, have given decades of service and continue as volunteers to this very day. Gwen Beehag, who has held the position of assessor at Meals on Wheels for the past 15 years, is yet another person who has gone about serving the community with little fuss. In 1971 deliveries had risen to 95 per day and, as we are all aware, our community resources are placed under increasing pressure as the number of those in need in our communities continues to rise.

Auburn is known for its ethnic and cultural richness and diversity, and Meals on Wheels Auburn has worked tirelessly to assist people of all backgrounds. Language and cultural barriers may have prevented some people from even attempting to communicate and assist others, but 10 years ago the organisation set about distributing translated flyers around the Auburn community to reach even more members of society. The selfless and humble nature of these volunteers means they go about their service quietly, with minimal acclaim. In fact, due to the skill and dedication of these volunteers, many would underestimate the commitment and co-ordination required to serve the meals each day. The current volunteers are well led by manager Thanh Ho, administrative officer Sue Anderson, CBM worker and assessor Gwen Beehag, and generalist Julie Brush. The current board of management comprises chairperson Betty Mayo, vice chairperson Merle Roll, secretary Samantha Cooper, treasurer and public officer Glad Richardson, and members Jean Armstrong, Pat Hawthorne, Ian Meadows and Bill Readman.

I would like to acknowledge a number of volunteers who have made an outstanding commitment to serving the Auburn community and Meals on Wheels Auburn. They are Delma Lloyd, 38 years service; Joye Long, 37 years service; Glad Richardson, 25 years service; Merle Roll, 24 years service; Ann O'Hara and Betty Freeman, 23 years service; and Pat Hawthorne, 22 years service. In the words of manager Thanh Ho, the volunteers really are the backbone of the organisation. There are currently 40 volunteers who serve approximately 100 meals per day and, like most charitable organisations, they are desperately in need of more volunteers to meet the growing demand for assistance in our community. These volunteers are glowing examples of the strength of community members working together to support others who need a little extra help to meet those basic needs.

If we can learn anything from their example, it should be that we all have the capacity to look out for one another and offer a helping hand. From their modest beginnings washing up dirty dishes in the senior citizens centre every night, these volunteers and staff have worked hard to build community networks and relationships with all members of our society. It is with great pleasure that today in this House I acknowledge 40 years of dedication and outstanding service by Meals on Wheels Auburn and its fantastic volunteers.

## GOULBURN WATER SUPPLY

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Burrinjuck) [5.19 p.m.]: Today I would like to inform the House that Goulburn is open for business, and visitors are very welcome. In recent months we have seen a continuing stream of politicians from various political parties traipsing into Goulburn to have their photographs taken at the bottom of Pejar Dam. The imagery of a water uptake tower and dam wall fronted by acres of cracked and dry mud is just too powerful for them to resist. In this age of quick sound bytes and 30-second television grabs, the most compelling image is usually broadcast. Unfortunately, this sometimes gives a very misleading message. On many occasions in this place I have spoken about the need for long-term planning for Goulburn's water supply and the need for State Government financial support to handle this problem. I acknowledge the emergency funding that subsequently has been forthcoming from the State Government. And I also acknowledge that the New South Wales Government has assisted with funding for measures designed to address this problem. The most recent of these to come on line is the completion of work to raise and strengthen the Sooley Dam wall.

Just last week I inspected the Sooley Dam with Goulburn Mulwaree Council's General Manager, Luke Johnson, and the Director of Engineering Services, Phil Hansen. Goulburn's total water storage is at 28.4 per cent, and its useable storage is 16.4 per cent. To put this into perspective, at the same time last year the total water storage stood at about 20 per cent, with only about 8 per cent useable. Twelve months ago Goulburn's water situation was worse than it is today. I am not saying this to indicate that the situation is less severe, but simply to illustrate that Goulburn is holding its own when it comes to conservation of water. The citizens of Goulburn deserve strong commendation for this water conservation effort. Last week Goulburn used only 5.7 megalitres of water a day. This is significantly less than the five-year average daily consumption of 8.55 megalitres for the same time of the year. For some time now I have had concerns about the image that is being generated by the negative coverage of Goulburn's water problems. A recent edition of the *Goulburn Post* published a letter written by Mr Charles Thurston. I would like to quote part of that letter. He wrote:

Last Saturday I was in Canberra and it took me five minutes to convince a couple that we actually did have some water in our dams. Sooley is almost 90 per cent full. Then on Sunday I was sitting around a table in Sydney and one person asked me how we were coping without water. He had just heard a news report on Channel 10 that claimed our city was both desperate and dry, and that soon we would have to drink recycled effluent.

Another had heard when she was in Melbourne over the school holidays that Goulburn was totally out of water, and people down there actually offered her jerry cans when she was leaving so she could transport some water back with her.

A few weeks ago I spoke to a friend in Tasmania who was also convinced that Goulburn had run out of water. It was true! He had just heard it on the news. He barely believed me when I told him it was still coming out of the taps.

The image of Goulburn that has been portrayed is hurting the city. Local real estate agents have told me they are anxious that house prices have fallen and the property market is slow, with many home buyers and investors expressing concerns about Goulburn's water supply. Goulburn is known as Australia's first inland city. It is incredibly rich in heritage and a major regional rural centre. The arts are alive in Goulburn, with a thriving cultural community of performing and traditional artists. Festivals are an important part of Goulburn's social scene with the Blues Music, Lilac Time and Rose festivals drawing large numbers of visitors.

