

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 30 August 2006

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

Mr Speaker offered the Prayer.

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

DEER BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr GRAHAM WEST (Campbelltown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.02 a.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Deer Bill introduces new legislation to clarify the ownership of deer, to regulate the keeping and management of captive deer, to prevent the release of deer from captivity, and to introduce mechanisms to control deer that are not captive. The difficulties in managing deer have led to significant public safety, and environmental and agricultural impacts. The bill will help manage deer to mitigate those impacts. As honourable members would know, deer are not native to Australia. However, they do have a long history in New South Wales when viewed from the perspective of European settlement. The first deer were imported into New South Wales in 1803 and have since established in the Australian bush, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales.

Two hundred years later, those deer populations are flourishing and today we understand much better the perils of not managing introduced wild animals. Introduced animals are well known for the environmental damage they can cause when present in large numbers. Deer are no different, and excessive deer populations could destroy native vegetation and damage sensitive areas in our fragile Australian landscape. Recently the New South Wales Threatened Species Scientific Committee recognised the impact of deer on our environment. The committee has listed the degradation of vegetation and environment caused by feral deer as a key threatening process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. Deer in the wild not only damage the environment, they also cause agricultural harm. Deer compete with grazing livestock and can damage crops.

Deer are also becoming an increasing hazard for motorists outside towns and cities, causing significant numbers of motor vehicle accidents. They wander onto roads and because they are flighty, their behaviour can be unpredictable. These are all good reasons for better managing captive deer and for stronger control of wild deer. While deer in the wild can cause significant harm, captive deer remain a legitimate industry for farmers. Deer farming is well established in New South Wales and this State has nearly a quarter of Australia's dedicated deer farmers. Deer products from captive deer fill an important niche market both at home and overseas. There is steadily increasing demand from overseas markets for products such as venison and velvet antler. For example, 90 per cent of Australian venison production is exported.

While the development of the commercial deer industry is important, it is also important to recognise that the control and management of deer present unique challenges. It is necessary to ensure those challenges are properly addressed through appropriate management controls for captive deer. The Deer Bill addresses a range of different issues that arise with respect to deer. First, the bill clarifies the issue of ownership of deer; second, the bill regulates the keeping and management of captive deer, and as part of that, it puts in place measures to help prevent the release of deer from captivity; and, third, the bill provides for the control of wild deer.

Turning to the issue of ownership, there has been considerable uncertainty about the legal status of deer. This has been a major obstacle to the effective control of problem populations of deer. Deer are considered

wild animals at common law. This means they are not considered to be domestic, as are cattle and sheep. Domestic animals that have escaped are still considered the property of their owner. However, this is not the case for wild animals. As a general rule there is no ownership in wild animals once they have escaped captivity. The problem with deer is that the rules are not so simple. Farmed deer belong to their owner for a short time after they have escaped. That ownership exists for as long as the deer may return to the herd, but as soon as this tendency to return ceases, ownership in the deer is lost.

This uncertainty means that it is difficult to determine whether a particular deer is owned or not. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the deer should be controlled or whether the deer has recently escaped and is the property of a nearby farmer. This legislation clarifies the common law position. Deer farmers will now have absolute property rights over deer, provided they are kept in accordance with the legislative requirements. This ownership will cease the moment such deer escape.

The second major aspect of the bill deals with managing captive deer. Managing captive deer can be a difficult task. Deer are flighty. They can easily escape from normal livestock fences and may quickly travel long distances. Special skills and facilities are needed to muster and capture them. Because of those characteristics, the bill provides a framework for developing regulations for keeping and managing captive deer. These regulations will reflect the deer industry code on important matters such as fencing. The regulations will be developed in conjunction with the deer industry. The co-operation of industry will be important in ensuring the most appropriate standards are put in place.

As well as addressing the management of captive deer, the bill minimises the risk of damage by deer to public safety, the environment and agriculture. It does that by providing for the control of deer in the wild. First, it adds to sanctions in other legislation to prevent the release of deer into the wild. This bill will make it an offence to release captive deer. Of course, exemptions to this rule will apply in certain circumstances, such as transport of animals for veterinary treatment and sale. The bill also provides for a defence where a deer keeper has taken all reasonable steps to prevent the release of the deer, and after the release, has taken all reasonable steps to capture or control the deer. Preventing the release of deer into the wild is just part of the solution; this bill also sets up a framework for the control of deer in the wild.

Experience in States such as Tasmania shows that deer impacts can be well managed locally and through appropriate arrangements between landholders and licensed hunters. Licensed hunters represent a significant resource available to landholders seeking to control deer on their properties. It is worth noting that the Game Council of New South Wales has already implemented the most comprehensive system in Australasia to ensure that trained, licensed and accountable hunters are available for this purpose.

The bill recognises that wild deer can also cause impacts over large areas and in situations where they can only be successfully controlled through properly organised, broad-scale management programs. These programs are developed with stakeholders, including landholders, the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries, relevant rural lands protection boards, the Game Council, local councils and other public and private land managers, and of course the deer industry. This legislation will provide support to stakeholder groups by allowing the director general to make control orders regarding wild deer.

The deer control order will require landholders to eradicate deer that are not kept in accordance with the regulation. Before making a control order, the director general must consult with the relevant stakeholders. This will help to ensure that key interests and expertise are properly reflected in any control order. The unique characteristics of wild deer mean that our licensed and responsible game hunters represent a particularly important resource for landholders seeking to control deer on their properties. It is worth reiterating my earlier comments:

...the Game Council of New South Wales has already implemented the most comprehensive system in Australasia to ensure that trained, licensed and accountable hunters are available for this purpose.

The Government has consulted widely on this legislation, and feedback from that consultation has been taken into account in the bill. The State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards, the New South Wales Game Council and the New South Wales Farmers Association all support the policy approach the Government is taking. The provisions introduced by this bill will contribute to public safety, and help to prevent further damage to the environment and agriculture. It will do this by clarifying the ownership of deer, regulating the keeping and management of deer, preventing the release of deer from captivity, and allowing control orders to be made. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

APIARIES AMENDMENT BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr GRAHAM WEST (Campbelltown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.13 a.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Apiaries Amendment Bill introduces a set of useful and practical changes to the administration of beekeeping in New South Wales. It makes reforms in the areas of compliance, and it puts in place the last of a set of changes that the Government has brought to beekeeping. Beekeeping is an important area of agriculture and agricultural production. It provides a range of important economic and social benefits. Most obviously, the honeybee industry produces a diverse number of valuable commodities. The main direct product of beekeeping is honey. Beekeepers can also profit from the sale of queen bees or other hive products, such as beeswax, comb honey and royal jelly.

The benefits of beekeeping go well beyond honey and wax. Honeybees play a critical role in the pollination of agricultural and horticultural crops, as well as the house garden. A recent report estimated that 65 per cent of crops introduced to this country are reliant to some extent on honeybees for pollination. The value of this free pollination service to the Australian economy is estimated to be around \$1.7 billion. Additionally, beekeeping provides important social benefits, being an outdoor pursuit that is enjoyed by people of all ages and from all walks of life. Many beekeepers belong to their local amateur beekeeping groups, adding a further social dimension to this activity.

Honourable members would agree that honeybees require proper and responsible management to protect human safety and prevent the spread of disease. Responsible beekeeping in New South Wales is promoted through a voluntary Beekeeping Code of Practice. Apiarists, decision-making authorities and the public use the code, which was developed in consultation with key industry stakeholders, to provide a consistent approach to beekeeping issues. The regulation of beekeeping in New South Wales is primarily carried out through the Apiaries Act 1985.

That Act requires the registration of all commercial and recreational beekeepers. Its main purpose is to prevent the introduction of, and to control and eradicate, certain diseases and pests that afflict bees in New South Wales. Additionally, the Act contains provisions to manage nuisance bees. The Act is being amended to improve the administrative arrangements. The amendments are designed to promote responsible beekeeping, enhance compliance with the Apiaries Act, and minimise potential risks to human safety, while still recognising the importance of recreational and commercial beekeeping. This is part of the continuous improvement process undertaken by the Department of Primary Industries, which is responsible for administering the Apiaries Act.

In terms of threats to human safety, the statistics show that managed bees present a very low risk to the human population. In New South Wales, managed bees have been associated with only two human deaths, the most recent being in early March 2000. As honourable members might recall, an inquiry was initiated following that tragic incident to assess the level of risk to humans posed by urban beekeeping, and to determine whether any further measures were needed to control urban beekeeping. The inquiry identified that the danger to the community from managed beehives is in fact very low. The inquiry's technical expert advised that only one or two people per annum die from bee venom allergy in Australia. The expert also outlined that a person is more likely to die from being struck by lightning than from an allergic reaction to a bee sting.

The inquiry made several recommendations to promote responsible beekeeping. These recommendations included the introduction of penalty notices for breaches of the Apiaries Act and regulation. The inquiry also recommended the need for improved information and education for urban beekeepers. The Government has already taken steps to implement many of the inquiry's recommendations. In terms of compliance, the Apiaries Act has been amended to allow penalty notices to be issued by prescribed officers for offences against the Act or regulations. These offences include, for example, failing to register hives and owning hives that do not display a registration number.

Authorised officers are inspectors employed by the Department of Primary Industries and can include other persons authorised by the director general of the department. In terms of education, the web site of the

Department of Primary Industries now contains detailed information on beekeeping. This includes information on the Beekeeping Code of Practice and other important legal requirements of beekeeping. This information is produced in a variety of languages, which will ensure that non-English speaking beekeepers have access to useful information on urban beekeeping. The code is provided to all apiarists on registration and re-registration. The purpose of the bill is to build on these initiatives. In terms of consultation, the amendments were discussed with key industry and amateur beekeeping representatives, including the New South Wales Apiarists Association and the New South Wales Amateur Beekeepers Association. I am advised that there was support from these groups for the amendments currently before the House.

Turning to the specifics of the amendments, the bill proposes a number of changes to further improve the compliance provisions of the Apiaries Act. I will first address the changes to the provisions on registration of beehives. Registration and the display of registration numbers on hives is a critical tool in effective beekeeping management. Among other things, it assists in controlling and eradicating diseases that afflict bees. For example, where a disease outbreak occurs, a registration system allows authorities to identify all beekeepers in New South Wales, including their home location and the number of hives they keep. This enables all beehives to be inspected and traced from infected locations. This is essential to limit the spread of a disease and ultimately to eradicate it. This system is particularly important, as hives are often not kept at a beekeeper's residence. Beekeepers sometimes travel long distances with their hives to find good flower sources, and usually have hives in numerous locations.

Registration also provides a mechanism to ensure beekeepers receive the latest information on bee disease prevention and management. While many beekeepers are responsible and law-abiding, there are some that do not adhere to the requirements of being registered. Therefore, several amendments in the bill strengthen the existing obligation on beekeepers to register and to display a registration number on their hives, and to encourage them to take responsibility for their hives. Public lands provide a vital flora source for beekeepers. Most beekeepers register their hives and seek the permission of public land managers before locating their hives on such land. However, a small number of beekeepers effectively leave their hives on areas like roadsides and reserves without permission. This works against efforts to control disease and can potentially compromise public safety.

Under the new arrangements, inspectors will have the power to seize and remove unidentified beehives on public land. Any expenses incurred by an inspector in removing the hives will be payable by the owner of the hive, and the beekeeper will not be entitled to compensation for the loss of the hive. Identified hives on public land may also be seized by an inspector and forfeited to the Crown if an inspector believes that the hives are on the land without the permission of the controller of the land. Before an inspector can seize a hive in these circumstances, the inspector must serve a notice on the owner of the hives. The notice will advise that the owner has 14 days to remove the hives, or provide satisfactory evidence that permission has been obtained to keep the hives on the land. Unidentified hives can also be a problem on private land, and the bill addresses this issue.

Under the new arrangements, inspectors will have the power to seize and remove such hives, provided that a notice is displayed in the vicinity of the hives for 28 days. The notice will state that the hives are to be forfeited to the Crown unless they are identified. A similar notice must also be placed in a newspaper with statewide circulation. An owner of such hives on private land can avoid forfeiture if the hives are identified with a registration number within the 28 days, or if the owner can prove that registration of the hives took place within 60 days prior to the notice being served. Another amendment in the bill that will encourage beekeepers to register and display a registration number is the removal of the requirement for hives to be branded. Currently, the Act specifies that beekeepers must brand all hives with a registration number.

Branding requires the use of a hot brand to burn the numbers into the box, or other tools such as a router. This requirement can act as a disincentive for beekeepers to display their registration number, in terms of the effort required to physically brand their hives. This is particularly so for beekeepers with only one or two hives. Under the new arrangements, this requirement is modified to make compliance easier. Beekeepers will be required to display their registration number on the outside of their hives. For example, it will be acceptable to paint a registration number on a hive. Another major feature of the bill is the provision of powers to inspectors to relocate beehives in emergencies. Currently, removal of nuisance hives from premises is subject to a fairly lengthy process. Once it comes to an inspector's attention that bees appear to be posing a risk to public health or safety, it is routine practice that an inspector investigates the matter.

Unfortunately, some people make vexatious complaints because of neighbourly disputes and other reasons. When an inspector is satisfied that the bees are posing a risk to public health or safety, a report is

prepared by the inspector, with recommendations for the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries. The director general may order the removal of the hives if this is the best possible solution. The owner of the bees then has 14 days to comply with the order. Often beekeepers comply quickly with such orders, but in other cases they take the full 14 days. This is an appreciably lengthy amount of time and can potentially put human safety at risk. In particular, the safety of a person with a severe allergy to bee venom may be severely compromised. The bill improves this arrangement by allowing inspectors to immediately seize and remove beehives from premises if the bees are a danger to public health or safety. In such cases, the beehives will be relocated to prevent any continued threat to the community.

The seized hives can be removed for a period of 21 days. During that time, an order prohibiting the keeping of bees must be served or the beehives must be returned to the land from which they were removed. The amendments in the bill provide other additional powers to inspectors under the Act. Inspectors will be able to require a person in charge of a premises to produce any records or documents under the person's control that relate to beekeeping. The inspector will also have the power to make copies of these records and documents. This change will allow inspectors to thoroughly investigate matters, including the location and prior movements of hives, and any other relevant information on problematic hives or beekeepers who breach the law. Additionally, inspectors who find a person committing an offence against the Act or regulation will be able to require that person to specify the location of all their hives.

Currently, inspectors may only require persons to state their name and address. This change will allow inspectors to locate the person's hives more quickly. The bill also makes various changes of a minor, administrative nature. The register of beekeepers, for example, is to be maintained by the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries, rather than by a registrar. Access to the register by authorised officers will be free of charge. Authorised officers will include police officers, employees of local councils, and any other persons approved by the director general. Other changes include the removal of section 25 from the Act. This provision imposes an unnecessary restriction on interstate trade, and in any event section 26 provides adequate power to prevent the introduction of diseases from other States or Territories. The apiary industry supports this amendment.

Another minor change concerns liability. The bill inserts a new provision that excludes personal liability for certain persons for things done, or omitted to be done, in good faith for the purposes of executing the Act. This is a standard provision and it is similar to that contained in other legislation, such as section 22A of the Stock Diseases Act 1923. Good beekeeping practices are critical to safe recreational and commercial beekeeping, and the bill recognises this. The amendments in the bill will further improve the management of beekeeping, particularly in urban areas, and will be welcomed by beekeepers and the general community. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Steven Pringle.

POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr GRAHAM WEST (Campbelltown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.29 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Carl Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government established the Police Integrity Commission in 1996 in response to a recommendation by the Wood royal commission. The main function of the Police Integrity Commission is to detect, investigate and prevent serious police misconduct and corruption. In fulfilling this function the commission has broad-ranging oversight and investigative powers under the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996. On 21 February 2005 Cabinet approved the transfer of jurisdiction to investigate civilian members of NSW Police from the Independent Commission Against Corruption to the Police Integrity Commission. This transfer of jurisdiction occurred by amending the definition of "police officer" under the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 to include all employees of NSW Police.

The effect of the broadened definition of police officer was that all the provisions of the Police Integrity Commission Act that previously dealt with police officers were applied to administrative employees. However, this has resulted in some unexpected anomalies within the legislation. For example, by virtue of the amendment to the definition of "police officer", section 10 (6), which governs the involvement of police officers in carrying out investigations on behalf of or at the direction of the commissioner, applies to administrative employees, although it is certain that the intention of the section was that only qualified police officers be able to undertake investigations.

Administrative employees hold no special office or exercise any special powers. Therefore, the Police Integrity Commission was of the view that administrative employees of NSW Police should not be equated to sworn police officers for all purposes under the Act. Following amendment to the definition of "police officer", both the Police Integrity Commission and NSW Police requested that the Act be further amended to remove the anomaly created by the definition of "police officer" and to establish a more robust system for the investigation, referral and oversight of complaints against unsworn members of NSW Police.

I now turn to the amendments to the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 and the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. The bill establishes a system for the investigation, referral and oversight of complaints against members of NSW Police who are not police officers, enables criminal proceedings in respect of certain summary offences under the Act to be brought within a period of three years from their commission, and confers on the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission the power to conduct investigations into the conduct of former officers of the Police Integrity Commission.

I take the opportunity to address some of the reforms in more detail. The bill provides for a definition of "administrative officer" to be included in the Act. The definition forms the basis for the distinction between the complaints system for unsworn members of NSW Police and the complaints system for NSW Police officers. This definition will also ensure consistency in the definitions of "police officer" and "administrative officer" between the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 and the Police Act 1990. A definition of corrupt conduct will also be inserted into the Act consistent with the definition of corrupt conduct under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988.

This provision defines the type of conduct that the Police Integrity Commission will investigate and ensures that administrative members of NSW Police are treated in the same manner as other public servants. This provision will also ensure that corrupt conduct by former administrative officers can be investigated by the Police Integrity Commission. The bill sets out the functions of the Police Integrity Commission regarding administrative officers. These functions include the detection, investigation and prevention of corrupt conduct by administrative officers and the oversight of other agencies in the detection or investigation of corrupt conduct by administrative officers. A new part will be added to the Act that provides for a system for the referral of complaints to the Police Integrity Commission.

The provisions are modelled on sections 10 and 11 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988. This part outlines who can make a complaint about corrupt conduct to the Police Integrity Commission and imposes a duty on certain officers, such as the Commissioner of Police, to notify the commission of corrupt conduct by administrative officers. The amendments will ensure that complaints against unsworn members of NSW Police are referred to the commission by NSW Police in a similar manner as they are currently referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The Act will also be amended to enable certain public officials to make complaints to the Police Integrity Commission about the conduct of administrative officers. In addition to amendments to establish a complaint management system for administrative members of NSW Police, the Police Integrity Commission requested that amendments be made to the limitation period for certain offences under the Act. Section 141 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 will be amended to allow criminal proceedings for certain summary offences under the Act to be brought within the period of three years after their commission.

These provisions are section 25, which makes it an offence to fail to provide information to the Police Integrity Commission, or by providing false information, when requested to do so; section 52, which makes it an offence to publish evidence where the person has been given a direction not to do so by the Police Integrity Commission; section 53, which makes it an offence to publish evidence given at a private hearing of the Police Integrity Commission without authorisation; section 54, which makes it an offence to make disclosures prejudicing investigations being made by the Police Integrity Commission; section 56, which makes it an offence to divulge information acquired by reason of, or in the course of, exercising functions under the Act

where not authorised to do so; and section 106, which makes it an offence to fail to comply with a summons issued by the Police Integrity Commission. The current limitation period for these offences is six months from commission.

This amendment will bring the limitation period for these offences in line with the limitation period for an offence under section 104 (c) of the Act. Section 104 (c) prohibits a person from wilfully making any false statement to attempt to mislead, or to attempt to mislead the Police Integrity Commission, an officer of the commission, the inspector of the commission or an officer of the inspector of the commission, in the exercise of functions under the Act. The bill proposes that the limitation period be extended to enable the Police Integrity Commission to prosecute breaches of these offence provisions where it is not provable or apparent that a breach has occurred until after the limitation period has expired, and where the commission is aware of the misconduct and such misconduct is provable at the time of commission of the offence, however the initiation of a prosecution may jeopardise any investigation in progress. The commission advises that a three-year limitation period is reasonable, given the length of the more involved investigations.

The Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 will also be amended to confirm that the conduct of former officers of the Police Integrity Commission may be investigated by the inspector of the commission. It is appropriate that any officer of the commission be investigated for any involvement in corrupt conduct whilst employed with the commission, particularly given his or her role in investigating corrupt conduct by NSW Police officers. The Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission has the power to investigate former NSW Police officers who may have engaged in serious misconduct and it is appropriate that the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission has the same powers in respect of former officers of the commission.

Any officer who has engaged in corrupt activities or other misconduct whilst employed by the commission should not escape investigation on the basis that he or she is no longer employed by the commission. This bill will ensure that there continues to be appropriate independent and accountable oversight of the conduct of all NSW Police employees. The proposed amendments to the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 are essential to ensure appropriate detection, investigation and oversight of complaints against all members of NSW Police. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORATES AND ELECTIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr GRAHAM WEST (Campbelltown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.39 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Morris Iemma: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In this the 150th year of parliamentary democracy in New South Wales we can be very proud of an electoral system that is free, fair and independent. But there is always room for finetuning. In that spirit, I am pleased to introduce the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Bill, a piece of legislation that aims to strengthen the conduct of elections in New South Wales and to improve the functioning of our State electoral authority. This bill implements recommendations made by the New South Wales Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the electoral districts commissioners and the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government. It also includes numerous changes proposed by the Electoral Commissioner as well as measures arising from an extensive consultation process. In fact, the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters received a number of submissions and held two public hearings as part of its inquiry into the administration of the 2003 State election. In addition, the bill was released on 3 July as a consultation bill for public comment, and 17 submissions were received by the Cabinet Office. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made submissions on the draft bill.

Turning to the substance of the legislation, the bill makes a number of changes to modernise the arrangements for the conduct of elections, perhaps the most visible of which will be a change in the name of our electoral authority. Under this bill the State Electoral Office will be renamed the New South Wales Electoral Commission to bring our nomenclature into line with other States and Territories. Another important reform will

be a change in the way that the Electoral Commissioner's term of office is decided. Currently the Electoral Commissioner's term is age defined—that is, he or she must retire at the age of 65 even if that falls just before an election when it would be highly inconvenient. This amendment will ensure that the Electoral Commissioner is appointed initially for 10 years and is eligible to be reappointed for any period up to another 10 years.

An appointment of 10 years is considered appropriate as it will ensure that any Electoral Commissioner will be in office for at least two general elections. This means that any given Electoral Commissioner will have time to gain the confidence of key stakeholders and will provide stability in the electoral administration of New South Wales. Transitional provisions will be required to ensure that the current Electoral Commissioner is appointed under the new provisions for a period of 10 years. When passed, the bill will mean that the current commissioner will remain in office from late 2006 until late 2016, allowing him to oversee the general elections in March 2007, 2011 and 2015 plus the local government elections in September 2008 and 2012. The Electoral Commissioner may also be reappointed for a further period—for example, long enough to oversee the local government election in September 2016.

The bill will redefine the roles of the Electoral Commissioner and the returning officers. Under current legislation many of the important functions associated with running an election are vested in individual returning officers, who have wide discretion. This reflects a bygone era when it was not possible to communicate readily with the State Electoral Office. This situation has persisted even though most people see the Electoral Commissioner as bearing the ultimate responsibility for conducting elections. The amendments will increase the Electoral Commissioner's control over the conduct of elections and therefore reduce inconsistent decision making by various returning officers. The bill will make it clear that returning officers are subject to the direction and control of the Electoral Commissioner.

The bill will also make several changes relating to enrolment. Under the legislation New South Wales residents will now be able to check their enrolments online. The bill will also clarify the Electoral Commissioner's power to obtain information from State agencies so that he can notify people about their obligation to enrol and also pass on this information to the Commonwealth. The rights of registered parties, members of Parliament and candidates to have access to the roll will be codified. The sale of the New South Wales electoral roll will be prohibited. Importantly, the Electoral Commissioner will be able to provide access to the electoral roll when this is in the public interest—for example, for the purpose of medical research. The bill will introduce a new requirement to collect date-of-birth information as part of the enrolment process, which will ensure consistency with the Commonwealth. The requirement for voters to state their occupations when enrolling will also be retained for statistical purposes in line with a request made by the Electoral Commissioner.

A number of provisions in the bill have been designed to improve postal and pre-poll voting arrangements. For example, silent voters will be permitted to make pre-poll and postal votes and postal votes will now be able to be issued and received by the Electoral Commissioner as well as by returning officers. The eligibility criteria for becoming a registered general postal voter will be made consistent with the Commonwealth, which will reduce confusion for voters. Another important aspect of the bill relates to the use of certain licensed premises as polling places. The bill will permit premises with a liquor licence to be used as polling places in certain circumstances—a provision that was requested by the Electoral Commissioner and that has been modelled on the Commonwealth Electoral Act.

The Government wants to be clear about this: This provision exists to give people in rural and remote areas the best possible access to polling places. In many communities town halls and community halls have some type of a liquor licence, generally because they are used for functions such as wedding receptions and dances. Under the law as it stands the possession of such a licence rules them out as potential polling places even though they may be the only suitable location for a polling place in a town or hamlet. Under this clarification to the law such premises may be employed by the Electoral Commissioner as polling places but only under strict conditions—and I emphasise the word "strict". The first and most obvious of these conditions is that alcohol may not be served in the polling place during the hours of polling. Furthermore, the area in which alcohol is kept or served must not be accessible from the place where voting is occurring.

I turn to other aspects of the bill relating to how-to-vote material. The bill extends the current registration requirements for how-to-vote material so that all election-related material to be distributed on election day in a public place must be registered by the Electoral Commissioner. Currently the legislation requires only the registration of materials concerned with the technical aspects of how voters mark their ballot papers. While those provisions will continue to apply, the bill will also require all other election-related material

to be registered. That material must meet three reasonable criteria in order to be registered. The material must contain the name and address of the author and printer. It must not be obscene or offensive and it must not encourage informal votes.

Currently there is nothing in the Act that compels returning officers to make registered material available for inspection. The bill improves transparency by providing that all registered material proposed to be distributed in electorates must be available for inspection on election day at the office of the returning officer. The registered material may be requested by any scrutineer or by any person enrolled in that electorate. These reforms implement the recommendation of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters that all registered material should be available on election day. Following the consultation process, the bill has been amended to provide that when election officials attend declared institutions, such as nursing homes, to provide residents with a vote they must have a folder that contains the registered electoral material of candidates, parties and groups and they must ask each voter whether he or she would like to view any how-to-vote material.

This amendment will ensure that voters in declared institutions have access to how-to-vote cards to assist them in making a formal and informed vote, just as they would at a regular polling place. This bill will also change the laws governing election posters. For example, the bill will abolish the existing size restriction on posters so that posters of any size may be displayed on election day. We do not want returning officers running around with tape measures sizing up posters. They have better things to do, and the Government trusts political parties to apply a commonsense approach to the size of posters.

The bill will also abolish the power of returning officers to remove illegal posters on public and private property, except at polling places. This should be a matter for property owners to deal with because returning officers should not be required to divert resources to undertake this task. I add that all political parties can do better when it comes to cleaning up their posters after election day. We all can and must do better. This amendment will not, however, affect the ability of election officials to remove illegally placed posters on polling day at a polling place. Indeed, in accordance with the recommendation of the joint standing committee, enforcement powers are being expanded to ensure that election officials have the capacity to confiscate all unregistered material that is being distributed on polling day at polling places. There will be no requirement under the bill for posters to be registered, which continues the current practice.

Another recommendation of the joint standing committee that has been adopted is the proposal to prohibit the canvassing of votes within six metres of the entrance to a polling place. The amendment will ensure consistency with the Commonwealth and will therefore reduce confusion for persons handing out electoral material on polling day. The bill also carefully defines the entrance to the polling place as being the entrance to the actual building and not to the enclosed grounds where the building is located unless the returning officer puts up a notice to the contrary. Several recommendations of the electoral district commissioners arising from the recent electoral redistribution have been adopted in this legislation. In particular, electoral boundaries will now be shown in map form instead of being described in words using the traditional "metres and bounds" approach.

The bill also makes a number of provisions concerning local government. In particular the bill allows the Governor to make a regulation requiring local councils to contribute to the cost of maintaining the electoral roll. In response to concerns expressed during the consultation process, the Government proposes to consult further with local government about the amount and timing of this contribution before making any such regulation. I note that the Local Government (General) Regulation will be amended to codify the right of local government candidates to obtain a copy of the electoral roll for their area once an election is called. When this bill is passed the Government will also need to consider which of the new State electoral laws should also be applied to the conduct of local government elections. This will involve amending the Local Government Act and any regulations made under this bill. The Government proposes to consult further with local government and other stakeholders about the appropriate changes with a view to putting any changes into place well before the next general local government election in September 2008.

A number of other procedures will be streamlined under this bill. For example, registered political parties now have the option of lodging nominations for all endorsed candidates at the same time with the Electoral Commissioner instead of having to lodge individual nominations separately with each district returning officer. I note that bulk nominations of this kind will have to be lodged before noon on the day before the close of nominations. Similar amendments are to be made to the Election Funding Act so that registered parties will now have the option of applying for bulk registration of all candidates with the Electoral Commissioner at the same time as they nominate those candidates. Deposits for both Legislative Council and

Legislative Assembly elections may now be returned to political parties and groups rather than individual candidates.

The bill will also provide that the form used to nominate scrutineers and the declaration form that scrutineers must sign are to be combined into one standard form. The bill will also provide for an elector to make an oral declaration instead of a written declaration that he or she fulfils one of the eligibility requirements for pre-poll voting. In addition, minor amendments to the ballot papers will ensure that the same ballot paper may be used for both postal votes and on polling day, which will save on printing and administration costs. The bill will also provide that a vote recorded by a voter placing numbers outside the squares but clearly beside the name of candidates is to be treated as a formal vote instead of as an informal vote, as is the case now. This is consistent with other Australian jurisdictions.

The bill also implements a proposal of the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government that the Electoral Commissioner no longer conduct elections for statutory boards or industrial organisations. Those elections will be conducted instead by external service providers who are accredited by the Electoral Commissioner. This reform will assist the Electoral Commissioner in focusing on his core responsibilities of conducting State and local government elections. The Electoral Commissioner has identified a number of additional minor and technical amendments that are required to be made to the legislation. I seek leave to table a summary of these amendments for honourable members to review in detail, if they wish. I also seek leave to table the draft Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Regulation 2006, which makes changes that are largely consequential on the amendments contained in the bill.

Leave granted.

Documents tabled.

This legislation is about improving the conduct of elections in New South Wales to ensure our electoral system remains not only free and fair but also efficient and effective. I commend the bill to the House and once again thank all those who have contributed to the creation of these important reforms.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

POLICE AMENDMENT (POLICE PROMOTIONS) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.55 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Carl Scully: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Police Amendment (Police Promotions) Bill 2006. The promotion system has been a major cause of dissatisfaction for officers within NSW Police for some time. The Government is strongly committed to reforming the police promotions system and has worked continually to improve the promotions process. In 2002 a ministerial inquiry into the NSW Police promotions system was initiated under section 217 of the Police Act 1990 by the former Minister for Police. The objectives of this inquiry were to identify concerns held by members of NSW Police about the current promotions system and to initiate improvements to that system. The inquiry was chaired by former Assistant Commissioner Geoff Schuberg and included senior members of NSW Police and the New South Wales Police Association. The report of the ministerial inquiry into police promotions, known as the Schuberg report, was finalised in December 2003. The inquiry identified some serious concerns about the operation of the existing system including, but not limited to:

- The need to reduce significant delays associated with position-specific appointment through the greater use of eligibility lists. Under the current system vacant positions were being left unfilled and officers who had demonstrated their suitability for promotion were not being promoted because an officer's eligibility was limited to particular locations.

- The isolation of the existing promotions system from professional development and training systems. Officers were being appointed to supervisory roles without having adequate training or any clear understanding of the requirements of the position.
- Importantly, the promotion of inexperienced and junior officers into critical command or supervisory positions, and those officers then sometimes acting or relieving at higher rank.
- The ongoing use of relieving arrangements to bypass the promotions system and confer an unfair advantage on officers who were given the opportunity to act in a position, often for lengthy periods, prior to the position being advertised and filled through the current promotions system.
- The difficulties associated with the review by commanders of workplace performance. Police were concerned about inaccurate assessment and possible bias within some command management teams and the impact of this on their promotional opportunities.
- The requirement for all applicants to complete all stages of the promotions process, even if they had little realistic chance of being appointed.
- The perception that inadequate weight was being placed on experience, and the need for recognition and appropriate weighting of length of service.
- A protracted and costly appeals process. The need for a review of the promotion appeals system was identified. There were significant delays in appointment, cost—both time and monetary—and "bad blood" resulting from the Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal [GREAT] promotional appeal system.

The Schuberg report was subsequently released at the New South Wales Police Association annual conference on 24 May 2004. In order to implement key recommendations from the Schuberg report, the former Minister for Police convened a high-level working party in July 2004, chaired by the Hon. Peter Anderson, AM, which included representatives from NSW Police and the New South Wales Police Association. The report of the working party "Review and Implementation of the Report of the Ministerial Inquiry into Police Promotions", December 2004, proposed the implementation of a new police promotion system based on the recommendations of the Schuberg report. The report was approved by Cabinet in April 2005.

In August 2005 the Minister released a consultation report on the proposed new promotion system to enable comment by officers of NSW Police. During November 2005 a delegation from the working party visited eight locations across the State. The objective of the information sessions was to identify and address any police concerns about the new system. Members of NSW Police have now provided their views on the new promotions model. The chair of the working party has also met with the commissioner's executive team and the New South Wales Police Association executive to discuss the new promotions model and made a detailed presentation to the Police Association's annual conference in May this year. The consultation process is now finished and every effort has been made to incorporate the feedback received from officers into the new promotion model, where possible.

Significant expertise and effort has gone into reviewing the police promotion system, identifying and addressing the issues of most concern to NSW Police officers, identifying shortcomings of the existing system and developing a system to remove those shortcomings. The result of these efforts is a best practice promotions model that will address many of the inadequacies of the existing promotion system. It is imperative that any police promotion system be as timely, fair and equitable as possible. The new system gives all officers who seek promotion an equal opportunity to be promoted if they have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience. The model also removes unrealistic expectations of promotional opportunities by advising applicants for promotion of the likelihood of success at an early stage of the promotions process. The differences that exist within the current promotion system between ranks are removed and a similar system applied equally to the rank of sergeant, inspector and superintendent. The proposed system is not, however, applicable to grades within the rank of constable or to the police senior executive service.

I now take the opportunity to briefly explain how the new promotion system will work. The promotion system utilises an annual promotion list for each rank, being the rank of sergeant, inspector and superintendent. It also utilises another promotion list for the grade of senior sergeant. This list is used for all vacancies occurring within the year for which the list is current. I will explain this concept in further detail shortly. The new system

is based on an annual cycle. The promotions process therefore starts one year before the promotion list is created. The new promotion system establishes a three-staged process designed to identify officers with the requisite skills for promotion and ensure that the best applicants for the job are appointed. An officer must successfully complete this process before being placed on a promotion list.

