

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 17 November 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 country.

AVALON POLICE STATION (PUBLIC OWNERSHIP) BILL

Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading

Mr ALEX McTAGGART (Pittwater) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Avalon Police Station (Public Ownership) Bill is a very important bill for the people at the northern end of the Pittwater electorate. For the benefit of the House, I will lay out a little bit of the history of policing on the northern beaches. My first recollection of policing in Pittwater was in the 1960s when I was a young teenager. Sergeant Joe Gardner, the only police officer in the area, lived in Careel Head Road and drank at both the Avalon and Palm Beach Returned Services League clubs—the only two watering holes in the area. Joe knew your dad and your mum, and your uncles and your aunts. If you came to Joe's attention you got a kick up the backside and a very polite discussion with your father, who subsequently gave you a second kick up the backside.

I remember a major altercation at Palm Beach in about 1965 when the surf lifesaving movement tried to ban a surfing contest. There was a riot between several hundred surfers and about 30 unfit Palm Beach Surf Club members, who tried to confiscate surfboards. The result was a standout punch-up and near riotous behaviour. Then Sergeant Gardner arrived. He calmly walked onto the beach. He identified just about every local who was there, and then he told the rest to shove off. That was Pittwater policing in the 1960s. After Sergeant Gardner we had Constable Gale, whose brother was a golf professional. My recollection is that Constable Gale moved into a house in Hudson Parade and hung a blue police shingle out the front, thereby giving us our first official police station.

Somewhere along the line Constable Gale relocated and I remember all we had then was a black-and-yellow striped telephone box style shed out the front of the fire station on Old Barrenjoey Road. From there, the police moved into the current police station in Avalon Parade. I am grateful to Geoff Searl of the Avalon Beach Historical Society, who has provided me with numerous references to policing on the northern beaches from the *Avalon News* dating as far back as 1953. In November that year, under the heading "Snippets" by R. W. Askin, the member for Collaroy, the paper reported:

Police protection does not seem to be all it could be around the Newport-Palm Beach area and I have made representations in the matter. The local men do their best and are all well spoken of, but there are not enough of them.

Then in September 1954, under the heading "Police Station", the *Avalon News* reported:

Residents will be pleased to learn that a policeman is to be stationed at Avalon as soon as accommodation can be found. A vacant house is required. If anyone can help in this respect, please contact the Editor, *Avalon News*.

In February 1956 the paper was again lamenting the fact that a house could not be found, and reported:

Appointment of a police constable at Avalon was made some time ago. Representation has been made by the Avalon Progress Association and Mr R. W. Askin, MLA, to the Commissioner of Police to consider purchasing a house as efforts to rent one have failed.

Three months later, in May 1956, Avalon still had no resident policeman. The *Avalon News*, under the heading "Here and There", reported:

Avalon district has not yet been blessed with the provision of a resident policeman. The district is growing rapidly and surely we must be in line for a police station.

By December that year the Progress Association was writing to the local member, Mr Askin, asking him to "again make strong representation to the police department for police to be stationed at Avalon". The letter says that association members had tried unsuccessfully to find an "empty dwelling" for the officer, and they now believed it was the police department's responsibility to find suitable accommodation. They stressed the need for a resident officer in light of "numerous robberies in the shopping centre". Mr Askin responded by saying that he would "act immediately and take the matter up with the Premier himself". But in February 1957 the issue was still unresolved. The Premier, Mr J. J. Cahill, replied to Mr Askin's representations saying he had arranged for:

... inquiries to be made into the matter and that the Commissioner of Police had reported that for some time past it had been planned to establish a police station at Avalon and that would be done as soon as a suitable residence could be secured.

Mr Askin said at the time he was "dissatisfied with the delay in procuring a residence". He continued:

The fact of the matter was that police supervision for Warringah Shire was not keeping pace with the tremendous population increase and the development which was taking place.

It would appear not much has changed in the past 50 years. In 1996 the then local member, John Brogden, was expressing concerns about declining police numbers on the peninsula. At that time the electorate of Pittwater was serviced by two police stations—Avalon, north of the Bilgola bends, and Mona Vale, which was then known as Pittwater. Ten years ago, the two stations had a staff of 55 officers. In March 1995, in the last days of the Liberal Government, it had 64, but nine were subsequently transferred out of the area. Why we do not know. In 1996 Mona Vale was a 24-hour station operating seven days a week. Avalon also operated seven days a week, although only between 10.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m., and with just one officer on duty—that is, when one from Mona Vale was available.

When Mona Vale could not supply an officer the station was shut, and even when it was open the solitary officer had to sit behind a desk in the station, unable to respond to calls for assistance. That is what is happening now in Mona Vale. It has one single officer on duty, unable to respond to calls for assistance because the officer is on his or her own. Avalon has been closed for about eight years, and Mona Vale is staffed by just one officer. There was a station at Collaroy but that was closed 10 years ago. So the only police presence north of Dee Why is a single officer who cannot leave the station. Policing on the far northern beaches is now done by way of patrol car. That is despite the dramatic increase in population as a result of unit and townhouse developments, plus the Warriewood Valley land release, which has seen nearly 3,000 people move into the area.