I have a strong connection with Goulburn. My family has lived and worked in the city for generations, back to when they built and operated Rogers Department Store. I must stand up for Goulburn and say that, despite the negative image portrayed about the water situation, Goulburn is a great city—it is alive and vibrant. It is a magnificent place to live and to work. It is a great place to visit, and even better when you extend your stay. Goulburn Mulwaree Council is seeking \$150,000 in additional funding to carry out community consultation on the introduction of a recycled water project. Council has allocated a third of the funds and the Federal Government has also committed \$50,000 for the next phase of Goulburn's work to secure its long-term water supply. I call on the State Government to match this funding commitment to allow the process to continue. I would like to quote from the latest Goulburn tourism brochure because it really sums up how vibrant Goulburn is. It says:

There are attractions and activities suitable for anything from a short break to a much longer holiday.

You'll find a wide selection of dining and accommodation choices in the Goulburn District with everything for a romantic weekend in a heritage B&B to a family holiday on a rural farmstay—and everything in between! Goulburn's central location makes it the number one choice for conferences, weddings and other events and with great facilities for motor sport in the region, Goulburn is fast becoming the Motor sport capital of New South Wales! There is always something exciting happening in Goulburn whether it is performances, festivals, exhibitions, racing or simply taking in the natural beauties of the district and all its heritage.

As the local member of Parliament representing Goulburn, I can attest to the truth of that statement.

### WYONG ELECTORATE HIGH-RISE DEVELOPMENT

**Mr PAUL CRITTENDEN** (Wyong) [5.24 p.m.]: I wish to speak about overdevelopment in the Wyong electorate. Honourable members who were present at the time would recall that in 2002 I opposed a six-storey development on the corner of Hargraves and Fravent streets, Toukley, and that in the second half of 2002 I sent letters to all people in the Toukley, Noraville and Norah Head areas who were on the electoral roll. About 2,500 people responded, agreeing with my position that that sort of high-density development in Toukley would be totally inappropriate, both in regard to its bulk and scale and because of the traffic problems that would result from it. In the lead-up to the 2003 council election the mayor wrote that the council had taken notice of this community response. However, a series of stalling measures now have as their genesis what the council is happy to call a Toukley strategy. The strategy proposes four- and six-storey development in a whole raft of areas in



Toukley and Noraville. Again I have written to constituents in the aforementioned areas, and 2,108 people have agreed with me that this so-called Toukley strategy is just not on. The letter I wrote says it all:

Wyong Shire Council is at it again!

Despite us telling them in 2002 that we didn't want high-rise in the area, Wyong Shire Council has exhibited a proposal that will allow up to six storeys in parts of Toukley.

It is quite clear that the local people do not want Toukley to become like The Entrance. My letter continued:

The traffic that this high-rise will generate will clog local roads.

Wyong Shire Council is relying on the silent majority doing nothing and not objecting to its high-rise proposals.

I reiterate that 2,108 people have said they do not want this high-rise development. I certainly hope Wyong Shire Council takes careful note of what they have said. Local people are concerned about traffic congestion. The mayor has recently floated proposals to deal with traffic issues in The Entrance. We need to make sure that traffic issues are resolved before development occurs. What the people are also telling me—I am sure they are also telling the Minister at the table, whose electorate adjoins mine in the north—is that water is a major issue. Although one solution involves supply of water from the Hunter Water Corporation, we need to identify all infrastructure issues before we go down the track of further high-rise development.

Sadly, that is not the only issue on which I have had to consult local residents in recent times. At Mardi, in the other end of the Wyong electorate, a drip feed approach to development has emanated from the Terrace Tower Group. In 2003 I sent letters to a number of people. In fact, it occurred during the election campaign. I did not use parliamentary resources; I used party resources. About 800 people at that time said they did not want development there. Now, the developer, adopting the drip feed approach, wants 50 per cent more units in the twin towers, which are considerably higher than anything at The Entrance. The people of Mardi have indicated they do not want that development. In fact, 624 people signed a letter to that effect, following a mail-out to about 900 people.

This most recent proposal for high-rise development is totally inappropriate in the Wyong area. We must be careful to ensure that the existing population is happy with further developments. Everyone recognises that urban consolidation is needed. That has been dealt with around the villages in the electorate. We are getting higher density, but not high-rise development in those areas. I hope we can achieve rational planning in the fast-growing Wyong shire.

**Mr MILTON ORKOPOULOS** (Swansea—Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [5.29 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Wyong on bringing this matter to the attention of the House. He is right: urban consolidation does not necessarily have to mean three-storey to six-storey towers where they are inappropriate. Wyong Shire Council is seemingly all ears when it comes to development, but deaf when it comes to conservation and proper management. Honourable members may recall that Wyong Shire Council refused to adopt the Wyong Conservation Strategy that properly designated and apportioned development in certain areas and preserved the environment in others.