In order to match demand for officers with supply, NSW Police will now project the number of vacancies for each rank before the start of each promotion cycle. These projections are based on historical information, trends in attrition and an improved work force planning capacity which will enable NSW Police to proactively manage their work force requirements. This projection enables NSW Police to estimate the number of persons who are able to pass through each stage of the promotions process. Before commencing the promotions process an officer must now complete two years at rank. This gives an officer the opportunity to further develop the skills he or she needs to be promoted.

The first stage of the promotions process modifies the existing rank-based pre-qualifying assessment process. This stage involves a multiple choice computer-based assessment that tests an officer's technical and professional knowledge. Any officer seeking promotion must undertake this assessment. However, only three times the number of officers needed for the promotion list, being the number of projected vacancies, are able to undertake the rank-based promotions examination. An officer who does not progress to stage two is entitled to a review of his or her mark. An officer who progresses to stage two is able to undertake the rank-based promotions examination. The examination will be designed to test an officer's job-related knowledge, analysis, decision-making and judgment.

Following completion of the examination, an applicant's management performance rating then becomes relevant to the process. This involves an assessment of an officer's workplace performance over a period of time. During this stage an integrity check is also conducted. The pre-qualifying assessment and promotion examination marks are then combined with the management performance review to give the officer a mark. This mark will determine whether an individual will go through to stage three. An officer who does not progress to stage three is entitled to a review of his or her promotion examination mark or his or her management performance review score. The officer is also entitled to be debriefed on why he or she has been unsuccessful.

An officer who progresses to stage three is able to undertake the rank-based eligibility program. This program is aimed at not only testing an applicant but ensuring officers are qualified for the rank to which they seek to be promoted. The eligibility program is a residential program that is made up of a number of components, including an interview and an assessment centre process. The focus of this program is on assessing an applicant's suitability for promotion. This provides the opportunity to assess their attitudes, behaviours and values, which are not able to be assessed in a formal examination environment. If an applicant successfully completes the program he or she is eligible to be placed on the promotion list. An officer who does not successfully complete the eligibility program is entitled to a review of a component of that program where that component is able to be reviewed. The officer is also entitled to be debriefed on why he or she has been unsuccessful.

The eligibility mark determines an officer's merit and is the mechanism by which officers are ranked on the promotion list. The eligibility mark is made up of the marks achieved in the pre-qualifying assessment, the promotion examination, the management performance review and the eligibility program. The eligibility mark also includes a weighting for years of service. All of these results are then given a weighting. Weightings to be given to the various components of the proposed promotion system are to be determined in accordance with relevant academic research and industry norms. It is expected that the eligibility program will receive the heaviest weighting within the eligibility mark. A person will be placed on the promotion list for each rank in accordance with his or her eligibility mark—from highest to lowest.

The promotion list for a rank applies to all positions within that rank. A promotion list is current for one year unless all persons are promoted before the 12-month period. If officers remain on a promotion list, they will be integrated into the next promotion list and re-ranked according to their eligibility mark. An applicant can remain on promotion lists for three years before having to requalify. A person who is ranked the highest on the promotion list will have the option to accept any available vacant position or wait until another vacancy arises that better suits his or her situation. Following this decision, the person next on the list will then have the option to accept any available vacancy or wait until another vacancy arises.

A person will have 72 hours within which to accept the promotion that is offered. This process enables appointments to vacant positions to be made very quickly. The use of promotion lists in this way will

significantly reduce delays in filling vacant positions. Officers will be trained and have completed the promotions process prior to a vacancy arising. The use of promotions lists for all positions within a rank will also remove barriers to appointments being made in remote and hard to fill locations as they are not qualified by geographic location. The exceptions to this process are positions that are designated as specialist. A person will not be able to accept a specialist vacant position unless he or she has relevant specialist qualifications.

I now turn to the amendments made to the Police Act 1990 and the Police Regulation 2000 to establish this new promotion system for police officers. Schedule 1 provides for amendments to the Act to establish the new police promotion system for non-executive positions of the rank of sergeant, inspector and superintendent and the grade of senior sergeant. The bill amends the Act to provide for the following:

- appointment by way of promotion is from promotions lists, and not by individual application and selection for individual positions;
- appointment to any position by way of promotion is to be made by appointment of the highest ranked available officer from a promotion list for the rank concerned;
- individuals seeking placement on a promotion list must have spent the requisite time at the rank below (being at least two years) and must successfully complete a pre-qualifying assessment, a promotion examination, an applicant evaluation and an eligibility program;
- officers who qualify for a promotion list will be given an eligibility mark and will be ranked according to order of merit (from the highest mark to the lowest);
- a new promotion list for each rank or grade will be prepared each year and an applicant who does not accept promotion can remain on a list only for three years before having to requalify for the list;
- individual vacancies will no longer be advertised given that position-specific appointment is no longer relevant;
- the number of places on the promotion list for each rank will be estimated at the beginning of each promotion cycle and the numbers of candidates accordingly restricted on the basis of quotas determined by those estimates; and
- the removal of the right of appeal to the Government and Related Employees Appeal Tribunal [GREAT] against an appointment of another applicant to a particular position. In the place of this, there will be a review mechanism for each stage of the promotions process.

I would now like to take the opportunity to address some of the reforms in more detail. The promotion system for police officers is now substantially different from the system for administrative officers. This has necessitated the creation of two separate parts within the Act. Specifically, the bill amends the Act to repeal part 6, which previously dealt with all non-executive officers of NSW Police—being both administrative and police officers—and inserts a new part 6 dealing with appointment of non-executive police officers and a new part 6A dealing with the appointment of non-executive administrative officers.

Part 6—non-executive police officers—substantially re-enacts the existing provisions in relation to the general appointment of non-executive police officers. Appointment under the Act can be by way of promotion, transfer or otherwise. However, the bill has replaced previously existing provisions dealing with police promotions with provisions that give effect to the new promotion scheme for police officers—other than the commissioner, members of NSW Police Senior Executive Service and temporary employees and non-executive police officers. There are a number of key changes to part 6. First, I refer to appointment on merit, as outlined in proposed section 66. The provision relating to merit has been amended to reflect that promotional appointments are now to be made from a promotion list for the rank concerned, to the officer with the greatest merit being:

- the highest-ranked available officer on the list concerned; or
- in the case of vacancies identified by the Commissioner as requiring additional. specialist qualifications, the highest ranked officer who has the requisite specialist qualifications for such a vacancy.

The second change relates to the promotions lists, as set out in proposed section 70. Previously the use of eligibility lists was limited to specific positions within specific locations. The new promotion list has a much broader application and will apply to all positions within the rank to which the list applies. The bill replaces the provision that previously dealt with eligibility lists—section 67A—with a new provision requiring the commissioner to establish promotion lists for the ranks of sergeant, inspector and superintendent, and the grade of senior sergeant. The provision also provides for regulations to be made with respect to promotions lists, for applicants to be appointed to the applicable promotion list if qualified, and for a review process of decisions relating to such lists and the promotion process. Specifically, the section prescribes that the regulations may make provision for:

- the requirements for placement on a promotion list;
- the ranking of police officers on a promotion list; the period for which a police officer may remain on a promotion list or replacement promotion lists;
- the appointment of persons from a promotion list; reviews of requirements for placement on a promotion list and of ranking on a promotion list;
- reviews or appeals against a decision to remove a person from the promotion process or suspend or remove a person from a promotion list, on integrity grounds;
- the procedures for conduct of reviews;
- the circumstances in which a person may be removed or suspended from or restored to a promotion list;
- the period for which, or the circumstances in which, a promotion list remains current;
- notification of a decision to suspend or remove a person from a promotion list.

The third change relates to integrity matters, as outlined in proposed section 71. This provision substantially re-enacts the existing provisions requiring the commissioner to make certain inquiries into a person's integrity before the person can be appointed to a non-executive police officer position. This means that prior to appointment whether by way of promotion or otherwise, an integrity clearance must be received. However, the new system introduces an additional integrity check, which requires the commissioner to make inquiries about a person before he or she undertakes the eligibility program. This new integrity check has been adopted in response to concerns identified with the existing promotions process. Under the current system a person can progress through the entire promotions process without being aware that there may be an integrity issue preventing his or her promotion. This wastes the time and resources of both the individual and NSW Police.

The additional check means that an individual who would be prevented from being promoted due to an integrity issue does not undertake the whole promotions process before becoming aware that he or she is unable to be promoted. Where integrity clearance procedures delay an officer's entry into the eligibility program, the officer's PQA and examination results remain valid for a three-year period from the day an applicant's formal written notification of clearance through integrity procedures is dated. The requirements that the commissioner make inquiries with the Police Integrity Commission and the Commander, Professional Standards Command as to an officer's integrity before promoting that officer still applies. The commissioner retains the discretion to refuse to promote the person on integrity grounds. Section 71 also allows the commissioner to suspend or remove a person from a promotion list or any part of the promotion process if the commissioner receives any information about a person's integrity that causes him to form the opinion that the person is not suitable. This provision ensures that integrity of individual officers who seek promotion remains paramount.

In relation to advertising vacancies the new promotion system no longer requires an applicant to apply for individual positions. The introduction of the promotion list concept for all vacancies within a rank and the elimination of the process of selection and appointment to a particular position remove the necessity to advertise a particular vacant position. However, the commissioner will advise as to the number of vacancies that will be available for the upcoming year. This requirement will be covered in the policy dealing with promotions and the policy dealing with transfers.

I turn now to schedule 2 "Amendment of Police Regulation 2000—requirements for appointment". The regulation has also been amended in accordance with the decision of Cabinet to set out the requirements for appointment to the rank of sergeant, inspector, superintendent, and to the grade of senior sergeant. An officer is eligible for appointment to the rank of sergeant, inspector and superintendent, or the grade or senior sergeant, only by way of promotion, if he or she achieves placement on the promotion list for the relevant rank or grade covered under proposed new clauses 18A to 18G of the regulation. This ensures that a person cannot be promoted unless he or she is on a promotion list. The eligibility requirements for placement on a promotion list for each rank are set out in proposed new clause 18H. These requirements are:

- the completion of two years at the rank below before being eligible to commence the promotions process, that is undertake the pre-qualifying assessment for the rank of sergeant, inspector and superintendent;
- the undertaking of a pre-qualifying assessment with a mark sufficient for inclusion in the quota to complete the promotion examination and management performance review;
- the completion of the pre-qualifying assessment, promotion examination and management review to meet the quota requirements to proceed to undertake the eligibility program; and
- the successful completion of the eligibility program.

The requirements for placement on the senior sergeant's promotion list differ slightly:

- Existing sergeants are not required to fulfil time at rank requirements or undertake the pre-qualifying assessment as they are deemed to have already fulfilled those requirements.
- An existing sergeant may be required to undertake the sergeant's promotion examination if there are a large number of applicants for placement on the senior sergeant's promotion list. How that officer performs in the examination will determine if he or she meet the quota requirements to proceed to undertake the sergeant's eligibility program.
- If an existing sergeant is successful in completing the sergeant's eligibility program he or she will be placed and ranked on the senior sergeant's promotion list in accordance with his or her eligibility program mark only.
- Senior constables who seek promotion to the grade of senior sergeant must have achieved placement on the sergeant's promotion list and have applied for placement on the senior sergeant's promotion list.
- A senior constable's performance in the eligibility program alone will determine if he or she meet the quota requirements for placement on the senior sergeant promotion list.
- A person who is qualified for more than one promotion list may be placed on more than one promotion list at any one time.

Proposed new clause 18I enables the commissioner to determine quotas for persons who may attempt to complete eligibility requirements for placement on a promotion list and the period within which successive attempts to meet eligibility requirements may be made. Proposed new clause 18J provides that persons on promotion lists are to be ranked according to their eligibility marks. Proposed new clause 18K provides that a promotion offer will remain open for 72 hours, unless the period is extended by the commissioner in a particular case. Proposed new clause 18L removes a person from a promotion list if the person is appointed to the rank or grade within a rank to which the list applies. The clause also provides that the commissioner must notify a person in writing if the person is suspended or removed from the list on integrity grounds. Proposed new clause 18M provides that a promotion list remains current for 12 months or until all persons on the list are appointed, whichever occurs first.

Proposed new clause 18N provides that an eligible person may be included on a replacement promotion list. However, a person can remain on a promotion list or replacement promotion list for only three years before he or she must re-qualify. Any person placed on a replacement promotion list will be re-ranked according to his or her eligibility mark. This may mean that they are ranked higher on the replacement promotion list than on the previous list or alternatively that they are lower placed, depending on the eligibility marks obtained by other

officers coming through the promotion process. Part 6A deals with non-executive administrative officers and re-enacts the appointment scheme for administrative officers in New South Wales

In relation to police, other than members of the NSW Police senior executive service and temporary employees, there are no changes from the existing provisions dealing with administrative officers. Part 6B re-enacts provisions relating to industrial matters common to both non-executive police officers and non-executive administrative officers. The new system provides for a right of review of a decision that an applicant has failed to successfully complete a promotion qualification as to the applicant's mark and removal from a promotion list. This replaces the previously existing right of appeal to GREAT. The review mechanism will be incorporated into the regulations following recommendations by the Promotions Implementation Steering Committee as to the appropriate review mechanism and procedures. It is expected that the review will take the following form:

- in respect of the examination it will involve a review by two independent markers who would review or re-mark the officer's examination results in accordance with the promotions examination review policy, which is yet to be finalised and is still before the project steering committee;
- will involve an independent marker who would review or re-mark the officer's eligibility program results, where those results are able to be reviewed, in accordance with the eligibility program review policy, which is yet to be finalised and is still before the project steering committee;
- that all officers will be notified that they must elect to apply for a review or re-mark within seven days of receiving their pre-qualifying, examination or eligibility program result;
- that all officers are notified that if they elect not to apply for a review or re-mark within the seven-day period, they are precluded from subsequently appealing their pre-qualifying, examination or eligibility program results at a later stage in the promotion process.

It is expected that the proposed review processes should be comparable with the Board of Studies New South Wales processes for marking and remarking. An independent standing review panel will also be created to review eligibility marks and rankings on all promotion lists. The panel will be able to take into account special considerations in appropriate circumstances. All review processes will be completed within 14 days of application during which time no appointments will be made. There have been a few changes to the new promotion system from that previously proposed. The new system originally made provision for appointments by way of promotion to the grades of chief inspector. However, following the conclusion of the award negotiations in relation to the rank of inspector and the overlapping pay scales now applicable to that rank, no further promotional appointments will be made to the grade of chief inspector, and the grade will eventually cease to exist.

Therefore the new promotion system does not provide a promotion system for the appointment of chief inspectors. The new promotion system has also changed following the consultation process. The Act now makes provision for a review of an integrity matter that prevents appointment by way of promotion. The Act previously allowed for an applicant for promotion who was prevented from being promoted due to an integrity matter to appeal to GREAT. The Act now provides for the regulations to establish a mechanism for review relating to a decision to suspend or remove someone from the promotions process on the basis of an integrity matter. The review mechanism will be incorporated into the regulations following recommendations by the Promotions Implementation Steering Committee as to the appropriate review mechanism and procedures.

As a result of the consultation process, the proposed promotions model has been changed so that the combined score in the pre-qualifying assessment, the promotions examination and the management performance review, would determine whether an officer could proceed to undertake the eligibility program. This change was viewed as a desirable improvement to the system, resulting in greater fairness to the applicants, and did not depart from the fundamental promotions model concept. These changes to the police promotion system accord with the overall objectives of the new police promotion model. The changes as a result of the consultation process have resulted in improved efficacy and fairness in the promotions process.

The regulations provide also that the Minister will carry out a review of the promotion system established for non-executive police officers two years after the establishment of the first promotion list, with the review to be completed within six months of that time. This is to ensure that the promotion system is

working as intended and that the objectives of the new system are being achieved. The Act makes provision for the existing and proposed system to operate at the same time during 2007. The existing promotion system will continue to apply in respect of appointments by way of promotion to positions within the rank of sergeant, inspector and superintendent, and the grade of senior sergeant until the first promotion list is established for the relevant rank or grade within a rank.

As the new promotion system is predicated on an annual cycle for each rank, it takes approximately one year for officers to complete the different eligibility requirements in order to be placed on the promotion list for each rank. The Police Amendment (Police Promotions) Bill 2006 applies to the extent necessary to enable the establishment of the first promotion list and qualification for placement on those lists. During the time that a person is seeking to qualify for placement on a promotion list for the new system, officers will be given the opportunity to apply for promotion under the old promotion system. Existing qualifications such as the pre-qualifying assessment and assessment centre scores are not, however, transferable to the new promotion system.

Once the promotion list is formed for a particular rank, appointments can be made immediately from that list. Given that it takes one year for a person to complete the promotions process, the first appointments under the new promotion system cannot occur until 2008. However, the new system will commence from 1 January 2007. Appointments by way of promotion under the new system will not occur before 1 January 2008. The Act maintains the right of appeal to GREAT in respect of any appointment made under the existing system, even after commencement of the new system. A comprehensive communications strategy will notify police when the old system will be phased out and when the new promotion system will begin to apply to each rank. At all times officers will be notified of key dates for old and new.

Unmet expectations of promotional opportunities are, understandably, a cause of frustration for officers within NSW Police. Some level of dissatisfaction with the police promotion system will always exist, given the large number of potential applicants for a relatively small number of positions and given the nature of the policing profession where unsuccessful applicants remain within NSW Police. Whilst these frustrations will never be entirely alleviated, they can be managed through a fairer and more equitable promotion system that provides officers with a realistic understanding of promotional prospects early in their careers and offers professional development opportunities outside the promotion system.

The new promotion system creates an equitable system of promotion that ensures that a person is not prevented from achieving promotion other than by their individual performance during the process. The promotions process is simplified by using one promotion list for all vacancies in a rank for a 12-month period. This reduces the delays associated with the existing promotions process. The new system removes the current costly and protracted appeal system and replaces it with a comprehensive system of review. The new system will ensure that integrity in the promotion process and of candidates for promotion is a fundamental principle of the police promotion system. I believe the new promotion system to be fair and equitable, giving all officers an equal opportunity to apply for a promotional position if they have the requisite skills, knowledge and experience. This bill ensures that there is an appropriate legislative framework for the new promotion system. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Bill: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 a.m.]: I move:

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

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [11.36 a.m.]: Since 9 June the State Labor Government has had 11 weeks to prepare for the resumption of Parliament. This motion for the suspension of standing and sessional orders is a classic sign of a lazy, lethargic, tired old Government. The Government has had plenty of time to prepare; it has failed to prepare and it has failed to plan. The Government has been wallowing in false confidence, self-congratulations and arrogance. The Government is doing to the Parliament what some people say it is doing to the State. After 11 weeks, the best the Government can do is come up with the five bills that are on the business paper put today.

With hundreds of spin doctors and staff, is cobbling provisions together and bringing in legislation by suspending standing and sessional orders the best the Government can do? The Government purports to be big on plans, so why did it not plan to introduce this legislation yesterday. What happened? Did someone miss their cue, or is it just that the Government has been lazy and unprepared. Government members have been having a holiday, putting their feet up, and have not been doing their work. The Premier has been travelling the State purporting to plan. He claims that his Government is big on plans, but there is no delivery. After 12 years, the Government still does not know what the people of this State want and it still cannot run this Parliament. It is just appalling.

Motion agreed to.

CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (GANGS) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr TONY STEWART (Bankstown—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.38 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Bob Debus: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Gangs) Bill. Put simply, this bill introduces a raft of reforms to the Crimes Act and other legislation to criminalise gang participation and gang-related activity. The Government has prepared this bill because the citizens of New South Wales deserve the best possible protection against gang violence, thuggery and organised criminal activity. In December last year, Sydneysiders fell victim to unruly, riotous behaviour during the weekend of public disorder in Cronulla and subsequent revenge attacks. Earlier that year, residents and police were attacked during mob violence at Macquarie Fields perpetrated by a brutish few. No-one can forget the horrific shoot-out between rival bikie gangs, the Bandidos and Comancheros, at Milperra on Father's Day in 1984 that left seven dead, one of whom was a 15-year-old girl. These different acts of violence are deplorable. Whether committed by an organised criminal enterprise or an impromptu mob, they should be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The bill attacks both mobs and organised crime gangs. Its provisions will undermine the very foundations of crime gangs and will further empower police in situations where people form a gang or mob on an ad hoc basis. Before providing the House with details of the bill, I would like to paint a picture of the types of organisations and activities we are trying to prevent. Fortunately, New South Wales cities are not plagued by violent street gangs such as those found in the United States of America. However, criminal organisations do exist. At the highest level, there are well-developed and hierarchical criminal networks such as the Russian mafia and other ethnically based organised crime groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs, known colloquially as bikies. Those organisations terrorise individuals and businesses, run sophisticated drug and firearm trafficking operations, cover their tracks through veiled money laundering operations and make innocent bystanders and businesses their victims.

In recent years, there have also emerged significant crime gangs based on common ethnicity. They include Vietnamese and Chinese gangs with a strong involvement in the drug trade, Pacific Islander groups who are specialists in armed robberies, and criminals of Middle Eastern origin who engage in firearms crime, drug trafficking and car rebirthing. I scarcely need remind the House that the majority of the members of those communities either have no connection at all with such crime groups, or, regrettably, are their victims. Many gangs have nothing to do with ethnicity. They are formed rather on the basis of common interests, for example motor bikes, geographical proximity, or, sadly, social contacts made in the prison system. One thing that links those people together is that they are criminals.

Sydney residents were reminded of the presence of crime gangs during the tit-for-tat shootings over past years. Those cowardly and murderous attacks saw pockets of south-western Sydney suburbs terrorised night after night. Unfortunately, my electorate of Bankstown was focused on significantly during that period. Hence, the changes in the bill are very important to my constituents. The Cronulla riots and revenge attacks also showed that violent gangs can be formed quickly and on an ad hoc basis. The vile behaviour of those gangs made headlines throughout the world as violence, racial abuse, bullying and assaults found their way into peoples' front yards, shops and cars.

The bill recognises that crimes committed by gangs, whether they be crimes of violence, revenge attacks, systematic property damage, organised motor vehicle theft, protection rackets, armed robberies or the drug and gun trade, are a far greater threat to the safety and wellbeing of the community than most crimes committed by individuals acting alone. The bill attacks the foundations of two very different types of gangs. It deals with both organised criminal groups and impromptu groups of violent individuals or mobs. The two types of gangs are dealt with separately in the bill.

Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Crimes Act 1900. Item [1] inserts a definition of "public disorder" to mean a riot or other civil disturbance that gives rise to serious risk to public safety, whether at a single location or resulting from a series of incidents in the same or different locations. Items [3] and [7] make it clear that offences involving assault against police and other law enforcement officers include throwing missiles at them. Items [5] and [6] increase the penalties by two years for assaulting a police officer, assaulting a police officer occasioning actual bodily harm and maliciously wounding a police officer. Items [8] and [9] increase from two years to five years the maximum penalty for offences involving obtaining personal information about law enforcement officers or members of their families.

Item [10] increases the penalty by two years for firing at a house or building. Item [11] creates new offences relating to participation in criminal groups and recruiting persons to assist in criminal activity. Items [12], [13], [14] and [15] create new aggravated offences in relation to various crimes involving assault or damage to property where the assault or damage occurred during a public disorder, with a two-year increase in maximum penalties. Item [18] extends the limitation period for bringing proceedings for the offence of consorting from six months to 12 months.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act. Item [1] gives police further powers with respect to entry and search of crime premises by removing alarms, surveillance devices and the like, as well as blocking drains and pacifying guard dogs. Item [3] gives police further powers to disperse groups during public disorders. Item [5] gives police the power to obtain a court order to remove unnecessary fortifications to crime gang premises. Schedule 3 to the bill makes consequential amendments to other Acts, including the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 and the Local Courts Act 1984.

The organised crime offences relate to active participation in an ongoing criminal enterprise. The mob offences relate to crimes taking place during a public disorder involving assaults on law enforcement officers or attacks on property. First, let me explain how the bill tackles organised criminal groups. The bill creates a new offence of participating in or assisting in a criminal organisation. The bill defines a criminal group as being a group of three or more people who seek to gain material benefit from serious criminal offences which attract penalties of five years imprisonment or more, or who commit serious violence offences that are punishable by life imprisonment or 10 years or more. These conditions apply also to those who engage in conduct of that nature outside of New South Wales.

As can be seen, the threshold used to define an organised criminal group is quite high. This means that three kids spraying graffiti on a billboard could not be classified as an organised criminal group, but a 10-person car rebirthing operation would be. The proposed legislation does not make membership of a criminal organisation an offence per se, nor does it make every transaction with a criminal organisation an offence. A person can be a member of a gang and not a criminal participant. Similarly, a person can be a participant without being a member. For example, someone may be a member of Hell's Angels but may be largely removed from any criminal activity performed by that organisation. In the same way, a garage mechanic specialising in motorcycle maintenance ought not to be penalised for fixing Comancheros' bikes.

However, persons who participate in a criminal group knowing that it is a criminal group and knowing or reckless to the fact that their actions contribute to criminal activity, may face five years imprisonment. That offence targets a range of activities and people who work with criminal organisations, and obviously some of them will be members. They will wear the colours and have the tattoos. Others will wear tailored suits and appear to be the pinnacle of respectability. The offence targets those hiding in the background of a criminal enterprise and those who facilitate organised criminal activity. They may be accountants, bookkeepers, executives, or even lawyers who fudge records, launder money, construct sham corporate structures and hide assets. It also targets the front men.

These are the so-called cleanskins, people with no criminal record who give criminals a legal front behind which to commit their crimes and minimise the risk of detection by law enforcement. They may be

licensed hoteliers, real estate agents, smash repairers, pharmacists or public officials, who, in various ways, aid and abet ongoing criminal activity. And, of course, the bill targets the heavies—the people who actively commit ongoing criminal acts: the drug runners, the gun traffickers, the car rebirthers, the armed robbers and the standover men. Beatings, stabbings, shooting of rivals or witnesses who stand in their way, and destruction of property—these are the stock in trade of organised criminal groups.

If crimes of violence towards people or property, actual or threatened, are committed on behalf of a criminal organisation, then the penalty is doubled to 10 years. I stress that the assault or property damage must be committed as a way of furthering the gang's criminal activities. So a gang member who thumps his mate in a pub over a personal disagreement would probably not commit the offence, but if he hits a barman who threatened to report the gang's drug dealing, then he would be part of that organised gang activity. If an organised crime gang member assaults a law enforcement officer to further the gang's criminal activity, he or she faces up to 14 years imprisonment. The bill also introduces a new offence, with a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment, of recruiting another person—not a child—to commit a crime. While it is already an offence to incite a person to commit a crime, recruiting someone into crime is a different activity. It is less about the crime itself than about corrupting a potential member and drawing him or her into a criminal gang.

New provisions in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 will allow the Commissioner of Police to apply to the Local Court to have an order granted that directs the removal or modification of fortifications at named premises. This will mean that fortified gang headquarters set up, for example, by outlaw motorcycle gangs will no longer be out of range from police. With these new powers police will be able to break down criminal strongholds. These are premises designed to hide the manufacture of illicit drugs, stolen goods, equipment used in identity theft, or guns and other weapons. Sometimes they are even used to dispense brutal rough justice on gang members who have transgressed the gang's rules. New search warrant powers for criminal gang premises enhance existing police powers. Police will now be able to disable alarms, cameras or surveillance devices, pacify guard dogs and prevent criminals from destroying evidence by blocking drains or the like. These powers will only be needed to execute search warrants on well-protected crime gang premises. They will not become a routine procedure for police.

The bill also targets persons involved in less organised gang activities, such as the rioters at Cronulla and those who took part in revenge attacks. I note that the honourable member for Cronulla is in the House. A new section of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 will give police the power to order people to disperse from a nominated area. Failure to comply will incur a penalty of up to \$5,500. This provision is designed to diffuse volatile situations in circumstances of public disorder. This power only becomes available if a lockdown has been declared. A dispersal order can only apply to locations within the area where the lockdown is in place. For example, people congregating on a beachfront or in a town square may be directed to leave those areas.

We ask a lot of our police. We ask them to put themselves potentially in harm's way every day they go to work to protect the public, but that does not give angry mobs a licence to attack them. This bill protects police and other law enforcement officials from becoming victims of gang brutality. Police and other law enforcement officers deserve the full support of the Government in the difficult task of ridding our streets of these low lives. Of course, police officers expect to take knocks in the course of their duties. But we should draw the line at an organised crime gang member assaulting a law enforcement officer to benefit gang criminal activity, and we will not tolerate mobs attacking police during a public disorder. It is totally unacceptable for mafia-type heavies to scrounge together personal information about law enforcement officers and their families to harm and intimidate them. Our police and other law enforcement officers commit their working lives to protect citizens of this State and this House should back any law that offers further protection to police.

The bill increases to seven years the penalty for anyone who, during public disorder assaults, throws missiles at, stalks, harasses, or intimidates a police officer in the execution of his or her duty. If the police officer suffers actual bodily harm, the penalty increases to nine years and if, heaven forbid, a police officer is maliciously wounded or suffers grievous bodily harm during public disorder, the offender faces 14 years in prison. We are also increasing to five years the penalty for snooping on the private affairs of law enforcement officers and their families with the intention of causing them harm. I am sure all members of the House share my disgust at the systematic destruction carried out by the revenge attackers in the wake of the Cronulla riot. Perhaps even worse are the incidents of rival gangs of thugs attacking each other's houses and those of their families and even engaging in drive-by shootings.

The bill increases the maximum penalty for a variety of offences involving damage and destruction of property during public disorder. These range from seven years for malicious damage to 16 years for firing at dwelling house or other buildings. Setting fire to premises with the intention to injure will now earn up to 16 years in gaol. We have ramped up the penalties for gang crimes, we have given police tough new powers, we have introduced Australia's first criminal organisation offences and we have given police and their families the protection they deserve. Crime gangs are on notice. Whether you are a violent mob or an ongoing criminal enterprise, the police are coming after you. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Thomas George.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2006-07

Debate resumed from 9 June.

Mr ALAN ASHTON (East Hills) [11.57 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak on the Government's budget. I would make the point that the Budget Speech delivered by the Treasurer in June went for one hour and ten minutes, and many people were calling out "More, more" at the conclusion of it. Unfortunately, none of them were in the parliamentary Chamber. It was a wonderful speech that detailed virtually every dollar that will be spent in New South Wales and why. That is no mean feat, given the record expenditure in almost every portfolio area. It was certainly a memorable Budget Speech for many reasons. One important point acknowledged by the Treasurer was that the Government's general overview of the budget for eight or nine years was based on the very successful management of the economy since the election of the Carr Government in 1995.

The Treasurer also acknowledged the fact that New South Wales needs to meet the new challenges it faces as a result of changes in the property market. That is not a secret. The Labor Government is not hiding from it; it is an Australian phenomenon. Economies worldwide go through boom and bust periods. The Government managed to avoid the bust that might have resulted from the Asian economic crisis. To its credit, the Federal Government also did so. New South Wales was well prepared, because of its triple-A credit rating, to withstand the structural changes that have resulted from changes to the property market.

Although this budget should be viewed in concert with the State Plan announced by the Premier, it maintains record spending in many areas. For the first time in nine or 10 years the budget predicts a deficit that is greater than was foreshadowed in the December review. The deficit figure is there for all to see. However, the Treasurer and the Government have implemented a series of plans that will ensure we return to a surplus in the next year or two. We must remember also that the deficit is largely to do with the fact that we have borrowed record funds in order to improve infrastructure across New South Wales. There was some discussion of this issue in question time yesterday.

The Federal Government is bragging about its record infrastructure budget. Certain people have felt for some time—Mr Acting-Speaker, the honourable member for Liverpool, may support me in this view—that State budgets could have dipped into the red. New South Wales is a vast entity, with massively valuable assets in the form of schools, hospitals and railway stations and even the Parliament building. We are entitled to use Keynesian economics and say, "We are going very well so let us borrow." I imagine every member in this Chamber would have some loan somewhere for something. As long as we can pay off our loans we will gain assets. That is how the economy moves forward. It is good governance to recognise that we do not have to be continually obsessed with the idea of bringing down a budget that is in surplus.

Mr Malcolm Kerr: Did you mention that to Mr Egan?

Mr ALAN ASHTON: Yes, I certainly mentioned that to Mr Egan several times.

Mr Malcolm Kerr: What did he say?

Mr ALAN ASHTON: Mr Egan, who is no longer a parliamentary colleague, had a slightly different view. However, we are certainly now in a position to borrow. To expand on the comments of the honourable member for Cronulla, when things are rolling along reasonably well and infrastructure is new and looks good nothing needs to be done for some time. However, anyone who owns a house will know that at about the

10-year mark new carpeting or a new paint job will be needed or perhaps the garage door will give up the ghost. It is the same with government instrumentalities and infrastructure. Maintenance is most important.

In some parts of Sydney and New South Wales—such as Sydney's north-west and in the regions—there is great demand for new facilities. We cannot deny that fact. However, the State's older areas and Sydney's established suburbs require infrastructure maintenance, such as replacing rail signals, rail tracks, cables, wires and other facilities. Government must balance those needs. It will be great for our growing areas if we fund only new products and equipment. But we must not neglect the maintenance needs of those in older, more established areas. That is why I fully support the Government's recognition that borrowing is essential.

Just yesterday the Premier announced that New South Wales has again achieved a triple-A credit rating. So it is not as though we are taking any risks at all by borrowing. I do not want to be nasty all the time, but I am compelled to point out that the previous Coalition Government ran six consecutive budget deficits—I think Peter Collins was Treasurer for one or two of them. So the Coalition managed some budget deficits as well. It was the Labor Government under Bob Carr that planned for the future, and the current Premier and Treasurer have implemented plans to extract us from the only deficit that the State has faced in 10 or 11 years. Borrowing is an essential part of any government's budget structure.

Unlike Western Australia and Queensland, New South Wales has not had the advantage of an economic boom based on minerals. There is no doubt that we have minerals to extract in this State. The Chinese and Indian markets are going gangbusters—to use a Paul Keating-ism—and undoubtedly Western Australia and Queensland have benefited as a result. However, we all know that we can dig up only so many minerals from any site before either the minerals run out or another country finds a way to extract the same minerals more cheaply. Western Australian and Queensland should be warned not to base their entire budget cycles on economic booms linked to minerals.

I think no-one would quibble with the fact that the housing boom in New South Wales generated growth. However, all housing bubbles must hit a brick wall and burst. The State's housing boom has slowed, but it needed to do that. People in ordinary suburbs—such as those in the electorates that most members represent—cannot afford to pay average house prices of \$500,000 or \$600,000. We now read expert predictions that people will have to mortgage their grandchildren's economic interests in order to secure a loan. That is certainly the case in Japan, where families take out loans that are to be repaid not by them or their children but by their grandchildren. That is a real problem.

The Federal Treasurer recently pinned the blame on the States for not releasing enough land for housing. Anyone can draw lines on a map and say, "We will release that land." But the Government is not a developer: it does not build roads, swimming pools, libraries, schools, railway stations and hospitals. We must think hard about land releases. I am advised—and I know this to be true—that there is plenty of land to be built on and developed. Land sites are available in the Bankstown municipality, for example. However, I know from my time on council that many developers wanted to build not along the Hume Highway or Chapel Street, Bankstown, but along the Georges River. So they pressured the Government through inaction and said, "We will just wait to get the best sites."