It is also worth noting that former police Ministers have never made a case for closing Avalon and selling off the site. They have never explained why we would be better off with the northern beaches command concentrated in Dee Why, which is closer to Parliament House than to Palm Beach. I acknowledge that statistics indicate a low level of major crime in Pittwater. While there has been a 122 per cent spike in the incidence of break and enter to dwellings, and while the increase in malicious damage to property on the northern beaches is 13 per cent, the increase in Pittwater is 35.8 per cent. And there are incomprehensible anomalies in the way resources are allocated. According to the NSW Police web site, Manly Local Area Command, which mirrors the Manly local government area [LGA] with a population of 38,886 and an area of 15 square kilometres, has a police strength of 102.

The Northern Beaches Local Area Command, which includes the LGAs of both Warringah and Pittwater, has a total population of 196,980, with 139,626 in Warringah and 57,354 in Pittwater. The command covers 241 square kilometres—150 in Warringah and 91 in Pittwater—but it has a strength of only 198. So Manly, with a population of fewer than 40,000, has 102 officers and the northern beaches command, which covers an area 16 times greater and a population that is five times the size, has just 198 officers. That does not make sense. Basically, there is no police presence north of Dee Why, yet we have a growing population with either greater population dictated by government in coming years with the Ingleside land release, which will see up to 15,000 new residents in the area. That was announced publicly by the Minister for Planning about a month ago.

Mona Vale police station, which could easily be transformed into a fully staffed, fully functioning police station, lies virtually derelict and abandoned while Avalon is scheduled to be sold off, presumably to

developers. That is not what the community of Pittwater wants. It wants and deserves a police presence and a functioning police station in the area. That is why I am introducing this bill: to guarantee that the Avalon police station site remains in public ownership, with its use restricted to policing or emergency service operations. The proposed sale has caused consternation, anger and confusion in the community, and is seen as symbolic of the Government's abandonment of policing at the far northern end of the peninsular. Yet there is an opportunity for a reorganisation of policing on the northern beaches.

As I said, Mona Vale could easily be turned into a fully functional police station. Its land size is currently underutilised. The station accommodates one officer. Part of the site is also used on a part-time basis for tactical response group training and gun handling. It has a large holding yard for vehicles, a forensic investigations facility and storage facilities for the Broken Bay water police who are based at Church Point. Preliminary discussions I held with departmental officers who deal with assets and ministerial advisers indicate that the ample land size would be sufficient to accommodate not only a police station but a multifunctional police precinct to service the northern commands.

Our community is completely opposed to selling off the Avalon police station site. As a north ward councillor in Pittwater, I initiated a rezoning application for the Avalon police station site to have it changed from residential 2A to essential services. That application was then opposed by the police Minister. We need to hold onto the Avalon police station site, not only because we need it to house police but because there is a drastic lack of government infrastructure north of Newport. The Government owns a significant amount of Crown land on the peninsular but it is all contained in either beach reserve or steep escarpment and is unsuitable for development. Until 2004 the Government owned three assets north of Newport: Avalon fire station, Avalon police station and Avalon ambulance station. I exclude the three schools from this.

In 2004 the Department of Health opted to sell off the ambulance station site for development and use the funds for recurring costs. Now the Government wants to sell off the police station site, which will leave us with just one remaining asset, the fire station site. That means that when a future government needs critical infrastructure for a growing population it will have to purchase land and build, which is much more expensive than retaining and maintaining the existing infrastructure. I might add that land values in Pittwater are extremely high.

The Avalon Police Station (Public Ownership) Bill will ensure that the Avalon police station site remains in public ownership and that use of the site is restricted to police and emergency services. It will prohibit the site from being sold, transferred, leased or otherwise alienated. The bill specifies that any development must only be for the purposes of police services or other emergency services, and will prevent any development from becoming a project to which part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 applies. It also specifies that Pittwater Council is the consent authority in relation to any development of the site. I turn now to the essence of the bill, which states:

1 Name of Act

This Act is the *Avalon Police Station (Public Ownership) Act 2006*.

2 Commencement

This Act commences on the date of assent of this Act.

3 Definitions

(1) In this Act:

Avalon police station site means the land comprising Lot 76, DP 9151 and known as 75 Avalon Parade, Avalon, and includes all buildings and other fixtures situated on that land.

emergency services organisation has the same meaning as in the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* ...

4 Objects of Act

The objects of this Act are:

- (a) to ensure that the Avalon police station remains in public ownership, and
- (b) to limit the use of the site to police and emergency services.

5 Avalon police station site not to be sold

- (1) The sale, transfer, lease or other alienation of the Avalon police station is prohibited.
- (2) However, subsection (1) does not prevent a grant, transfer or sale to a statutory body representing the Crown if the statutory body is subject to the direction and control of a Minister.
- (3) This section applies to any part of the Avalon police station site in the same way as it applies to the whole of the Avalon police station site.

6 Development of Avalon police station site restricted to police and emergency services

- (1) Development of the Avalon police station site may only be carried out for the purposes of police services or emergency services that are provided by an emergency services organisation.
- (2) Any development (such as development for a residential purpose) that is not allowed by this section is prohibited at the Avalon police station site, despite any other Act or any environmental planning instrument.
- (3) The council of the local government area within which the Avalon police station site is situated is the consent authority in relation to the carrying out of development on the site.