When it comes to development, the council seems to think it is appropriate to put buildings such as we see in Chatswood and The Entrance in Toukley and Mardi. That is clearly not what the people want and not what the industry needs. There will be overdevelopment and it will certainly impact on the urban environment. The Central Coast has problems securing sufficient water supplies for existing residents. This huge overdevelopment will put more pressure on those resources and attendant infrastructure requirements. I congratulate the honourable member for Wyong on raising this issue and I support him in his stance.

#### **LISMORE WEST ROTARY CLUB**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore) [5.30 p.m.]: Tonight I offer a word of praise for the Rotary Club of Lismore West. Last February, Bob Barnes, on behalf of the club, invited me to attend a meeting of interested people—the Federal member for Page, Ian Causley; the Mayor of Lismore City Council, Merv King; and another representative from the Rotary Club of Lismore West, Keith Parry—to discuss an idea he had to put together a committee to have a "Night of the Decade". The concept was a success from day one. The idea was that Bob Barnes would approach businesses in Lismore and try to get 300 to 400 people to attend the Lismore Workers Club for the event. He did that and—whacko—we had a great night. The Combined Charities Auction Extravaganza was held on Saturday 13 May at the Lismore Workers Club. The beneficiaries of the night were

Lismore Challenge Limited, Summerland House with No Steps, the St Vincent's Rehabilitation Unit, the Police Citizens Youth Club Lismore, Summerland Early Intervention and the Rotary Club of Lismore West.

Five hundred people turned up and \$90,000 was raised to support the six charities. Dr Bill Buddee, who was also part of the committee, is the president of the Summerland House with No Steps. That charity's charter is the training and employment of people with a disability to enhance their quality of life. Jim Crethar, who was also part of the committee and is a great supporter of the community, represented his favourite organisation, the Police Citizens Youth Club, Lismore. That club has been a landmark in Lismore, providing educational, recreational and cultural activities in the community since 1971. Ian Walker is the chief executive officer of Lismore Challenge Limited. That organisation has provided training and support services for people with disabilities in Lismore for more than 54 years. Last week Lismore Challenge Limited was voted Lismore city's business of the year—that is how much of a community organisation it is. I pay tribute to Ian and the team.

St Vincent's Hospital Rehabilitation and Aged Care Service—I do not need to tell people in this House what those organisations do, they speak for themselves—benefited from the event even though it is part of the public health service that provides both inpatient and outpatient care. The service looks after about 350 patients the year, and that is extraordinary. Summerland Early Intervention is an early intervention centre that has been operating for 28 years in Lismore. It helps children with health problems from birth to five years of age. It is doing a tremendous job in the community. All those organisations combined with the Rotary Club of Lismore West to put on this extravaganza. The \$90,000 that was raised was far above everyone's expectations. I do not know how much time the Rotary Club of Lismore West, Bob Barnes and his family put into organising this event. Bob and his family really got behind the event. Some of the items that were sold were big-ticket items. It was a great night. I congratulate all the people involved.

I want to pay tribute to a special person who works with Hansard here at Parliament House but who comes from Casino, Lisa Gelzinnis. Lisa will have a lovely honour bestowed on her in the next week or so. I know she will be very embarrassed by my raising this issue and she will probably not talk to me again! She does a tremendous job with Hansard and she does a lot for her family. This honour is in recognition of the special gift she gave her sister, and I pay tribute to her. I know that everyone at home is very proud of her. I trust that she will enjoy the honour next week. She deserves it.

### ROYAL NEWCASTLE CENTRE OPENING

**Mr JOHN MILLS** (Wallsend) [5.35 p.m.]: I refer the House to a significant event that took place in the Wallsend electorate on 31 March. The Premier opened the \$100 million brand-new Royal Newcastle Centre. The centre is the centrepiece of the Government's \$297 million investment in health infrastructure for the Hunter region. It is very much a state-of-the-art centre, offering specialist, diagnostic and outpatient services, with three 28-bed inpatient wards and 60 procedure beds. It is located on the Rankin Park Campus next to John Hunter Hospital. The centre will provide specialist treatment for patients, including orthopaedics, orthopaedic rehabilitation, rheumatology, urology, ophthalmology, dermatology, diabetes, immunology and podiatry. There will be other clinical services, including medical and surgical outpatients, cardiac catheterisation, endoscopy, diagnostic radiology, pathology testing, surgical services, intervention or procedures, and the Hunter Integrated Pain Service. The Government, the Department of Health and local members have worked hard to bring together talented, dedicated staff and to provide them with the very best technology. The new centre will provide world-class patient care.

The opening ceremony was well crafted. The Awabakal people gave us a traditional Aboriginal welcome at the front of the building. Part of that welcome involved showing us the brand-new artwork at the entrance, which was done by Awabakal artists. The Premier invited June Gollan, a long-time hospital volunteer who has made a significant contribution, to cut the ribbon at the entrance to the hospital. We went on a tour of the hospital. My parliamentary colleagues and the Premier were gobsmacked. The wow factor was enormous, as this brand-new equipment is the best in Australia and equal to the best in the world. Lots of art and memorabilia was on display on the walls for the enjoyment of people.