The honourable member for Cronulla may have a view about this issue. Every now and then I like to visit Cronulla, where there are some very interesting high-rise developments that mix well with ordinary housing and parks. But the developments near Northies and along the waterfront at Cronulla, north Cronulla, Wanda and Elouera do not overshadow the residences behind them. We must have a mixture of housing. Developers must recognise that they should build not just 10- and 12-storey high rises but conventional buildings for ordinary people. It is unfair of the Federal Government to pin the blame for whatever may be wrong with house prices on the release of land. Enough land has been released. If we release every bit of land available we will be telling the States to put all their funds into providing additional infrastructure that will be needed as a consequence. The New South Wales Government has borrowed enough over the next few years without assuming further risk.

As everybody knows, the budget also recognises not only that our economy is slowing but that our population is ageing. The baby boomers have hit 60. For example, Bill Clinton and his mate George Bush recently turned 60. Baby boomers never envisaged that they would be 60 one day. The budget takes account of that fact and is structured to fund hospitals and aged-care facilities. We must provide critical housing for those in our community who are still massively disadvantaged and who will never own any house, let alone those that cost the quoted median price in New South Wales. We must recognise that many of those people will depend on

a pension or some form of superannuation in their retirement. Younger people will be asked to pay more taxes for benefits expected by a generation of baby boomers.

It is predicted that by 2044 this State will be dudded about \$23 billion in today's dollars. As that is a fair way away I will not pretend that 30 years hence is a critical factor. I make the point—I am sure many Government members will make this same point in debate—that this State is still being robbed of \$3.5 billion in GST revenue. It could be argued that there is GST revenue boom and then that revenue drops off, but I believe in equity. We must prop up Tasmania and look after South Australia and the Northern Territory. If Opposition members were ever given a chance at governing New South Wales I am sure they would not like to see their State being robbed of \$3.5 billion. I am sure they would take up that issue with the Prime Minister.

Mr Malcolm Kerr: What about having a word to Peter Beattie and Alan Carpenter?

Mr ALAN ASHTON: They are going quite well. The honourable member for Cronulla would be aware that politicians at a local level have their own elections to win. If Opposition members were on the government benches I am sure they would not sit back and say, "We will cop being dudded \$3.5 billion." They would be on the telephone to John Howard and they would be saying, "Hang on. We are in government now; we want more of a share." I am sure they would get it. The Prime Minister said he would do all that he could to knock off this State Labor Government and to look after Opposition members.

He should be given credit for that, as that is not what Peter Costello is doing in Victoria. Peter Costello will not endorse anybody who wants to be Premier of Victoria. He is prepared only to endorse Steve Bracks to continue his Labor premiership of Victoria. He said nothing about the new leader, Ted Baillieu, other than, "I think I have heard of him." Ted Baillieu had to depend on former Liberal leader Jeff Kennett to say what a top bloke he was. The honourable member for Cronulla referred to politicians in other States. All I can say is that what goes around comes around. This Government recognises that much more money must be invested in infrastructure. Our population is ageing and new technology must be incorporated into service delivery. Service delivery is up 22.8 per cent and it will only increase over the next few years.

We must also look more closely at housing. I note that the chairman of the Public Bodies Review Committee is in the Chamber. That committee has been looking at housing allocation in New South Wales and at new public housing models to correct some of the schemes that were adopted when housing was built rather cheaply and certain communities in Sydney's south-west forced to live in one another's backyards. I am sure the honourable member for Campbelltown knows exactly what I am talking about. I really admire the people in those communities that are struggling. However, this Government is trying to change all that.

A healthy community requires not just a healthy body; it also requires a healthy mind and adequate and quality facilities, for example, schools, teachers, et cetera. I have a great interest in health. This year a record \$11.7 billion has been allocated to health. There is also an unprecedented increase of \$939 million over five years for mental health. As a result of the love fest that seems to occur now at meetings of the Council of Australian Governments, the State Government in concert with the Federal Government is spending much more on mental health. Behind my desk in my office I have a compactus containing all the files and records that I use daily. I am sure that all honourable members, like me, have a few personal files. I have the odd file relating to Australian Labor Party memberships and branches—issues that I do not keep a secret—as I like to know what is happening in my electorate.

The only file I keep right behind me is a mental health file in which I keep information about what the Government is trying to do and correspondence from groups or people with mental health issues. For far too long people have not identified these mental health problems and, if they have, tragically not enough money has been allocated to fix them. All honourable members are aware, as this issue is not political, that anyone who has been injured in a car accident and who has a broken leg or arm will be treated well when presenting at casualty. A tragic incident occurred last week at Bankstown hospital, the major hospital for my electorate that is located just outside it. Many people with mental health issues are not presenting at that hospital and the lives of families are ruined as young people deal with mentally ill parents, and parents deal, tragically, with mentally ill children.

I commend both the Federal and State governments for recognising that much more must be done in that area. It is not just a matter of providing more psychologists and psychiatrists; the whole community must recognise that sometimes someone's bad or inappropriate behaviour has much more to do with a mental illness than it has to do with the need to be bad, naughty or get into trouble. Sometimes people who turn to alcohol

might be suffering from mental health problems. I am sure that all honourable members agree with what I am saying as they probably all have a friend or relative who has mental health problems.

This year the Government is spending a lot more on public housing. I welcome its \$200 million allocation for housing maintenance. The respect and responsibility outlined by the Premier goes to the heart of what he said yesterday about behavioural schools for students who cannot manage their own behaviour. Last week I did some work at one of those schools where two former students of mine got the chance to push me around. They are doing quite well. A lot of students play up at school but that does not mean they are terrible tearaway students or potential criminals. I used to have fun when I dealt with those sorts of kids because I could turn them around. I could see them changing their behaviour and gaining respect for those around them. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

It is traditional for members to say something nice about their electorates. East Hills is getting its fair share of resources because of the demands my community makes and the demands I make of the Treasurer, the Government and various Ministers. I am very proud of the government schools located in my area but they are getting older. Padstow public school recently celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary and many other schools are celebrating their fiftieth anniversary, but they need new things such as toilets and security upgrades. I am proud of the fact that I was successful in achieving the installation of a security fence at Padstow Park Public School. Some of the older and more established government schools are located on very large sites and the perimeter fences around the buildings are sometimes 2½ kilometres. In the 1940s and 1950s governments provided large areas in which children could play. It could be argued today that the land that was provided was more than was needed, but kids need land on which to play.

Panania Public School and Padstow TAFE will have security fences installed around their perimeters. Horticultural facilities at Padstow TAFE, which are already under way, are estimated to cost around \$5.5 million. Everyone knows about the provision of an additional 750 police officers. An amount of \$2.85 million has been allocated for a new helicopter to be based at Bankstown airport; \$1.5 million has been allocated for an infrared imaging system that will be used to track criminals from the scene of a crime; and \$1.2 million has been allocated for additional beds at Bankstown Hospital. Ongoing funding has been provided for roads.

A good roads project in my electorate involves the bottom of River Road and Henry Lawson Drive. A narrow cutting created in the 1920s and 1930s has now been widened and the rocks have been removed. Trees overhanging Henry Lawson Drive have also been cut down which has made that area much safer. One of the problems, especially with country roads—members representing country electorates could talk about this in more detail—is that motorists can travel along those roads at 100 kilometres an hour, with massive gum trees only a metre off the road. When you hit those, as I am sure the honourable member for Clarence knows—

Mr Steve Cansdell: You stop.

Mr ALAN ASHTON: Your vehicle stops, but the momentum throws you towards the front of the car and, whether or not it is fitted with an airbag, you are in a very tricky position. So I certainly support the removal of dangerous trees. Some of these will be very healthy trees, but if they are only a metre or two off the main highway I think they have to go in the name of safety for the people, as well as livestock, travelling up and down those country roads.

In transport, this year alone \$32 million will be spent on the Revesby turnback. That work involves a total expenditure of \$100 million, but \$32 million this year. For public housing, \$4 million has been allocated to commence eight new homes in Panania and eight new homes in Bankstown. That \$4 million is to be spent on 16 homes demonstrates how expensive it is to provide public housing. It shows the difficulty in dealing with this issue. No government, of whatever persuasion, can create hundreds of millions of dollars to build the thousands of public homes that are needed.

I welcome the Alford's Point Bridge upgrade. After all, this bridge was built back in the 1970s. I am sure that members in the Sutherland area, in the electorates of Cronulla, Heathcote, Miranda and Menai, would welcome the fact that finally that bridge will have second lanes. This is a \$25 million project. Construction tenders have already been called for and announced, and the work on the project will start. I have to acknowledge that one or two people have written letters saying that they do not like the upgrade because it might create extra noise. This is one of the difficulties that all members of Parliament have to deal with. The upgrade will be welcomed by the thousands of people who need this extension to the bridge. The Bangor bypass

is brilliant, and we love it; the Woronora Bridge extension is great, and we all love that. But, when you get to Alford's Point you can go one way from two lanes. That will now be fixed up. I recognise that there will be people who will complain about the extra noise or extra traffic, but these works are all about the common good for lots of people, and for them the bridge upgrade is vitally important.

The Bankstown courthouse, which opened in May, was a \$21 million project. Tony Stewart, the member for Bankstown, and I worked very closely with then Minister for Police, Paul Whelan, and the present Minister, Bob Debus, to build the new courthouse. Nearly \$100,000 was provided recently to refurbish the oncology unit at Bankstown hospital. Nearly \$800,000 will be spent on upgrading the facilities at the Georges River National Park—largely in my electorate, which is something of a bonus. It will receive new boating facilities, new road facilities and entrance upgrades.

As we know, the State Government has indicated the cutting of five taxes, particularly the very unpopular vendor tax and the clubs tax. I and many Labor members, as well as Coalition members, recognised that these taxes—brought in by the then Premier and the then Treasurer—were not popular, and were not fair. Most of us spent the next two or three years making sure we lobbied the Government to make changes in them. I have to say that one of the advantages of having a new regime at the top of this still young, fresh and vigorous Government—led by Morris Iemma and Michael Costa—came in the recognition that those taxes, particularly vendor tax, land tax and the clubs tax, were very unfair. We have corrected that. More is to be done in WorkCover premiums, and I am aware that more stamp duty changes will be phased in.

I welcome the funding for security fencing for schools in my electorate. When I was first elected one of the big issues was that a church had indicated it intended to close down a day care centre in Padstow, in my electorate, virtually without notice. I fought that issue, with the support of the parents of the little kids that went to the day care centre. I approached the relevant Minister at the time, Carmel Tebbutt, and asked, "Is there any chance of getting some money?" We were able to get \$800,000 to build a new facility. The council came good with the land, but it took a long time to achieve those goals, in partnership with the Kindergarten Union, and in the meantime the price blew out to nearly \$2 million. There are difficulties when you have to go back to a Minister—a different Minister this time, Reba Meagher—and say, "Can you find me an extra \$1.2 million?" So I was very pleased that Minister Meagher, through her staff and the department, were able to find the extra money. That is just proof that, without bragging, through me doing my job and the Minister and the Government supporting local members in their electorates, the result is a good budget for everybody.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Malcolm Kerr.

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Third Day's Debate

Debate resumed from 6 June 2006.

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [12.25 p.m.]: In his Speech delivered in another place on 22 May 2006 His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. James Spigelman, acknowledged the celebration of the sesquicentenary of the Parliament—150 years after its opening—before going on to talk about various aspects of State administration. It is to those that I want to respond. As is appropriate, the Speech was prepared by the present Government. The Lieutenant-Governor spoke first about the economy. I am pleased that I speak after the honourable member for East Hills addressed the House, because His Excellency said:

The Government will give the highest priority to securing and strengthening the State's economic foundations.

It is a great pity that the former Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Egan, did not listen a little more attentively to his economics adviser the honourable member for East Hills in relation to compiling those budget surpluses—surpluses built on the pain and suffering of the people of New South Wales. The honourable member for East Hills likened the State to a home that has to be maintained. That is precisely the analogy drawn by the *Sydney Morning Herald*—not a right-wing paper—in an editorial that likened former Premier Carr and former Treasurer Egan to a couple of misers hoarding their gold, sitting in a house that was becoming increasingly ramshackle and in an increasingly poor state of disrepair.

The people of New South Wales have paid a very high price for the neglect of maintenance of the New South Wales economy, because we now have to undertake repair of infrastructure that should have been

maintained over the past 10 years. That maintenance will cost a great deal more money than would have been required if the infrastructure had been maintained at a time when the Opposition was drawing attention to the shortcomings in this State's infrastructure. We now have to pay 2006 prices, instead of the prices that would have been paid had these matters been attended to if we had had more diligent stewards of our economy. The Speech really is in the nature of a confession, because once again the thwarted economic adviser, the honourable member for East Hills, referred to vendor duty, describing it as unpopular. Indeed it was.

Who was responsible for the imposition of vendor duty? It was the present State Government. Vendor tax was the creation of the present State Government. The honourable member for East Hills sat in this Chamber, as did all members of the Government, when Michael Egan came into this place and defended vendor tax by saying what a great initiative it was. From memory, the honourable member for Wakehurst was escorted from the Chamber when he interjected. No member of the Government interjected to say what an unfair imposition it was. However, after the vendor tax was imposed our constituents came to us to tell us of the economic pain it was causing them. The honourable member for East Hills was quite right when he described the vendor tax is unfair. It was particularly unfair to many of his former colleagues in the teaching profession who perhaps built retirement homes down the coast as a prudent investment for the future, but who were then forced to pay vendor tax. This tax did not hit the wealthy elite, to quote the words of Michael Egan, it created economic pain and suffering right across the spectrum.

The Government says that it has abolished vendor tax and wants to take some credit for that. But it is like bashing somebody up against a brick wall and wanting them to be grateful to you when you stop bashing them. A lot of people have suffered economic hardship as a result of the economic policies of the Government. The Government's spin doctors would like us to believe that when Mr Carr resigned some men in suits went up to Mr Iemma, the current Premier, who just happened to be walking past Parliament House, and said to him, "You are a graduate of the Graham Richardson school of public administration. How would you like a new job? Mr Carr has just resigned." In fact, the current Premier was an accomplice to the decisions on vendor tax and so many other things that are the Carr legacy. He was a member of Cabinet. He was a member of the Government. He took part in, and was responsible for, decision making at either a caucus or a Cabinet level. He is not a fresh face for the Government. He was deeply entrenched in the decision-making process that resulted in the legacy of the Carr and Egan years.

His Excellency referred to cuts in workers compensation premiums—cutting them from record levels. However, we still have unfunded liability. When the Coalition was in government we restored workers benefits that had been abolished under the Unsworth Government. We restored common law rights and we had a scheme that was in surplus. We were able to cut workers compensation premiums, but we continued to provide compensation to, and justice for, all workers. As some form of class warfare it is alleged that the only people who pay land tax are the rich. But that is not true. Members on both sides of the Chamber can attest to the fact that hardworking members of their electorates bought homes or built properties when they were relatively cheap. They are asset rich with very little liquidity, but they are forced to pay outrageous land tax bills. The Government continues to impose economic pain and suffering on the people of New South Wales. His Excellency's Speech continues:

The Government will bring in legislation to abolish stamp duties on a range of transactions to ensure cheaper home loans, rental agreements and leases.

The honourable member for East Hills referred to the GST deal, which was signed by Mr Carr. The Government now wants to renege on that deal because it says that its Labor brothers in Queensland and Western Australia are receiving an unfair share of the GST. Part of the GST agreement was to abolish a series of State taxes to ensure cheaper home loans, rental agreements and leases so that a whole range of economic activity would be unshackled. Honourable members might remember that the Federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, had to bring Mr Costa screaming to an agreement to reduce the burden on the businesses of the State, businesses which, if unshackled, can create jobs for families and citizens of the State.

Planning and development is interesting from the perspective of the Sutherland shire. What input has the Government sought from Sutherland Shire Council as representatives of the people of New South Wales or the people of Sutherland shire? Has the Government asked them their views about the local environmental plan? The people of Sutherland shire do not want greater density in the shire because it will result in the congested roads and planning problems that the honourable member for East Hills noted had been avoided when he last visited Cronulla. We want to ensure that on his next visit to Cronulla he is not confronted with unsuitable development. It is about time that the Government came clean on its planning decisions for the Sutherland shire.

Page 12 of His Excellency's Speech refers to water. People in the Sutherland shire know all about desalination, another legacy of the Carr Government. The proposal for a desalination plant in response to a water crisis was totally inappropriate and wildly unpopular. Even the honourable member for Coogee is not a supporter of desalination. He said that it had not been referred to caucus. If the people of Coogee and other parts of the State feel so strongly about it, one can only imagine how strongly the people of the Sutherland shire felt when it was planned to put the desalination plant at Kurnell, the birthplace of modern Australia.

Despite the public relations and the spin doctoring on desalination, the honourable member for Coogee will be shocked to learn that the project has not been abandoned. In fact \$70 million has already been spent in pursuit of that futile dream, which is an absolute nightmare for the people of the State, particularly the residents of the Sutherland shire. The proposal for a desalination plant must be stopped. The \$70 million could have been better spent on hospitals, police or transport. The Iemma Government sought to distance itself from its predecessor, but at the same time, behind the public's collective back, the project proceeds.

Page 13 of the Speech refers to health. Despite a previous commitment, Sutherland Hospital will not get its hydrotherapy pool. It is no longer a community hospital and it no longer has a community board or community involvement. Its relationship with the St George Hospital is beset with a great deal of uncertainty. The plan is that there will no longer be a full-time general manager at Sutherland Hospital: Management will be shared between Sutherland and St George hospitals. In relation to the involvement of Sutherland shire in its own hospital, let me examine representation of Sutherland shire on the senior medical appointment review committee.

What number of surgical hours are being worked in the shire for ear, nose and throat or cardiac catheterisation procedures? What number of staff are employed to look after facilities and infrastructure? These are questions that must be answered, but there is no response to the challenges posed in His Excellency's address. To properly discuss the future of Sutherland hospital, one needs the clinical services report to be released. We need to know the services that will be available in Sutherland hospital. Despite calls for the public release of the clinical services report, it remains a State secret. I have to say that until the document is released, it will not be possible to have an informed discussion about the future of Sutherland hospital.

His Excellency's Speech refers to schools, so I inform the House that I had a meeting with representatives of the Parents and Citizens Association in Sutherland shire that was attended by the shadow Minister for Education, the honourable member for Wakehurst. The association's representatives simply catalogued the neglect that shire schools suffer under this Government. One instance is Burraneer Bay Public School. Honourable members will recollect that on a number of occasions over the years I have referred to Burraneer Bay Public School. I received a letter dated 25 August 2006 from the Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Training referring to my representations. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Parliamentary Secretary stated:

I am advised that the previous Government committed \$2.5 million to provide capital works at Burraneer Bay Public School and this Government has honoured this commitment ... I understand that a master plan was prepared during initial planning discussions with the school. This listed all desired improvements, including a hall. When detailed planning commenced, individual projects, to the value of \$2.5 million were chosen in conjunction with the school. A hall was not included in the Stage One works as it was not identified as a priority over other improvements.

I am informed that a further stage has been identified, which includes the provision of a hall, covered outdoor learning area and additional car parking ...

I also received a letter from one of the parents stating:

I am forwarding to you copies of election promises made prior to the last State election. The promises followed a long, hard fought and emotional campaign by parents which began in the year 2000. We were able to clearly establish to the then minister for Education how serious our needs were and how far below par the physical shape of the school was in.

I can testify to that because many of the representations were made through me. I thank the parents who took part, many of whose children have since left the school. The letter goes on to state:

Thankfully, now we have a new administration block for the staff and a nice new car park for the staff. Also, some classrooms have been refurbished into a library and one and a half refurbished classrooms. The library, which was for 19 years housed in a demountable, is now returned as 2 demountable classrooms. The infants' toilets which were supposedly refurbished have simply been re-surfaced and the canteen is refurbished. We don't begrudge our hard working staff new facilities at all—

that is an important point, because the staff and principal of Burraneer Bay Public School are extremely hardworking—

but there's not a lot there for the kids. The primary toilets are approximately 100 years old. Replacement toilets were to be included with the new hall and the state of these toilets is of major concern to the parents ... The parents, rightly, are angry. How can this one building and some resurfacing possibly have cost \$2.6 million? Why couldn't we have had a hall built first which has always been our first priority? It was the Department who insisted upon the order of the building works and is now we're being told bad luck. (Though neither the Minister for Education nor Premier have had the courtesy to answer over 400 ... letters that have been sent to them on the subject.

That says a lot about what is really a refurbished Government: It has a new image, but no substance at all. It is such a con job. Education is a woeful story in this State. Earlier I referred to health, and I note that no amount of Labor spin can hide the fact that the New South Wales health system is in crisis. Patients are not receiving the high standard of care they deserve. Recently a local resident who suffers from cancer phoned my office. For six weeks that person has to travel daily to the eastern suburbs to receive treatment because of a lack of radiotherapy at Sutherland hospital—the whole question of radiotherapy at Sutherland hospital is very interesting and should be examined—and a shortage at St George Hospital. That person contacted my electorate office, which in turn contacted Sutherland hospital. The staff of the hospital certainly went out of their way to assist, but they are still bound by the lack of resources at that hospital. When referring to industrial relations, His Excellency stated:

... the Government believes that a truly healthy society requires something more than the physical wellbeing of its citizens, more than good schools and health services.

A healthy society requires that people feel safe and secure in their homes, in the streets, in their jobs, protected from exploitation ...

The one area of industrial relations for which the Iemma Government certainly has responsibility is the Parliament House workplace. One would have thought that Parliament House would be a worker's paradise, a workplace that has happy staff, considering the commitments to the type of industrial relations climate that are stated in this House each time WorkChoices is referred to. However, Parliament House would not be the work choice of the staff in terms of the management of this place. This Government has the opportunity to make Parliament House a showplace of industrial relations, but what do we have? We have exploitation and mismanagement. The worst excesses of any industrial relations system are being practised and perpetuated in this place. Only yesterday Parliament House workers demonstrated in Macquarie Street against the bosses of the Iemma Government, one of whom is a former official of UnionsNSW—the Hon. Michael Costa.

The honourable member for Miranda has already derided Minister Costa as the Government's bookkeeper, but when it comes to workers he is not his brother's keeper. Under his ruthless and cruel cuts that affect workers in this place we have seen further suffering. The Government certainly does not practice what it preaches. It is appalling for the Government, which has this workplace under its total care and control, to preach to the Federal Government about justice and workers rights. In this place we have seen the most ruthless and cynical trampling of working conditions. I am glad that the workers stood up to the bosses of this Government and the way they have treated this workplace. I turn now to page 18 of His Excellency's Speech dealing with police and law and order, which states:

The right to live in safe communities—free of fear and threat of crime—is another fundamental requirement of social well-being.

And so say all of us! However, that is certainly not the experience of people in my electorate. Ten years ago the Cronulla police station was fully manned, with more than 50 officers. On a number of occasions in this House I have read a speech by former Deputy Police Commissioner, Geoff Schuberg, outlining policing in Cronulla. Previously Cronulla had its own patrol command; it is now incorporated into the Miranda Local Area Command. Our police are extremely hardworking; however, unfortunately, they do not have the necessary resources, nor is there an undertaking in the budget or in His Excellency's Speech to upgrade the Cronulla police station or for the provision of additional policing.

The right to live in a safe community, free of fear and the threat of crime is another fundamental requirement of social wellbeing. Not long ago the Parliamentary Secretary for Police, the honourable member for Bankstown, referred to the incidents and reprisal raids at Cronulla. We are now at the end of August and the Government is now introducing legislation to deal with gangs. Why was that legislation not in place before December 2005? The formation of gangs is not something that suddenly happened in August 2006; they have been around for a long time. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Police said, the legislation will be effective in dealing with gangs—so why was that legislation not in place before December 2005? The Parliamentary

Secretary for Police referred also to the police promotion system. The former Minister for Police had advisers, including Geoff Schuberg and Tim Priest. I wonder whether they were consulted about the finished product for the police promotion system, which is central to effective policing in this State.

I refer now to public transport, and the duplicity with the duplication of the Cronulla railway line and a number of relevant issues, to which I have referred previously. In a letter dated 3 July 2006 to the Minister for Transport, I referred to representations from constituents concerning the provision of noise barriers and vibration controls for affected dwellings in my electorate. I referred also to the need for essential noise mitigation barriers for people living in Woollooware. I am still awaiting a reply. Residents are entitled to have a peaceful life, the sort of life that is envisaged in His Excellency's Speech. Residents are entitled also to live free from the fear of noise and to be able to have a peaceful domestic life. Those are some of the issues that need to be addressed.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Graham West.

[Mr Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 12.57 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

MISS WORLD AUSTRALIA MS SABRINA HOUSSAMI

Mr SPEAKER: I welcome to the public gallery Ms Sabrina Houssami, Miss World Australia. Ms Houssami will represent Australia in the Miss World Pageant to be held in Warsaw, Poland, during September. The Miss World Pageant has a television viewing audience of 2.8 billion people. Ms Houssami has raised \$1.2 million for charity as part of the quest. She is a constituent of a very proud Tony Stewart, member for Bankstown, and is here as his guest today.

PETITIONS

Pensioner Travel Voucher Booking Fee

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

Hornsby and Berowra Train Station Parking Facilities

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

Bus Service 311

Petition praying that the Government urgently improve bus service 311 to make it more frequent and more reliable, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Bus Service 352

Petition requesting extension of bus service 352 to operate on nights and weekends, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Edgecliff Interchange Upgrade

Petition requesting the upgrading of Edgecliff interchange, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pets on Public Transport

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

CountryLink Rail Services

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

Whale Protection in Australian Waters

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

Snowy Hydro Limited Sale

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

Newnes and Ben Bullen State Forests Trail Bike Activities

Petition requesting trail bike activities be moved from Newnes and Ben Bullen State Forests to Sunny Corner pine plantation, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Gardens of Stone Reserve

Petition requesting the reservation of the Gardens of Stone stage two park proposal to preserve the area's outstanding scenic, historic, scientific and recreational value, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Rural and Regional Police Resources

Petition calling upon the Iemma Government to allocate more police resources to rural and regional communities throughout New South Wales, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Police Resources

Petition requesting increased police resources for New South Wales, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Nambucca Policing

Petition requesting a permanent 24-hour police station at Nambucca, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Holbrook Public School

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

Colo High School Airconditioning

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

Parkinson's Disease Funding

Petition requesting funding for Parkinson's-specific support services for people living with Parkinson's disease, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Breast Screening Funding

Petition requesting funding for BreastScreen NSW, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Sutherland Hospital Management

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

Sunflower House, Wagga Wagga

Petition requesting funding to facilitate the operation of Sunflower House, Wagga Wagga, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Lightning Ridge Water Fluoridation

Petition praying that the House prohibit Walgett Shire Council from fluoridating Lightning Ridge artesian basin bore, received from **Mr Ian Slack-Smith**.

Cammeray Open Space Rezoning

Petition opposing the rezoning of 2 Vale Street, Cammeray, from open space to residential C, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

Community-based Preschools

Petitions requesting increased funding to community-based preschools to maintain parity with preschools administered by the Department of Education and Training, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire** and **Ms Marianne Saliba**.

Private Native Forestry

Petition requesting a review of the draft code of practice for private native forestry, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

Recreational Fishing

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

Alcohol Wet Centres

Petition requesting the establishment of wet centres in the inner city to provide a safe place for chronic drinkers, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Inner City Bicycle Lanes

Petition requesting dedicated bicycle facilities for the entire length of William Street, and on Craigend Street and Kings Cross Road, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag, Traffic Conditions

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

Grafton Bridge

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

East Richmond Railway Station Carpark Access

Petition requesting cancellation of fines imposed on passengers using the East Richmond railway station level crossing to gain access to the carpark, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Bells Line of Road

Petition requesting improvements to sign posting, sealing of road shoulders, and removal of dead and overhanging foliage on the Bells Line of Road, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Cross City Tunnel

Petition requesting government decisions concerning the Cross City Tunnel be based on the public interest, received from the **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Forster-Tuncurry Cycleways

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

Department of Housing Graffiti Removal

Petition requesting that the Department of Housing co-ordinate the removal within 24 hours of graffiti on its property being reported to the department's contact centre and monitor known graffiti hot spots to ensure immediate removal, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Reordering of General Business**

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [2.25 p.m.]: I move:

That General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 25 have precedence on Thursday 31 August 2006.

The motion for which I seek precedence reads:

That this House:

- (1) notes that it is the Government's intention to massively increase water extraction from the Shoalhaven River.
- (2) calls on the Government to seriously commit to water recycling, re-use and water reclamation initiatives so as to reduce Sydney's growing reliance on the Shoalhaven River.
- (3) notes the environmental stress already evident along the Shoalhaven River and the effects of this on the oyster and prawn industries in the area.

This motion must take precedence tomorrow because we need to debate this issue urgently. The Premier, the Minister for the Environment and the squawking member for Kiama must have an opportunity to justify the claims they have made that massively increasing water extraction from the Shoalhaven River will be good for the environment. I invite them to come into the Chamber tomorrow and justify those statements. I gave notice of my intention to move this motion on 23 May this year. Much has happened since then, not the least of which is the Premier's announcement in August that he would build tunnels to take even more water from the Shoalhaven River—30 billion litres more—making a total of 110 billion litres of water that he intends to siphon from the river. In addition, in one week in August 78 per cent of Sydney's water supply came from the Shoalhaven River. In the following week 82 per cent of Sydney's supply came from the Shoalhaven River. It is time to debate the matter urgently.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for South Coast has the call.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: We must hear from the Government as to why it has given up on serious recycling initiatives, why it now intends to entrench its reliance on the Shoalhaven River forever and why it has absolutely no plans, after ducking and weaving on desalination, aquifers and increasing the height of Tallowa Dam. The Government has come full circle and settled on massive extractions from the Shoalhaven River. The Government will destroy this beautiful, fragile river if it continues in the present vein. I invite the Premier, the Minister and the squawking member for Kiama to attend my rally on 17 September.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for South Coast has the call.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: I challenge them to tell the citizens why they think this will be good for the environment. People do not trust or believe the honourable member for Kiama and they do not trust the Government.

Mr CARL SCULLY (Smithfield—Minister for Police) [2.28 p.m.]: We now have a policy from the Opposition: If elected, it will ban water transfers from the Shoalhaven River. Those opposite have no idea the grief that will cause the four million residents of Sydney. What a bizarre commitment!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Police has the call.

Mr CARL SCULLY: The Government is happy to debate this policy madness. We are happy to talk proudly about our recycling and water conservation initiatives—and Opposition members will hear more about them tomorrow. On this occasion I am happy to tell the honourable member for South Coast that she has made the case, first, that she is stupid and, second, that we will debate the issue.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

JOHN LEWTHWAITE PAROLE

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is directed to the Minister for Police, who said:

When [Lewthwaite] comes out he is going to kill again. I have a four-year-old son and I am worried. This bloke lived in my area and I am very worried. He should not be released and something ought to be done about it.

Given the Minister's statement, has he instructed police to notify residents of Lewthwaite's old and new address?

Mr CARL SCULLY: Liberal Party research has to be a little more careful. This is one element of its research:

Papers to see: Scully's clips; newspaper from 1992-94; articles regarding Lewthwaite.

It is a bit obvious.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr CARL SCULLY: The views I held then in relation to John Lewthwaite are the views I hold now. He is a disgusting—

[Interruption]

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

Mr CARL SCULLY: I think the House is entitled to know the history of the role of the Coalition in allowing that individual to escape incarceration. The laws passed by the Liberal Party in the early part of its last administration enabled John Lewthwaite's sentence to change from a sentence of for the term of his natural life to a determinate sentence. What is a determinate sentence? It enabled this ratbag to go back to the Supreme Court, to the same judge that sentenced him for the term of his natural life, and get a 20-year sentence. The Coalition let him out, so the Leader of the Opposition should not come along today—

[Interruption]

They do not know the history. He should go through the parliamentary debates. Members of the Coalition beat their chests and went to the 1991 election and said, "Aren't we tough on laws!" Members of the Opposition cannot pretend in the House that they do not have dirty hands in relation to Mr Lewthwaite. He was the person who John Fahey and his cohorts, some of whom were backbenchers then and who are now shadow Ministers, were going to prepare for day leave. When I had been a backbencher for approximately a year Gwen Hanns came to me and said, "The Fahey Government is going to let out Lewthwaite because it wants to prepare him for parole. They want to release him into the community; they are getting him ready for the day when he has to leave." I said, "Why does he have to leave?" It is because the Government introduced determinate sentences and he got a 20-year sentence. He has been let out of gaol because of the legislation—

[Interruption]

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: The community takes it seriously even if Frank Sartor doesn't.

Mr SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr Peter Debnam: My point of order is relevance. The police Minister said he was very worried. He had a four-year-old child; he was very worried. What have you done—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question of the Minister for Police and the Minister is answering that question precisely.

Mr CARL SCULLY: The House now knows why John Lewthwaite was released. When in government the New South Wales Liberal Party facilitated statutory changes that enabled him to take advantage of its soft laws. In relation to his bail for this particular offence I have asked the commissioner to see whether it can be revoked.

Mr Peter Debnam: When?

Mr CARL SCULLY: I asked for that advice most recently. Child protection is of great concern. The Leader of the Opposition is nothing more than a populist hack. All he is interested in is peddling a line that might sound good in the morning newspapers and on talkback radio. The Government has been particularly tough with the child protection register.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: This Attorney-General said he would be surrounded—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition once again needs to be advised that this is question time. It is not the opportunity for a second reading debate. If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to move a motion there are other methods for him to do so. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Minister has the call.

Mr CARL SCULLY: The child protection register is a very important process. People who are convicted of these sorts of heinous crimes go onto the register on release. The Government amended the register—the amendments came into effect on 30 September—by introducing new measures that require police to be told whether offenders have unsupervised contact with children or have affiliations with clubs or organisations that have child membership. Offenders on the register are also now required to report annually. To ensure monitoring, the Government and the community quite reasonably expect police to know where registered persons live and work, what cars they drive and what they do from time to time. The simplistic, opportunistic, populist agenda of the Leader of the Opposition is to say, "Let us put on the front page of the daily newspapers where these individuals live." I have no truck with these animals. In fact, if that were the best thing for the community I would say, "Do it", but it is not.

Mr Peter Debnam: Put him back in gaol! You can do it!

Mr CARL SCULLY: No. The question was in relation to telling all and sundry where these individuals live. The only thing that would happen then—

Mr Peter Debnam: Put him in gaol!

Mr CARL SCULLY: He is not in gaol because you let him out!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Opposition will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr CARL SCULLY: Perhaps for the benefit of newer members, I should say that I cannot believe—rewind 14 years—that I am going to the Serious Offenders Review Council at Long Bay with Gwen Hanns and her family, having to put a case to keep this animal in gaol because of laws the Coalition passed a few years before. What did they do? Members of the Coalition hung their heads in shame, as they should have. How dare the Leader of the Opposition suggest that I want anything other than to have this animal locked up in gaol!