7 Part 3A of the EP&A Act does not apply in relation to Avalon police station site

In promoting the issue of increased policing for my electorate, I sympathise with members representing country electorates who have much greater distances to travel. But I reiterate: this metropolitan area is 25 kilometres from the Sydney central business district. The people of Pittwater deserve reasonable access to policing. I urge all honourable members to put aside party differences and support this bill, which has been introduced at the request of the Pittwater community. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Bryce Gaudry.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUBLIC HOUSING TENANCY SUCCESSION

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.19 a.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the impact of Department of Housing policy changes on my constituent Mrs Virginia Deurhof, of 16 Light Street, Newcastle. Mrs Deurhof's letter to me states:

I have resided at the above address continuously since August 1969 – some 37 years and have always paid market rent for the property.

Naturally the news that I may not be able to even qualify for a Department of Housing property was simply devastating. This news was told to me only one week after my Mothers death.

I have just turned 64yrs and am still working full time in the operating theatres at Lingard Private Hospital. Bryce I love my job and feel I still have a lot to contribute in the work force. Age should never come into the equation if a person is still capable of "doing their job".

The Federal Government has an incentive in place to keep the "oldies" working. The State is virtually forcing me to retire so that I can then submit an Application for Public Housing.

Whilst I still work I am not a burden on the Taxation Department, in fact I still contribute to the tax coffers.

This entire situation is totally iniquitous!

The status of my health requires me to be close to Medical Networks of people that I have been seeing for over 20 years. I feel sure that my Doctor will also submit a letter stating this fact.

According to the Succession of Tenancy Q&A paper it states:

"The intent of Succession of Tenancy is to ensure that household members with a history of satisfactory occupation, and demonstrated ongoing need for assistance, will not be made homeless or forced to suffer undue hardship because the tenant has left the property or died".

Whilst on advice I have not as yet submitted the Succession of Tenancy form to the Department, there is perhaps some urgency in doing this as it has to be submitted 10 weeks After the tenant has died.

I feel at the moment I am living on a knives edge, unsure what the future holds for me. My life is entirely in the hands of bureaucracy.

Mum was 91 years of age when she died, lovingly cared for in her home until the last 2 days of her life, which is an achievement in itself, she would be horrified at the situation I am now in.

Thank you for taking this on board.

I subsequently wrote to the Minister and also expressed my concerns to officers of the Department of Housing. I later received a letter from 13 of Mrs Deurhof's resident neighbours that states:

Virginia and her mother had occupied the property for a period of 37 years up to the time of her mother's recent death. During this time she and her mother have always been valued neighbours. Virginia looks on the property as her family home and has established a wide variety of friends and interests in the area over the years. Virginia is at retirement age and to ask her to leave familiar surroundings at this stage of her life would be a considerable burden. We wish to support her request to stay on the grounds that her family has always met their obligations and she would continue to be a responsible tenant in her long time familiar surroundings.

While I understand that the policy decisions of government are made to ensure housing is provided for the needy, the disadvantaged and those suffering from disability, to my mind it is unconscionable that Mrs Deurhof faces eviction from the home that she shared with her late mother for 37 years. I have known Virginia Deurhof for that entire period and can certainly attest to her character and her standing in the community. As I have already said, throughout that time she has held down a responsible job in the operating theatres of the Lingard Private Hospital. She has raised a son as a single parent. She has also cared for her mother through her mother's declining years. As she stated in her letter, her mother died recently at the age of 91.

Six days after her mother's death she received an unsigned letter from the Department of Housing advising her of the fact that she virtually would be in a position of eviction from her home. She contacted the department at that time and attempted to discuss that with them. She recently discovered that her verbal application was assessed and declined on the basis of her income. I believe that this matter should be reappraised by the department. To my mind, the decision totally lacks fairness to my constituent.

THORNLEIGH BUILDING WALL COLLAPSE

Mr ANDREW TINK (Epping) [10.24 a.m.]: On the afternoon of Tuesday 31 October 2006 a 40-metre wall collapsed in Thornleigh Street, Thornleigh. The wall was part of a new development and it fell onto a funeral home in an adjacent property operated by Albert and Meyer Funeral Directors. Both the honourable member for Hornsby, who is present in the Chamber, and I went to the site at different times on the following morning. I think it is fair to say that we were both pretty shocked by what we saw. I am even more shocked now by some of the facts that have emerged recently.

The executive manager of the Council of the Shire of Hornsby described the collapse as the result of a serious breach of building practices. The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU] representative who attended the site on the day I was there said that illegal and untrained workers from China, who fled the site to avoid the authorities, had been working on the wall at the time of its collapse. Before I arrived at the site I telephoned the office of the Minister for Industrial Relations and phoned again when I arrived at the site. I state for the record that his officers acted very quickly. We were very concerned to have WorkCover investigators on site, and they also arrived very quickly. I express my sincere gratitude for that because a thorough investigation was required and I believe a professional investigation was undertaken.

Subsequently some interesting admissions were made. The building site foreman, Tony Constantinos, was quoted in a local newspaper as saying that the wall comprised concrete blocks more than four metres high held together by steel bars inserted horizontally and vertically. I inform the House that the wall was on top of a wall that was already under construction below it. He went on to state that concrete was supposed to be poured on a Wednesday, which I understand was six days before the collapse, and it had not been done. His statements reflect a general concern felt for a long time by a neighbour of the property, Mr Richard Zeaiter. From the outset Mr Zeaiter has been concerned about the project and has made numerous complaints about it. Many of his concerns have been borne out by the collapse of the wall.