We met a lot of the staff at the centre. They explained how the centre is carrying on the tradition of innovation in treatment and procedures from the Royal Newcastle Hospital for the past 60 or 70 years. The Premier, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister for Health, my colleagues the honourable members representing the electorates of Charlestown, Swansea and Newcastle, Terry Clout, the chief executive officer [CEO] of the Hunter New England Area Health Service, and Professor Katherine McGrath, the former CEO of Hunter Health, were present. Also in attendance were lots of staff from the Royal Newcastle Hospital and lots of

volunteers, including the Kookaburra Carers from John Hunter Hospital and the Pink Ladies from the Royal Newcastle Hospital.

I remind honourable members that the Royal Newcastle Hospital started treating people in 1817. It has a great continuity of service to the local people in Newcastle. The pink ladies have volunteered at the hospital for much of that time. Now that the Royal Newcastle Hospital is closing, many of them are retiring, but many of them have joined the Kookaburra Carers at John Hunter Hospital to continue their service of volunteering. One of the most interesting aspects of getting the new hospital ready was deciding on its name. Initially it was to be called the Access Centre and then the Bone and Joint Institute—very utilitarian. The romantics had a go and suggested that it be named after James Wallis, the first superintendent of the convict settlement at Newcastle.

Unfortunately he fell out of favour when his history of bad treatment of Aboriginals in the region became known. Some was suggested that, in view of the specialties offered in the new centre, it be called the Wee, See and Knee Centre. Finally, nostalgia won and the name of Royal Newcastle was adopted. As I said, most of the staff from the Royal Newcastle Hospital is transferring to the new centre. The older traditions of fine service to patients will be maintained. Co-operation with the university medical school is important. A second access road is under construction to ensure safe access to the hospital. I commend the Government for the opening of the Royal Newcastle Centre.

### HENTY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [5.40 p.m.]: Early last month I advised the House of a planning problem in the Riverina town of Henty. I noted that the Minister for Natural Resources had become a victim of his own legislation. In an obsessive desire to secure Green preferences, the Carr-Iemma Government has pandered to environmental elements to such a degree that it has hamstrung its ability to develop country New South Wales. Minister Macdonald now finds himself hoist on his own petard over the construction of a retirement complex and aged care facility in Henty. The Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority, for which he is responsible, refused to approve the development because it would involve the eventual removal of nine trees on a commercial golf course. The agreed offsets of 3,100 trees were not taken into account. Nor were the social and economic impacts of a \$14.6 million development that would accommodate aged people from the Riverina and generate up to 90 jobs in a rural town.

The catchment management authority [CMA] claimed it was constrained by government legislation—effectively being set up as the enforcer for Government Ministers. This neat political trick has regional development looking down a government gun barrel, sending out a clear signal to developers and shire councils that New South Wales is closed for business. The Greater Hume Shire Council and the developer met with the Minister and his advisers early last month. After the intemperate display one comes to expect, the Government attempted to find a way out of this mess of their own making by suggesting the council apply for spot rezoning of the affected land. The Minister's office advised it would seek some resolution and contact the developer within a certain timeframe. This did not happen. Instead, the Minister resorted to the type of behaviour one associates with a school bully. Deadlines were rejected, agreements were disavowed, and the council was attacked for not rezoning the land as "residential" at the time the development application was lodged.

When the development application was lodged in September 2005 the relevant land adjoining the urban area was covered by "State environmental planning policy (seniors living) 2004", which allowed the land to be developed for an aged care facility. The development consent was issued in good faith under the regulation. The Minister's attack was ill-founded and unjustified. The CMA and the department had the option of resolving this impasse at the outset because senior departmental bureaucrats had told a parliamentary committee that new property vegetation plan developer software was almost brand new, would obviously have glitches, and would require the exercise of local judgment and discretion to ensure that outcomes are practical. We are waiting for the Minister and his officers to make good on that statement, and I am sure they will. One reason I think this significant aged care facility will proceed after much needless waste of time and money, and considerable stress and anxiety, is that the Government is quite prepared for the few trees and grasses to be removed if the land is now rezoned.

But wait, there is a catch! Rezoning will take perhaps another 12 months. Do honourable members really expect the developer to stick around after being put through the three-ring circus of the CMA, the Minister for Natural Resources, and now the planning department? Not likely when he has aged people desperately wanting to secure their units, having put down deposits when the facility was first approved. In fact, would honourable members expect this developer to undertake any further investment in New South Wales or

would they think he might take his \$14.6 million to Victoria or Queensland? While he is being driven out of this State by a government intent on denying development opportunities in regional areas, do they think he might pass the word around to all other prospective investors? "Closed for business" will be the message, which is in stark contrast to the rhetoric peddled by the Treasurer and the Premier during this budget week. The interesting thing about the fiasco is that some people are actually trying to find ways to make a simple solution palatable.

The nine trees are only a problem under one set of rules. Change the rules by rezoning and, like magic, the trees can go. But it is not just the prospective older residents, the developers, the potential employees, the Henty community, and the shire council that are being upset by the Government's intransigence. I have spoken to many farmers in the region and they are so incensed by the lack of commonsense that they are seriously considering pulling out of their Landcare groups if this is the way the Government is going to deal with people. In its twentieth year, I am sure the Minister would not wish to be responsible for the demise of Landcare in the Murrumbidgee region. But there is a way forward. I have spoken with several eminent scientists and environmentalists who do not agree with the CMA computer's assessment. Landcare personnel have also come to a different conclusion on the trees and grasses. So why not get a second expert opinion and then why not exempt minor parcels of land just as fence lines receive special exemption. I ask the Minister to urgently address this issue and help the senior residents of the Riverina and the wonderful community of Henty.