The Premier has announced a change to the Bail Act, a very good initiative, which will provide a presumption against bail for a person on parole charged with offences of this nature, and other offences. I conclude by saying it is important to take into account that as attractive and simplistic as it may be to put up

banners and electronic signs and to put advertisements in newspapers about where these individuals live—that may make the Leader of the Opposition feel better—what will then happen is that these people will disappear. They will not be detectable. They will go underground and that is not in the best interests of the community.

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

YOUNG WORKERS PROTECTION

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to better protect young and vulnerable workers?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I commend the honourable member for Drummoyne for her interest in the protection of workers, particularly young workers. The question is indeed relevant in light of the WorkChoices laws, which are so bad for workers and their families. Since their introduction in March the New South Wales Office of Industrial Relations has received more than 82,000 calls from workers and businesses being hurt by the changes—workers losing hard-won entitlements and conditions, workers stripped of holiday pay and penalty rates, workers demeaned and threatened with the sack. Despite the more than 82,000 victims of the Liberals' WorkChoices laws, we have had not one word in their defence from the Leader of the Opposition—just a cold-hearted pledge to sack 29,000 New South Wales government workers and put them on the scrapheap.

It is not just workers who are being hurt by WorkChoices. Small business owners also are calling the Office of Industrial Relations, confused and frustrated by the red tape and extra costs imposed by WorkChoices. In fact, a recent survey by small business software and service provider MYOB found that most small businesses believe WorkChoices is unfair and damaging to their communities. So even small businesses have cottoned on. Only 9 per cent of those surveyed said they planned to use any part of the WorkChoices legislation—despite small business being put forward as one of the needs for this legislation—and only 10 per cent believed the laws would improve business productivity in any way. WorkChoices is bad for workers, bad for business and bad for New South Wales.

I can advise the honourable member for Drummoyne that the Government is doing everything in its powers to protect New South Wales from the Liberals' WorkChoices laws. Last year we introduced new laws to protect front-line public servants, such as nurses, firefighters and ambulance officers from WorkChoices. Today I am proud to announce that the Government will introduce new laws to protect the 150,000 young people under the age of 18 years who are in formal employment in this State. Today, in the public gallery are three such hard-working young people, Joel, John and Christy, who will benefit from these new laws. The Government is determined to protect young workers because, unlike our opponents, we do not believe in an Australia where employers can exploit children and young people—hence our legislation to protect young workers from exploitation. The choice is clear: under us, protection for young workers; under them, 29,000 sackings and WorkChoices all round.

Today I announce the latest part of our plan to protect workers and families from WorkChoices—our legislation is based on the State's constitutional power to protect young people. Young people on State or Federal awards will be protected by stringent minimum conditions. Wages and conditions will have to be at least at the level provided by New South Wales awards and legislation. Young workers will not have to bargain individually to maintain their existing penalties, allowances, training pay and training leave. Young people will have access to the services provided by the New South Wales Office of Industrial Relations, and they will be able to get information about their employment rights—we believe they should still have those rights—and receive help to enforce their entitlements.

When that bill comes before the Parliament it will afford another opportunity for the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues to show whether they back the families and young people of New South Wales, or whether once again they will squib the chance to stand up for the people that they allegedly represent. As we know, the record of Coalition members on standing up for workers and their families is pathetic. When asked to support this Government's High Court challenge, the Leader of the Opposition is on record as replying:

Yes...no...um...I've got no comment on that.

When asked if he would keep the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission or shut it down, he responded:

We'll spell that out later in the year.

We are still waiting. But on one industrial relations issue there can be no doubt about where the Leader of the Opposition stands, and that is to sack 29,000 workers. The Leader of the Opposition was desperately backtracking on the 29,000 sackings, claiming that the 29,000 was "not my figure"—as was recorded in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. That is despite the fact that that number and even higher numbers have been repeatedly reported as Coalition policy. I am happy to share the record with the House. I quote from Radio ABC Riverina of 16 March this year:

The 29,000 came about because of our calculation of the number of bureaucrats.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 22 February this year said that the Leader of the Opposition's:

... broad strategy is to cut the 300,000-strong public service by 10 per cent.

And 10 per cent of 300,000 is 30,000. Further, in November of last year we had this from *Club Life*—

Mr Andrew Stoner: Is this what you are getting for your \$4 million media monitoring package?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: No wonder there is confusion whether it is 29,000 or 30,000.

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

Mr Andrew Stoner: You spend \$4 million on media monitoring, yet you are sacking staff in Parliament House. You are a hypocrite.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: And the Leader of The Nationals wants the food subsidy brought back! *Club Life* reported:

... Every year a little over 30,000 people leave the public sector ... if you were to implement a freeze on the bureaucrats and replace that person from within, you'd immediately be saving more than \$2.3 million a day.

So there is the Coalition's plan: to cut 29,000, or 30,000, public sector jobs, despite the audit released in February finding that more than 80 per cent of workers in the service are in frontline service, and a further 7½ per cent are in essential support roles.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the Opposition will stop calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Some 80 per cent of the State's public sector are in frontline service; another 7.5 per cent are essential support to frontline services staff, which leaves 33,000 workers who could be the target of cuts by the Leader of the Opposition. He has confirmed that it is 29,000, but on other occasions he has confirmed that it is 30,000. He accepts that 80 per cent of the 300,000 are in frontline service provision and he accepts that another 7.5 per cent provide essential support to them, so the pool from which he will get 29,000 is 33,000. If that is not his number then somebody must be going around the radio stations of the State impersonating the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Whether he gets the 29,000 from the back office or through natural attrition, it does not add up. What does add up is that to get anywhere near the 29,000, frontline nurses, teachers and police will have to be targeted.

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND AREA HEALTH SERVICE PATHOLOGY CASES REVIEW

Mr ANDREW STONER: I direct my question without notice to the Premier. As he was made aware in 2004, when he was Minister for Health, that pathologist Dr Farid Zaer had been sacked from Wollongong Hospital for "significant diagnostic variation", why did he endanger the lives of rural and regional patients by failing to notify the Hunter New England Area Health Service until mid 2005 that there had been a problem?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Hunter New England Area Health Service undertook a review of 7,432 pathology cases from patients in the New England area taken between November 1999 and December 2001. The review was undertaken to investigate the accuracy of reports, after concerns were raised in another area health service regarding the accuracy of reporting of a pathologist who was employed at the time. The Minister for

Health and the chief executive of the area health service announced the outcomes of the review last Friday, as the Leader of The Nationals would be well aware. Both the Minister and the chief executive have apologised unreservedly to the affected patients, their families and their friends.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The question was quite clear. It was about a time when the Premier was the Minister for Health and he failed to notify Hunter New England.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of The Nationals asked the Premier a specific question and the Premier is answering that question. The Leader of The Nationals cannot take a point of order merely because he does not like the answer. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: This was a major clinical review of approximately 55,000 slides from 7,432 pathology tests re-examined by three independent pathology laboratories. I am advised that of the 7,432 tests re-examined the reviewers found no significant difference from the original result in 97 per cent of the cases. Further, in 179 cases the reviewers found significant variations from the original result.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: However, this has had no clinical impact on the care or treatment the patients received. I am advised that in 38 cases the reviewers found an error in the original diagnosis and an accurate diagnosis, if known at the time, might have resulted in the patient receiving different care. I am advised that six of those people have passed away. As has been indicated already, that is a tragedy, as is any death. However, the chief executive of the area health service and the chief executive of the Clinical Excellence Commission advised that it is not possible to state that these deaths are the result of the original diagnosis. I am further advised that the health service has spoken to the doctors of all patients where a significant variation was detected and, in conjunction with the doctors, the health service has been able to contact all but four of the patients—none of those four is in the group where there has been any clinical impact.

I am further advised that the chief executive of Hunter New England Area Health Service has written and apologised to the affected patients and their families. In the vast majority of patients affected by the review, more than 7,000, the reviewing pathologist found no significant variation between the current report and the original report. I am further advised that the chief executive of the area health service is currently sending letters to all of those patients to confirm the results of their pathology tests. I am further advised that throughout the course of the review, the area health service has made clinical and mental health staff available to support patients and their families, as needed. A hotline established when the review commenced in March has received almost 200 calls. The hotline—1800 756 343—will continue to operate for the next few months to answer any ongoing queries.

I can also advise that the New South Wales Department of Health warned the Federal Department of Health and Ageing that the doctor was under investigation. The Director General of Health wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing on 16 March 2006 stating that New South Wales Health had received information that the doctor was also employed in private pathology service. The director general's letter stated that, while he has access to information that can confirm the private activities, including pathology, the doctor may have been involved in, he is also the regulator of private pathology providers. The director general's letter indicated that the Federal department could contact NSW Health or the medical board for further assistance. I am advised that neither the NSW Health nor the medical board has had contact from the Department of Health and Ageing and, therefore, I cannot provide further information to the House on what action they may have taken.

CRIME STATISTICS

Mr STEVEN CHAYTOR: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Police. What is the latest information on crime statistics and related matters in New South Wales?

Mr CARL SCULLY: Crime statistics were released today by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and they are very good news for the people of New South Wales. However, it is very bad news for the Opposition. Members of the Opposition love it when crime figures go up: they uncork the champagne and they celebrate. The good news for the people of New South Wales is that crime has fallen, or remains stable, in all 17 categories over two years since 30 June 2004. The figures are even better if we go back five years. Since 30

June five years ago crime has fallen in 10 categories, it has remained stable in five and it has shown a small rise in just one. The statistics are fantastic and unquestionably good news, and a credit to NSW Police.

The honourable member for Lane Cove is impressed with the figures. I see he has a view on this matter. Do honourable members know that he did not turn up for work the other day for Pollies for Small Business? I am very worried. Aristocrat Coffee House in Lane Cove said that it was expecting him for the annual Pollies for Small Business on Friday, but he rang in sick. Robbo—not John Robertson—had every intention of turning up for work but it all flew out the window. Kevin Andrews was seen hovering around the Parliament earlier today, but if I were the honourable member for Lane Cove, I would be hiding because he knows that under WorkChoices people are sacked, dismembered, fined, sent to prison, or all of those things. I urge the honourable member for Lane Cove to phone 131 628 and check his rights. He should not interject any more while I am talking or he will cop it.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to the answer.

Mr CARL SCULLY: Members opposite think they can interject with impunity. Yesterday we heard that the Leader of the Opposition used to be a gym instructor. If Debnam was a gym instructor, Andrew Stoner must be the dumbbell. Members opposite spend all their time criticising the police or constantly attacking the Commissioner of Police. Take for example the disgusting behaviour recently when the Leader of the Opposition called the Commissioner of Police a clown. That is absolutely disgraceful.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mr CARL SCULLY: The Leader of the Opposition can call me whatever he likes, but I heard him call the Commissioner of Police a clown. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to endear himself to the police, my advice to him is that that is not the way to go about it. The Commissioner of Police is a man who has 41 years experience in the NSW Police. He is a man of great stature and good character and integrity who has been giving his all for four decades to the New South Wales community. When the history of this place is written, Ken Moroney will be writ large in it, but the Leader of the Opposition will not rate a footnote. I remember doing footnotes when I used to write essays, and the Leader of the Opposition in the history of this Parliament will not even be mentioned at the bottom of a footnote. So many crime categories have decreased in the past five years that I barely have time to list them. Do honourable members want to hear them?

Mr Alan Ashton: Yes.

Mr CARL SCULLY: They do.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government backbenchers should not encourage the Minister for Police.

Mr CARL SCULLY: I want members of the Opposition to prepare their press releases. They always hop into us when matters go awry, so I think we should reorder the agenda. I want everyone to get excited about this information and put out press releases in communities, but I do not want any lying, cheating, or mischievous deceptions.

[Interruption]

The honourable member for Clarence should keep quiet while I am speaking. Motor vehicle theft has decreased by 12.4 per cent. Robbery with a firearm has decreased by 10.1 per cent. I hope that the honourable member for Clarence was not involved in any of that type of activity when he was a young man. Robbery without a firearm decreased by 7.9 per cent. Robbery with a weapon that is not a firearm decreased by 10.4 per cent. For the benefit of the Opposition, just in case they need it, I point out that the incidences in all these categories of crime have decreased. There is more: Breaking and entering of a dwelling decreased by 9.8 per cent. Breaking and entering of a non-dwelling decreased by 12.9 per cent. Murder decreased by 5.1 per cent. Stealing from a motor vehicle decreased by 10.3 per cent. Stealing from a retail store decreased by 3.3 per cent. Stealing from a dwelling decreased by 6 per cent.

All those categories of crime have gone down, down, down. What does the Leader of the Opposition do? Does he contact the Commissioner of Police and say, "Well done, police; well done, Commissioner"? No,

he says, "Commissioner, you're a clown." I think the community has just about come to the view that the Leader of The Opposition is unfit for office. I think anyone who treats a Commissioner of Police in that manner ought to be treated with contempt and disgust because that is how I treat such remarks. I think these figures reflect extremely well on the NSW Police. On behalf of the Government side of the House, I say to the men and women of NSW Police, "Thank you very much for a job well done."

CONCORD HOSPITAL DRIVER TRAFFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I direct my question to the Premier. Given the failure of Concord hospital to submit a report to police about the traffic accident involving a driver from Concord hospital in which 91-year-old Elsie Passmore was injured and subsequently died, will he now end the culture of cover-up and spin that reigns in his health department?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I thank the honourable member for North Shore for her question and advise that Elsie Passmore passed away at Concord hospital on the weekend. I take this opportunity to extend my sincere condolences to her immediate family and to her extended family. With regard to the issues that have been raised today by the Opposition, I make three points. First, families have a right to information relating to the treatment and circumstances of their loved ones. Second, hospitals have an obligation to keep families appropriately informed. Third, I am advised that a full and thorough investigation of these matters has been instigated. It is the obligation of the health service and the hospital to ensure that the Passmore family is involved and informed of progress on and the outcomes of the investigation. I have asked the Minister for Health to ensure that this occurs and to report back to the Parliament with any relevant information arising from the investigation.

WATER SAVINGS FUND

Mr PAUL PEARCE: I address my question without notice to the Minister for Water Utilities. Will he outline to the House what the New South Wales Government is doing to boost recycling using the \$130 million Water Savings Fund?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I thank the honourable member for Coogee for his question and for his interest in water conservation and recycling. I was with him at Bronte recently where we met with the local council about its water savings plans. I appreciate his question. I am pleased to inform the House that this morning the Premier and I announced the first successful projects in the second round of the New South Wales Government's Water Savings Fund. More than \$24 million will be allocated to 41 new water savings projects in this round. Together both rounds will save 4.5 billion litres of water a year.

The Water Savings Fund is one of a number of initiatives in the Government's Metropolitan Water Plan to encourage recycling. Of the 41 projects announced this morning, 23 will recycle and reuse water. The Government has allocated \$17 million to get recycling projects off the ground, saving 2.3 billion litres of water a year. The Water Savings Fund is stimulating investment across the industrial, commercial and government sectors. Two of the most exciting projects in the second round of the Water Savings Fund intercept effluent from the ocean outfalls at Manly and Cronulla for its reuse on parks, gardens and golf courses. These projects will recycle and save 550 million litres of water a year. They will provide a reliable and permanent irrigation water supply for Manly and Sutherland councils—which, I might point out, are our partners in this project.

Honourable members have probably heard that the failed company director opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, and his sidekicks have been talking about putting a plug in our ocean outfalls. Honourable members may have heard his fanciful plan simply to turn the outfalls around. This would add more than \$4 billion to the Peter meter and would mean, because there will be no other use for the 1,000 million litres of treated water discharged through the outfalls on a dry day, that people would have to drink recycled sewage. As soon as I pointed out that the failed company director was all at sea and that his pledge was fantasy, he scaled back the pledge and said that he would close just one of the ocean outfalls in his first term. However, when pressed on just how he would do this in an interview by ABC Illawarra on 24 July this year, he was all at sea again.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: What this community expects of this Government is bold action.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition must state his point of order, not debate the issue. Again he seems to be unaware that this is question time, not a second reading debate. The Minister has the call. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Peter Hand on ABC Illawarra asked the Leader of the Opposition a series of questions. In one answer during that interview the Leader of the Opposition said he had pledged to turn back the ocean outfalls, asked for bids to turn back the ocean outfalls, aimed to close off one of the outfalls in his first term of government, and committed to turning this stuff around. The Leader of the Opposition does not have a clue about what he will do because in one interview he gave four different positions.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has the call.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: When the baffled interviewer asked him whether this was an aim or a promise, the drowning Leader of the Opposition could manage only—

[Interruption]

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The drowning Leader of the Opposition could only say, "Oh, gee, Peter, if you're going to ridicule something ..." I inform the Leader of the Opposition that the interviewer was not ridiculing anything; the Leader of the Opposition could not make it clear whether it was an aim, a promise, a commitment or an incoherent rambling. It is a bit like what we have heard of the incoherent ramblings of the Leader of the Opposition over the past 24 hours or so concerning his credibility. First, he said he owned and operated a gym. He then took that off his official curriculum vitae. He then said that the gym was in Melbourne. He then said maybe it was a squash court. Then, despite being the owner-operator, he said he could not remember what it was called. The Leader of the Opposition is the Justice Einfeld of the fitness industry.

I return to the important issue of recycling. In the meantime, Opposition members have been running around their communities in the Sydney area getting their hopes up that their outfall will be the one to close. When pressed on which outfalls the Government would shut the Leader of The Nationals told the *Manly Daily* this week, "We will leave it open at this stage but what we are saying is that one of them will close." The Opposition does not know which one. There is constant confusion between the Leader of The Nationals, who is based in Sydney and who has a focus on Sydney issues, and the Leader of the Opposition. Opposition members are saying once again that they have been caught out. They have been caught out making promises without doing any homework or having any idea of the cost. My advice to the communities of Manly, Cronulla and other areas in which Opposition members are making hollow promises is: Do not believe them because they are all at sea. My advice to members opposite is: Take up the Premier's very generous promises amnesty.

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Members opposite can trade in millions of dollars of unrealistic commitments and receive a pardon, no questions asked. Treasury mathematicians have put down their calculators and put the abacus into mothballs but the clock is ticking. At the end of the estimates hearings, whatever has not been withdrawn or refined will stand as the Opposition's official spending commitment.

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: As the Premier said yesterday, \$20 billion is unachievable but that \$20 billion has gone up by \$4 billion with the Opposition's proposal to live in fantasyland and close the ocean outfalls. This is the Opposition's one big chance to come clean and admit to its fiscal delinquency.

Mr Malcolm Kerr: Point of order: The Minister's answer is no longer responsive to the question. He is simply recycling the Premier's answer given yesterday.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is answering the question. However, I ask him to bring his answer to an end.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I suspect and trust that the honourable member for Cronulla will welcome the announcement of the Government's funding to Sutherland Shire Council to ensure recycling of ocean effluent in his electorate, in partnership with Sutherland Shire Council. I trust that the honourable member for Cronulla will support that and not be involved in the glib one-liners just to put a plug in it because that will not work.

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

INVERELL LINKING TOGETHER CENTRE

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading, representing the Minister for Housing. Will the Minister confirm funding details from the Department of Housing for the Linking Together Centre based at Inverell?

Ms DIANE BEAMER: The honourable member for Northern Tablelands has worked tirelessly to ensure that the Linking Together Centre is a success. I know that the Minister for Housing visited the Linking Together Centre last year. That centre is now used as a shining example of what can be achieved when communities take responsibility for their own future. The honourable member for Northern Tablelands expressed concern about funding for the community development worker. I am pleased to inform the honourable member that the Government will continue to provide that funding which will allow the invaluable work that is done with tenants on the estate to continue.

The Department of Housing will provide an additional \$25,000, taking the Government's total contribution to \$75,000, which will include funding to help meet the cost of running the centre. That is the value that the Government places on work done by our staff. Under the reckless policy of the Leader of the Opposition of 29,000 or 30,000 job cuts, positions such as that are under threat. The Leader of the Opposition has yet to say which staff from the Department of Housing he would let go and which he would keep. He continues to live down to our expectations.

Like many estates south Inverell was dogged by crime and social misbehaviour, but we have made real progress thanks to the work of people such as Jeanette Baumann, the community development officer who works closely with tenants on the South Inverell estate. As a result of work done in that position a strong and successful tenants group has been set up providing local leadership and driving the new direction that the community has taken. Employment generation programs have been conducted involving training for residents in computer skills, publishing skills, and TAFE courses in home maintenance and landscaping. The residents association set up its own employment projects such as lawn mowing, laundering and ironing businesses run by and for the locals.

The Department of Housing awarded a contract to the lawn mowing business to maintain the grounds for four blocks of units within Inverell. The residents association also conducts healthy eating, cooking and sewing classes. Work on the physical environment included a range of resident activities such as clean-up projects, gardening competitions and the establishment of a well-supported community garden. Residents also renovated local parkland, building and maintaining a local children's play area that had suffered from years of vandalism and misuse. Locals also help with painting and fencing and building work that provides them with skills training. Under the umbrella of community capacity building—something about which the Opposition has no understanding—residents have been empowered to make choices about the future of their community.

Regular activities include resident-focused activities, newspapers and flyers. Police in the area agreed to conduct beat controls and this has developed closer relationships with residents. The Linking Together Centre, originally a house on the estate, was opened—I believe by the local member—and quickly became a focal point for the local community and services. Today the Department of Corrective Services and probation and parole, in partnership with the South Inverell Residents Association, run local programs that allow local people to serve their community hours on the estate; the area health service runs a midwife and women's health service from the centre; a local resident and community leader produce "Dreamtime", an Aboriginal focused radio program each Sunday on local radio; and many more activities are conducted in the estate program.

All this hard work by residents has achieved some remarkable changes to South Inverell housing estate. Incidents of vandalism, nuisance and annoyance have decreased markedly, causing far less demand on police and resulting in a return to a normal community. Stability has returned to the estate, all of the homes are now let and vacancy turnover rates are low. Residents have indicated that this is a place in which they want to live and a comment by a resident in the local newspaper sums up their feelings:

People were afraid to leave their homes because there was so much animosity in the area. Today things have changed greatly. With the help of the Department of Housing, Council and a community development plan, it is a privilege to live in the area.

I think this, by any measure, is an extraordinary achievement. I congratulate the honourable member for Northern Tablelands, Jeanette Baumann, the Department of Housing, Inverell Council and, most importantly, the tenants who live on the estate who have done so much to help themselves.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITY CONTRACTS

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY: My question without notice is to the Minister for Community Services. Will the Minister update the House on what action the Government is taking to make irresponsible parents meet their obligations to their children?

Ms REBA MEAGHER: I am sure every member of this House would agree that the most important duty parents have is to provide a safe and loving environment for their children, a place where kids can learn and play, and try to maximise their potential. Parents have a duty of care to nurture and protect their children and ensure they grow up in an environment where respect and responsibility are a part of everyday life. The building of respect for authority and goodwill towards other members of our community needs to begin at an early age. The overwhelming majority of parents in New South Wales do the right thing but, sadly, there are those who do not. The truth is that some parents are indifferent to the welfare of their children while others are downright cruel. Too many children are exposed to drug and alcohol abuse, poor parenting or neglect. We are always looking for new ways to improve the system and, today, the Government will introduce a bill to create parent responsibility contracts. It represents a new direction to ensure parents meet their obligations when it comes to their children because all kids deserve the best possible start in life.

Parent responsibility contracts are being introduced for parents who are known to the Department of Community Services [DOCS] for failing to meet their basic obligations to their children. They are part of the Iemma Government's respect and responsibility plan. If the Department of Community Services suspects that a child is at risk of harm due to the behaviour of one or more parents the department will seek an agreement with these parents as set out in a parent responsibility contract. The contracts will require parents to improve their parenting skills and accept greater responsibility for their children. Parents will be required to enter into a contract for a period of six months and the contracts will be registered in the Children's Court. Parent responsibility contracts may require a parent to actively participate in a range of programs, including: positive parenting programs to better equip parents with life skills and behaviour management programs, to ensure parents learn to manage their anger rather than unleashing it on their children, or parents may be required to attend a treatment program for drug and alcohol abuse.

Parent responsibility contracts are about assisting parents to meet their obligations and build on the strengths of a family. But for those who simply refuse to do the right thing and continue to place their children at risk of harm these contracts will be enforceable through the Children's Court. Refusal to enter into a contract or breaching the terms of the contract will be grounds to establish the matter in the court and may be used as evidence that a child is in need of care and protection. This will enable the Department of Community Services then to seek final orders from the court that may include the permanent removal of the child. We make no apology for removing children who cannot live safely at home. Bad parents need to lift their game because children who are failed by their parents are far more likely to fail as adults—and the evidence is strong.

Research shows us that for every 1,000 children that are neglected by their parents, 256 will enter the juvenile justice system. These figures are sobering and serve as a reminder that we must all play our part to support the early years of a child's life. Parent responsibility contracts were recently welcomed by the well-respected welfare agency, the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Executive Director Tony Nicholson told the *Australian* newspaper:

If the State is to accept its responsibility to invest in parents and their children, parents themselves must be prepared to co-operate and play their crucial part.

He went on to say:

The responsibility of disadvantaged parents is no less than that of any parent.

We agree but also accept that we can often play a greater role in supporting families struggling against poverty and disadvantage. This is not a one-way street. The five-year reform plan for the Department of Community Services includes \$150 million for early intervention. We are providing practical support for families with supported playgroups, home visiting, family workers and a range of other support services. These tough new laws are being backed up by the Iemma Government's \$1.2 billion DOCS reform program, the biggest reform to children's services in this State's history. We have a record number of caseworkers and we are giving them extra powers to better protect children. That is our part of the bargain; we guarantee to provide services for those who need them. So, whether it is an anger management program, a better parenting course or a drug and alcohol treatment program, we will give parents the help they need to meet their obligations.

These contracts represent the next step in a child protection system that is getting stronger all the time. The Iemma Government is determined to build the strongest and most responsive child protection system possible. But, make no mistake, these new powers for front-line DOCS caseworkers will mean nothing if the Opposition ever gets the chance to run this State. Under the Leader of the Opposition's cruel and heartless 29,000 job cuts, parent responsibility contracts would be dead and buried, because there would be no legal officers to register contracts with the Children's Court and there would be no caseworkers to ensure that parents were meeting their responsibilities under these contracts. There would be no early intervention programs and no support for families that are battling if this Coalition were ever elected to office. The parents and vulnerable children in this State would suffer if this mob ever got elected. The families of New South Wales need to be constantly reminded that this mob opposite would cut \$700 million from the Department of Community Services and slash its capacity to meet the needs of families in New South Wales.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SENSIS BUSINESS INDEX

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Sensis Business Index shows that 53 per cent of New South Wales businesses think the Government is working against them and that chambers of commerce members visiting Parliament today are telling us that the Government's failure to fix the Pacific Highway is stifling small business, will the Premier admit that New South Wales is not open for business because Labor cannot deliver one infrastructure project on time or on budget?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: We will come to the Sensis business survey in a moment. We will start with the \$80 million Coffs Harbour hospital that was delivered not in two stages but in one stage by a Labor Government. Many of the colleagues of the honourable member for Coffs Harbour might have a short memory but he does not. He was a member of the last Coalition Government that could not even get the project started. Whenever discussion turned to Coffs Harbour hospital there was talk about building it in two stages. Then Labor was elected and what happened? Coffs Harbour hospital roared ahead, not in two stages but in one. It was delivered on time and it is a great hospital.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member need only listen to his Canberra colleague the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, who had plenty to say about health infrastructure. On radio 2BL this year he said, "Yesterday at Coffs Harbour I had a tour of the brand new base hospital, which is really a credit to the State Government, I've got to say."

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That is not all Tony said. I must finish his quote—and do it accurately—because he went on to say, "It's an excellent hospital."

Mrs Shelley Hancock: That's your job.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the honourable member for South Coast to order. Government members will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for South Coast interjects so we might talk about Shoalhaven hospital as well. She was at the ceremony to open the redevelopment of Shoalhaven hospital and had many good words to say about this Government delivering another health infrastructure project. Returning to the subjects of Coffs Harbour hospital and infrastructure, the honourable member for Coffs Harbour might remember the radiotherapy facility.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: He might recall that the former Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Kay Patterson, rushed out and made a commitment to provide radiotherapy services at Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. But when the State Government committed to both projects the Commonwealth's commitment disappeared, leaving the State Government to pick up on a Commonwealth promise to develop radiotherapy services at both hospitals. The State Government was left to proceed with those two projects at a cost of approximately \$40 million. I might add that the project at Coffs Harbour went ahead first despite the honourable member for Port Macquarie making a compelling case that the Port Macquarie project should go ahead. But

does the honourable member for Coffs Harbour utter one word about the radiotherapy service in his electorate? No, he does not. Did he say anything when Kay Patterson attempted to pull the rug from under that project? No, he did not. Did he stand up for his constituents about that health infrastructure project? No, he did not.

The Sensis survey on business confidence shows that, contrary to the claim by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, business confidence in New South Wales is growing. The simple fact of the matter is that there has been a 17 per cent increase in private investment in New South Wales. We have the lowest unemployment rate in more than two decades. That is a significant sign of business confidence. In 2005-06 alone more than 38,000 businesses were established in New South Wales. Contrary to the doom and gloom about infrastructure and business confidence peddled by the honourable member for Coffs Harbour, I can inform the House that some 38,000 businesses were set up in New South Wales in the past financial year. Over the four years to March this year, business investment in New South Wales—I mentioned the yearly figure—increased by 68 per cent, demonstrating confidence in doing business in this State. In addition, the Government has announced its payroll tax concession, which is a seven-year concession package targeted at those areas that have above-average unemployment. That is another practical, workable and fully funded measure that will assist small businesses in rural and regional areas with payroll tax relief.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I ask a supplementary question. In light of his answer, will the Premier advise the House whether his Government has conducted a socioeconomic impact statement showing the effects of the Pacific Highway road toll on North Coast businesses and the community?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not recall the Premier making any reference to road tolls or road infrastructure in his reply. As that was not part of the Premier's reply, I fail to understand how that is a supplementary question.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: My initial question referred clearly to the Government's failure to fix the Pacific Highway. The Premier answered part of the question about the Sensis Business Index. I am now asking him whether the Government has conducted a socioeconomic impact statement on the effect of the Pacific Highway road toll on small businesses on the North Coast, as asserted by the 16 chamber of commerce members who visited Parliament today and whom I mentioned in my initial question.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A supplementary question must arise from a Minister's reply. I do not recall the Premier making any reference in his reply to the matters to which the honourable member for Coffs Harbour referred in his supplementary question.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Further to the point of order: *Hansard* will show—

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

Mr Andrew Fraser: *Hansard* will show that the Premier responded in his answer to my reference to the Pacific Highway. I am now asking a legitimate supplementary question on behalf of the affected chambers of commerce as to whether a socioeconomic impact statement has been conducted into the effect of the road toll on businesses on the North Coast of New South Wales.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I do not recall any reference in the Premier's reply to the road toll on the Pacific Highway. There is no point of order. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. I call the honourable member for Canterbury.

STUDENT LITERACY

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is addressed to Minister for Education and Training. Will the Minister inform the House about the Iemma Government's commitment to improving student literacy in New South Wales?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The ability to read and write fluently and to be literate is at the core of educational success. Improving student literacy results has been the centrepiece of this Government's education reform agenda for a decade. This Government has led Australia in literacy testing in years 3, 5 and 7. In New South Wales we teach and assess grammar, spelling and comprehension. Phonics, grammar, spelling, comprehension, writing, speaking and listening skills are in the New South Wales primary syllabuses and explicitly taught to New South Wales students. And the results speak for themselves. Students in New South

Wales public schools have a strong record of achievement in literacy—a record of which this Government is justly proud. That record is the direct result of sustained government commitment, high quality teaching and continued parental support.

We all know the importance of parent support of children, particularly young children, in their reading. The ability to read and write fluently depends in part on parental support. The 2005 basic skills test mean scores for year 3 literacy were the highest recorded. This year's English language and literacy assessment [ELLA], which looks at year 7 students, once again demonstrated that in literacy our students perform at levels comparable to the impressive levels of previous years.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: It is not just when we compare New South Wales students to other States and Territories but it is also reflected internationally, where Australia continues to be one of the world's top-scoring countries. The 2003 Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] study of 15-year-olds from 41 OECD countries placed Australia amongst the highest performing countries in reading literacy, with New South Wales 15-year-olds demonstrating that they are among the best in the world. These successes have been achieved through the Government's State Literacy Strategy. A key feature of this strategy was an emphasis on a statewide co-ordinated approach to literacy and a relentless focus on improvement. However, we will not rest on these successes. This Government knows that we can always do more in the literacy area.

We know that for all students literacy and reading are foundational to their success at school, in the work force and in life. We also acknowledge that challenges are still there for particular groups of students and further improvements need to be made. Aboriginal students and students in rural and remote areas are achieving at a lesser rate than other students and we need to meet that challenge. To meet that challenge, and take all students confidently into the future, I am pleased to announce that we have developed a new plan for literacy in New South Wales public schools. The Literacy Plan 2006-08 is designed to strategically address the literacy challenges of today and to set a platform for future success.

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

Mr Michael Richardson: Point of order: The Minister for Education and Training is answering a question about literacy. She used the word "foundational". There is no such word in the dictionary.

Mr SPEAKER: The honourable member for The Hills will resume his seat.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: If that is the best they can do, we all know why they are on that side of the House and we are on this side of the House. If that is their contribution to improving literacy skills of students in New South Wales, I am pleased to say that they are not in the driver's seat. This year alone the Government will invest more than \$150 million to improve standards across all New South Wales schools—three times more than that lot over here invested when they occupied the Treasury benches. The plan will also support teachers in their efforts to achieve the New South Wales Government's targets by ensuring that all schools with a high proportion of poor performing students have access to highly successful specialist literacy programs, by providing teaching resources to universities, by providing new teachers with top-up training in the systematic teaching of literacy skills and by making sure information about a student's literacy skills is available within and between schools. This will be particularly important when students move from primary school to secondary school.

The plan sets ambitious but achievable targets. We are seeking an overall reduction of 10 per cent in the number of lowest performing students in literacy for years 3, 5 and 7 by 2008. This plan will articulate the New South Wales approach to teaching literacy, in particular, reading. This approach will focus on the systematic and explicit teaching of phonics as part of an integrated approach to achieving reading proficiency and the development of comprehension, grammar, spelling and handwriting skills. As well, schools will be supported to use the data analysis tools, such as the department's school management assessment package, to analyse their own data and identify areas for improvement.

Nonetheless, we all know that these strategies would be placed at risk if ever this lot opposite were in office. These strategies rely for their success on teachers and also on the support provided to schools by district, regional and State offices. If the Leader of the Opposition has his way and slashes 29,000 public servants, no tests will be prepared because there will be no trained professional staff to prepare them. There will be no training for teachers in analysing the test data; no State, regional or local literacy support; no new curriculum

materials; no curriculum research; no teacher training packages and no leadership support. The Opposition has no plans for education in New South Wales and for improving literacy standards in our schools. Students would go backwards if members of the Coalition were ever in government.