The site was being developed by the Domain Group as a retail outlet. The development has had a long and troubled history with the council, which repeatedly refused the development application. However the Land and Environment Court, in its wisdom, nevertheless decided to approve it. The council's executive manager, Mr Hinton, stated:

It is not normal building practice to build a wall of that height without core filling [with concrete] as you go ... [there were] 15 courses [15 levels of blocks] without core filling.

It astonished me that a Domain Group spokesman, Tristan Fieldhouse, described the standards adopted at the site as "normal practice". They cannot be described as normal practice if they result in a wall collapsing in such a dramatic fashion unless gale force winds or something of that nature are responsible. The honourable member for Hornsby and I were in that area on the day the wall collapsed and the next day. I do not recall any unusual weather and I know of no reports warning of untoward atmospheric conditions or weather that would cause the wall to collapse. As lawyers say, the thing speaks for itself. I cannot believe the comments that have been attributed to Mr Fieldhouse. He should withdraw them and reconsider his position.

Perhaps as serious, if not more serious, is another observation by the CFMEU that there was no scaffolding along the wall that collapsed. I do not mind stating that I am very pleased 15 notices subsequently were issued. There is a suggestion of prosecution. I sincerely hope that the people responsible are prosecuted to the full extent and with the full force of the law. What happened was an absolute disgrace. The fact that Domain is still trying to assert that the construction was normal practice is an even greater disgrace. Everyone associated with the development should be prosecuted to the full extent and with the full force of the law. As far as I am concerned, if they are found to be guilty, they should have the book thrown at them. This is a most disturbing event and the seriousness of it is compounded by the more disturbing views expressed by the Domain Group.

The notices listed improvements which include scaffolding, site security, lighting and rectification of a lack of an occupational health and safety plan, which indicates just how bad the site is. In conclusion, I refer to the mayor of Hornsby. It was a private certifier who had responsibility for the development, making it difficult for council. I make this admission. One of the things that most concerned me about my time as a member was my support for, or non-opposition to, Government legislation in the late 1990s that proposed private certifiers. It was a big mistake but we all supported it at the time. There is a place for public authorities to police these sites, and not private individuals.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.29 a.m.]: I congratulate the honourable member for Epping on bringing this matter before the House, his ready acceptance of the importance of WorkCover, the role played by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and how important it is to have not only regulation but oversight and quick response by the Minister and his department. It is a disgrace that accidents like this can occur because of a lack of adherence to safety procedures within the worksite. Over the years members of the public and workers have suffered because of unsafe work practices. That there was not even an occupational health and safety plan on this site damns even further the group involved in this project. I thank the honourable member for bringing the matter to the House.

WINHANGADILINYA PROGRAM AWARDS CEREMONY

Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [10.30 p.m.]: Today I speak about the Winhangadilinya Program Awards Ceremony that I attended on 31 October at Bathurst Correctional Centre. Winhangadilinya is an Aboriginal word meaning, "know yourself". The official guests at the ceremony were Ian McLean, acting commissioner; John Dunthorne, south-west region assistant commissioner; Bill Fittler, general manager of the Bathurst correctional complex; Clarrie Dries, Aboriginal facilities and services manager, Paul Newman—not the actor—from the Aboriginal support and planning unit; I was there as local member; Bob Bourke, from Bathurst Regional Council; Gloria Rogers and Bill Allen, Aboriginal elders from the area; Kim Ward, manager of offender services and programs; and Ed Windle, master of ceremonies and senior correctional officer in charge of this program. Also at the ceremony were family and friends of the course participants.

Staff at Bathurst Correctional Centre organised the program to equip Aboriginal prisoners to return to life in the community following release from prison. Six men graduated and although I would like to place their names on the record, protocol does not allow that. Participants in the six-month, stringent course had to meet the guidelines or drop out. The course taught literacy skills, if required, and helped participants with self-esteem, anger management and other necessary life skills.

Each of the participants stood up in front of the assembled multitude, including Ian McLean, the acting commissioner, and made a speech. They spoke about what they had gained from the course and expressed appreciation for being given the opportunity to participate in it. All the speeches were varied—some were natural, polished speakers, while for others it was an effort—but every one of them made an excellent presentation and were able to convey what this rehabilitation course, developed in the gaol complex, meant to them. Each urged their fellow indigenous prisoners to get involved because they realised the rewards that could

flow from it. Those who had had problems with anger management learned how to cope with that—I see Mr Speaker is thinking I should do that from time to time—and it was wonderful to see the bond between the teaching staff and the correctional staff.

Ed Windle, a senior correctional officer I have known for many years, told the fellows at the start of the course, "We're here to show you the way but we are not here to carry you." They all knew they had an obligation to put their heads down and work—and they did. Kim Ward, who is manager of offender services and programs, was overcome when the course participants made a presentation to her. Presentations of Aboriginal art and artefacts were made to Ian McLean, John Dunthorne and Clarrie Dries. It was beautiful Aboriginal art that was produced at the Girrawaa Creative Work Centre at Bathurst council where Aboriginal inmates from the Bathurst Correctional Centre learn the trade and gain a source of income.