### PEATS ELECTORATE HISTORY

**Ms MARIE ANDREWS** (Peats) [5.45 p.m.]: This year we celebrate the sesquicentenary of responsible government in New South Wales. It is therefore appropriate that I place on record the history of the Peats electorate to, first, mark the sesquicentenary of the Parliament of New South Wales and, second, remind honourable members that from 24 March 2007 the electorate of Peats will disappear into the history books. In preparing this speech I am indebted to the staff of the Parliamentary Library, who, I am sure members on both sides of the House will agree, do a magnificent job. The electorate of Peats was named after George Peat, who established the Peats ferry service on the Hawkesbury River in 1844. The ferry service operated across the mighty Hawkesbury River near Mooney Mooney, at the southern tip of the Peats electorate. Peat is understood to have been the first European settler in the area, having received a land grant in 1836. He is credited with plotting out a road to connect Sydney with Brisbane Water, following a path established by a local Aboriginal. Peats Ridge, located within the Peats electorate, is also named after George Peat. Sadly, as from 24 March 2007 the electorate of Peats will cease to exist. Approximately two-thirds of the electorate will come within the boundaries of the electorate of Gosford. An old saying is: What goes around comes around.

With redistribution over the years, the major portion of the Peats electorate has periodically been part of other electorates. I will outline the history of representation of Peats, commencing at the turn of the twentieth century. I have taken the liberty of using the Woy Woy peninsula area of Peats, because it is the most populated area within the electorate, to demonstrate how that part of Peats has been in various electorates from 1904 until the 1973 State election, when the electorate of Peats came into being. From 1904 to 1910 Matthew Charlton represented the constituents of Woy Woy peninsula in the electorate of Northumberland. He was followed by William Kearsley, who represented the electorate from 1910 to 1913. From 1913 to 1920 the Hon. Alfred Edden represented the electorate of Kahibah. From 1920 to 1927 the Hon. Walter Bennett, William Cameron and Walter Finlay O'Hearn represented the electorate of Maitland.

From 1927 to 1941 Robert Bruce Walker represented the electorate of Hawkesbury, followed by Francis Joseph Finnan from 1941 to 1950. From 1950 to 1953 Harold Ernest Jackson represented the electorate of Gosford, whereupon the area reverted to Hawkesbury and Bernard Sydney Llewellyn Deane represented it from 1953 to 1962. Once again the area became part of the Gosford electorate, where from 1962 to 1965 the representative was Harold Ernest Jackson, from 1965 to 1971 it was Edward Harris Humphries, and from 1971 to 1973 it was Keith O'Connell. The electorate of Peats was established in 1973 and I am proud to say that all members to date have been members of the Australian Labor Party. From 1973 to 1984 the member for Peats was Keith O'Connell, from March 1984 to November 1984 it was Paul Landa, from 1985 to 1994 it was Anthony (Tony) Kenneth Doyle, and from 1995 to date I have had the honour to represent the electorate. I take this opportunity to commemorate the sesquicentenary of the Parliament of New South Wales and to commend the electorate of Peats. It has been an honour to serve it in this place.

### M2 AND M7 MOTORWAYS ACCESS RAMPS

**Mr WAYNE MERTON** (Baulkham Hills) [5.50 p.m.]: Tonight I speak on a matter of great importance to the people of The Hills district, namely the lack of west facing ramps on Windsor Road,

Baulkham Hills, to access the M2 and M7 motorways. I first raised this matter shortly after the M2 was completed in 1996. I led a delegation of mayors of Baulkham Hills and Parramatta to the then Minister for Roads to emphasise the importance of the work being carried out. I have also raised the matter in this Chamber. It has been 10 years since the M2 opened and it now joins the new M7, making the situation even more important. Recently I have received considerable correspondence and phone calls from local residents. I also received a letter from the Mayor of Baulkham Hills Shire Council, Councillor Sonya Phillips, which stated:

**M2 Motorway West Facing Ramps at Windsor Road, Baulkham Hills  
and Russell Street Traffic Signals**

You would be aware that Council has been pursuing the two matters listed above for many years and I would like to further engage your support at State Parliament to highlight our concerns.

The M2 Motorway was opened in August 1996 and since that time thousands of residents, business owners and visitors have asked why did the Minister fail to build the Windsor Road ramps when there is such an obvious need, particularly for the business community needing to access Baulkham Hills.

This comparatively small project would appear to be the only location along the entire Sydney Orbital Route where the land for access ramps is available, but the political will to build by the State Government has not been forthcoming.