Questions without notice concluded.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Disability Services Funding

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO (Penrith) [3.47 p.m.]: The motion of which I have given notice is urgent. People with a disability have waited long enough. This Government has delivered a \$1 billion increase in disability spending, but it cannot meet everyone's needs. My motion is urgent because families and carers need more respite and case management. They need more therapy, supported accommodation and in-home support. This Government has provided them with the largest increase in the State's history, but the Commonwealth Government's share of the disability funding has been falling, and falling fast.

This motion is urgent because in the past five years funding has decreased from 20.5 per cent of the share to just 16 per cent. This motion is urgent because we cannot stand by and allow it to fall further. In total, the Iemma Government is offering an additional 1,298 million over five years. This motion is urgent. The New South Wales Opposition has offered just \$69 million, just 5 per cent of the Government commitment, not one additional support accommodation place, not one additional community participation day, and no extra therapy or case management. This motion is urgent because people with a disability and their families cannot wait any longer.

John Lewthwaite Parole

Mr PETER DEBNAM (Vaucluse—Leader of the Opposition) [3.48 p.m.]: Nothing could be more urgent for this House to consider today than taking action to ensure that John Lewthwaite is locked up in gaol. The motion of which I have given notice states:

That this House condemns the Labor Government for its failure to protect the community and calls on it to immediately take action to return paedophile child killer John Lewthwaite to gaol.

All honourable members are aware that today the Minister for Police again lied his head off, as he has done on a number of occasions. The fact of the matter is that John Lewthwaite was released under the Labor Government's watch. That is why the Attorney General made those extraordinary statements in the House, those re-assurances to the community. He was released into the community in 1999. The other point about which the Minister spoke was truth in sentencing. He suggested that Lewthwaite got life and then the Coalition changed it. The fact of the matter is that under Labor "life" meant effectively about 12 years.

Lewthwaite was given a longer sentence as a result of the Coalition's changes to the legislation. There is no doubt also that, under Labor's management of the prison system, John Lewthwaite escaped twice. He was allowed day release after 11 years, and actually escaped twice. That is the record of Labor in dealing with John Lewthwaite. This month, when he was arrested and charged with indecent exposure, the Labor Government turned its back on the community and said it is not going to do anything. The system should operate so that if he breaks his parole, he is arrested, he is charged, he goes straight to court on that day and he goes straight to gaol. That is a system the Coalition is willing to back. If the Government wants to make changes today to ensure John Lewthwaite goes to gaol before sunset today, we will back it. But it is not doing that. It is making excuses. Bob Debus said on 22 June 1999, when he was releasing John Lewthwaite into the community:

Lewthwaite is surrounded by a web of restrictions and if he crosses the line even in the most trifling way, he will find himself back behind bars.

What has happened in the past 48 hours? Instead of fulfilling that promise made by a Labor Attorney General, every Labor Minister involved simply has been saying there was nothing they could do—or, perhaps, saying there was nothing they wanted to do. If they want to do anything, we will support the Government. If the Government wants to introduce legislation or change the Parole Board, we will support it in that in the House today. Before nightfall today, we are happy to support the Government if it wants to take action. But it does not. It does not want to put this paedophile and child killer back behind bars. That problem has become very evident

over the past 12 years as we have watched the Government's behaviour. The question I put to the Minister for Police today referred back to a statement that he made in this House. It is in *Hansard*. Minister Carl Scully said:

When [Lewthwaite] comes out he is going to kill again. I have a four-year-old son, and I'm worried. This bloke lived in my area and I am very worried. He should not be released and something ought to be done about it.

I asked the police Minister, "Have you instructed police to tell the residents in the old address or the new address that he has been moved to about your concern?" It is obvious he has not. Reference has been made to Bob Carr making all sorts of promises about "cementing" prisoners in gaol. He actually moved legislation supposedly to cement in their cells these sorts of convicted murderers. But when did he do that? It was in May 2001. When did Labor let John Lewthwaite out on the streets again? It was in 1999. So again, after the horse had bolted, Labor talks about taking tough action. But it has had no effect at all.

What did we get from the Government today? It talks about removing the presumption of bail. Again it is talking about future legislation. Well, the horse has bolted. The action the Government needs to take today to put Lewthwaite back in gaol is sack the Parole Board, sack Mrs Faye Lo Po', sack that Labor heavyweight John Whelan. We will support the Government in putting on the Parole Board people who will haul John Lewthwaite back into gaol before sunset today. Just do it! [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 56

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

Noes, 30

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

DISABILITY SERVICES FUNDING**Urgent Motion**

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO (Penrith) [4.02 p.m.]: I move:

That is House:

- (1) congratulates the Government on its increase in spending on disability services;
- (2) notes the Commonwealth's share of disability spending in New South Wales has diminished every year for the past five years;
- (3) supports the Premier's call for the Commonwealth to match the Government's historic increase in spending on people with disabilities; and
- (4) calls on the Opposition to join with the Government in calling on the Commonwealth to match Government spending.

Just over 12 months ago the Premier committed the Government to a number of key goals, one of which was to make a real, practical improvement to the lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers who face many challenges in seeking to grow, participating in their community and living with dignity. The Government has placed the needs of people with disabilities at the centre of policy making and, importantly, backed it with additional funding. In the next five years we will add a further \$1.3 billion under Stronger Together. Premier Iemma has written to the Prime Minister urging the Commonwealth to match our historic increase in spending. This is an initiative every member of the House should support. Stronger Together, and its additional \$1 billion in funding, is a great advance in the delivery of services to people with disabilities and their families. If the funds were matched by the Commonwealth it would deliver more respite, more accommodation and more therapy.

Stronger Together delivers greater flexibility in meeting the needs of vulnerable people. It will help them live in their own home and communities. Across the State 320 new intensive in-home support packages will provide personal care and other assistance for people to continue to live in their own homes. Over the first five years of the plan 1,216 new respite places will be created. My region, the Nepean, will receive 30 new respite places in this and the next financial year. Families access the type of respite that works for them. We acknowledge, in particular, the importance of therapy and early intervention for children to help them walk and talk. Stronger Together will provide 116 new therapy places for children over five years. Recently I visited the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care centre in Penrith, which includes a brand-new therapy centre. It was pleasing to see children undergoing therapy. I met wonderful people, including Madison, who presented both the Minister and me with a painting that sits proudly in my office. The centre provides 1,920 therapy places not only for children, but also 1,920 therapy places for adults. Community participation will be extended from three days a week to four days a week, and to five days a week for people with very high support needs.

Community participation is a passion of mine. In the past few years I have had people from the Nepean Area Disabilities Organisation who were taking part in the Community Participation Program work in my office for one day a week. I provide them with an opportunity to participate in a workplace. At least one of the people who works in my office has very high support needs. My office is open to people with such support needs and offers them the opportunity to spend time with people in the community and in an office environment. This is great news for the young people currently in the Community Participation Program, as well as next year's school leavers. For those who need to live in specialist support services, we will provide more options. Almost 1,000 new supported accommodation places will be created in the next five years. During this financial year \$700,000 will be spent in the Nepean area to provide specialist support for young people leaving the care of the Department of Community Services. We will set aside \$40 million to develop new types of care and implement new, more effective ways of supporting people with disabilities and their families. Almost 2,000 new therapy places for adults will be created over five years. Stronger Together will deliver a more flexible and responsive disability support system.

A new research and development group will be established to advise us on the fundamental policy changes outlined through Stronger Together. The Nepean will receive \$300,000 this financial year and again next financial year to support families who care for people with disabilities. This will support 30 families in and around Penrith. If the Federal Government were to match our funding we could double that number—not 30 families in and around Penrith, but 60 families in and around Penrith. Stronger Together will provide people with disabilities, their families and carers with predictability. Stronger Together links services to people's needs.

It provides greater clarity about the levels of support they can expect and where services will be available. The benefits of Stronger Together have already begun to flow. Since last month an additional \$154 million has been allocated across the State. We can steadily build capacity in the next five years. These funds will deliver extra supported accommodation, in-home support, respite, therapy, day and post school options, and a host of other support services.

Stronger Together represents real progress in improving the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families. We have supplied the lion's share of the funding under the third Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement, which defines national priorities for services for people with disabilities and the roles of their respective governments, and makes funds available for these purposes. Under this agreement the New South Wales Government has committed \$3.64 billion over the next five years of the current agreement, which represents 79.5 per cent of the total funds.

However, New South Wales consistently increased its level of expenditure. The New South Wales Government has recognised a growing need for services and has not hesitated to increase its level of funding accordingly. This year New South Wales will provide 84 per cent of funding, or almost \$1.1 billion, whereas the Commonwealth's contribution is expected to fall from 20.5 per cent a couple of years ago to just 16 per cent for this financial year. The New South Wales Government's contribution is rising while the Commonwealth's share proportionately is decreasing.

While the New South Wales Labor Government has consistently increased spending on disability services, more needs to be done. We all know a person with a disability or a family that could do with more help. One of the first interviews I held in my office concerned the family of a disabled person in supported accommodation needing more clarity and assistance. I was able to give that assistance. Another family I interviewed early in my term was a family that was placing a post school child into supported accommodation. We discussed issues concerning the placement of a young adult child into supported accommodation. The family needed assistance, which I and the then Minister provided. For some families, much more is needed.

The Prime Minister needs to respond to the Premier's call in a positive fashion. The Commonwealth Government must demonstrate its commitment to people who have a disability. The Howard Government must match the Stronger Together funding either as part of the new Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement or outside the agreement. That would reinstate the Commonwealth as a true partner in the provision of support for people with a disability as well as their families, friends and the carers who support them. I call on the Howard Government to match the Stronger Together funding because, as I have said, in my electorate of Penrith alone that would double the funds available for the program, adding ease, predictability and support for families, friends and carers of people with disabilities.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby) [4.11 p.m.]: What a load of hypocrisy from the honourable member for Penrith! It is no surprise that she is under threat in her electorate. The diatribe she has presented does not reflect the reality. Regrettably, for the past decade many families in the community who have a loved one with a disability and many carers in the community who care for a person with a disability have had no doubt about the Government's record in relation to the provision of disability services. The Government's record has been nothing short of appalling. For the Government and the honourable member for Penrith to try to gloss over their failings over the past decade in this House by promoting a hollow promise, which they give no assurance they will keep, is also appalling.

All that the honourable member for Penrith and the Government have done for disability services in the past 12 months is make announcements which have not been followed up by action. But, worse than that, for over 10 years, they have done nothing but neglect the many families who are struggling on a day-to-day basis with a loved one who has a disability. The honourable member and the Government lack political will, priority and resolve. As a result, they have left families desperately in need of services and desperate to obtain assistance. The Government's so-called budget announcement, or the Stronger Together announcement, is the least that the Government should be doing after 10 years of neglecting disability services. The Government's neglect is historic. Never before in the history of this State have disabilities gone so far down the ladder as they have under the reign of the Labor Government.

The budget announcement of Stronger Together is another hollow promise which, based on the Government's record, will mean that services will continue to fail. Even if the Government delivers on the hollow promise that has been announced, which no Opposition member believes in view of previous commitments, that will barely make up for the level of unmet demand that has accumulated during the time the

Government has been in office. The announcement does nothing to assure families and carers in the community that they will receive any additional support. It will still not be enough to catch up to the 10 years of neglect which the Government has demonstrated since being in office.

The community knows that last year the State Government turned away nearly 1,000 desperate families and people with disabilities who were seeking supported accommodation group homes for loved ones. That was in one year alone, yet the Government now has the hide to pat itself on the back. All it has done is neglect a huge need in the community. The Government's own figures indicate that one-third of respite beds in this State are unavailable to families who seek respite accommodation because they are taken up permanently by clients who cannot access permanent accommodation. Last year the Auditor-General reported that one-half of the people who seek home care from the home care service are turned away. That is a shocking indictment of the New South Wales system.

In addition, funding for disability aids and appliances under the Program of Appliances for Disabled People [PADP] is chronically inadequate. Unfortunately, children have literally been reduced to begging for wheelchairs in the media. Many families and clients do not even bother to apply for funding under the scheme and turn instead to the charity sector and community fundraising organisations. They do so because the Government provides only \$22 million for the program, even though when the Premier was the Minister for Health some 36 respected disability organisations informed him that \$35 million is required to provide a decent level of service. Despite that, yet again the Government has provided only \$22 million in its current budget. Even the commitment made in the Government's most recent announcement about what it was doing to address disability services after 10 years of neglect still falls far short of what many organisations and families with members who have a disability have urged the Premier and the Government to provide.

In stark contrast to that, the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Debnam, and the shadow Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ryan, have promised to fully fund the PADP at a level of \$35 million a year. The New South Wales Opposition is standing up for people who have a disability and for people who wish to access vital equipment and services through the PADP. The Opposition is standing up for those who are most vulnerable in our community in the wake of 10 years of neglect by the current State Government. I am absolutely bemused and flabbergasted that the honourable member for Penrith has the hide to pat herself and her Government on the back over this issue. Of all people, she should know how many families in her own community are suffering because the Government has not done enough. For her to politicise the issue in this Chamber by trying to shift responsibility to the Federal Government is appalling and beneath any member of this Chamber.

I wish the State Government would stand up for once for the most vulnerable in our community by acknowledging its neglect over the past 10 years. The Government should admit that it is playing catch-up while the Opposition has consulted over a long period with those in the community, particularly those suffering a disability and their families and carers, and has put together a series of announcements that will deliver services, outcomes and supported accommodation initiatives from day one. The Opposition will not wait 10 years to make hollow announcements and promises, as the current State Government has done. The Coalition supports people with disabilities, their families and carers. We will not engage in lip-service, but will provide real outcomes. For far too long people with a disability in New South Wales have been all but ignored and shunned because the State Government chose to spend money on spin doctors and on providing jobs for its mates instead of helping the most vulnerable in our community.

The honourable member for Penrith has had the hide today to turn her back on those in her own community who are suffering because of her Government's 10 years of neglect. For her to congratulate herself and the Government is the lowest act of political hypocrisy I have witnessed in this place—and I have witnessed a lot since I was elected three years ago. However, we cannot turn our attention away from the most vulnerable. Members of the Labor Party often read prepared speeches, as the honourable member for Penrith did. I wish she had referred more to her experiences with her community instead of reading from a prepared text. Those who are absolutely desperate for access to disability services walk into the offices of all members of Parliament on a daily basis. Why? Because for 10 years the Government has not given disability services the priority they should have been given.

Before the Government cut the PADP, most families were receiving four or five days a week in post school programs and other services. Honourable members should remember that the State Government's most recent round of announcements is just that: announcements. I am sure we will hear more about the \$1 billion over five years and see excerpts from the speech of the honourable member for Penrith in all the political

brochures that go out to electorates. However, the community is too smart and will see through that political rhetoric. The community has had enough. Anyone who cares about disability services or is in the unfortunate position of dealing with this issue on a daily basis—whether as a sufferer, a carer, a family member, a friend or a worker in transporting people with a disability, assisting with various programs, including school programs for young people with a disability, or looking for supported accommodation—will have had enough.

In the communities of all members of Parliament there are elderly parents who are concerned about what will happen to their children. There are only so many carers and the parents are concerned that their young, disabled relatives are housed in nursing homes or other inappropriate facilities because they cannot get access to appropriate accommodation services. The hypocritical speech that the honourable member for Penrith had the hide to read demonstrates why she is under threat in her electorate and why the people of Penrith lack confidence in her ability. She should forget the prepared speeches and think about the motions she moves. Rather than politicising the issue and passing off responsibility to the Federal Government, she should own up to what the State Government has not done and be more genuine to those in the community who suffer from a disability.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.21 p.m.]: I support the urgent motion, which relates to spending on disability services. One of the toughest parts of being a member of Parliament is dealing with the challenges and outcomes faced by families who have a member or a loved one with a disability. It is a demanding and humbling part of the job. It reminds us of how lucky we are not to have a disability. That part of the job gives us an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing and on how a government must balance its priorities. I was incredibly proud when the new Premier announced his three key priorities: funding for mental health services, challenges for affordable housing and, importantly, dealing respectfully with those with disabilities.

The announcement of \$1 billion for disability services, which the honourable member for Willoughby seemed to trivialise, is one of which this Parliament should be proud. The Premier has put that at the top of the agenda, and it should be applauded. I know from my dealings with families in my electorate that they applaud it. They thank the Government for correcting some of the mistakes of the past and for acknowledging that there is much more to be done and that disability services should be at the top of the agenda. The allocation of \$1 billion is not to be trivialised. It should be acknowledged appropriately, and we must make sure we get good value out of it.

The Government has met and exceeded its responsibilities under a host of bilateral agreements with the Commonwealth Government. New South Wales has dramatically increased its budget for disability services. It has matched the Commonwealth's offer of \$24 million to provide much-needed respite to ageing carers of people with a disability, and it has matched the Commonwealth in an \$80 million joint program to help young people living in nursing homes. That program will help up to 300 young people with a disability by finding new accommodation or providing care options, improving the lives of those who live in residential aged care, and preventing more young people from having to live in residential aged care.

The Government has now gone the extra mile with the release of the so-called Stronger Together package, an historic change in how we approach social policy. We will lift spending on disability services by an extra \$1.298 billion over the next five years. The Commonwealth Government now has the opportunity to match our spending. If it does, we could double the already increased respite places. We could double therapy services and provide more care to those with disabilities and their families. The south-east Sydney region, including my electorate of Heathcote, will receive an additional 90 respite places this financial year. That figure could be 180 places, if the Commonwealth steps in. South-eastern Sydney will receive 19 new therapy places and new early-intervention services to help 30 families. With Commonwealth money that could be doubled.

The Government has forged ahead in developing a policy that reflects the priorities of a civilised society. It has done so on the back of an extensive program of consultation. Over 16 months my honourable friend the Minister for Disability Services met with those with a disability, their families and carers, as well as a broad spectrum of service providers and advocates, including local providers in my electorate, such as the highly regarded Sylvanvale and New Era Independent Living Centre. Throughout this period of consultation the message has been loud and clear. While the Government has consistently increased spending in this area, more needs to be done and there are areas in which things can be done better.

The Government has not been afraid to go beyond agreements to meet the needs of the families who access disability services. We have consistently exceeded our share of funding of the Commonwealth State/

Territory Disability Agreement. Over five years of the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement, New South Wales has increased spending from 79.5 per cent to 84 per cent. The Commonwealth's spending has fallen over the same period from 20.5 per cent to 16 per cent. The Commonwealth can and should do more. We challenge the Commonwealth to match our disability spending of \$1.3 billion over five years. We know it will be more. The last two funding offers from the Commonwealth—options for young people in nursing homes and respite for older carers—have been offered on a dollar-for-dollar basis. New South Wales accepts those offers. I urge the Commonwealth Government to match our disability spending, and I urge the New South Wales Opposition to support the Premier's initiative and make a real difference for people with a disability and their families. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [4.26 p.m.]: I oppose the motion, which is an absolutely outrageous waste of the time of the House. The hypocrisy of the Government in relation to disability services is incredible. The true face of the State Government's treatment of disability services is evident from its treatment of Nardy House. Can anyone imagine a government funding the construction of a respite care facility in country New South Wales and allowing that facility to sit idle, unopened, for almost 14 months, with no solution? Can anyone imagine a Government Minister saying in 2000 on ABC radio that not only would the Government fund the construction of Nardy House, but it would fund it on a recurrent basis? That was Faye Lo Po', the former face of disability services. That is the way the State Government treats disability services. The Government has the hide to move a motion that congratulates itself while 50-odd families in south-eastern New South Wales, including in the electorate of Monaro, are in need. That is simply not good enough. Where is the honourable member for Monaro? He is not here because he knows this motion is a disgrace.

The honourable member for Penrith has some explaining to do in relation to the Nepean Area Disabilities Organisation [NADO] community participation outlets at St Marys and Lemongrove, the Bridges Disability Service at Hawkesbury and Interaction at the Jarrah Disability Service at Springwood. She needs to explain the decision to strip funding from those disability agencies in Western Sydney. She has disrupted the lives of those families, the people who are seeking assistance through those relevant agencies. Today she has congratulated herself and the Government on a job well done. That is incredibly hypocritical. In country New South Wales, where the Government has built a respite care facility, it has not bothered to provide recurrent funding. The facility has sat empty on the side of the Princes Highway. That is completely outrageous.

In contrast, what a difference the Liberal candidate for Penrith, Trish Hitchen, will make when she is elected in March 2007. She will make an enormous contribution to the way in which disability services are shaped in her local area of Penrith. She has an eight-year old son with cerebral palsy and she has experienced the difficulties first hand. She recently took part in an Opposition policy announcement when the Leader of the Opposition promised to provide \$35 million per year for disability equipment under the Program of Appliances for Disabled People [PADP]. She informed the media that when she needed to replace her son's wheelchair she was told that they faced a three-year wait.

As I said, I am certain Trish Hitchen will make a fine member of Parliament and will be far more effective in her advocacy for people with disabilities than the current member for Penrith. As we heard this afternoon, she is more interested in playing politics and moving a motion congratulating herself and the Government when we have an outrageous situation in the outlying areas of western Sydney and at Nardy House. I want to place on the record my disgust at the way in which the Minister, John Della Bosca, and the deputy director general of the department have handled the issue of Nardy House. They have made conflicting statements in relation to an offer that was made in an attempt to get this facility opened. The former Minister made a commitment to fund the facility. It is still not open. Meanwhile, 50 families are desperate for assistance.

The Government must come clean on this issue. It must release every document held by the department relating to Nardy House. Nardy House will define the State Labor Government's handling of disability services under the current Premier. The facility has remained idle since he assumed the office of Premier and no families are able to access it. As I said, it is an outrageous situation. I will be happy to take to the Minister the expressions of interest, support documentation, certificates, wages and salaries, recurrent funding audit of Nardy House and the trust deed and constitution, and to sit down with his officers and flesh it out to have the issue resolved, because it is a disgrace. [*Time expired.*]

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.31 p.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Penrith on bringing this motion before the House. I acknowledge the hard work she does in her electorate. I also appreciate that the State Government, particularly in recent times, has given a tremendous commitment to funding extra services for those with disabilities. I welcome the Government's

announcement that it will seek additional funding for disability services from the Commonwealth Government. Providing people with a disability with the quality of life they deserve is a challenge that goes beyond the borders of New South Wales. I am aware of that because I live on the border with Queensland. The benefits of the lemma Government's billion-dollar boost to disability services, Stronger Together, will begin flowing almost immediately. Indeed, it has provided \$154 million extra this year and that funding has benefited people with disabilities in the Tweed.

The bulk of the funding will be targeted where it is needed most—that is, to those living in the community being cared for by family and friends. In New South Wales there are 200,000 people with a severe or profound disability and 97 per cent are cared for by family or friends. Our 10-year billion-dollar plan for disability services will provide significant new resources to assist those in the community with a disability; it will provide more options for those living in specialist accommodation. But even a billion dollars will not meet the needs of all families, and we need the Commonwealth Government to reaffirm its commitment to disability services. We want the Commonwealth Government to match the New South Wales Government's contribution of \$1.298 billion to make a real difference for those with a disability and their families.

The Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement [CSTDA] determines roles, responsibilities, funding and priorities for disability services. In the past five years the New South Wales Government has consistently spent more on disability services than required under the agreement. I stress that in 2002-03 we committed to spend \$686 million, but in fact spent \$730 million, an extra \$44 million. In 2003-04 we committed to spend \$694 million, but spent \$810 million, an extra \$116 million. In 2004-05 we committed to spend \$710 million, but spent \$879 million, an extra \$169 million. In 2005-06 we committed to spend \$736 million, but spent \$923 million, an extra \$187 million. This year we are committed to spending \$812 million, but expect to spend well over \$1 billion, an extra \$273 million.

The Government has increased its spending so that New South Wales now contributes 84 per cent of funding under the CSTDA. The Commonwealth Government's commitment and real expenditure has decreased from 20.5 per cent to just 16 per cent. That is something the Opposition should take up with its Federal counterpart. If the Commonwealth was prepared to make up that 4 per cent it would make a difference to the lives of families caring for a person with a disability. Those with a disability and their families need help practical help to live in and be part of the community, and we call on the Commonwealth to match our billion-dollar boost. Our billion dollars will provide specialist accommodation, therapy, respite, case management and in-home care. For people living on the far North Coast this means an additional \$40 million dollars over five years. I mentioned the \$154 million that is already flowing through.

Recently I had the pleasure of attending the opening of a new facility in the Tweed which will enable five people with disabilities to live independently. The renovated house for young people is located in the Tweed and is part of the funding that is flowing though from the Stronger Together plan. I congratulate the Minister for his work in that regard and pass on the thanks expressed by many of the parents at the opening of that facility. But we could double the support if the Commonwealth Government was prepared to assist the New South Wales Government, as it should, under the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement. The Leader of the Opposition described the Government's commitment as a Labor promise and said voters could return a verdict in March. In other words, he is not prepared to make the commitment to keep this funding flowing. He is not prepared to get stuck into his Federal colleagues to ensure that they match, or go some way towards matching, the New South Wales contribution so that those with a disability in New South Wales get their fair share.

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO (Penrith) [4.36 p.m.], in reply: I thank honourable members who contributed to the debate. Aside from continually repeating herself, the honourable member for Willoughby failed to take note of the research I quoted: during the past month \$154 million in funding has been allocated across the State. The honourable member for Tweed said that he had recently attended the opening of a supported accommodation facility in his electorate. The funding is being rolled out: it is there and it is real. Both the honourable member for Willoughby and the honourable member for Bega failed to mention paragraph (4) of the motion, which urges the New South Wales Opposition to join with the Government in calling on the Commonwealth to match New South Wales Government spending.

Earlier I stated that with additional Federal funding 30 respite places could be increased to 60. The honourable member for Heathcote said that 90 respite places in the south-east region would be increased to 180. If the funding were doubled, the respite places could be doubled. The opening of a new facility in the electorate of the honourable member for Tweed is an indication that the \$154 million allocated in the last budget under the

Stronger Together program is making a real difference. If our funds were matched, we would be able to offer more respite accommodation and therapy, and provide flexibility for vulnerable people. The honourable member for Bega referred to families of people with disabilities in the Penrith area. I referred to many such families. The honourable member for Willoughby suggested I should be listening to these people. I have listened. The Penrith Association for People with Disabilities Community Participation Awards were funded by the CDSC. If the honourable member researches private member's statements she will see how many wonderful people were given an opportunity to participate in those awards through the Program of Appliances for Disabled People [PADP].

The honourable member for Bega referred to the Nepean Area Disabilities Organisation [NADO] but failed to mention that it was a successful applicant in the last tender process. NADO is happy with its arrangements. It has two places at Lemongrove and Penrith. The honourable member also failed to mention that Ability Options runs the Sunnyfield facility and Barnardos. Barnardos offers a very strong program. It has a wonderful choir that performs at Barnardos open days and at functions in and around the city of Penrith. Its program does marvellous work for people with disabilities. I have met program participants, their families and those who conduct the program.

The Government's approach is about flexibility and meeting the needs of vulnerable people. The honourable member for Willoughby claimed that the Government had underfunded the disability sector and asked what the Government had done in this area. Accessibility in schools is important. Last week I visited Emu Plains Public School, which has secured funding to improve school accessibility for children with special needs. The honourable member for Willoughby also mentioned the Coalition's \$1 million promise. Is that on the Peter meter? Where will that funding come from? We know that the Government has allocated \$154 million across the State in the last budget. That is not an empty promise. We are not about promising a few hundred million here and a couple of million there—promises, promises, promises—and not acting.

The Stronger Together plan will provide 960 new therapy places for children over five years. It will provide 1,920 therapy places for adults. The Community Participation Program will be expanded from three to four days. The young adults who come to my office will have the option of spending four or maybe even five days there. Funding will be allocated according to the nature of their disability—it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, Carol who comes to my office will get proportionately more funding than David will receive. I support the motion. I urge Opposition members to call on the Commonwealth to match the New South Wales Government's funding. I am outraged that the Commonwealth's share of disability funding has reduced in the past five years.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 53

Ms Allan	Mrs Fardell	Mr Newell
Mr Amery	Ms Gadiel	Ms Nori
Ms Andrews	Mr Gaudry	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Barr	Mr Gibson	Mr Pearce
Mr Bartlett	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
Mr Campbell	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Mr Chaytor	Mr Lynch	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Mr McLeay	Mr Torbay
Mr Corrigan	Mr McTaggart	Mr West
Mr Crittenden	Ms Meagher	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Ms Megarrity	Mr Yeadon
Ms D'Amore	Mr Mills	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Debus	Ms Moore	Mr Ashton
Mr Draper	Mr Morris	Mr Martin

Noes, 28

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders****Special Adjournment****Motion by Ms Sandra Nori agreed to:**

That:

- (1) standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide at this sitting:
 - (a) from the commencement of Private Members' Statements until the rising of the House, no divisions or quorums be called;
 - (b) at 7.30 p.m. the resumption of the adjourned debate on the Address-in-Reply to the Lieutenant-Governor's opening speech with up to four speakers; and
 - (c) at the conclusion of Government Business, the House adjourn without motion moved; and
- (2) the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Thursday 31 August 2006 at 10.00 a.m.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE**Matter of Public Importance**

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [4.52 p.m.]: The genesis of this matter of public importance is a press release issued on 28 August by Rick Colless, a member of the Legislative Council, and headed, "Nationals take lion's share of funding." I welcome that press release. In the figures given The Nationals demonstrated yet again that Country Labor best serves country New South Wales. Rick Colless—some would say he is a nice Nat as opposed to some of the others—claims that the three-year funding allocation for Barwon is \$386 million, for Tamworth \$136 million and for Northern Tablelands \$241 million. I was so inspired by those figures that I thought I would make some more comparisons.

All honourable members would be aware that adjacent to the large seat of Murray-Darling are three Nationals seats—Barwon, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee. I sought assistance and obtained the figures to make a comparison between the seat of Murray-Darling and the three other seats. In 2006-07 capital works spending in the Murray-Darling electorate was \$137 million; in Barwon \$119 million; in Murrumbidgee, which arguably is not well served, \$74.9 million; and in Lachlan \$64.7 million. In 2005-06 capital works spending in the Murray-Darling electorate was \$157.5 million; in Barwon \$114.5 million; in Murrumbidgee \$64.9 million; and in Lachlan \$53.2 million. In 2004-05 capital works spending in the Murray-Darling electorate was \$118.6 million; in Barwon \$104.6 million; in Lachlan \$49.3 million; and in Murrumbidgee \$54.1 million.

Those figures demonstrate the veracity of the statements made by Rick Colless. Outside the metropolitan area New South Wales has been well served by Country Labor. Country Labor is delivering for country New South Wales and we now have the support of The Nationals. However, some of the things The

Nationals have been up to deserve closer scrutiny and inquiry. That was brought home in the Percy Allan report, a report commissioned by local government, which demonstrated that the bush is short of \$6 million to fix up and repair ageing infrastructure and to put in place requisite new infrastructure.

I note the comments of the Shires Association relating to capital works funding. Percy Allan from the Shires Association rightly pointed out that in the 1980s under Malcolm Fraser revenue for the shires was 2 per cent compared to present Federal funding of 0.7 per cent. As Federal funding decreases, with the assistance of The Nationals, a ploy called Roads to Recovery makes up a little of the 1.3 per cent reduction in funding. New South Wales is short-changed and does not receive its fair share of GST revenue. Imagine what our shires could do to replace ageing infrastructure and the like if they received their full share of GST revenue.

I refer next to a topical subject. In the north-west of New South Wales there are four problems: woody weed, drought, John Cobb and rising fuel prices, and not necessarily in that order. John Cobb told everyone that the seat of Gwydir should not be abolished. He said that an area of 47 per cent was too much for someone like him to handle.

Mr Matt Brown: Fourteen per cent would be.

Mr PETER BLACK: Indeed. When I heard that statement I questioned it because no protest had been made about the seat of Murray-Darling being 43.7 per cent. The Nationals moved the motion to create the current seat of Murray-Darling. A closer examination of the Federal seats of Parkes and Gwydir reveals the terrible results of neglect by The Nationals. Approximately 12 months ago I issued a press release and said that, based on demography, one of the western seats must go. Sussan Ley said it would not be her seat of Farrer and I agree with her because, after all, she is a member of the Liberal Party and at a Federal level the Liberal Party does not let the tail wag the dog. So one of the other three seats had to go. I am on record in the past as saying that Riverina is well served by Kay Hull, a good member. John Cobb holds the seat of Parkes, so the seat to go was Gwydir.

There was a lot of gnashing of teeth. But the seat will go because the Federal electoral commissioners will start all over again the process required to put another arrangement in place. Why is that seat going? It is because of loss of population. It is going because The Nationals federally have been party to a deal. It is ironic that it is the Leader of The Nationals who loses his seat. Ian Armstrong, that last great leader of the once great Country Party, will lose his seat of Lachlan at the next State election. At the Federal level that once great leader John Anderson had his seat abolished. The problem is falling population. And falling population reflects lack of support for infrastructure—failing to put in the hard yards for regional and rural New South Wales.

We have witnessed a travesty of Federal funding for our shires, and we have seen uncertainties associated with Roads to Recovery—certainly not picking up the 1.3 per cent gap between 2 per cent and 0.7 per cent—a gap that has never been questioned. It certainly does not make up for the infamous decision on GST that rips more than \$2.5 billion in funds each year from New South Wales so that families in Queensland can cop money that the people of this State pay in fuel tax and GST. That amounts to \$188 per family per year. Western Australia is being subsidised by New South Wales—yet it is a boom State, riding on the back of the mineral explosion that Australia is enjoying.

Here in New South Wales people are suffering and suffering again. I go back to where I started—that wonderful press release from Rick Colless. I say "wonderful" because here they are telling us in the clearest terms how well Country Labor has represented rural and regional New South Wales. The press release asserts that The Nationals are getting the lion's share. I think that was perhaps going too far, because I think I have demonstrated that Murray-Darling is getting the lion's share. But I do not wish to compete for money with my friends from Country Labor, whether they be from the South Coast, the North Coast or anywhere else that we represent in New South Wales. We have a great rural and regional New South Wales, and Country Labor is proud to represent them.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [5.02 p.m.]: I welcome this opportunity to make a brief contribution to debate on country infrastructure, which we all know to be very important to lifestyle and the quality of services in country areas. I take this opportunity to thank the honourable member for Murray-Darling for his complimentary remarks about the quality of members of The Nationals representing regional areas. We have excellent members, and they are achieving a lot for their electorates. Despite those great achievements, the honourable member for Murray-Darling has failed to recognise that

overall country New South Wales has been neglected by the New South Wales Labor Government. In fact, we are not getting our fair share of funding.

Within the funding that is allocated, members of The Nationals are doing extremely well by comparison with the Independents in particular. However, the fact is that country people generally are not getting a fair share of the budget. I will give two brief examples. Country people comprise about 33 per cent of the population, but in the last budget we received about 25 per cent of the capital works budget in the Health portfolio. In Police, the figure was even lower—about 10 per cent of the capital works budget for the portfolio, despite the fact that 33 per cent of the population live in country New South Wales. One could argue that because of the geographic location of disperse communities in country areas we should be entitled to an even greater share of capital works budget funding than the proportion of population.