The course itself started within the gaol. People in Correctional Services are innovative when it comes to rehabilitation programs and this program should be held up as a model. Aboriginal elders had a smoking ceremony for the garden that was constructed by participants in the course. Community people, such as Ron Hollibone, Bill Gates and a Salvation Army minister were all involved. They were contracted to do part of the work but they did so above and beyond the call of duty. This wonderful example of participation by a government service and the community has made a tremendous difference to these men's lives.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.35 a.m.]: It is a sad fact that in all of our correctional centres there is a disproportionate number of members of the Aboriginal community, reflecting a high level of disadvantage in our community, a disproportionate death rate among young Aboriginal men in particular, a low educational standard, and poor health. An important focus of the Bathurst Correctional Centre has been training, improvement in literacy, anger management, skills development and the positive role model these offenders can become to other inmates.

When I was Parliamentary Secretary for Aboriginal Affairs I had the opportunity to visit the Yetta Dhinnakkal Correctional Centre outside Brewarrina. Young offenders at that centre are given skills to enable them to return to the community, gain employment and not reoffend. With such programs in our correctional centres we are focussing upon improvement in the status and skills of those within the centres. We are moving towards a positive program of rehabilitation, and I congratulate those involved at the Bathurst Correctional Centre. I thank the honourable member for bringing this matter before the House.

PORT STEPHENS GREAT LAKES MARINE PARK

Mr JOHN TURNER (Myall Lakes) [10.37 a.m.]: I raise the ongoing controversy of the Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park, which affects my electorate significantly. It will deprive many people of a pastime they have enjoyed for many years—that is, fishing and other recreational activities in the fine and beautiful waterways of the Great Lakes area. The Government seems to have shut down on many issues, including this issue. People on the advisory committee and others have told me that Government representatives are not even bothering to answer their phones and that all advisory committee meetings have been cancelled unilaterally.

I am distressed about this, not least because the Minister said he was going to have this matter finalised by the end of last month. We are now left in a complete hiatus and are uncertain about what is happening. The advisory committee people, who are volunteers of course, have been treated dreadfully and the general public have also been left in the dark. The matter will be exacerbated with the influx of tourists, which will start shortly, if the Minister dumps this marine park on us without fully informing the tourists. It is possible that regular tourists will return to the area next summer and, unknowingly, will break the law. They will be faced with the \$80,000 compliance boat—which has already been purchased although the zoning for the marine park has not been declared—steaming down on them to enforce the Government's proposed regulations that we are all ignorant of at this time.

The Minister had blinkers on when he proposed closing down the area, but he has finally realised he got it wrong, and he should admit he was wrong. He should consult further with the people and rethink this marine park idea. Members of the Opposition have said, and as the local member I have said, that we will investigate the value of having a marine park, but not on the unilateral boundaries that have been determined by the Minister. The history of this whole concept has a smell about it. The Minister for Primary Industries said, before there was any determination to have sanctuary zones, he thought that about 20 per cent of the area could be a sanctuary zone. He stated that before there was any consultation and before submissions were called for.

Surprise, surprise! What did we get when he considered all the data? We got 21 per cent of the area for a sanctuary zone—pretty close to the 20 per cent.

One wonders whether public consultation has been properly carried out for the Port Stephens Great Lakes marine park draft zoning plan. Of the 4,200 submissions received, the great majority opposed it for a variety of reasons. Certainly, we know that the Greens have been very active in pushing their barrow, and that is their prerogative. The overwhelming fact is that the public do not want it. They say they do not want it in the way that the Government has proposed and they want the Government to reconsider it. As I have said, the Coalition has agreed to look at the proposal for the marine park, but considers that the boundaries should be significantly reduced and that the no-go areas should be the subject of real consultation with the people. The Coalition will make sure that the people's needs are met. The Minister and the Government have isolated themselves from the people of the area regarding the marine park. Interestingly, yesterday in the upper House the Hon. Robyn Parker asked a question on this matter. The Minister for Primary Industries said that New Zealand research shows marine parks have enhanced fishing. His answer contained this really scientific statement:

... because in many circumstances the fish line up around the boundaries of these parks ...

That was an amazing statement from the Minister. I can just see little battalions of fish lining up around the sanctuary zone, knowing where the line is, and knowing not to cross the line because they would be caught. That amazing statement indicates that the Minister is out of touch with what is going on; he is out of touch with the people. He might have finally seen that there is a groundswell against the proposal, and will balance that against the deal that has been done with the Greens, obviously to gain their preferences.

The Minister might now realise that the Government is in a bit of trouble with this, particularly in the seat of Port Stephens, where there is great concern about this marine park and the reduction in boating and marine activities by the many people who traditionally enjoyed them. There is concern from people not only from Port Stephens and the Great Lakes, but also from Maitland and Cessnock. As I said previously, even the Minister for Local Government, who represents the Cessnock electorate, had people from his office ring my office to ask for a copy of the petition I had presented so that the people in Cessnock could sign it, against the Government. [*Time expired.*]

SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [10.42 a.m.]: An important event of significance to many of my constituents was the Sydney Peace Prize award ceremony held on Thursday 2 November at the University of Sydney. The recipient of the award this year was Irene Khan, the Secretary General of Amnesty International. Apart from the interest that many of my constituents have in the aims and objectives of Amnesty International there is a more specific interest in my electorate in this prize. The prize is awarded by the Sydney Peace Foundation. One of the members of the executive committee of the foundation is Abraham Quadan, who is a constituent of mine. The chair of the committee is Alan Cameron. The director is Emeritus Professor Stuart Rees.