Councillor Phillips stated that although the estimated cost to build the ramps was \$4 million when the M2 was constructed, that cost would be considerably more if the ramps were to be constructed today. One of my constituents, Dianne Gorman, wrote to me in 2005, incorporating a letter she wrote directly to Minister Tripodi and Minister Beamer on 20 June 2005, which clearly tells the story. The letter states:

Since I first contacted my local member, Wayne Merton, on 20 June 2005, he has been trying to get an answer to a simple question. My original email to him asked:

I am writing to enquire if there are any plans to construct west-facing ramps at the M2/Windsor Road interchange at Baulkham Hills, to provide access to the new M7 for residents of Baulkham Hills, North Rocks, Northmead and surrounding areas.

Whilst Mr Merton has been diligent in following up my enquiry, to my knowledge after 6 months there has still not been an answer.

The original M2 plans include west-facing ramps at Windsor Road, but these were simply dropped—I assume on cost grounds. However, at the time the M2 was planned all the traffic and environmental studies were presumably done, and west-facing ramps were obviously considered viable and necessary.

The situation now is that there are no west-facing ramps between Pennant Hills Road and Norwest Blvd. There are three sets of east-facing ramps between those two interchanges.

I live in North Rocks, my workplace is in St Marys, and I have family ties with Canberra. It is most irritating to find that the new Westlink M7 doesn't actually link me to anything. The publicity surrounding the opening of the M7 only increases my frustration.

So, perhaps asking directly will elicit an answer. Are there any plans to construct west-facing ramps on the M2 at Windsor Road, so that residents of Baulkham Hills/Northmead/North Rocks/North Parramatta and surrounds actually have access to the M7?

And three supplementary questions:

If the answer is "no", how do you justify denying access to the M7 to so many people due to the absence of west-facing ramps over such a long distance of the M2/M7—a distance which contains three east-facing ramps?

If the answer is "no", how do you suggest I best make use of this wonderful new link road which is such a short distance from my home?

If the answer is "yes", when may residents of this area expect construction to begin?

A timely response will be most appreciated. Since I have already been waiting 6 months for an answer, perhaps you could look at a significant shorter time-scale when considering when you might reply.

My constituent is quite agitated about the situation. We have both pursued the matter, but to date we have not received a satisfactory reply from the Government. In June 2005 Transurban Pty Ltd became the new owner of the M2. In August last year I met with the company to ask whether it would construct the Windsor Road ramps and that request was noted. This was before the M7 opened. Given the sympathetic community support, Transurban is willing to consider the request in more detail. [*Time expired.*]

**MAITLAND ELECTORATE AND NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS**

**Mr JOHN PRICE** (Maitland) [5.55 p.m.]: I compliment the Government on the pre-budget expenditure in my electorate on the New England Highway, which is also the temporary F3 between Weakleys Drive in Beresfield and the Queensland border. A number of very well used intersections can be found along

that stretch of the New England Highway between Ashtonfield and East Maitland. Ashtonfield is the location of one of the three public-private partnership primary schools that are being built and it will be open for first term next year. A number of other traffic interventions are being constructed to ensure there is safe passage to and from the suburb of Ashtonfield from the New England Highway.

Over the past four years council has had made a number of complaints and, indeed, I have also made some inquiries about the area from Ferraby Drive through to Telarah and Rutherford, close to the airport at West Maitland. Pre-project funding of \$1.2 million has been allocated to the South Seas Drive intersection, the Chelmsford Drive intersection, and the Chisholm Road intersection. The intersection at South Seas Drive is a major one, and a set of traffic lights will be installed, a significant number of alterations will be made to the median strip and median strip islands, and a crossing will be constructed. Two fatalities have occurred at this intersection in the past two years and although the police report found that this was caused through driver error—and I admit there is a clear view each way—accidents still occur. Although one cannot guarantee that traffic signals will prevent accidents or fatalities, one can feel more comfortable knowing that every reasonable safety measure has been put in place.

After the first fatality several years ago, the speed limit between Four Mile Creek and the public school zone in East Maitland was decreased from 90 kilometres an hour to 80 kilometres an hour near the Greenhills intersection of Mitchell Drive and from Mitchell Drive to the East Maitland Public School where there is a further reduction to 70 kilometres an hour. While the reductions in speed limits have helped, ultimately they proved to be ineffective. Accidents are still occurring. The numerous complaints received from bus drivers underscore the significance of the location of the Ashtonfield school. Buses will be used to access the school and there are normal community bus routes. We must pay attention to what drivers and bus companies describe as difficult intersections.

The other two intersections on Chelmsford Drive and Chisholm Road also need upgrading. They are both lit sections and both have traffic signals. One of the intersections is adjacent to the Maitland Private Hospital and a significant amount of traffic accesses the hospital and the Greenhills shopping centre by the alternative route. Chelmsford Drive is a significant bypass for people travelling to Metford and is the site of the very large East Maitland fire station and the Minda River Aboriginal Land Council. Because of the traffic intensities, the traffic lights will be upgraded and there will be changes to the median strips. The Roads and Traffic Authority has assured me that it will maintain constant surveillance of speeds zonings in those areas.

Although the upgrades have not treated all the intersections that I would like to have seen upgraded, it has certainly taken care of the most dangerous and immediate problems. I look forward to further action being taken by the Minister within the next year or so in relation to the very dangerous Wollombi Road intersection with the New England Highway at Rutherford. All things being equal, significant improvements in road safety will be achieved, which means better access for all in the Maitland electorate.