I would like to refer to a couple of other examples, particularly cuts in funding for water and sewerage in country towns. The Government indicated at the beginning of its term that it would provide \$850 million for country town water and sewerage. In fact, in its first 10 years in office it has delivered about half that amount. That has had very significant negative impacts for country communities. Obviously, it has meant that many water and sewerage programs that were on the drawing board and ready to go have not been able to proceed. As a consequence of a lack of state-of-the-art technology, many sewerage systems discharge sewage into our river systems and we do not have the best possible environmental outcomes for them. That has been a very short-sighted policy of this Labor Government.

The honourable member for Murray-Darling spoke about a number of issues relating to his electorate. I make the point that after 11½ years in office this Labor Government has now decided to introduce what it calls a New South Wales State Plan—a new direction. I would have thought the fact that, after 11½ years in government, it is looking to a new direction is an admission that the previous direction was a complete failure. The Government now has its State Plan out there in the community and it is seeking feedback on it. At five minutes to midnight, just before a State election, the Government is out there in the community pretending it has a vision and it is doing something—having demonstrated that it had no vision for, and committed very little money to, country areas for 11½ years. The Government's own web site tells us that it asked the Tamworth community:

What could the NSW Government be doing better?

The answer was:

Water—improvements required in the supply, cost and water conservation areas.

Social infrastructure—provision of educational, health and cultural services.

The people of Tweed Heads—I note the presence in the Chamber of the honourable member for Tweed—were asked:

What could the NSW Government be doing better?

The answer was:

Hospitals and medical services need improvement.

This is the community talking, as recorded on the Government's own web site. In Broken Hill, in the electorate of the honourable member for Murray-Darling, the people were asked:

What could the NSW Government be doing better?

The answer was:

More funding for repairs and maintenance in schools.

Decentralise services, don't centralise them.

Is that a message for the Labor Party! And further:

Access to health services locally—not Adelaide or Mildura.

This is the community speaking, and telling the Government what it thinks of infrastructure expenditure in its area. In Queanbeyan, in the electorate of the honourable member for Monaro, who I note is in the Chamber, the community was asked:

What could the NSW Government be doing better?

The answer was:

Improve provision of health and transport services in rural areas.

That is what the community wants the honourable member for Monaro to do. Get out there and do it! This is on the Government's web site, and this is what the people of New South Wales, particularly in those seats that I have mentioned, think of the Government's efforts in relation to infrastructure. This Government has been deficient in its allocation of funds in particular portfolios. The roads budget, for example, has been cut in real terms in the past couple of years.

There have been major blow-outs in funding and delays in Pacific Highway projects, such as in the Bonville deviation and a four-year delay in the Ballina bypass. There was a commitment by the Government at the beginning of the process that it would complete 80 per cent of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border by 2006, as part of its 10-year program. What has it achieved? It will be less than 50 per cent at the end of this year. There have been significant delays in projects, and almost a \$1 billion blowout in expenditure. That is the extent of the lack of management we are experiencing under this Government.

The Government has cut funding to the timber bridges program. As we know, it closed four branch rail lines and withdrew train services on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line. Despite its protestations that it is interested in doing something about that matter, the Government has no real intention of reinstating the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line. It is saying that it will put \$75 million on the table if the Federal Government puts up a similar amount. The fact is that this is a State responsibility. It was the State Government that took away the trains, and it is a State responsibility to put them back on the track.

Serious cost studies that have been done indicate that a train could be put back on that track for an absolute maximum of \$21.8 million, and that it could be funded for much less than the \$30 million per annum for the first five years that the Government claims. It could be funded for a lot less than that. The honourable member for Tweed is interjecting. If he and his Government were fair dinkum about putting the train back on that line, they would use the \$75 million that they say is on the table to put a train back on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line, preferably a commuter service. Such action would have a lot of tourism benefits and a lot of local benefits.

I have a long list of projects in country areas that need priority attention, but I will mention just a few. We need a new library for Deniliquin South Public School. We need natural gas connected to Deniliquin—it almost gets there. We need a new Deniliquin ambulance station, timber bridges in Wakool shire and repairs to a grandstand in Dubbo. We need to upgrade hospitals in Parkes and Forbes, and upgrade the sewage treatment plant in Parkes. The Alstonville bypass is a classic example. A week before the last election the Premier came to the area and promised that construction would commence in 2003 and that it would be finished by 2006. But guess what, not one sod has been turned. That promise by the former Premier of the State was not worth the paper it was written on. We need a new hospital for Byron shire, a school hall for Ballina Primary School, a new Gunnedah courthouse and a new hospital or multipurpose service at Manilla. We need to upgrade the Manilla Road at Tamworth and boost power supply to Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School to aircondition dormitories.

We need a new bridge at Nundle and a new Gunnedah ambulance station. We need to upgrade the Jack Evans boat harbour at Tweed Heads. We need to develop a new community health centre at Pottsville. The Government should get on with it. We need to commence construction on the upgrade of Sextons Hill, which has been hanging around for a long time. We need a heavy truck bypass to deliver traffic solutions for Queanbeyan and Jerrabomberra. We need sporting facilities and an oval for Jerrabomberra. We need to upgrade the Broken Hill water supply. We need to improve the water supply at, and upgrade, Menindee Lakes. We need to complete the Silver City Highway between Tibooburra and Broken Hill. Timber bridges over the Murray River need attention. At one location a truck had to travel an extra 90 kilometres because of the failure of this Government to reinstate the Timber Bridges Program.

We need to get serious about some big picture items, not just the Pacific Highway. We need to construct a divided carriageway over the Blue Mountains to open up the central western part of New South Wales. We need a new police station for Orange. There is a stack of other projects, but that is just a small sample of the sorts of things that have to happen in country New South Wales. But they will not happen under this Government. It will be up to a Coalition government to clean up the mess and invest in infrastructure. I was amazed that Planning has identified Parramatta, Liverpool and Penrith not Wagga Wagga, Tamworth and Lismore as regional cities. That is what the Government believes, which only demonstrates how city-centric it is.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.12 p.m.]: I know the honourable member for Ballina listed a whole range of commitments, or was he just grandstanding? The Opposition is pretty good at grandstanding. This matter of public importance is about country infrastructure. I am not surprised that the best the honourable member for Ballina could do was to stand up and read out a number of projects that the Coalition could not commit to. I am not sure whether he has put them on the Peter meter, as we refer to it these days. In the run-up to the 1988 State election the Coalition, when in Opposition, gave a commitment to build the Lismore police station. When the Coalition was in government it did not build the Lismore police station, which meant that poor old Bill Rixon, who was then the member for Lismore, had to make the same promise to his constituents in 1991, which he dutifully did.

The Nationals always make commitments that they cannot deliver. Having made that promise again in 1991, was it built by 1995? Not on your ditty! No way! It was none other than the Labor Government who committed to fixing up the Lismore police station. The Labor Government has delivered, which is something the Coalition could not do. The same thing will happen with all of the Coalition's commitments: like snow falling from the sky, they will melt away. The Labor Government will have to deliver on them.

Mr Donald Page: Tell us about the Alstonville bypass.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL: I would love to tell honourable members about the Alstonville bypass, because I know that the Labor Government is delivering on the Ballina bypass. The Coalition could not decide which project should come first. It would not commit to either of them. The Labor Government is delivering the Ballina bypass. Today the Minister for Roads made three announcements about upgrading the Pacific Highway, and he anticipates making two more announcements in the short term, including the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale project, which will be announced shortly. It is good news. We are delivering infrastructure for country New South Wales. The Opposition has a tendency to make all these sorts of commitments, but it never delivers on them. Voters in the electorates of Ballina, Lismore, Tweed and Clarence understand those sorts of commitments. *[Time expired.]*

[Discussion interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! It being after 5.15 p.m. the House will now deal with General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MR BRYCE GAUDRY, LABOR PRE-SELECTION CANDIDATE FOR THE ELECTORATE OF NEWCASTLE

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.18 p.m.]: Today I clearly state my determination to stand as a Labor candidate for the seat of Newcastle at the 2007 State election. I do this to counter the misinformation that has been published claiming that I intend to retire and to clarify my intentions for the people of my electorate who continue to encourage me to represent them and who question the attempts being made to install a candidate in the seat of Newcastle. At every function I attend in my electorate, on the

street and at every venue, whether it be a public meeting, a shopping centre, a Knight's game, the local bottle shop or a presentation evening, I am asked the same question, "Are the media reports that you are retiring true, or are you going to stand?"

The common response when I state that I will stand for the seat of Newcastle is a strong statement of support, and a strong rejection of moves being made in Sydney to dictate who will represent Labor in Newcastle. I emphasise that this response comes from people of all political persuasions. People from all walks of life have been vocal in their support of my candidacy and for my work with, and on behalf of, the community since my election as the member for Newcastle in 1991.

Misinformation about my future has been part of the move by Sydney-based powerbrokers to impose their own candidate in Newcastle and to deny local rank and file Labor members their right to choose their own candidate. This approach is totally unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of Labor members in Newcastle and the Hunter. These members continue to demand their democratic right to select their candidate by rank and file preselection, and not have a candidate imposed on them by outsiders. I have always supported this position and have had the privilege of being returned as the representative of the people of the Newcastle electorate at four successive elections since I won the seat back for Labor from an Independent in 1991.

I have worked very hard for my community and for the balanced development of our region. I have always been prepared to stand up for the interests of the Newcastle community, even if it meant standing up against policy decisions of our Labor Government. My role in the successful campaign to keep the electricity industry in public ownership and my involvement in the community campaign to retain rail services to Newcastle Station are two instances of my determination to put the community first. Newcastle people are strong, proud, resilient and passionate. They took part in the transformation of the city after the Newcastle earthquake and after the closure of BHP. They passionately support our sporting teams, especially the Knights. They will not be taken for granted or dictated to.

Understandably, they are resistant to efforts to centralise power in Sydney. They strongly reject the proposition that their representative should be chosen by outsiders from south of the Hawkesbury. They even more strongly express their contempt for the move to install a non-Labor member as the Labor candidate in Newcastle. This is not a parochial view but rather the continuation of a proud tradition of standing up for the rights of local people, building up and supporting local institutions, and developing our local industries and the economy that is the powerhouse of New South Wales. I put my faith in Newcastle Labor members to select a candidate and Newcastle electors to decide who should represent them, and to say to Sydney to butt out and respect the right of Newcastle to make its own decision.

INDIAN MYNAS CONTROL

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [5.22 p.m.]: When it comes to pest species, they do not come much peskier than the Indian myna. This aggressive brown bird has become the dominant avian species in many parts of New South Wales, literally chasing away native birds, evicting them from nesting hollows, tossing chicks out of nests onto the ground, and filling nesting holes with rubbish so that other species cannot breed. Mynas attack in gangs of up to 30 birds and are absolutely fearless, dive-bombing cats with impunity and attacking kookaburras, magpies and currawongs. More than 1,000 birds roost in the Castle Hill shopping centre in my electorate, drowning out the traffic noise with their incessant chatter at dusk. Indian mynas have been around a long time—since 1862 when they were introduced into Melbourne to control insects in market gardens. C. J. Dennis wrote a poem about them in 1933 that included the lines:

*So I swagger an' strut an' I cuss an' I swagger.
I'm wise to the city's hard way.
A bit of a bloke and a bit of a bragger.
I've always got plenty to say ...*

A flock of mynas will quickly drive all the native birds out of an area. We do not have to look too far outside Australia to see what can happen. Indian mynas have replaced native birds throughout the South Pacific, Hawaii and Mauritius. I understand that 83 per cent of the birds in Fiji are Indian mynas. In 2000 the World Conservation Union listed them as one of the top 100 invasive species of the world. So great a nuisance do mynas pose, they are considered the second-greatest threat to native birds after habitat loss.

A constituent of mine, Gary Cunich of West Pennant Hills, has devoted the last 18 months of his life and a considerable amount of his own money to reducing the myna menace. He has set up the Indian Myna Eradication Program, which has as its goal the control and eradication of Indian mynas in this country. Naturally, when I heard this my first question was: How does one control them? The answer is simpler than it might seem. The birds are trapped and then killed humanely. Every 3,000 birds caught and killed means 500,000 fewer Indian mynas in three years time. While Indian mynas are highly intelligent, they are also voracious eaters. It is this characteristic that makes it possible to capture them.

Chris Tidemann from the Australian National University has developed a two-section trap—a base for catching the birds and a top for roosting. The birds enter the trap at the bottom, having been lured by dog food, which they love but which the native noisy mynas do not. The traps are quite commodious, with food, perches and water, and encourage the birds to stay. Birds are free fed for several days. Once trust is established, they are easily caught. Because of the birds' gregarious nature, sometimes a pair of birds may be placed in the trap to lure others. When it is dark and the birds are roosting, the top section is removed and the birds are killed in a sack filled with carbon monoxide from a car exhaust.

Mr Cunich manufactures myna traps locally and sells them for \$385 each. He guarantees that, used properly, they will catch and kill any flock of Indian mynas. They will also last 20 years. When Mr Cunich recently appeared on the John Laws show to talk about what he was doing, the switchboard lit up with more than 600 phone calls from listeners. Councils are the predominant buyers of the traps. Ku-ring-gai Council has 10, but most councils buy only four—for example, Warringah Council has four traps. Some private companies, such as Dural Stockfeeds, rent traps for approximately \$40 a month, but there simply are not enough to go around. Mr Cunich makes a small profit on the sale of each trap which he then uses to promote this humane way of dealing with this introduced pest. But the money is not enough to keep the program going. He desperately needs government assistance.

Given the extent of the menace and the fact that, unlike so many plague species, there is a way of dealing with it and it is something that everyone in the community can do if they wish, I think the Government should be putting some money behind Mr Cunich and his crusade. After all, the Indian myna is the second-greatest threat to our native birds and affects crops and farm animals. Surely this is not a threat that we have to live with. Government assistance for the program would lead to private ownership. I ask the Minister to have someone from his office speak to Mr Cunich about practical ways in which the Government could assist him—for example, by subsidising the traps, buying the traps and distributing them to councils, buying traps for Landcare and Bushcare groups, and using them in national parks where Indian mynas are a problem.

Indian mynas are an environmental disaster. If they continue to be ignored by government, within a few generations or less the Indian myna's song may be the only birdsong that is heard throughout much of Australia. The traps are enormously effective. For every 100 traps that are set, 3,000 Indian mynas will be caught and destroyed in a month. Over 12 months, the total number of birds destroyed would be 36,000. Over a three-year period, six million Indian mynas could be destroyed. Unlike other pests, something can be done about controlling Indian mynas. I ask the Government to provide assistance to Mr Cunich.

DEATH OF MR JOHN DUNCAN O'REILLY

Mr PAUL GIBSON (Blacktown) [5.27 p.m.]: For the benefit of the *Sunday Telegraph*, this will be another run on the board. I inform the House of the death of John Duncan O'Reilly, who was born at Young, where I come from, on 24 June 1928. He passed away suddenly a few weeks ago, on 24 July 2006, at his home at Belrose. He was a man of many talents. Most people will remember him as one of the greatest sports broadcasters this country has ever had, but there was so much more to him. He was a very Christian person, honest to a fault and, as I recall, during his heyday in television and radio, very humble. The eulogy at his funeral was given by his brother-in-law, Raymond Chapman, and his brother, Fred O'Reilly. I will reiterate some of the comments they made.

John O'Reilly was born at Young. Upon leaving school he took up a cadetship with the local radio station, 2LF-Young. He developed his radio skills at a very early age and soon found himself sitting on the cold and often very wet sidelines of Group 9 rugby league grounds, calling the famous Maher Cup with his old colleagues Errol Eastley and Billy Dennis. In those days it used to be said that the Maher Cup was almost as famous as the Melbourne Cup, and the call just had to get through. Never mind that the Gundagai Bridge was three or four feet under water and players could not get onto the ground until 5 o'clock in the afternoon—John O'Reilly, the Maher Cup caller, was always on the sidelines, waiting to call the game.

He married a lass from Cootamundra, the love of his life, Dulcie Chapman. In 1960 Dulcie, John and their young son, Timothy, moved to Maroubra, Sydney, where John began a 30-year career with the ABC. John O'Reilly had a most successful career at the ABC; he was the voice of rugby league and undertook four or five Great Britain tours with the Kangaroos. He made many friends on those tours. The ABC expected John to be an all-round caller. I remember him calling the Davis Cup with Adrian Quist for many years. He was also there when tennis player Rod Laver played his first professional game. John called 10-pin bowling—he called everything. There are probably not too many sports that John O'Reilly did not cover in his time. Some well-known co-commentators in those days were the legendary Reg Gasnier, Jimmy Lisle, Keith Barnes, Kevin Ryan and Les Johns.

Other co-commentators were his great friends Tiger Black, Frank Hyde, Nugget May, Trevor Allan and many more. After retiring from the ABC at the age of 62 John took up another great passion, bowling. He played bowls at a top level for many years. John was a good family man, a Christian, a man of very sober habits who loved to laugh and tell jokes. Every year I host a reunion in Parliament House for the people of Young. John and Dulcie attended that reunion for many years. John was not only nature's gentleman, and very humble, but also a great friend. John was a great Australian talent.

At his eulogy his brother Freddy spoke of how John came to have his unique style of calling. He was one of the old callers. As there was no television in those days, John's voice was the eyes of people who were listening to a game, a fight, or whatever he was broadcasting. One day I asked him how he came to have that unique style. He replied that he loved to listen to Billy Boyd—for the information of the younger members of this Chamber, William, or Billy, Boyd was the great Hopalong Cassidy. John always said that the greatest fight caller was Cyril Angles. John often spoke about the Vic Patrick and Freddie Dawson fights. On one occasion John painted the picture by saying:

Patrick shuffles forward, his right hand glove flicking the face of Dawson, his left hand poised like a scorpion's tail ready to strike the killing blow but the wily American, ducking and weaving, counters with a flurry of jabs to the solar plexus followed by a right cross to the side of Patrick's face—whose knees buckle momentarily.

That was how he called. He could paint the picture for everyone. He played football with Christian Brothers College of Young with the likes of locals Keith Bowls, Don McKillop, Ray Maher and Brian Clarke. As Freddy O'Reilly said, "John is somebody who everyone loved." At John's eulogy, Freddy said that when John got up there to meet the Master, assuredly John would have heard the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." May he rest in peace.

COFFS HARBOUR AND CLARENCE POLICE NUMBERS

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [5.32 p.m.]: I draw attention to police numbers in the electorates of Coffs Harbour and Clarence, in the Coffs/Clarence Local Area Command. On 11 July 2006 I wrote to the Coffs/Clarence Local Area Commander, Superintendent Peter Barrie, stating:

Following my telephone conversation with the Duty Officer at Coffs Harbour Police Station on Saturday morning, 16th June, when I advised of an intended beach party at Korora, a large amount of damage was caused in the Korora area. Car windscreens were smashed, letterboxes were torn out and garden ornaments were destroyed. I am unaware of any charges being laid as a result of these incidents, although I am aware that Police did attend that area on at least two occasions that night.

A petition I have circulated calling for more police has received huge support, 120 petition sheets ...

In fact, 133 petition sheets have now been received by my office, with in excess of 2,000 signatures. Every time I raise this issue the Minister says that we are over strength. Recently five probationary constables were appointed to the area. However, the Minister fails to acknowledge that at any given time in the Coffs/Clarence Local Area Command up to 30 officers are off duty, either on sick leave, stress leave, or had been hurt on duty, or whatever. As a result, the command is considerably under strength. I point out also that the overtime budget in the Coffs/Clarence Local Area Command is nowhere near good enough. Only a matter of weeks ago a constituent, Harry Atwal, was driving a taxi when there was an altercation with some louts in the cab about the fare. When Mr Atwal attempted to get the fare from the passengers, he was severely bashed.

Mr Atwal called his base and the police and asked the police to attend. However, only one police car was on duty that night. The manager of the taxi base turned up to the incident before the police arrived. No charges were laid, because the juveniles gave false names and addresses. They claimed that Harry Atwal had threatened them, which was not true. Harry lost his fare, was severely beaten and required medical attention. My point is that the police on duty were unable to attend the incident because only one patrol car was on duty that

night. Only one patrol car was on duty because the overtime budget is inadequate. Coffs Harbour has a 24-hour police station, but it does not have the resources to run it in the way that the public expect and deserve.

When the House last sat I drew attention to an incident in which a BMW four-wheel drive was involved in a fatal accident just north of Macksville. The driver veered onto the wrong side of the road, went under a semitrailer and the two occupants of the BMW—who I think came from either Queensland or the far North Coast—were killed. When emergency services tried to get police to respond, not one highway patrol vehicle was on duty that night between Taree and Grafton. Only one patrol vehicle was on duty that night because there is no money. Although the Roads and Traffic Authority funds the police force to run highway patrol vehicles, the budgets are so tight that Superintendent Barrie and his fellow commanders on the North Coast do not have the resources to provide the required services.

From one end of the electorate to the other beach parties have resulted in complaints of drug taking, vandalism, swearing, loutish behaviour and general lawlessness. In response to my letter of 11 July, Superintendent Barrie wrote to me informing of the Coffs Care Tent Program, the New Years Eve Booze Free/Ride Free Program, the How to Drug Proof Your Kids Program, the Your Choice Program and the Anger Management Program—all fine programs. Unfortunately, they are not assisting in the day-to-day management of lawlessness. Graffiti in Coffs Harbour is out of hand. In 1994 the late Joe Blanch visited Coffs Harbour and there was a blitz for four weekends, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. That sorted out the lawlessness and juvenile crime in our city. I appeal to the Minister and the Government to do the same again. Do not give us excuses: give us action and support the police officers who are valiantly trying to do the job. [*Time expired.*]

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.37 p.m.]: The New South Wales Government is committed to providing appropriate levels of policing to communities. We have record numbers of police in New South Wales. The good news is that more are to come. The current class of 750 police will graduate later this year and will certainly be welcome around the State. Isolated incidents of crime affect every community. The Government knows that but believes in providing the tools that local communities want, such as party packs and advising people on how to prevent crime. The honourable member trivialised those efforts and said they do not work. He is wrong; they do work. Police say their efforts work as long as the community and the police work together. However, the primary function of policing is to respond to urgent need.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Like assaults on taxi drivers?

Mr PAUL McLEAY: Yes, that is right, that is what they are there for. That is why we have more active high profile policing. In past incidences that has not been available, but the new extra police will be of assistance across the State. I thank the honourable member for Coffs Harbour for bringing those matters to the attention of the House.

NEWSTAN-AWABA MINES LAND PROTECTION

Mr JEFF HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [5.39 p.m.]: Over the past nine months the Lake Macquarie community conducted a very strong and successful campaign to stop the establishment of a proposed open cut coalmine between the townships of Awaba and Cooranbong. I was pleased to work with the local community and with the Federal member for Charlton, the Hon. Kelly Hoare, to fight the proposal. I made two speeches in this House in relation to the community's opposition to the mine, and tabled a number of petitions containing thousands of signatures. In May Centennial Coal announced that it was withdrawing its proposal for the open-cut coalmine. As soon as that happened, I met with two local community groups—Southlakes Communities Against Mine and No Open Cut Mine for Awaba—in an effort to ensure that the community would never again have to fight a proposal for an open-cut coalmine in this area.

It was the second time in 25 years that the community had won a battle to prevent a mine from being established in that area. As part of this effort the Southlakes Communities Against Mine group put together a petition and tonight I have with me 200 pages of the petition, containing some 4,000 signatures, which calls on the Government to include the Awaba land in the draft regional conservation plan that is being finalised at the moment. I am pleased to announce that the Minister for the Environment advised me during the past week that the community has won its battle to have this land included in that draft regional conservation plan. This means that the land will be earmarked for conservation. The Awaba area has been assessed as suitable for inclusion in the regional conservation plan of the Department of Environment and Conservation because of its important natural conservation values and biodiversity.

The bushland contains many rare and endangered species and forms an important link between Lake Macquarie and the Watagan Mountains. This was one of the reasons for the local community's opposition to Centennial Coal's open-cut mine proposal. First, the community focused its energies on ensuring that Centennial Coal's proposed open-cut mine did not proceed. Then the community rallied to ensure the area's protection so that future generations would not have to fight any open-cut mine proposals. I mentioned that twice in the past 25 years the community had fought and been successful in preventing the establishment of an open-cut mine between Cooranbong and Awaba, and we believed it was now time to provide some permanent protection for the area. I am pleased that the Minister for the Environment heeded our call. In a letter directed to me dated 17 August he said:

Dear Jeff,

Thank you for your letters of May, June and July 2006 concerning the recent withdrawal of the proposal by Centennial Coal to establish an open cut mine in the Lake Macquarie area. Thank you also for your many previous representations on behalf of your local constituents who were opposed to the development. A number have also written to me separately about this issue.

I acknowledge your concerns, and those of your constituents, that a similar inappropriate proposal may be put forward in the future.

The letter continued:

I am pleased to advise you that DEC is proposing that, in the draft RCP [regional conservation plan], the conservation values of the site originally proposed by Centennial Coal for open cut mining will be formally recognised. As well as containing important natural conservation values and biodiversity, the site links the shores of Lake Macquarie with the Watagans and so forms an important part of a contiguous bushland corridor to the north.

The Minister went on to say:

I can assure you that as a consequence of the values identified in the draft RCP, efforts will continue to be focused on ensuring that the important biodiversity and other natural values within this area are properly conserved.

I anticipate that the draft RCP will be publicly exhibited in the near future. This will allow your local community to be fully informed about this issue and to be provided with an opportunity to contribute directly to its finalisation.

I am pleased that we have won the first stage of our conservation fight, but we need to win the final stage as well. We need to ensure that other areas on the western side of Lake Macquarie that have been earmarked for possible future open-cut coalmining are also included in the conservation plan. We want to ensure that when the plan is finalised the Awaba land remains in it. I encourage local residents to view the draft when it is released and to continue to voice their support for the area's protection so we ensure the confirmation of it in the final plan. Tomorrow this 4000-signature petition in support of that proposal will be presented for tabling in Parliament.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.44 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for drawing the attention of the House to the community campaign. He is an active local member. He has often told me about the pristine environment and about the importance of the lifestyle to him and his community. He is a strong advocate of behalf of his constituents. He has told me that they enjoy their way of life in the beautiful area in which they live and that the environment is important to their continuing lifestyle and the life they seek for their children in the future. I am pleased that the Government has responded in this appropriate way. I congratulate the honourable member on his ongoing campaign and wish him well for the future.

TURRAMURRA RAILWAY STATION UPGRADE

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.45 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to raise the proposed improvements to access at Turramurra station and associated works. Those improvements have been long sought by local residents and often promised by the State Government. While a September 2002 announcement and commitment to have the works completed by the end of 2003 failed to materialise, this year's State budget finally allocated funds to start the project. The works will result in a lift being installed at the station. To achieve that the existing pedestrian overbridge that links Rohini Street and William Street and provides access, by stairs, to the Turramurra railway platform, has to be moved and rebuilt. As part of its response to the State Government's rezoning of Ku-ring-gai town centres, Ku-ring-gai Council's planners identified the pedestrian overbridge at Turramurra as an issue for improving connectivity of shopping precincts located on both sides of the station.

One of the problems of the Turrumurra shopping precinct is that it comprises three distinct areas divided either by the Pacific Highway or the railway line. Lessening the impact of those barriers would have a significant community benefit. Over the past six months Ku-ring-gai Council has been in discussion with RailCorp about this issue and the Turrumurra EasyAccess upgrade generally. It was agreed that the existing 3.3 metre wide pedestrian overbridge would be replaced by one that was 8.5 metres wide, and council indicated its willingness to fund the difference in construction costs of the wider structure. That would not only achieve the improved pedestrian access between two sides of this shopping district but also enable the much sought-after lift to be installed. The current pedestrian overbridge would not allow a lift to be installed, given its position and the footprint of the Turrumurra railway platform.

As part of the wider bridge project RailCorp has also proposed that three shops be included on this new wider facility. A small newsagency operates on the current overbridge. I have no doubt that all of this would meet with overwhelming community and commuter support and I am keen to see a start to this work. However in June, for the first time, and again in August, RailCorp advised Ku-ring-gai Council that it would face additional costs beyond those associated with the widening of the wider overbridge. The proposed costs are set out in a letter dated 2 August to council's general manager as follows:

- (1) Construction costs for the additional width of the bridge deck and canopies from 3.3m to 8.5m
- (2) Overhead costs:
 - Project management costs
 - Pro-rata possession and bussing costs for when the rail line is closed for construction
- (3) Maintenance costs assuming a bridge life expiry of 40 years:
 - Yearly ongoing routine maintenance of the structure
 - Periodic renewal of the surface finishes including floor tiling, internal ceilings, roofing, lighting and entrance areas
 - Demolition of the bridge at life expiry.

RailCorp assessed these costs at \$1.1 million, excluding the goods and services tax [GST]: \$823,000 for the increased width of the bridge, \$123,000 for project management, possession and bussing and \$162,000 for maintenance and demolition costs. That is around \$200,000 or an increase of more than 20 per cent on what Ku-ring-gai Council believed the project would cost when it considered the matter at a meeting on 6 December 2005. There are a number of problems with this approach that understandably concern Ku-ring-gai Council. There is the issue of the reasonableness of the additional costs. On Monday, at the mayor's initiative, I met with council to discuss this issue. Council made clear its desire for the project to proceed and its willingness to accept a fair share of the costs. But how fair are these proposals?

As I have said, the new wider structure will allow the number of shops on the structure to increase from one to three. The resulting rental income will all go to RailCorp. So while, under this proposal, Ku-ring-gai Council will maintain the environs around these shops, it will receive no income. It is not asking for any, but a fairer deal would acknowledge this benefit to RailCorp and be reflected in the costings. Equally, I find it extremely odd that RailCorp is proposing to charge Ku-ring-gai Council for future demolition of the structure. That is odd, not only because we are talking about demolishing something yet to be built, but also because of the end point envisaged. Is RailCorp seriously suggesting that, after 40 years, this structure is to be demolished and not replaced? If so, how is it proposing that commuters at that time will access their trains? The reality is that when and if the structure needs replacing or further upgrading, the costs of full or partial demolition will form part of the construction costs at that time, just as they do in the current project costs. To try to get Ku-ring-gai Council to sign up now to such costs is absurd. If the boot were on the other foot, it is easy to guess what RailCorp's response to council would be.

On 2 August RailCorp wrote to council requiring a commitment to this cost-sharing arrangement by 23 August or it would revert to a project that only involved replacement of a 3.3 metre-wide pedestrian overbridge. I would argue that giving council just three weeks to make a decision on a significant increase in funding is unreasonable. It is especially unwarranted when one takes into account the funding position facing council for these works. Council's share of the project costs would come from section 94 contributions, that is, those funds paid by developers when developing or redeveloping sites which are intended to be used for projects to improve public or community amenity and facilities. To secure the funds council firstly has to develop a section 94 plan

for the Turramurra Town Centre and then wait for the funds to flow into it. Council's advice is that it is unlikely that sufficient funds will have been collected before council is required to pay its contribution to RailCorp. As a result council will have to consider options to either borrow from external or internal sources to fund its share of the project.

Once again, the unreasonableness of RailCorp's deadline is demonstrated. This whole episode also, regrettably, again confirms the State Government's piecemeal approach to planning. It is a case study of disconnectedness and placing obstacles in the path of better planning outcomes. After my meeting with council on Monday I wrote to the Minister for Transport urging greater fairness in apportioning costs and additional time for Council and RailCorp to settle these issues. Reasonableness and commonsense are required to ensure this important project is delivered for the Turramurra community and commuters and I urge the Minister to heed council's request.

POLLIES FOR SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.49 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I speak about the Pollies for Small Business Program, which was held from Monday 21 August to Saturday 26 August. Many high-profile members of Parliament, including Peter Garrett, spent some time assisting in the program and received considerable media attention. On Monday 21 August quite a few happy shoppers in the Heathcote electorate attended Pepies One Stop Corner Shop at 91 Lawrence Hargrave Drive, Stanwell Park, the main store in Stanwell Park, which carries everything from takeaway food to videos.

Last Monday I looked forward to gaining some first-hand experience of the day-to-day pressures confronting small business operators. At one stage when I took some time off university I worked in a mattress factory in Marrickville for 14 months, but that has been my only experience with small business. The rest of the time I worked with the bureaucracy in big business and insurance companies. Therefore, my exposure to small business has not been great and this was a real eye-opener. Wendy Lepre, the owner of Pepies One Stop Corner Shop, welcomed me. She is also a member of the Northern Illawarra Chamber of Commerce, a very active and well-run organisation. Daryl Bromley is the chair of that chamber of commerce, which is a small organisation that strongly believes in community participation and advocacy for its members. Indeed, it has certainly had its challenges.

Honourable members will recall that 2½ years ago Lawrence Hargrave Drive was closed because of the effects of mother nature: rocks fell from above and there was erosion. The road had been closed previously but following significant slippage it was decided for safety reasons that the road should be closed permanently and that engineers should be called in. The result has been the Sea Cliff Bridge, which is a magnificent addition to the area. However, the road was closed for two years, during which time Stanwell Tops was a cul-de-sac and trade dropped significantly. Tourists did not visit local communities in the area and retailers in those isolated areas suffered a substantial decrease in their sales.

It was two years of very hard slog, even though the Roads and Traffic Authority provided business advice and assurances to the local community. As well, business owners were able to take advantage of a \$2 million community fund to keep the towns vibrant and the community active. Several people went bankrupt because of lack of patronage, but those that were able to survive are now beginning to have their patience rewarded. However, it is a slow process. Many people are visiting the area to see the new bridge, and we hope that many more will visit during the summer. However, one cannot base a business around the summer period; it must be viable on an ongoing basis. Wendy showed me the in-depth side of the business, which employs 10 locals and increases that number during the busy times in summer and on weekends.

Not only is Wendy a member of the local Chamber of Commerce; she is also involved with the Festival of Flight, which is another activity that brings people into the northern towns of the Illawarra. The Government has sponsored the past two festivals under the guidance of Helensburgh Lions Club, and I thank the club for its ongoing participation. The northern towns have a bright future, with the pubs reopening and people returning. It was my pleasure to attend the festival for a few hours to cut lettuce, serve customers and clean glass fridges. I even managed to cook a hamburger. I thank Wendy for giving me the opportunity to participate in a small way. A better understanding of small business strengthens the fibre of all members. I acknowledge that many members of Parliament have much stronger ongoing relationships with small business but, as ABL State Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Officer, Kevin MacDonald, stated:

Politicians often deal with the big picture when it comes to regulations and legislation, so working in a small business for the day can help them gain some valuable insights.

It certainly did and I thank Wendy Lepre and Pepies One Stop Shop.

MANNING AND GREAT LAKES EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE FUNDING

Mr JOHN TURNER (Myall Lakes) [5.54 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the Manning and Great Lakes Early Intervention Centre. Recently I met with Ms Lynne Stuttard, co-ordinator-teacher, in relation to funding problems that the centre is experiencing and specifically to query some information about a State Government initiative under the heading of Stronger Together, which I will come to shortly. The Manning and Great Lakes Early Intervention Centre is a not-for-profit community-based service supporting young children from birth to six years and meeting the additional needs of their families.