The Sydney Peace Foundation is described as a partnership between business, media, public service, community and academic interests. It is a not-for-profit organisation funded by Partners in Peace and by the support of organisations and individuals with an interest in the promotion of peace with justice and the practice of non-violence. The citation for Irene Khan in awarding her the prize, included the following:

The Sydney Peace Foundation honours Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, for her courageous leadership as an advocate of human rights and her skills in identifying violence against women as a massive injustice and therefore a priority in campaigning for peace. The award recognises Ms Khan's efforts to eliminate violence towards women.

Ms Khan was born in Bangladesh and was educated in three different countries. Prior to becoming Secretary General of Amnesty she served on the United Nations High Commission for Refugees for more than 20 years. She became Secretary General of Amnesty in 2001. She has been quoted as saying:

I passionately believe in the power of human rights as a set of global values to bring our fractured and divided world together. Around the world human rights activists are giving hope to millions of people—women, indigenous people, the poor and the marginalized—in their struggle for equality and dignity. This award is for them. In their name I accept this award with humility and gratitude.

The Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, presented the award and the master of ceremonies for the event was Mary Kostakidis. On the prior evening, 1 November, Irene Khan delivered the Sydney Peace Prize lecture, which was a very impressive oration. She noted in that speech that she regarded receiving the award as a tribute to all the activists in Amnesty who chose to protest rather than be silent; to stand up and be counted; to act rather than be indifferent. Irene Khan makes a strong argument that peace is being redefined in the interests of the powerful and the privileged at the expense of the poor and marginalised.

Thus the so-called war on terror dominates while sexual terror is ignored. For example, Western diplomats and the authorities in Afghanistan do pragmatic deals with warlords and ignore their atrocities against the women of Afghanistan. Fear in the west—fear by the powerful—makes the world a dangerous place. As Ms Khan says, "History is replete with examples of how fear provides a power structure for unprincipled leadership." That includes desperate asylum seekers in leaky boats in 2001. Ms Khan has messages of great importance for our country. On David Hicks, she says:

I have no doubt that this law too will be challenged in the US courts and found wanting. But until then, the prisoners in Guantanamo must remain in legal limbo. Among them is David Hicks, an Australian citizen who has spent almost five years in detention. The Australian government's treatment of Hicks has been shameful. It agreed that Hicks could be tried by a US military commission which one British judge described as a "kangaroo court", and which was later declared unlawful by the US Supreme Court. In fact, Australia is the only western government to have reached such an agreement with the US government! Hicks is unlikely to get a fair trial from the US Administration under the new law. Last week, I addressed an open letter to Prime Minister Howard asking him to bring Hicks home to Australia to face justice. If there's no ground on which to prosecute him here, then he should be released. Live up to Australian values then, Mr Howard. Give Hicks a fair go.

Ms Khan argues powerfully that compromising human rights increases fear and mistrust, threatening multiculturalism, not defeating terrorism. Increasing polarisation, a decrease in tolerance and an increase in hostility helps terrorism; it does not thwart it. Part of the antidote is not to have a religion-centred approach; we all have multiple identities. When people are defined only by their faith, or their lack thereof, all their other aspects are excluded. Ms Khan very correctly points out women's human rights have suffered greatly in this climate of fear and fundamentalism. She makes the point that violence against women is not restricted to victims or perpetrators of a particular faith or particular clothing. It is far more to do with the inequality of women, the impunity of perpetrators and the apathy of States and societies.

Irene Khan is a worthy recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize, following in the distinguished footsteps of recipients such as Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, Hanan Ashrawi, Arundhati Roy and others. This year's award was not quite as controversial as some previous awards; nonetheless it maintains a fine and admirable Sydney tradition. The organisers of the foundation and the prize, in particular emeritus Professor Stuart Rees, deserve congratulation and support.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.47 a.m.]: The honourable member for Liverpool has always been acknowledged by this House as one who looks at global issues as well as local issues, especially human rights. Today he brings to the House a private member's statement about the Sydney Peace Prize. This year's worthy recipient is Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, who has focused on human rights and violence against women. The honourable member has brought to this House a very important issue.

WORKERS COMPENSATION PREMIUMS AND PAYROLL TAX

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [10.47 a.m.]: I am often asked why I ever entered politics. I always answer, "Out of frustration." I am frustrated about what happens to businesses in country and regional areas. It is embarrassing for me to read this document, but I want to place it on record. It is from Allister Parker's Plastering, and it states:

We have an internal linings company based in Lismore, Northern NSW. We as a small business have always found it difficult to compete against QLD contractors due to the differences in NSW Worker's Compensation and Payroll Tax, examples as follows.

Allister Parker's Plastering set out details of its quotation for the building of the Ballina hospital, a New South Wales Government contract. His quotation price was \$208,088. The successful tender in the amount of \$191,440 from a Queensland company \$13,277 less. The workers compensation and payroll tax charges for the Queensland company were \$4,530. The Lismore company's quote for internal linings at the Lismore police station was \$716,840. It missed the job again. Why? The variance in the two taxes: \$27,835 more for the New South Wales contractor.

The New South Wales quotation for the mental health unit at Lismore Base Hospital was \$1,958,000; the successful tenderer bid \$1,890,000. The variation in charges between the New South Wales and Queensland bidders was \$67,000. The quotation from the New South Wales company for the Tweed Heads Hospital was \$340,000. Again the successful tenderer was a Queensland company at a price of \$325,000. The variance in charges on that contract was \$15,665. The New South Wales company often loses business even for plastering a house at a cost of about \$3,000 because the payroll tax component is about \$600. They are being priced out of the market by competitors from Queensland. New South Wales Government charges are defeating the efforts of businesspeople in this State.