#### **AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF POLICE MANAGEMENT NORTH HEAD SITE**

**Mr DAVID BARR** (Manly) [6.00 p.m.]: Again I draw to the attention of the House issues related to North Head. The Australian Institute of Police Management [AIPM] has occupied a 1.7 hectare site at North Head since 1957. The site is part of the quarantine station. The Seamen's Isolation Hospital, which is now part of AIPM, was erected at the end of World War I in 1918. Currently the AIPM has a redevelopment proposal that has raised as many heritage and environment issues as has the proposed Mawland development at the quarantine station. Whereas the Mawland development had to jump through many hoops, including a commission of inquiry and over 200 conditions of consent, fast-tracking seems to be taking place in relation to the police college site.

The development application represents an intensification of use as well as an expansion into activities that clearly are outside those of a police academy, such as a conference centre. The site is Crown land that belongs to New South Wales, as is the quarantine station and the School of Artillery. Under a 1910 agreement, the Commonwealth Government was given the right to occupy North Head for defence and quarantine purposes. In a 1984 agreement, the quarantine site was returned to the State, but not the AIPM and the School of Artillery site. That agreement makes no mention of the police college. In a 1979 land exchange agreement that was signed between New South Wales and the Commonwealth, a land pooling arrangement was established that was designed to facilitate the exchange of specific Commonwealth and State sites around Sydney both at the time of the agreement and in the future. The AIPM supposedly was one of these sites.

I say supposedly because I have not seen the document, nor has the Manly Council. The AIPM strongly argues that the document gives it lawful occupation of the site. The document, which appears to be in its hands, was not produced at the recent public hearing that was held at the Manly Council chambers by a Commonwealth parliamentary standing committee, but it should have been. The committee is one of the two Commonwealth content authorities in this matter. The Commonwealth committees will not be in a position to come to any conclusion until all appropriate documents are tabled. I wrote to the Director General of the Cabinet Office to obtain a copy of the document. He in turn wrote to his Federal counterpart as part of the protocol for the release of the document.

Land tenure at North Head is crucial. The AIPM has entered into a long-term lease with the Charles Sturt University, which refers to the site as its Manly campus. Does the basis of the lease rest on the 1979 document? We do not know. We are entitled to know. Until land tenure is clarified, we do not know the legal status of the lease. To add to the confusion, the New South Wales Department of Lands wrote to the Manly Council indicating that the State Government agreed to transfer Lot 2764 to the Commonwealth and stating that the AIPM is part of that lot. In fact, according to council records, Lot 2764 is the School of Artillery site, and the AIPM site is Lot 2766. Is the State transferring the School of Artillery site, or the AIPM site, to the Commonwealth? Irrespective of which site it is, why?

Given the current state of limbo in relation to the quarantine station, which looks like the end of the road for Mawland, the North Head situation is becoming messier and messier. It is time that the State Government showed some leadership, unravelled this mess and gave a clear plan of action for the implementation of a century. It needs to enter into constructive dialogue with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and tell the people of Manly just what is going on. What is the Government planning to do in relation to the quarantine station and the AIPM site? What are the Government's long-term plans for the School of Artillery site when it reverts to the State in five years time? There is a huge window of opportunity for the State Government to pull all these threads together and develop a coherent plan for all of North Head. I call on the Government to do so.

### NARRABEEN LAGOON RESTORATION

**Mr ALEX McTAGGART** (Pittwater) [6.05 p.m.]: I inform the House of an important environmental initiative that is being undertaken by a coalition of councils and community groups to restore the environmental health of Narrabeen Lagoon. Narrabeen Lagoon on Sydney's northern beaches is the largest remaining coastal lagoon in the Sydney region. Only 16 kilometres from the CBD, it extends over approximately 5.7 square kilometres and has an average depth of 1.5 metres, although there are big variations in depth. Sand has built up in certain sections of the lagoon as a result of run-off from development and earlier unsuccessful dredging efforts. Three main creeks drain into the main southern lagoon, Deep Creek, Middle Creek and South Creek, and all have tributaries that are major causes of siltation.

Geological studies indicate that Narrabeen Lagoon was formed between 2,000 and 6,000 years ago. Narrabeen Lagoon is not only a magnificent stretch of water but it provides a set of ecosystems that support a vast diversity of flora and fauna, some of which have been identified as endangered species, and the lagoon is an important recreational facility. The lagoon is a relatively large intermittently closed or open lagoon [ICOL]. Its entrance is located at the exposed northern end of Narrabeen Beach facing the prevailing ocean wave direction. The surf and beach dynamics are such that they can close the lagoon relatively rapidly. This has flood implications for a significant number of Pittwater and Warringah residents.

Several attempts at dredging have been made over the years but most had to be halted because of residents' objections. Noise, pollution, the creation of deep holes and the onshore handling of the dredged sand all proved to be major problems, particularly the building of large onshore sand stockpiles. Community opposition has resulted in no attempts at dredging being made since 1992. However, a new restoration plan for the Narrabeen Lagoon may address all the concerns and result in the lake being restored without the problems of the past. In April last year, the Warringah Council convened the Narrabeen Lagoon Summit. As a result, an advisory board was established to oversee the Narrabeen restoration project.