The service is presently funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and also receives a grant on application from the Department of Education and Training through the intervention and support program. Financial support from those State government sources is not sufficient to maintain current levels of service. In fact, in 2003-04 the Manning and Great Lakes Early Intervention Centre was able to offer a more comprehensive service to clients than in 2006-07. Obviously, that is disappointing to the management committee; I also met some members of the committee. It is also devastating to the clients of the service. The level of service funding has been caused by the funding cuts and increased costs.

I have been associated with early intervention centres for many years and I know the great work they do. Anyone with young children knows that getting to the problem early often means that it can be fixed and that early intervention goes a long way towards reducing ongoing problems in future years. It is imperative that early intervention centres be recognised and properly funded. This is not a fad. In some instances, it is about putting in place lifetime solutions for young people and helping them and their families. The State Government has produced a document called "Stronger Together: A new direction for disability services in NSW 2006-2016." Ms Stuttard was somewhat concerned about the document. She stated:

I struggled to find a reference to this area of disability services and feel that there may be within the NSW State Government little understanding or knowledge of the vital role early childhood intervention services such as Manning & Great Lakes Early Intervention play in the lives of young children under school age and their families.

She is concerned because of the funding program. She referred her concerns to the department and sought additional funding. She received a reply stating that her problems could be solved under the Stronger Together program. However, the program does not spell out what the Government intends to do for organisations such as Manning and Great Lakes Early Intervention Inc. I have written to the Minister asking him to explain fully the funding under the Stronger Together program but to date I have not received a reply. I hope to receive one very soon because the centre is in dire straits.

If it is not envisaged that early intervention services will receive funding, there will be a huge hole in the funding system that may not be able to be filled, particularly if Stronger Together is to be the funding program for disability services in New South Wales. My other concern about the centre is its current state of funding, which has steadily reduced over the past four years. This year funding for the Department of Education and Training was reduced by approximately \$20,000, even though the centre's application contained the same number of diagnosed children as it did in 2005.

In 2003-04 the organisation received \$212,000 in DADHC funding and in 2006-07 it will receive just \$200,000. This organisation clearly provides an outstanding service but it will be unable to continue to do so, and services such as speech pathology and paediatric physiotherapy will decrease, and in some cases may disappear into oblivion. It is vital that not only this early intervention service but all such services throughout New South Wales are funded adequately. I urge the Minister to ensure that Stronger Together plays a role in providing funds to early intervention centres.

MACQUARIE FIELDS ELECTORATE YOUTH FACILITIES

Mr STEVEN CHAYTOR (Macquarie Fields) [5.59 p.m.]: I shall speak tonight about youth facilities in my electorate, particularly the proposal for a skate park in Macquarie Fields. As the local member of Parliament I am determined to work with the local community to build a strong Macquarie Fields. One of the ways that Macquarie Fields can become a safe and positive place is to ensure that young people have more things to do. This is also one way to improve the community image and community outcomes in Macquarie Fields.

The proposal for a skate park in Macquarie Fields has been talked about for a long time and campaigned on for a long time. It has been on the drawing board for too long. There have been community

petitions and community consultation. I thank the local residents who completed my petition in large numbers in support of a Macquarie Fields skate park. The time has now come for action. That is why I strongly welcome the recent decision by Campbelltown City Council to select the suburb of Macquarie Fields as the site for a second skate park for the city and to undertake investigations of various suitable locations.

The corner of Victoria and Canterbury roads is one site being considered strongly for the location of a high-quality skate park. This location is away from homes, highly visible, and close to the police station and Glenquarie shops. This location would complement the work being undertaken to upgrade the Glenquarie precinct to improve retail, employment and recreation outcomes, and the work being undertaken to reduce crime through the better design of public space.

Campbelltown council has the opportunity to replicate in Macquarie Fields the great success and achievements of the skate park at Leumeah. As I am sure the honourable member for Campbelltown would confirm, the skate park at Leumeah is a high-quality facility, incorporating the latest design elements. It is surrounded by quality open space and is the location of many extreme sports competitions and instructions. It is, importantly, graffiti free and a place where youth service providers, including NSW Police, build positive and strong partnerships with young people in our young city.

As the youngest member of Parliament and one who represents an area with a high proportion of young people, I strongly support the extension of leading youth services throughout New South Wales. A leading youth service operating in Macquarie Fields is late-night basketball for young people, which is co-ordinated by Father Chris Riley's Youth Off the Streets. Using the basketball courts next to James Meehan High School, this program incorporates recreational, educational and peer support programs that are building a stronger Macquarie Fields community. I know the New South Wales Government is always considering supporting appropriate youth programs that expand opportunities for young people and expand benefits to the whole community. I recommend support of the late-night basketball in Macquarie Fields, which plays an important role in providing brighter futures for young people from disadvantaged families. I emphasise the importance of youth programs that expand benefits to the whole community. Nothing is more important than community programs and infrastructure that expand the horizons of future generations. A skate park at Macquarie Fields and the Youth Off the Streets late-night basketball are two such programs that are building a brighter tomorrow for us all.

In conclusion I compliment the staff of Campbelltown council, the local youth advisory subcommittee, and the leadership of Councillor Anoulack Chanthivong on the launch of the *Showcasing Campbelltown* CD on International Youth Day. The launch took place at the new Macarthur Square, a development that has positively changed the face of south-western Sydney. The CD project involves inviting young people from Campbelltown to record their music. It is the first time that most of them have been in a studio. The CD is distributed to all major record companies in Australia. The project encourages young people to pursue and expand their musical talents and gives them the chance to make it big with a hit in this competitive industry and competitive world. The project builds the skills and confidence of our youth. I commend listening of the CD to all honourable members.

EPPING WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL HALL

Mr ANDREW TINK (Epping) [6.04 p.m.]: On Saturday 2 September the Epping West Public School community will hold a school fete to raise yet more money for the provision of a school hall. As things stand, the school has raised well over \$250,000 and I imagine that by the end of the fete that total will be somewhere in the vicinity of \$300,000. This reflects a longstanding commitment by successive school communities over a decade to raise money for a school hall. The project has been the subject of repeated representations to successive Ministers for Education and Training, particularly former Ministers Aquilina, Watkins and Refshauge, and the present Minister for Education and Training, Ms Tebbutt. In March this year I presented to the Minister a petition signed by 3,677 local residents who support the construction of a school hall. They include school parents and members of the general community as well as small businesses that have generously donated to the school fund.

The State Government made no contribution to the project in the last State budget and it has given no indication that one is likely in the future. In these circumstances I say on record that the State Minister for Education and Training should make this project a priority. She should approach the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training and seek a Commonwealth grant to add to the money raised by the school community. This would allow the State Government to make a balanced and proportionate contribution to the

project. I note that when the Deputy Premier was the Minister for Education and Training he declined to provide a school hall for Epping West Public School but signed off on a major upgrade, including a school hall, at Eastwood Heights Public School in his electorate. The then Minister approached the Commonwealth Government for funding under its capital grants program to assist in the building of new facilities at Eastwood Heights Public School.

I certainly do not begrudge Eastwood Heights Public School its facilities but I believe the time has long passed for the New South Wales Government to recognise the claim of Epping West Public School for a school hall, which has been pursued for a decade by successive school communities. The State Government should commit funds to that project and request a contribution from the Commonwealth Government under its capital grants program. It is important to point out that under the Australian Constitution the main responsibility for providing schooling rests with the State and Territory governments. For that reason, the Commonwealth provides supplementary funding and capital works funding to improve educational outcomes.

I understand that in 2006 the Federal Government has provided more than \$92 million in capital works to New South Wales State schools under the program. I further understand that these applications are made through the Government of New South Wales, which plans and prioritises major capital works and maintenance programs in accordance with demands across the entire New South Wales system. The Government of New South Wales recommends to the Commonwealth Minister for Education projects for funding.

I highlight this important point: As a result of this and the constitutional arrangements, for such funding to flow from the Commonwealth it is a condition precedent that the State Education Minister make an application to the Federal Government. In other words, under the Constitution the Federal Government cannot act unilaterally to support a school such as Epping West Public School. It can act only after that request is triggered through the office of the State Minister for Education and Training. It is up to the State Minister for Education and Training to commit funding and to commit to approaching the Commonwealth Government to ensure that Federal funds are tapped.

In the past few days I have requested that the Minister for Education and Training seek funds from the Commonwealth and make a commitment on behalf of the New South Wales Government to fund the construction of a hall at Epping West Public School. Given that the funding will come from three directions and that the school community has already raised a massive amount of money—and it is not a wealthy community by any means—the State education Minister must act now so that the Federal Government can act in turn.

LANDCARE COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [6.09 p.m.]: Community Landcare networks of volunteers have made a valuable contribution to natural resource management in New South Wales for more than 15 years. Currently, however, numbers are dwindling and landholder involvement has declined. This is largely because changes in government policy, particularly the establishment of catchment management authorities [CMAs] in 2003, have often alienated these groups rather than involving and engaging them.

The Southern New England Landcare Co-ordinating Committee [SNELCC] formed in 1991 as one of five strong community Landcare networks in the New England area in the north-west of New South Wales. These five networks include 105 member groups and 2,000 member families. They boast 63 collective years of community natural resource management experience and 63 partner organisations, including government agencies, private enterprise, research and development organisations, a university and schools which assist with project funding, resources, design and delivery. Although the five networks vary in structure and focus, they work effectively on a regional scale and across CMA boundaries.

The SNELCC contribution alone has included more than \$6 million worth of on-ground works across its one million hectare region since 1994, including planting 1.5 million native seedlings, protecting and regenerating 2,912 hectares of remnant vegetation, and rehabilitating and protecting 84 kilometres of riparian zones. It has held field days, seminars, conferences, workshops, training sessions and art exhibitions. It has collected key natural resource management information using satellite imagery and geographic information systems to allow community monitoring and evaluation of its achievements. Despite this strong record, Landcare is currently in decline across many parts of New South Wales, with one network reducing from 28 active groups to three in just two years.

The current CMA model encompasses several improvements on previous regional models, including the ability to form partnerships with local organisations and leverage local investment, in cash and kind; a more direct communication route between implementers and the funding body; clearly defined natural resource targets towards which community members can work; and reduced application paperwork for community members. However, I am advised that a culture within many CMAs assumes that the regional model should replace local mechanisms for community engagement rather than maintain and support local mechanisms in a partnership arrangement. Where CMAs have made it a priority to support and enhance local natural resource management [NRM] mechanisms, we have seen valuable partnerships develop and outcomes achieved.

Many CMAs have implemented funding mechanisms that discourage group membership because they contract only individuals. A poor understanding of the nature of community capacity and its link to NRM has resulted in some CMAs regarding community capacity building simplistically as awareness raising or something that is separate to works on the ground. Where community capacity is high a great deal of NRM activities are implemented without external funding. A sole focus on catchment action plans and catchment investment strategies to the exclusion of other activities means that these unfunded works remain unacknowledged. Within the Landcare networks of the Northern Tablelands, local assessments over several years have shown that for every \$1 invested by the Government in natural resource management, local Landcare groups have invested between \$3 and \$6, either in cash or in kind.

No longer are there clear advantages in belonging to a Landcare group. Over time the ultimate outcome of this process is the decline of volunteerism. This means that NRM activities will not be undertaken unless they are fully funded by CMAs. The majority of CMAs across New South Wales have rebadged local Landcare co-ordinators as community support officers [CSOs] and internalised them within the CMA. These positions were previously employed through community Landcare networks, and in some parts of the State there has been a community backlash against this. At least one CMA is currently discussing the implications of reducing its 11 full-time CSO positions to only four across the whole region after 2007 due to budget reductions.

The State should not be prepared to stand by and allow the disintegration of a valuable community-based network which saves the Government millions of dollars through its volunteer activities and binds communities together to regenerate the natural environment. A change is needed to recognise, reward and promote those CMAs that utilise and strengthen local mechanisms for community natural resource management and develop effective audit frameworks for assessing this progress.

GROUND WATER ENTITLEMENTS

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [6.14 p.m.]: Today I raise a matter of serious concern regarding the cuts to ground water entitlement for irrigators in the Namoi Valley and the issue of adequate compensation for that loss. If the current recommendations are adopted we will soon see irrigators leaving their farms and the decimation of a \$400 million a year industry. Recently irrigators in the Namoi Valley were informed of their new entitlement under the Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Entitlements [ASGE] program, confirming the recommendations to Minister Macdonald made by the Groundwater Adjustment Advisory Committee and the Namoi Catchment Management Authority [CMA]. These new entitlements cut the original allocations anywhere from 70 per cent to 90 per cent. This entitlement will be temporarily gazetted under the Water Act 1912 until implementation of the water-sharing plan on 1 October this year.

The ASGE program builds on previous efforts to return ground water to sustainability in the Namoi Valley. Under various titles, this process has dragged on laboriously for many years, and it now seems that the program will be completed quickly to allow irrigators to plan for their future. A number of critical issues remain before the water-sharing plan can commence. These issues effectively disallow the stated positive outcomes for industry being sought through the ASGE program—namely, first, the recognition of a property right; second, the capacity to plan cropping rotations and forward market based on good resource knowledge; and, third, the creation of a tradable and easily valued right.

These are serious matters, and to date no response has been provided to the industry through the ASGE program. Following consultation with Namoi Water and local irrigators, I believe the following actions should be taken to resolve these critical issues. In regard to point one, the New South Wales Government is requested to issue a deed of offer with the payments made under the ASGE program, which should be viewed as compensation for lost access to the ground water resource. I ask the New South Wales Government to reject attempts by the Commonwealth to have the deed of offer described as structural adjustment income assistance, as this allows the Commonwealth to recoup up to half of the payment in tax.

In regard to point two, reviews of sustainable yield should be implemented following the commencement of the Namoi ground water-sharing plan, if required by irrigators in the relevant zone. It is also important that this review be conducted in accordance with a credible scientific process identified as appropriate by the Natural Resources Commission in New South Wales, and that the review be carried out under the auspices of the Namoi CMA and not the Department of Natural Resources. Elevations in sustainable yield must also be linked directly to elevations in entitlement holders' share of the resource within the water-sharing plan. Water to be transferred from consumptive use to environmental use should be identified through transparent scientific processes and be acquired according to the principles of just terms acquisition.

On point three, the Government was asked to consider that committees be established immediately in each ground water zone to discuss hotspot management issues or areas of over extraction. I am pleased to say that Minister Macdonald has agreed to this request, and the first meeting of these committees will be held shortly. The recent news of entitlement cuts confirmed the worst fears of many. For example, the Billingshams, who are lucerne producers located in zone 12 in the Kelvin area, are facing the loss of 84 per cent of their current entitlement. Such a large cut will force them from the land, and I am not exaggerating. They will be unviable, yet they are to receive a pittance for compensation resulting from their loss of entitlement, especially when one considers that they have spent over \$600,000 on their property to develop a sustainable lucerne business within the framework of a 73 per cent cut that many Government officials had indicated they should expect.

There also remains the critical issue of compensation for loss of entitlement, which I have attempted to address through the Water Management Amendment (Water Property Rights Compensation) Bill 2006 that I introduced earlier this year. That legislation will guarantee compensation under the Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991 for the compulsory acquisition of water access licences and for any reduction in water entitlement. This will give irrigators financial security by allowing water to be viewed as an asset when applying for finance using the water component of their property as collateral. The Federal member for New England, Tony Windsor, has called on the Commonwealth Government to amend the Income Tax Assessment Act so that payments for loss of entitlement are recognised as compensation, not income. Farmers have met the challenge of sustainability and they contribute substantially to the Namoi Valley economy. The State and Federal governments must offer irrigators fair just terms compensation to give them security of tenure, as well as provide them with the capacity to forward plan based on sound scientific study. I urge the Government to consider this issue carefully before we see the decimation of what has been an excellent industry in the local area.

Private members' statements noted.

[Madam Acting-Speaker (Ms Marianne Saliba) left the chair at 6.19 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Third Day's Debate

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [7.30 p.m.]: I want to reply to comments made by the Lieutenant-Governor concerning the Government's great fiscal policies and budget announcements, about which I have some concern. I can talk only about my area in the Clarence Valley in northern New South Wales, but something that impacts on electorates across the State is the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme. In 1995 the Government made a commitment to allocate \$850 million over 10 years—that is, \$85 million a year—yet less than half of that money has been spent. At one stage councils received 50 per cent in subsidies but that has now been reduced to 28 per cent for small councils and 11 per cent for larger councils.

In my area at Evans Head a major environmental issue is the effluent that is released into Salty Lagoon. However, as it is not a priority for this Government no funds are allocated to alleviate the problem and ratepayers have to foot the bill. Iluka is the largest unsewered town in New South Wales and Lawrence has to pay \$3,000 just for pump-outs plus a huge increase in council contributions. So I really cannot say I agree with the Lieutenant-Governor's comments about this Government's great achievements in fiscal policy or in managing the State. By cutting subsidies, local government authorities have to look at the cheapest options, which is river or ocean release. That is not good enough. Collectively, State and local governments should be looking at attaining the best optimum environmental outcomes and that costs money.

Before the election in 2003 I remember former Premier Bob Carr with his hapless Labor candidate for Clarence on the veranda of South Grafton Ex-servicemens Club, with the Grafton Bridge in the background. Macquarie Bank Bob gave an ironclad guarantee that construction on the Grafton Bridge would commence in 2005-06. He said that the \$50 million to \$60 million that was needed was already in unallocated Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] funds. The RTA could not find them but Bob knew where they were. Now Bob has gone and the Grafton Bridge is on the never-never. There is a risk of one narrow two-lane crossing dividing South Grafton, Grafton and the Clarence Valley generally. God help us if, in the event of an accident, emergency services are needed.

I am reminded that just before the last election Craig Knowles, dressed like Dr Spock in an operating theatre gown, gave another ironclad guarantee and made a firm Government commitment that \$3 million would be provided to upgrade operating theatres at Grafton Base Hospital, enabling orthopaedic operations along with general surgery to work hand-in-hand, thus easing the pressure on Lismore Base Hospital and health services in general on the North Coast. The list of broken promises goes on, but the Governor's representative did not refer to them. One Minister who has not jumped ship is the Minister for Police. Earlier this year he gave a \$600,000 commitment for the reconstruction of Yamba police station, one of the highest priorities of the risk management groups of the New South Wales Police Association. That project has now been put back until maybe next year.

If any risk management or occupational health and safety organisation carried out an assessment of that police station it would identify the problems and risks associated with policing at Yamba. When police bring prisoners to the police station they have to park their vehicle on the footpath and walk prisoners across a yard and open footpath to the front door. By the time police return from, say, the hotel where there had been trouble as many as three carloads of troublemakers could be waiting at the station for the police wagon to arrive to harass and hassle officers as they escort the prisoners into Yamba police station. Once prisoners are inside the police station they have to walk through the kitchen and an open change room, or police locker room, if they want to go to the toilet. In the kitchen there are dangerous knives and forks. It is only a matter of time before police are injured. They are already regularly threatened.

The list goes on about what the Opposition would have liked the Lieutenant-Governor to talk about—for example, maintenance dredging of Evans and Clarence rivers. Port Yamba is one of the four working ports in New South Wales. The operation of that port is restricted because the river needs regular maintenance dredging but no money has been allocated by the Labor Government. An issue was brought to the attention of Michael Costa before he became the famous Treasurer. A new shed is needed at Goodwood Island wharf to store goods either entering or leaving the Port of Yamba, which represents the Clarence Valley, with connections through Australasia and South-east Asia. They are things that can make or break the growth of an area, especially Yamba.

I will stay with the river industries, the seafood and commercial fishers. There is a dire need for another buyback scheme to assist commercial fishers to be viable and to assist the environment. During the dire times we have been going through, to eke out a living the fishers fish as much as they can, which results in overfishing of the Clarence River. At least 30 fishers would be prepared to sell their licences if a buyback was on offer. It would be a worthwhile exercise for the Government. It has been put to the Government and rejected, but it is needed not only for the commercial interests of the valley but also for the environment. If the Government put up a buyback scheme it would probably have to fight off the fishers. More than 600 people rely on the fishing industry in the Clarence Valley. Many are struggling. Many have second jobs and still have trouble paying their fuel bills and licences. Cheap imports have nothing to do with this Government, but they are something else the fishers have to face.

There should be more money in the budget for more police, not just new cadets, but to encourage the present police to stay in the job. Many are getting out because of the strain put on them by the lack of authority they have to meet their obligations to the community. That is no insult to the police, because they do a great job but they work under trying conditions. I should mention Maclean hospital because for some time the Government has been doing studies on where the rehabilitation centre should go in the Clarence Valley. Maclean hospital has been a priority for that for some time but once again nothing has been mentioned in the budget about rehabilitation facilities in the Clarence Valley. Richmond Valley is the closest. Once again, that is another impost that people in the country have to face.

I mentioned earlier the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme. I was surprised that the Government's water tank rebate scheme is not being taken up as much as it should be, possibly because it is available to people only in the Sydney Basin. There is a drought and water shortages outside Sydney, as anyone

in Goulburn and anywhere else in the State could attest to. The Clarence Valley has just received eight inches of rain in the past 24 hours, so it is doing okay, but with 90 per cent or 95 per cent of the State in drought, I am surprised that the Government has not extended the water tank rebate to country New South Wales.

Many people in country towns would be happy to install a water tank if there were some financial incentive to do so. Most families in country New South Wales are struggling to make ends meet. Unemployment is at its highest in country New South Wales, I would say higher than in some of the harder hit areas of Western Sydney. Country people need those incentives to save water and to save on their water bills. In many country towns it is now user pays—what you use you pay for—and using water tanks will take the pressure off the local water supply.

Again I was surprised that the Government has not taken heed of the Coalition's policies. The surf life saving club movement should be brought under emergency services funding for its liability insurance cover. These organisations are made up of volunteers who, week in, week out, patrol the beaches while everyone is enjoying themselves. They train regularly. I have been involved with the surf life saving club movement. I know how much they put in and how much pleasure and pride they get out of working with the community and creating a safe recreational environment for locals and tourists alike.

The Coalition is committed to bringing the surf life saving club movement under the emergency services umbrella and paying for its liability insurance. I would have thought the Government would have backed up those unsung heroes by taking away some of the imposts so when they raise money it could be used to buy more equipment rather than to cover their liability insurance. Two surf clubs in my area have no clubhouse. Funding has been applied for but no money was available this year. Red Rock-Corindi and Minnie Waters-Wooli surf life saving clubs have been operating for 10 years but have only just had sites granted through much negotiation with the Department of Lands. They now have to arrange funding. The Government needs to look at those things as well.

The Government should be looking at ways to save money through simple regulation. Recently a riot by four youths in Acmena Juvenile Justice Centre caused more than \$100,000 worth of damage. One of the youths was 14 years old and would not have weighed 40 kilograms dripping wet, yet he was one of the main instigators. They went unchallenged, smashing PlayStations, televisions and equipment in rooms because the staff were not allowed access to the rooms to apprehend them even though they had the training and equipment to do so. I thought the Hon. Tony Kelly may have brought new life and commonsense to the portfolio when the former Minister for Juvenile Justice was removed, but nothing has changed. He has his super hit squad that is part of the Department of Corrective Services stationed around New South Wales, and when juvenile justice centres need the tactical response squad to come in and break up a problem they will call them. By then the horse has bolted. The juvenile justice centres will not call them until the problem has reached the riot stage and the damage is done.

Why not empower the workers there to break up trouble as soon as it starts? That will avoid these youths getting another cross against their names and will save a lot of money. In January it was \$200,000, and a little more than that about two years ago. This expenditure will go on and on until something changes. Otherwise, the centre will be another Kariong—turned over to Corrective Services, which will walk in and run it like a gaol, and solve the problem in a month, as it did at Kariong, with half the staff. How was that possible? It was because the Government empowered the staff. It is a simple thing, Minister Kelly. Please read this speech, empower the workers, save yourself a lot of money, and save these youths from getting another across against their name, which would entrench them in crime for the rest of their lives. One issue that I have been happy to assume ownership of is community-based preschools. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I note the enthusiasm of Opposition members to hear what I want to say about community-based preschools. This Government and previous governments have ignored the plight of these preschools. I give Minister Reba Meagher credit for getting \$8.8 million of what is basically emergency funding for preschools. This has enabled them to keep their doors open for another 12 months. But that is about it. That funding has averted closure of the Copmanhurst preschool. I have made representations to the Minister on a couple of occasions, but especially before the budget, about the plight of the Copmanhurst community-based preschool and all other community-based preschools in my area. The reports I have from every other community-based preschool in New South Wales is that they are all struggling to keep their doors open. If it were not for the mums and dads of the preschoolers and the grandparents, uncles and aunts that dig in and do maintenance round those preschools, and help out otherwise wherever they can, those preschools would not be able to keep their doors open. They are struggling because of underfunding.

Once again I would urge the Government to look at the Liberal-Nationals policy of \$360 million, over four years, for community-based preschools. Why? To bring the fees down so that more four-year-olds can attend preschools. In other States, the participation rate is close to 95 per cent. In New South Wales it is 55 or 60 per cent. Any school teacher will tell you that kids that have not been to community-based preschools and had that preschool training are way behind the eight-ball, and that many never catch up. I have just finished my annual Pedal for Preschools—a charity bike ride around the 18 preschools based in the Clarence electorate.

Mr Geoff Corrigan: Did you come off your bike?

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Yes, I did. I did have concussion, and did not know much about it for two hours. But I know all about it now. The people staffing every one of those preschools are just great people. Though they have the same teacher education standards as those in the public school sector, they work for 20 per cent less. Why? Because they love the preschools and know that the communities need them. Many communities could not have a long day care centre because the communities are too small and could not afford it. As we know, day care centres are federally funded. They are well funded, to the extent that they are practically small businesses.

Community-based preschools are a different proposition altogether. We need a funding boost to ease the pressure on fees. I will continue to push for more funding. I am hoping that in the lead-up to the election the Government and Minister Reba Meagher can push Treasury for a bigger commitment, so that preschools not only can compete with other day care centres but also can start lifting attendance rates of four-year-olds so that our education standard right across the board improves. Teachers have told me that some kids who turn up have no social skills or structure—many have not even held a pencil in their hands. They are so far behind it is not funny.

There are one or two other things I want to talk about in this debate. In an area as large as my electorate, there are many issues I would like to speak about. One issue close to my heart—the honourable member for Lismore is 100 per cent behind me on this as well—is the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line, which this Government heartlessly closed. After promising to look at this matter in another 12 months, it just pulled the rails out from under it, so to speak. We need to open up that line. The Government has said it will put up \$75 million if the Federal Government does likewise, and that the proposal would cost \$150 million. People that we have had look at it say that if we can get \$75 million, the line could be open for light rail tomorrow. That sort of service would connect coastal towns with country towns, and people could use the rail service for work and tourism.

The last thing I will talk about is the heritage Glenreagh Mountain Railway. The local community is putting a lot of work into this railway. They have a turn-of-the-century steam train and are putting down a track to make this one of the greatest tourists attractions in New South Wales—the equal of the north Queensland Kuranda line, which I have been on, and it is a fantastic scenic route. The Glenreagh mountain railway goes from Glenreagh, along the old Dorrigo plateau, through some beautiful rainforest and waterfalls. It has everything. But it needs funding. Maybe I should talk to the Lieutenant-Governor about this, so that at a future centenary celebration he will be able to say what a great job this Government has done in helping the Glenreagh Mountain Railway open up another five or six kilometres of line.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.57 p.m.]: Tonight I speak to the Address-in-Reply to the Speech delivered by the Lieutenant-Governor to mark the celebration of the sesquicentenary of the opening of the New South Wales Parliament. In doing so I want to refer to a number of matters and be fairly logical in my approach. The Speech of the Lieutenant-Governor was one that painted a picture. It spoke about the history of this Parliament, the economy of New South Wales, the Government's plans in relation to the economy, and about infrastructure, water, health, education, industrial relations, police, law and order, as well as respect and responsibility. I will come to look at each of those points in turn.

But I would like to begin by reflecting on some of the opening comments made by the Lieutenant-Governor in his Speech. I start by putting on record that the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech essentially was a message from the Governor and therefore the Queen. Members of this House know that I am a very strong republican and believe it is inevitable that this country, our country, Australia, will become a republic.

Mr Steven Chaytor: Vive la republique!

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Vive la republique! I say it is inevitable because Australia is such an old country—not in the sense of the history from the settlement of Australia but in the sense that this country has the oldest continuous history in the world, in fact on our planet. That is a unique and great gift to this country endowed upon us by the first peoples and their survival and their care of country. It seems to me anachronistic that we are still a member of the Commonwealth. Essentially, most Australians—in fact, the majority of Australians—believe that Australia should be a republic and that that is inevitable within our lifetimes.

The Lieutenant-Governor made an important point about the Parliament. It is a point of which all present and past members of this Parliament are very proud. He said that the New South Wales Parliament, which was established in 1856, is the oldest Parliament in Australia. It is an extremely important part of our history not only in New South Wales but also in the building of democracy and society in Australia. I believe I would be correct in saying that in the world today there are more conflicts than there have ever been. I take into account the great world wars and wars such as the Vietnam War. News of war is inescapable—just by listening to the radio, watching television or reading the newspapers. By looking at the world news on the Internet, we understand that conflicts are occurring on our planet of which some people would not even be aware. In particular, I refer to conflicts on the continent of Africa in Congo, Sierra Leone and Sudan. In that context, the history of this Parliament and the way it has helped carve out democracy and a free society in Australia is a very important point to reflect upon.

I take issue with the Lieutenant-Governor's account of the creation of democracy and free society in Australia as conflict-free. I know it is not and true Australian history shows it is not. We have come to the place we are at without registered wars, but we must acknowledge the frontier violence that was part of the creation of Australia. If we do not, if we ignore that chapter of our history, we perpetuate an untruth and a history that does not reflect an accurate picture of the building of Australia. On a personal level, it is important for me to consider the history painted by the Lieutenant-Governor. I came into Parliament as a woman, as the first woman representing the seat of Canterbury and as the first indigenous member. That is a significant personal achievement but, more importantly, it is an achievement for democracy and for the parliamentary process in the great State of New South Wales.

When I consider the creation of Australian society, I reflect on the seat of Canterbury, which I am responsible to. I deliberately say "responsible to" because I do not own the seat of Canterbury. Canterbury belongs to the people, as do all the electorates we represent. The people choose our fate and give us the enormous honour and respectful position of representing their electorates. On many occasions I have put on record, and I do so again this evening, that the seat of Canterbury is a wonder.

I believe it is a place that could teach the rest of the nation and many other parts of the world the importance of coexistence, respect and maintenance of culture. It could teach others about taking pride in being Australian and understanding the significance of democracy and the development of a free society. For that we are all grateful. The people of Canterbury come from every corner of planet Earth. They come from countries of conflict seeking a life of freedom and better prospects for their children.

As I reflect on the Lieutenant-Governor's description of the history of the New South Wales Parliament, I understand that our responsibility as lawmakers is a great one that needs to be and is taken very seriously. The Lieutenant-Governor spoke about the capacity of people in Australia for free speech. He informed us that when Parliament was first established in 1856 the Chief Justice of the colony had the right to review the laws that were passed. Those days are long past and we now have the great responsibility of being the chief lawmakers. It is a great honour to be in that position and it is not a responsibility that is frivolously accepted.

I now turn to the issues that the Lieutenant-Governor outlined about the New South Wales Labor Government—a government and a party that I believe in and have committed myself to, as have all members on this side of the Chamber. I note, significantly, that the Labor Party has principles and beliefs that are sacrosanct. That is the reason the members on this side of the House have taken the vocational step they have. The Lieutenant-Governor spoke about the Labor Government's plans. They are the plans of a party that is based on social justice. The party, which was created from a strike by shearers, stands up for people in our community who do not have a voice. The issue of social justice underpins the very existence of the Labor Party. I say with enormous pride that it is a strong principle of our party to stand up for the underprivileged members of our society. Because of its commitment to social justice and decency, there was no option for me other than to be a member of the Labor Party.

With government comes responsibility. One of the keys planks of that responsibility is managing the economy. New South Wales is the most populous State in Australia. I will briefly outline issues that affect the New South Wales economy. The New South Wales Government has worked steadily to reinforce business confidence. We abolished many taxes, including vendor duty, and reduced workers compensation premiums. We raised land tax thresholds, thereby exempting about 390,000 property owners throughout New South Wales. We have done much work in the abolition of stamp duty on a range of transactions. In essence, we have cut 11 taxes. I know that the honourable member for Monaro will speak on this issue. I put on record that the Government has maintained its triple-A rating over a long period. The Federal Government has deliberately targeted New South Wales for electoral purposes. Federal Treasurer Peter Costello says that the distribution of GST returns is not his responsibility. That is nonsense. He has enormous influence.

I know that the honourable member for Monaro will be more specific with numbers on this point, but the GST distribution undermines the New South Wales economy. We are duded. Much of the GST revenue goes to Western Australia and Queensland. There are real questions about the politics involved in the distribution of the GST revenue. One of the enormous storm clouds on the horizon is the Federal Government's approach to, and agenda for, industrial relations and their effect on economic prosperity at the State level, particularly for New South Wales. I am proud to be a member of a Government that has not sat back and accepted the Federal Government's approach to industrial relations. I am proud to be a member of a Government that has taken the Federal Government's industrial relations laws to the High Court of Australia. I am proud to be a member of a Government that has worked very hard to protect its public servants.

The centralist nature of the Federal Government is abhorrent, out of control and harks back to days gone by. I will give two examples. The first is the Federal Government using its joint funding arrangements with the States to bludgeon the States into making decisions that are not acceptable. The second is the debate on the history syllabus. This example may seem esoteric, but it is not. Last week and the week before that Julie Bishop, a person with whom I served on the SBS board and whom I know, called a history summit for the teaching of history in schools. New South Wales is one of the only States in which history is a core component of every child's secondary education.

I may not have read or seen everything, but I follow the media very carefully, and without exception they failed to make the point that the Federal Government intends to hold \$300 million of State funding unless the States agree with the Commonwealth's approach to the history syllabus. The same thing happened with industrial relations. The New South Wales Government was forced to agree, finally—we were the last State holding out—to place casual TAFE staff on workplace agreements. If we had not agreed the entire Education budget that would normally come to New South Wales would have been withheld. I call that blackmail. I do not call that State and Federal co-operative arrangements for the betterment of the country as a whole and for the betterment of the people we represent in this and other parliaments. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I will speak briefly to some of the initiatives the New South Wales Government is currently rolling out. I will take one example from each of the dot points I listed earlier. In Planning and Development, 100 new projects worth an estimated \$300 billion will inject new life into the sector, which is an important part of the economic management and growth of the New South Wales economy. In Ports, Rail and Infrastructure we are doing an enormous amount of work, particularly in the Hunter. I am sure the honourable member for Wallsend would be aware of that significant work. We estimate that a \$1.2 billion outlay would rebuild and revitalise State ports. Many new buses are coming on line. Over the next five years the \$1.5 billion Rail Clearways Program will untangle a very old rail network. All honourable members are aware that trains are running on schedule. We have well and truly achieved our goal of 90 per cent of trains running on time. Although water is a significant issue I will not spend much time on it because I know that other speakers will do that. However, water is emerging as one of the most important issues not just in New South Wales but also throughout Australia.