Time after time the Government claims that it is cutting workers compensation charges. It also claims that it is reducing every other tax. I put on record that the workers compensation paid by this company last year was 13 per cent or \$1,055,000. This week the company got the bill for this year's premium and there is no difference—again the rate is 13 per cent. The Queensland rate is 3.8 per cent. Where are these businesses to go? Rod Cunningham, the estimator, and Allister Parker visited me. Allister Parker asked, "Where do I take my business? Will I be forced to operate from Queensland to compete for New South Wales contracts because I am losing business? How do I keep my men employed in Lismore? I am not successful in getting contracts in New South Wales, especially government contracts, because the charges in this State are making my quotes higher. The Government should assist me to maintain employment in Lismore and be successful. I can run my business but when these charges are taken out of my hands how am I to continue in a responsible manner to employ just on 50 people when I am not being successful in obtaining contracts?"

Allister Parker does not want any help, but he certainly does not want to be penalised because he is operating on this side of the border when people from over the border are getting every assistance to compete against New South Wales businesses because of the Iemma Government's payroll tax and workers compensation charges. This is a disgrace and it needs to be fixed up. [*Time expired.*]

PUBLIC TRUSTEE ESTATE FEES

Mr DAVID BARR (Manly) [10.52 a.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the difficulties being faced by one of my constituents, Diane Collins of North Manly, in her dealings with the Public Trustee New South Wales. Diane's mother, Pamela Foote, passed away on 12 May this year. Mrs Foote had a will dated 6 March 2002 bequeathing the entirety of her modest estate to her daughter, Diane Collins. The executor of the estate was the Public Trustee New South Wales, which advertises that it provides a free will service. Its brochure states:

We do not charge for drafting a Will, and will prepare one for you when you appoint the Public Trustee as executor, co-executor, or alternate executor with your spouse or partner.

The sting in the tail of this free offer is that the Public Trustee, as the executor of the estate, charges exorbitant fees for this service. Pamela Foote's estate comprised a modest fibro home located at 66 Cameron Street, Doonside, and little else. The home is on 930 square metres of land and has a drainage easement running through the middle of the backyard, which restricts the usage of the land and consequently affects the value of the property. Having prepared the will for Mrs Foote, the Public Trustee's Office became executor of her estate. Diane Collins contacted the office saying that she wished to become the executor. She was told by one of the officials there that the Public Trustee is a business and it would contest her becoming executor.

Mrs Foote passed away in May. Mrs Collins received a bill for \$12,900 for services provided by the Public Trustee Office as executor of Mrs Foote's estate. These fees include \$9,065.66 for commission on the value of the property at Doonside. The Public Trustee hired as a valuer a real estate agent from Burwood, who valued the property at \$310,000. Mrs Collins believes that this is clearly an overvaluation, particularly given the existence of the drainage easement running through the middle of the backyard. It is unclear whether the valuer was even aware of the existence of this drainage easement, given the valuation document includes only a photo of the front of the property, a figure of \$310,000 underneath and no further detail.

Mrs Collins was hoping to keep the house but cannot afford the fees of \$12,900, which will now rise as she has had to put the house on the market. To give members an idea of how exorbitant these fees are, I have been advised by Law Access, the Attorney General Department's legal information service, that for an estate valued at \$300,000 probate fees of \$734 could be expected. Contrast this with the \$12,900 Mrs Collins has already been charged for what is essentially routine administrative paperwork. It is totally out of proportion with the tasks performed.

Apart from the exorbitant fees, one of the key issues is the question of whether the fee structure was fully explained to Mrs Foote, or other elderly people in similar situations having wills drawn up by the Public Trustee. Is the office taking advantage of elderly people seeking a will to be drawn up at no cost without telling them in detail the effect on beneficiaries of the will? Is it explained that the Public Trustee has a higher fee structure that will be to the financial detriment of the beneficiaries? Are they under the misunderstanding that because the organisation is called the Public Trustee it is somehow working in the interests of the public rather than actually operating as a hard-nosed commercial enterprise? The slogan of the Public Trustee is: You can trust us to help. The question is, can you really? What is being imposed on Diane Collins and other people in similar situations amounts to de facto death duty. This situation is not acceptable.

AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.57 a.m.]: This year Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC] television marks its fiftieth year of operation. The ABC's first television broadcast was in Sydney on 5 November 1956. Within four years ABC television was broadcasting in all States. ABC radio is, of course, much older, having been launched on 1 July 1932. I speak principally to pay tribute to the ABC. Like many others who grew up outside of Sydney, or Australia's other great cities, the ABC has had a significant impact upon me. ABC radio introduced me to domestic and international news and current affairs, music and science. I can vividly recall listening to a 1969 radio broadcast of Neil Armstrong taking man's first steps on the moon. I still enjoy listening to football and cricket on radio, as I did using a transistor radio as a child, allowing my imagination and the skill of talented ABC commentators to conjure up images of the game. Tragically, even now, as I drive between evening functions I often find myself listening to broadcasts of Federal Parliament just as I first did during my teenage years.