The board is chaired by a former general manager of the Pittwater Council and coastal engineer and environment expert, Angus Gordon, who has dedicated much of the past 30 years to the preservation of the lagoon. He has submitted an innovative proposal to restore the lagoon to its pre-1970 depth. The plan will result in the removal of weed throughout the catchment, and the restoration of seagrass beds and native vegetation, especially around the Middle Creek area. But it is the proposed excavation method that is different. An

excavator will be used to drag up a sand island in the lagoon on which the excavator would be positioned. The sand island would migrate through the area to be dredged, its size always remaining only large enough to support the excavator operation.

The new method would allow for a progressive achievement of the desired depth in a controlled manner, causing the minimum amount of disruption to both the lagoon itself and residents. This form of dredging has become standard technology for similar operations both within Australia and internationally at locations where environmental concerns are paramount. In addition to being environmentally sound, it will also produce sand that can be sold to help fund the cost of the restoration work. The operation is supported by local environmentalists, including the dedicated Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon community group, which has fought long and hard to see this beautiful, unique waterway returned to its former glory. The next step in the process is the development of an environmental impact statement and its public exhibition.

Five different government departments are involved in the management of the lake: Crown Lands, the Department of Planning, the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Department of Mineral Resources and the Department of Sport and Recreation. I have written to all five relevant Ministers seeking their support and input. Issues involving royalties still need resolution—royalties which will have to be waived so that funds from the sale of sand can be used for rehabilitation activities. But we have taken some big steps forward already, thanks to the co-operative effort of the two councils involved, Warringah and Pittwater, and the unstinting support and determination of local community groups and environmentalists, particularly the Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon. Given the dedication of the community, I am confident that restoration of the lagoon will take place.

#### MR STAN MAJOR

**Mr JEFF HUNTER** (Lake Macquarie) [6.10 p.m.]: This evening I pay tribute to a great Australian, Mr Stan Major. Wednesday of last week was a sad day as it marked the passing of Stan Major. It was a great shock when I received a phone call on Wednesday afternoon from my father to advise me that Stan had just passed away at his home. Following this, my father and I visited Stan's home and spoke to Stan's wife, Dorothy. It was good to see her with two of her daughters and her son-in-law. For many years Stan worked at Wangi power station with my father, Merv Hunter. My father was the member for Lake Macquarie from 1969 to 1991, and he and Stan had a very close relationship. Unfortunately my father was taken ill on Monday of this week and was unable to attend Stan's funeral. However, I had the opportunity, along with the Federal member for Charlton, the Hon. Kelly Hoare, and my brother, Councillor Alan Hunter, to attend and speak at the funeral.

I told those assembled that my brother Alan had advised me that when he was an apprentice at Wangi power station he particularly remembered Stan as a trade assistant to Wally Saxby, and what a good team they were. Alan told me that Stan was always well presented, even at work, and when he passed you he would give you a little salute. Even after all these years Stan's little salute remains a strong memory of Alan's. I think that salute was part of Stan's military service shining through. He served his country overseas, although he did not like to talk about his experiences during that time. He fought for this country and we thank him for that. I knew Stan from the Wangi branch of the Australian Labor Party [ALP] prior to my starting work at Wangi power station in 1980. When I started work at the power station I got to know him in the working environment, and I have lots of good memories from there as well. I knew Stan as a quiet achiever. Although he was reserved, he was always friendly and got on well with his work mates.

Stan joined the Wangi branch of the ALP in 1961, and was awarded life membership in 2004. He was active in everything in the Labor Party and contributed quietly to debate on many issues over more than 40 years. Stan and his wife, Dorothy, actively supported my father when he was the member for Lake Macquarie, my brother, Alan, as a councillor on Lake Macquarie City Council, and of course me since my election in 1991. Together, Dot and Stan have been great supporters. Dot and Stan were what one might call Darby and Joan—they did everything together. At the funeral on Monday I mentioned that everyone there would have memories of them together. During their retirement years in particular they were simply out enjoying life. They often zipped around in their little white car, and when you would see that white car coming towards you there was Stan taking Dot out on another adventure. Indeed, when I visited Dot after Stan's passing she told me that they had had a trip planned for this week.

Only last month, in early May, I went to their home, picked them up and took them to Newcastle for a special function to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the election of the Wran Government. During our trip into town I discussed political issues with Stan, and he put forward his strong views on the current political scene.



The evening was enjoyable. Stan and Dot spent the evening at the table of the Federal member and her husband, and the former Federal member Bob Brown. On the way home we talked about what a great ALP night it was and that Neville Wran was in great form. They told me a few stories about recent events, and we were laughing in the car on the way home. It is certainly a memory I will cherish of both Dot and Stan together. Whether it be by letterboxing, working on polling booths, attending functions and meetings, or in his everyday approach to life, Stan was a stalwart of the Labor Party. He was a great man, a friend and a loyal supporter. With his passing last week, he will be sorely missed. I extend to Dot and her family my sincere condolences and those of the Hunter family and all members of the Lake Macquarie branches of the Labor Party. Vale, Stan Major.

**Private members' statements noted.**

**COURTS LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL**

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.**

**The House adjourned at 6.15 p.m. until Friday 9 June 2006 at 10.00 a.m.**

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