We know that Australia is the driest continent in the world besides Antarctica. We have very thin topsoil, which means that water is a precious resource. The New South Wales Government's Metropolitan Water Plan is designed to meet our water needs through to 2015. It includes a number of recycling initiatives such as significant planning in new suburbs. Much work is being undertaken to maintain our dams, and many more initiatives to protect the New South Wales water supply will be announced in the forthcoming months.

Health care is a fundamental right. As the member for Canterbury I take my hat off to Canterbury Hospital and its staff. Emergency waiting times and elective surgery waiting times have been reduced to almost nil at Canterbury Hospital, which is something of which the hospital can be proud and a significant indicator of

the work that is being done to provide the people of New South Wales with medical services. Much work is being done in paediatric and neonatal services. The Government is undertaking extremely important work to provide mental health facilities for the people of New South Wales.

Education is close to my heart. The other evening, representing the Minister for Education and Training, I attended the North Sydney Institute of TAFE awards. I almost burst with pride at the amazing outcomes of the institute, and institutes right across New South Wales are producing similar results. I do not mean outstanding achievements only within the New South Wales context; I mean outstanding achievements at the national and international level through international skills programs. New South Wales can hold its head up high. We have built no fewer than 95 schools, and a number of other schools will come on line during the term of the Government.

Today in the House the Minister for Police reported on the amazing achievements in reducing and fighting crime across New South Wales. We have increased the number of police in New South Wales by 750, a number of whom will come into the Canterbury command. John Richardson, the recently retired commander of the Canterbury command, is an outstanding Australian. I have come to know him very well, and I place on record our enormous pride in the work of Commander Richardson. We wish him well in his retirement. His advocacy, capacity and work in the Canterbury electorate has been incredibly significant. In fact, it has been integral to the remarkable reduction in crime in the area.

Respect and responsibility underpin the Government's philosophies and policies. Earlier I spoke about the electorate of Canterbury. I mentioned the pride felt by those living in the area, despite the fact that it is constantly attacked, particularly by the media and commentators. Canterbury and the neighbouring electorates of Lakemba and Bankstown are the subject of constant criticism. People should do more research before they cast stones at the inner south-west and south-western Sydney. The electorates of the honourable member for Macquarie Fields and the honourable member for Camden are further south-west, but I am sure that, given their knowledge and understanding of the area, they will support my comments.

If people want to throw stones at south-western Sydney they should spend a day in the area. If they did, they would see communities which are enormously proud of being Australian, which are extremely proud of their area, which have huge respect for cultural difference and which respect and understand adversity. They appreciate the fact that this country has offered them a life of peace and freedom. They also respect the principles that underpin this Parliament and the democracy that it has engendered across our urban and rural areas.

Respect and responsibility are broad concepts. They refer to the way in which we treat each other, the way in which we observe our democracy and the way in which we respect the rule of law. They also relate to capacity within the community and the way in which we view ourselves as a State and a nation. The Government of which I am a member, the New South Wales Iemma Labor Government, understands these issues. The Government embraces all who have chosen to live in New South Wales and understands that it is our role as lawmakers to be responsible to them. All honourable members take that responsibility extremely seriously. In today's world, respect and responsibility are more important than they have ever been. We live in a world that is hard to recognise. As a result of the Howard Government's fear mongering and its attitudes, it is again acceptable to be racist in this country. I will fight that with every fibre of my being. In fact, all honourable members on this side of the House will take up the fight.

The Lieutenant-Governor's references to a stable and free society and democracy are timely. Those principles are seriously threatened in today's Australia. They are under threat not because of the actions of honourable members in this House, but because of the actions of the Federal Government that have been foisted upon us. We find it increasingly difficult to understand the Federal Government because of the way in which it has changed this nation. We have changed from a nation of people who care about each other, who respect democracy and who have worked hard over many years to tell the truth about our whole history to a nation that relegates people like the members of the stolen generation into non-existence.

I find it embarrassing when travelling overseas trying to explain what has happened to our democracy, our freedom and the notion of a fair go, which does not have a place in the Federal Government's philosophy. All members of the Government strongly believe that this is not the nation we believe we are, nor is it the nation we have strived to create. Australians, like the people of Canterbury, understand what democracy and freedom are about. We will not forgo it because of the mean-minded backwardness of the Government that has ruled this country for 10 years. It will come to an end because Australians are decent.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [8.27 p.m.]: I acknowledge the work not only of the Lieutenant-Governor but also of the Governor, who was absent when we celebrated the sesquicentenary of Parliament. She is a much-admired woman, a wonderful Governor and a role model for many in this State. The Lieutenant-Governor stated:

The sesquicentenary of responsible government is a landmark, not only in the history of the Parliament and not only in the history of New South Wales, but also in the history of our national institutions—our progress to democratic nationhood.

Those words are important. We have come a long way and much has happened over those 150 years. I also acknowledge the honour bestowed upon me as the member for Hornsby and in representing the 65,000 people who live in my electorate. I am the sixth member for Hornsby and the first woman to represent the area. My electorate displays wonderful diversity and the residents live in harmony. We are thankful every day that we live in this country, given the number of places in the world in turmoil. Many people living in the electorate have connections with people in other countries, and even in Australia, who do not live in such harmonious conditions, and we strive to assist where possible.

My electorate has a diverse population from many cultures and backgrounds. Three citizenship ceremonies are held each month and larger ceremonies are held on Australia Day and on other special occasions. There are usually 50 to 60 people from between 16 to 23 different countries and their diversity is reflected in each citizenship ceremony. According to the adjustment made by the last census, my electorate also has 300 Aboriginal people or people of Aboriginal descent. We certainly treasure and value them and their heritage.

My electorate of Hornsby has everything: waterways, bushland, built-up areas, light to heavy industry, and a wonderful community. I emphasise the word "community" because I am very proud to represent such wonderful community-minded people and I enjoy working with them. In the context of the sesquicentenary of responsible government, I acknowledge the Council of the Shire of Hornsby, which celebrates its centenary this year. The shire's celebrations include commemorative publications. I am a member of the centenary publications committee that has produced a number of small editions. One of a few I wish to mention is entitled *Growing up in Asquith—Grandma Pies and Gum Trees* by Bob Davis, who is a long-standing resident of Brooklyn. Bob grew up in Asquith and he has produced a delightful story which recounts his experiences as he was growing up.

Other contributions have been received from Tom Richmond, who is a well-respected historian and retired schoolteacher and principal, and Hedley Somerville. Last Saturday I was honoured to launch Hedley Somerville's second book. The Somerville family is a prominent family in the Hornsby electorate. The book I launched is entitled *A Bit More Ginger*. It follows his previous work, *A Taste of Ginger*, which deals with the history and early settlement days of the area. Also in the context of the sesquicentenary and matters referred to by the Lieutenant-Governor, which have also been dealt with in detail by other honourable members, it is sad to note the 11 years of neglect of the small business sector by the Carr and Iemma governments. It is time for a reversal of that trend.

The Coalition will provide solutions to get the monkey off the back of small business and to create growth in the small business sector. Recently the Coalition announced a plan that includes the introduction of a one-on, one-off approach to government regulation and will cut the burden and cost of regulation by 5 per cent each year in the first term of a Coalition government. The plan also states that the Coalition will limit the remuneration of agency chief executive officers, reduce regulation and red tape, exempt employers from paying the cost of WorkCover premiums for apprentices, make a Minister directly responsible for reducing regulation and red tape, and eliminate payroll tax for more than 4,500 New South Wales businesses.

Last week I had the honour of participating in the Pollies for Small Business Program. I spent an entire day visiting a number of different businesses and enjoyed it. In total I have visited 115 businesses over the past five years, which is a State Chamber of Commerce record. I express my sincere gratitude to the President of the Hornsby Chamber of Commerce, Greg Bepper, for organising the events of that day. He is a tireless worker for small business, and his endeavours are directed toward the creation of commercial space and the improvement of business opportunities for the local Hornsby area. In the forthcoming redistribution the election will be fought on new boundaries that include the Galston area. The Galston Chamber of Commerce is a hardworking group, and its president, John Cordina, is also tireless in his efforts on behalf of the small business community.

The Lieutenant-Governor mentioned housing. I point out that Labor's land release policy is crippling home buyers. The Government has failed to fix the crisis caused by its record low releases of land and its drip-feed style of housing land development that has forced up the prices of homes. That has made the purchase

of a home very difficult, particularly for first home buyers. Recently the Coalition announced the "Liberal-National Housing and Homebuyers Rescue Package—affordability, confidence and choice", which will top up the first home buyer's grant by \$3,000, establish a stamp duty concession of \$4,000 for investors who provide rental accommodation, and exempt employers from paying the cost of WorkCover premiums for apprentices over a four-year period.

It is obvious that the current State Government has failed home buyers. Various taxes were imposed but were later abolished as the absolute shame of having imposed them in the first place took hold. As a result of the imposition of those taxes, several thousand families were disadvantaged over a long period. Sydney's population increases at the rate of 1,000 people per week, yet the Iemma Government has reduced the new releases of building lots to a mere trickle, thereby pushing up the median home price to a record \$516,000. The cost of rental accommodation is also skyrocketing as investors are being driven out of New South Wales by high land taxes. Moreover, record stamp duty and taxation revenue have clearly not been directed to the provision of affordable land for people who want to raise a family and build a house on land that has enough space for a backyard. That is a most important objective.

The Lieutenant-Governor also referred to the role of women. On this occasion I refer to domestic violence and the problems caused by inadequate funding that is directed toward addressing this issue. I commend Amy David, who released a report in March on behalf of the Northside Women's Service highlighting the steady increase in domestic violence against women in higher socioeconomic families. On Sydney's north shore, one woman in four is said to be affected by some form of domestic violence. The report, which was produced as a result of a lot of hard work, makes the point that the full extent of domestic violence in affluent families is usually underestimated. It makes a big statement about what this Government and a Coalition government need to do to appropriately address domestic violence.

A definition of domestic violence is when one person, in a present or past relationship, uses violence or abuse to cause fear and gain control over another person. Domestic violence can take many forms, including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological and emotional abuse, social abuse and/or financial abuse. A brochure in my possession states, "All forms of domestic violence are unacceptable and many forms are against the law." I commend the work of a local group constituted by people from diverse backgrounds and groups who discuss domestic violence issues, in particular Josie Gregory, who is a tireless worker. She is extremely distressed by the number of women who have died as a result of domestic violence.

The Lieutenant-Governor referred to transport as a major issue generally, and that certainly is the case in the Hornsby electorate, which has 10 railway stations. During the four years I have been a member of Parliament I have been making representations fairly solidly to inform the Government about dissatisfaction with rail services, timetables, the service from Hornsby to Berowra and inadequate parking at railway stations. I point out that \$98 million will be spent on the Hornsby railway station under the Clearways Program, and that is a great deal of money.

The Government has stated that its aim is to encourage more people to use public transport, but inadequate parking space is provided. Although the Government claims to have provided more car parking spaces recently, that is not the case because a great deal of parking has been closed down on the High Street side of the rail line. This is a matter of great significance that the Government should address immediately. Berowra railway station is also undergoing an upgrade. After many representations by me and after ongoing pleas from the local community, an easy access lift has been installed at the station, but additional parking has still not been provided. This is a big issue. Many people travel down from the Central Coast, and they want to be able to access public transport and not have to go further down the line.

Water is well recognised as being an issue of State, if not national, importance. The Brooklyn-Dangar Island area is currently undergoing a sewerage connection, with the sewage treatment plant being constructed. Unfortunately, Cowan and Galston have missed out on a sewerage connection. They are on the priority 2 list, but it is an absolute disgrace that these two areas will not be connected in 2006. The Minister indicated to me that there is not sufficient money for the establishment of a recycling plant in the electorate. An expert advised me that it would cost about \$3 million to lay the pipes to establish recycling in the Brooklyn area whilst the trenches are being dug, but unfortunately this sensible option will not be availed of. In July this year Helina Sahlman, who lives in Brooklyn, wrote to me as follows:

"To Recycle or Not to Recycle"
Brooklyn & Dangar Island Sewerage Scheme

Hornsby Shire Council, in conjunction with Sydney Water, has commenced construction of a sewerage treatment plant as part of the Brooklyn & Dangar Island Sewerage Scheme. It is alarming to have recently identified that no provision has been made for the recycling of the water.

Considering that Sydney has been experiencing below average rainfall for the past six year period and our dam levels are below 50% of capacity, it is imperative that all new sewerage treatment plants incorporate a recycling component.

The recycled water could be used for various applications in our region including watering gardens and the local ovals, washing cars and other outdoor uses—not to mention the fighting of fires which has become a regular activity in our bushland environment. Introduction of water recycling would also reduce the amount of discharge into our river system, which is crucial, given the current state of our local oyster industry which is already under threat by the QX disease.

The time to act is now and our local and state governments must revisit the current plan with a high level of urgency to ensure that a sustainable water management plan exists within our region.

It is just one of many letters I have received on the issue. Nothing could be more important than the health of our nation. I am sure everyone would concur that if we do not have our health we suffer. The health system in this State is abysmal. I take my hat off to health workers. In my electorate, and indeed in the rest of the State, health workers, whatever their profession, are tireless and hardworking and often find themselves in situations in which they should not work. Nurses are desperately needed in our health system. The Coalition has a policy called "Bringing Nurses Back", which is most important. It is unbelievable that a restructure of the Northern Sydney and Central Coast area health services, including the removal of nurse managers from administration roles, is taking place, given the need for nurses to be encouraged not only to come back into the health system but to remain in it. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

The loss of senior nurse management positions from Hornsby hospital, Royal North Shore Hospital and other hospitals throughout the State is almost criminal. The nurses are feeling extremely disenfranchised and disadvantaged in terms of a career path. It begs the question: How can divisional managers make important decisions if they do not have appropriate nursing qualifications?

Under the Liberal-Nationals action plan, we will commit \$207.8 million over four years to improve nursing degree courses by ensuring that a greater amount of time is spent in clinical practice in hospitals or other health settings and investigating the opportunities for accelerated degrees to be offset by nursing internships; increase retraining opportunities for registered and enrolled nurses wishing to re-enter the work force; appoint an extra 50 clinical nurse educators over our first term, to enable recent nursing graduates to receive a greater degree of mentoring; provide funding for 500 more nurses in our first term of government; establish an additional quarantined fund to enable individual hospitals to negotiate benefits to meet the particular needs of nurses at that workplace; give nurses more recognition and control by maintaining senior nursing management positions, ensuring they are underpinned by strong support positions; establishing nursing staff councils to give nurses the same clout and direct access to the Minister as doctors' medical staff councils; and ensuring nurse representation on each local hospital board.

Other Coalition health policies include the delivery of higher standards and better services in our public hospitals through reducing the rate of hospital-acquired infections; retraining the New South Wales Clinical Excellence Commission as the body responsible for identifying issues of a systemic nature that affect patient safety and clinical quality in the New South Wales health system; and establishing quality and risk management programs, employing quality managers and seeking significant input from medical and nursing staff to measure and demonstrate improvement. Tragically, last November 16-year-old Vanessa Anderson was hit in the head by a golf ball. After two days in hospital she died. It is the belief of many that if Vanessa had had surgery she would be alive today, that the hospital system let her down.

Whilst the Health Care Complaints Commission continues its deliberations, Vanessa's family is still suffering. Hopefully there will be a coronial inquiry. However, the commission is certainly taking a long time and the family suffers every day. It is almost unbelievable that a document that was leaked to, and exposed yesterday by, the shadow Minister for Health shows that the Government is hiding, on waiting lists, patients who do not meet certain criteria. The document states that a request for admission with a planned admission date of greater than 12 months will not be accepted. A sudden reduction from many thousands down to one or two patients on waiting lists is almost unbelievable. That is obviously the reason why.

The Lieutenant-Governor spoke about the importance of looking after disabled people, who are among the most vulnerable in our society. Unfortunately the Lemma Government is about "spin now and pay later", promising \$1 billion but with most of the expenditure to come later. The schools in my electorate are fantastic and offer a wonderful experience for young people. It is a pity the Government does not give them enough

money for maintenance and that it ignores two specific issues I have raised on many occasions over the last four years. Berowra Public School desperately needs a hall. At present the school uses a demountable building. It lets in the wind and the tar in its joints is falling out. I have described the state of the building on many occasions previously. Asquith Boys High School still has a broken-down basketball court. It started off as a concrete slab and was then covered over with tar. The slab is now cracked, and weeds have grown through the cracks.

The last time I made a representation about this I was very surprised to receive a response from the Parliamentary Secretary for Education blaming the condition of that basketball court on the drought, which I thought was an absolute joke. The Government ought to bite the bullet and build a new basketball court in an area chosen by the school, thus enabling people to walk into the administration area without fear of falling over.

On many occasions I have spoken about the poor condition of the Pacific Highway, particularly the intersections at Mount Colah. The Roads and Traffic Authority has on two occasions sent a representative to public meetings I have organised on the issue. I have made many representations about the need for traffic lights to enable people who live on the western side of Mount Colah to exit south onto the Pacific Highway. That request has been duly ignored. The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] performed an audit, which also was a joke as it did not assess peak hour traffic or the busy traffic time of Saturday mornings. I have been waiting on an update of that audit from a representative of the RTA who promised at the last public meeting he would provide me with that update by taking further traffic statistics. On 8 May 2006 I received an email from Mary Abberton who wrote:

Thank you for your efforts on our behalf to try to make the Pacific Highway safer for both drivers and pedestrians. I hope that we do not have to wait for something like the accident that happened to Sophie Delezio last week before we get some positive action on our behalf.

This morning I was driving from Berowra towards Mount Colah at about 7.35 and saw a number of high school students having to cross the road to get to the bus stop (at Excelsior Road intersection). They have to cross four lanes of peak hour traffic—admittedly there is a median strip—but it is only a matter of time before something as tragic as Sophie's accident happens here.

If I had the Minister of Roads' email address, I would send a copy of this to him.

Obviously this lady is very upset that the RTA and the Minister have ignored the need for traffic lights at one of those intersections at least. I ask the Minister: What will it take? Will it take a serious accident, with someone seriously injured or killed, to get the message across?

I thank the police in my electorate who are working extremely hard. They do a fantastic job but they are frustrated that they cannot do their job as well as they would like because they do not have sufficient numbers. Today we heard the Labor spin on crime statistics. The Labor Government is irresponsible; it will not admit that its lack of action has led to a dramatic rise in crime statistics. Clear-up rates have not improved; indeed they are worse. The number of police officers has dropped significantly during the term of the Labor Government. Assault is up 82.6 per cent; sexual assault is up 88.5 per cent; indecent assault, act of indecency, and other sexual offences are up 32.6 per cent; robbery without a weapon is up 13.9 per cent; and robbery with a weapon not a firearm is up 82.4 per cent. Other crimes have risen significantly.

Coalition policies released in the run-up to winning government next year, which this State definitely needs, include library funding to purchase additional and new library resources, including hardware-software packages and books; improved access to the Internet and on-line information services through the use of new applications such as satellite and wireless; improved infrastructure; technical and professional support for library staff; professional development for library staff who are required to assist the public in using new technologies to access information, particularly through the Internet; increased access to library programs and services that target students; and the development of partnerships with other community organisations, including schools, businesses and the media in the provision of access to information and the support of on-line information.

As the Lieutenant-Governor said about New South Wales, Hornsby is fantastic. It has many volunteers, some of whom work on a daily basis. They certainly do not seek any recognition; they work because they love it. One group, the Cherrybrook Chinese Community Association, does a lot of work with Chinese people in my electorate. Every Saturday it runs a Chinese school at the Cherrybrook Technology High School. I congratulate the president of the association, Jenny Lau, on her re-election; she and her team do a fantastic job. That association is one of the many volunteer organisations that do a lot of work in the Hornsby area, and in the State. The Coalition has introduced a policy to back volunteers.

I congratulate the people who formed the Hornsby Ku-ring-Gai Liquor Accord with the aim of improving safety and reducing alcohol-related harm within the precinct. It has been extremely successful. Mental health is a particular interest of mine. Hornsby hospital has a mental health unit, and plans are before council for an intensive care mental health facility. However, sadly missing is a child and adolescent mental health facility, for which I have been calling for many years. Children and adolescents have unique needs and they should not be put into adult wards. I have suggested to the Government that funding is urgently required to complete the mental health facilities in the Hornsby hospital precinct. I have received feedback from parents of children who have been placed in an adult ward or discharged too soon because of inadequate placement. They are crying out for help; they desperately need a facility that caters for children and adolescents. Finally, New South Wales needs higher standards, better services and balanced budgets that only a Coalition government can provide.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [8.56 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to respond to the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech. I certainly welcome the comments he made on the day of the 150th anniversary of responsible government in New South Wales, and particularly his comments and Her Majesty's comments on the development of such a strong and healthy democratic tradition in New South Wales. The matters highlighted in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech are very important. I was disappointed that the New South Wales media decided that the 150th anniversary was an event of little significance. Instead of giving it significant coverage and highlighting the success of our democracy in New South Wales, the media tended to trivialise and make snide comments about the process.

I note particularly that the 150th anniversary of this Parliament occurred at about the same time as the 150th anniversary of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which published several multiple-page spreads about its own anniversary, but very little coverage of the anniversary of this Parliament and of democracy in New South Wales. That is in contrast to reading some of the history that was put out at the time when Parliament started and held its first meeting of a responsibly elected government, something that was widely welcomed by the people of New South Wales 150 years ago. In those days the people understood what it was like to not have a directly elected government and to be ruled from across the sea by the monarchs of England.

The people understood how important it was to have their own say, to be able to elect their own officials to make the decisions that affected their day-to-day lives. It is probably a shame that we did not see a bit more focus on the value of that democratic tradition in the coverage of the 150th anniversary. Having read some of the biographies of the early premiers in the pair of books that were released on the anniversary, I was interested to note the way that New South Wales has developed. In those early years there was a lot of change of premiers and governments and people moving from side to side in the House. There was generally a fair bit of instability in government. Since then we have developed what everyone would agree is a very stable Government in New South Wales which, because of that stability, is able to deliver well for the people of New South Wales.

Labor has been part of that history of stability for 115 years, since the early 1890s, when people in country New South Wales formed the Labor Party. As a member of Country Labor I think that is a very proud history and one that we need to acknowledge. Labor is the reason we have such stable and responsible government in New South Wales. In fact, Labor has been the agenda setter for most of that 115 years. Well after the formation of the Labor Party the so-called anti-Labor parties appeared. That is a good demonstration of Labor setting the agenda and the conservative parties following just to oppose what Labor was doing. Our 150th anniversary and the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech help us all to think about those things.

Since that time Labor has been leading the way in setting the agenda on things such as agriculture, national parks, economic development and even irrigation. For many years when Labor was pushing the development of irrigation schemes the old Country Party, as it was then, vehemently opposed such things. The old Country Party is now proclaiming to be the great proponent of those schemes. An interesting thing occurred in the Parliament today, which I thought showed how far the Country Party had fallen. Members of The Nationals often say, "Let us turn the rivers inland. Let us use all the water. Stop the coastal rivers from discharging freshwater into the sea." Today they were sitting in Parliament holding up stickers on behalf of Shelley Hancock that stated, "Do not use the Shoalhaven River". They want that river to flow out into the sea. That was an interesting illustration of the way in which members of the Country Party—who used to be proudly independent and fierce defenders of the bush interested in using water resources to their fullest extent—have been rolled over by one of the Liberals representing the South Coast.

The Lieutenant-Governor outlined a positive Labor program for New South Wales. In doing so he covered a number of areas, two of which were law and order and police. He referred to this Government's impressive record in increasing police numbers. Tonight I was astounded to hear some members of the Coalition state that police numbers had fallen. What planet are those people on? We have seen a massive increase in police numbers in New South Wales and the Lieutenant-Governor's speech highlighted the fact that this Government will recruit 750 more police before next year. In fact, many of them are training at the moment.

Every now and again Opposition members issue press releases based on monthly police figures. Strangely enough, when they do so it happens to be for those months when the monthly average has gone down. Of course, monthly averages bounce around a bit because people leave, recruits come in to replace them and people move on. Every two or three months, when there is a little decline, Opposition members issue press releases stating, "Shock, horror, the number of police in Monaro has gone down. What is Steve Whan doing about that? It is terrible". Funnily enough, for the past five months or so we have not seen any press releases from the Opposition because the number of police in the Monaro electorate has increased. In the July monthly averages the number of police in the Monaro Local Area Command—144 police—was the highest figure ever in the history of that command. That is 33 per cent more police than when the Coalition was in office. A pretty significant indication of why crime in the Monaro electorate has declined and people are feeling safer is that the Government's policing policies are working effectively.

The Lieutenant-Governor spoke about Labor's program and its plans for New South Wales. In contrast to the Howard Government, this Government is proud of the Premier's positive approach to climate change, an issue of vital importance for the Monaro electorate. We have CSIRO predictions regarding climate change, the number one global problem facing the world. In Australia we could lose most of our snow cover by the year 2050. For those who might not be aware, the Monaro electorate includes the New South Wales ski fields. If we lose our snow cover by 2050, or it recedes to very small areas, that will have an incredibly devastating environmental impact on valuable alpine areas in New South Wales. The tree line, which at the moment stops a couple of hundred metres below the summit, will rise. All those alpine areas that are treeless because they are above the tree line will see an increase in the growth of trees, thus eliminating alpine vegetation in the Snowy Mountains area, and that would probably mean the extinction of quite a few native species.

On the economic side it will become increasingly difficult for the New South Wales ski industry to continue. This year we were lucky in that we have a good manmade snowmaking capacity in the New South Wales ski fields. I say to those in the public gallery who are into skiing, "There is good skiing at the moment. Take a visit to the ski fields." It would be difficult to make snow if the temperature was not below zero. An industry in New South Wales that is worth \$812 million a year and that provides 10,000 jobs would face a massive blow. In the Snowy River shire, the major shire I represent in the electorate of Monaro, the gross regional product generated by the ski industry is \$290 million and there are about 3,264 jobs. That industry is under threat from global warming, yet the Federal Government has failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. It has failed to take any national action to institute greenhouse gas trading and it has failed to set any reasonable or meaningful targets for greenhouse gas reduction or renewable energy.

This Government is proud of the fact that it, along with other Labor States, has been party to the release of a discussion paper on a national greenhouse gas emission trading scheme—an incredibly significant development for Australia. The proposed Emissions Cap and Trade Scheme would tackle the electricity industry, which generates 35 per cent of all Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. It would cap greenhouse gas emissions from Australia's industry at between 1997 and 2000 levels by 2030. It aims for about a 60 per cent reduction over businesses usual projections in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It has provision for offsets and for carbon and greenhouse gas emissions through forestry and other measures. As forestry is an important industry in the area that I represent the scheme would be valuable for that industry.

Yet again the Federal Government dismissed that scheme out of hand. Clearly, the Prime Minister did not even bother to read it before he commented on it because he suggested it would mean that petrol prices would increase when the paper made it clear that petrol and petroleum refining would not be subject to the scheme. The Prime Minister did not even bother to read the scheme before he dismissed it. That is a sad indictment on the Federal Government's attitude to the environment and to the great threat of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia.

The Lieutenant-Governor's talked in his Speech about sound economic management in New South Wales. He talked about the massive investment in infrastructure that this Government is making through its infrastructure plan, which includes important things such as the Lanyon Drive link to the Monaro Highway in

the Monaro electorate. He also acknowledged in his Speech to the Parliament the extremely unfair deal New South Wales gets through GST distribution. I have highlighted before in this place the fact that the Commonwealth will raise a record \$272 billion in tax. The Federal Government is the highest taxing government in Australia's history. Of that amount about \$40 billion is GST revenue. New South Wales residents get about \$10 billion of that, even though they pay \$13 billion in GST. So other States get the benefit of our subsidies.

The sound economic management in New South Wales is in stark contrast to the Federal Government's recent budgets, which have begun to squander the impressive period of sustained and steady economic growth put in place essentially by the reforms of Paul Keating. Australia is in danger of returning to the boom-bust cycle because the Howard Government brought down an expansionary budget, a budget that boosted interest rates. Instead of investing in infrastructure in Australia, investment that brings long-term growth in the economy's capacity but also spreads the investment so that the boost to the economy is over a long time, the Howard Government introduced tax cuts. It was certainly nice to have the tax cuts. Members in this place received handsome tax cuts, thank you very much John Howard and Peter Costello—but that simply boosts spending and results in short-term high growth and the risk of a return to the boom-bust cycle.

We have seen the Howard Government with its hands off the lever, allowing Australia to rack up nearly half a trillion dollars in foreign debt. Honourable members will remember that during the election that returned him to office John Howard had a debt truck going around, saying this was the most pressing problem facing Australia. At that stage the debt was under \$200 million and it is now half a trillion dollars, so it has more than doubled. Returning for a moment to the GST, I have made a number of speeches in this House about the unfairness of the method used to distribute GST revenue to the States and the fact that using the old Grants Commission formulas, which were designed to distribute a small amount of money, and applying the formula to a much larger slice of Federal funding to the States has created huge anomalies in State funding. I was pleased to note that the well-known economic commentator Ross Gittins also made the point that various members of this House have known. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 8 July he said:

When you do look up the figures—as Rory Robertson of Macquarie Bank has done, and I have, too—you discover Mr Costello has been gilding the lily.

He went on to say:

In four years of supposed windfall [which Peter Costello talks about] it's had extra money in only one—the princely sum of \$209 million, the year before last.

Interestingly, Ross Gittins went on to make the point that many on this side of the House have made about the expenditure of New South Wales' funds. According to many conservative commentators the States have blown the money. To them, giving pay rises to teachers, nurses and police is a waste of money. We on this side of the House know it is not a waste of money; it is very important and we have seen evidence of that in the last few days with discussion about the value of teachers' salaries. Another point I want to make in respect of finances and Federal Government funding relates to funding for local government. A while ago I compared the financial assistance grants from the Federal Government as a percentage of tax revenue raised by that Government. What we have seen in the last decade is Federal Government tax receipts growing at an extraordinary rate. They have expanded rapidly. The Federal Government claims that it needs that funding because it is facing increased costs with an ageing population, and all those sorts of things. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Back in 1995-96, the year before the Howard Government was elected, local government financial assistance grants were worth about 0.33 per cent of tax revenue in Australia. That, of course, did not include GST, which did not exist at that time. At that stage the Federal Government collected \$115 billion in tax. This year it will collect \$213 billion, not including the GST, and of that local councils will get only 0.25 per cent, so that local government's share of funding has decreased significantly. This year the Howard Government gave New South Wales councils, in total with financial assistance grants and roads funding, just \$536 million—\$536 million out of the \$250 billion it collects from Australian taxpayers.

When one considers that it is looking at spending \$17 billion on the new Strike Fighter aircraft one can see how much store it puts in the ability of local councils to deliver services. The figures that I looked at show New South Wales councils would need \$167 million more in funding from the Howard Government just to catch up to the proportion of revenue they received before the Howard Government was elected. It is an important issue that we need to take up and ram home to our local councils to use in negotiations with their Federal Liberal and Nationals members in the lead-up to the next election

I now turn to the alternative in New South Wales, which is the Peter meter, the black hole promised by the Coalition, the grab bag of promises for New South Wales. I have been told that in some electorates the number of promises made has astounded the locals. I have not seen that in the Monaro electorate as yet. That is obviously because we have a Nationals candidate who does not have the power to get the Liberals to allocate even promised money. I have been told that in some electorates, such as Port Stephens, the promises have been determined by the number of people who have walked in the door and asked, "Can I have this?" It is an appalling way to try to manage government. It shows that the Opposition is a huge risk to the State's triple-A credit rating.

We have witnessed dissent in the Coalition. We have seen Coalition members lurching from one problem to another, clearly trying to hold it together until 24 March. Tonight on an ABC news broadcast we heard that the Prime Minister has convened a crisis meeting of State Liberal and Nationals leaders to try to sort them out and teach them how to win an election. A quote I thought most revealing was the comment that the Prime Minister was telling Coalition leaders in the States that they had neither done enough to endorse quality candidates—and we see evidence of that every day in this place—nor done enough on policy development. It is obvious that the Prime Minister does not believe the Coalition has put any effort into policy development.

There was the debacle of The Nationals' promises relating to roads in Queanbeyan, where the Coalition candidate—he calls himself the Coalition candidate and not The Nationals candidate—placed a brochure into letterboxes in Queanbeyan, which promises that the Coalition will build a ring road, the Edwin Land Parkway. He told the local newspaper and local business council that it would definitely be built and started as soon as he was elected. Then he invited the Leader of The Nationals and the media with the expectation of hearing all about the promise. The Leader of The Nationals repudiated his candidate and said, "We are going to undertake a study. We are going to look at it and see about a strategy for roads in the area." He failed to back up his candidate. That is policymaking on the run. It is failure to communicate and failure to operate as a team. That is what we have from the Coalition.

Its only policy is to smash the State's public service, with 29,000 jobs to go. Hundreds of jobs in Queanbeyan and dozens of jobs in Cooma would be abolished, and that would be a massive slug on the economies of those areas. I have to ask: Why it is that the Coalition hates Queanbeyan so much? Why is it trying a "divide and conquer" approach to the Monaro electorate? In an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* in July, the Leader of the Opposition criticised funding for the Monaro electorate as excessive. He said it was pork-barrelling.

I have always said to Gary Nairn, the Liberal Party candidate, "Roll out the pork barrel any time you want. It is always welcome in our community." I have always fought to get the Monaro electorate its fair share. The Nationals candidate—or is it the Coalition candidate? I wonder whether the merger has already happened because he says he is the Coalition candidate—issued a press release in the *Queanbeyan Age*, which stated: "It's no use trying to throw all this money at the people of Monaro." He criticised me for "throwing millions of dollars at the electorate". I plead guilty. At last we are getting our fair share after 15 years of neglect. The former Coalition member failed to get a fair share for the electorate.

A couple of weeks ago a Cabinet meeting was held in Queanbeyan but the Coalition's response was to go to the *Cooma Monaro Express* and claim that Queanbeyan was getting too much money. When the Coalition was in government it demonstrated what it thought of Queanbeyan by giving it nothing; it ignored the electorate for 15 years. I represent the whole of the electorate and I am delivering for the whole of the electorate, including Cooma, Jindabyne, the southern part of the electorate, Queanbeyan, Bungendore and Braidwood. In response, I pointed out to the local media that I had delivered more than 50 specific things to the southern part of the electorate in the three years since I have been elected, a significant contribution to the area that dwarfed anything on the meagre list of achievements that my predecessor had on his web site.

In conclusion, I highlight the importance of the Lieutenant-Governor's contribution to the 150th anniversary of responsible government in New South Wales. We are grateful for the fact that we have stable and effective government in New South Wales. Indeed, 115 of those 150 years have been the result of positive participation by the Australian Labor Party in this place. The Lieutenant-Governor's Speech demonstrated that the Labor Party will continue to set the agenda in New South Wales and lead the way for many years to come.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Daryl Maguire.

The House adjourned at 9.22 p.m. until Thursday 31 August 2006 at 10.00 a.m.