ABC television provided insights for me into this nation, its cities and its politics through programs such as *A Big Country*, *Chequerboard* and *This Day Tonight*. It ensured my music tastes remain mired in the *Countdown* years and fed my love of satire and comedy through shows such as *The Gillies Report*, *The Late Show*, *The Big Gig* and, yes, *The Glasshouse*. When I consider the ABC's influences upon me I can only imagine the impact it has also had on generations of other Australians. To paraphrase an ABC television program of my youth, Australia is a big country.

Throughout its 74-four year history the ABC has seen our cities grow. Over the same period Australians living in remote, rural and regional areas have continued to rely on the ABC for news and weather, sport, and entertainment. For many, the ABC was the only broadcaster available. ABC television and radio have been with us during the good times and bad, crises and celebrations. They have helped shape the nation's identity, and many of us could not imagine Australia without an ABC. That is not to say that is a universally held view, or that even those who love the ABC are not sometimes frustrated or irritated by programs or programming decisions.

The ABC is like family and, like one's siblings, parents, or relatives, Aunty can be both comforting and confounding, reassuring and disquieting. But, unlike one's spouse or partner, one is not compelled to agree with everything it broadcasts or does. In an open society like Australia's what is important is the opportunity for varied opinions and views to be aired and heard. Obviously in an open society debate is also allowed on whether the ABC or other media provide this opportunity. But I speak up for the ABC. I reject the views of some who regard it as biased. It is a view that ignores history and exhibits a poor grasp of the nation's and the State's political record.

In New South Wales no-one pursued the excesses of the Wran Government, the failings of the Unsworth Government, or the consequences of the spin-before-substance approach of the Carr-Iemma Government more than ABC radio and television did. Federally, it is hard to argue that during the Hawke and Keating years the national broadcaster's news and current affairs programs did not vigorously hold Federal Labor to account. Some of those interviews are legendary. Those who argue that the broadcaster is biased against government fail to recognise that the ABC has a record of trying to hold government to account, irrespective of political make-up. For me, the ABC makes up part of the nation's accountability mechanisms that work to benefit all those who live in our open and democratic society.

It is also worth noting that in his appearances on the ABC, whether television or radio, Prime Minister John Howard never seems to have trouble making his point, getting his message across and holding his own, whether facing Kerry O'Brien or Virginia Trioli. Perhaps those who engage in ABC bashing have forgotten what Opposition is like, when one makes use of whatever tools are at hand to expose and hold government to

account. Those who advance the argument of ABC bias also seem to suffer from a one-eyed perspective of Australia's media. The criticisms applied to the ABC never seem to be made of commercial radio and television broadcasters, none of whom would claim to be perfect.

Now that the decision to stop broadcasts of *The Glasshouse* has been made, it is safe for me to publicly declare I am a fan of the show, as are a number of my colleagues. I can also confess that during divisions between 9.30 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. on Wednesday sitting nights, if members of Parliament found me crankier than my usual jovial self it was because I had been dragged away from the show. Wil, Corrine, Dave and their guests invariably give me the biggest laugh of the week. *The Glasshouse* uses satire to tackle a range of issues and topics, including the actions of government, Federal and State. This type of humour seeks to use ridicule, irony and sarcasm to prick pomposity, lampoon individuals, and expose folly or nonsense. Government will always be a big target.

So I am bemused that, while some try to make careers out of criticising *The Glasshouse*, they ignore commercial programs like *Rove Live* or *The Panel* that use the same approach. Those who seek to criticise, attack or undermine the ABC would have greater credibility if their critique extended across broadcast dials. I get frustrated at attacks on the ABC from my side of the political spectrum because they ignore the obvious: many of those who rely on ABC broadcasts, who value and support the national broadcaster, are Liberal and National supporters. The same people who helped elect the Federal Government on four occasions are supporters of the ABC.

I also note that ABC radio was launched in 1932 by Joe Lyons, whose United Australia Party Government was the precursor to the Liberal Party of Australia, and who formed the first national Coalition Government—a Federal Coalition that continues to this day. ABC television was launched by Bob Menzies, the founder of the Liberal Party of Australia and, until recently, viewed as our greatest Prime Minister. But my pitch for the ABC is not based on politics. I stand up for the outstanding services its radio and television arms have provided to the State and nation for 74 and 50 years respectively.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.02 a.m.]: Private members' statements are wonderful things: they enable us to speak about something that is very relevant to our electorates. Nothing is more relevant to any member's electorate than the importance of maintaining the ABC as an institution.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Do you watch *The Glasshouse*?

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY: Yes. Through the medium of the ABC the opinions of a broad range of people can reach audiences nationally and internationally, and governments of all persuasions can be held to account. I am not an ABC-tragic like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but *The Insiders*, the *7.30 Report* and *Lateline* are of international repute for their accountability of government coverage. There is no more important task than maintaining the independence of the ABC and ensuring its funding in an increasingly shrinking media market as a result of recent Federal legislation.

BYRON BAY ROAD TRAGEDY

P-PLATE AND LEARNER DRIVER LICENCE RESTRICTIONS

Mr PAUL GIBSON (Blacktown) [11.02 a.m.]: Today I refer to the tragedy that affected the communities of Goonellabah, Lismore, and other towns and villages in the Richmond Valley in northern New South Wales. Four teenagers on the verge of becoming young men were killed in a single vehicle crash on the coast road of Broken Head just after midnight on 22 October 2006. The honourable member for Lismore asked me, as Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, to meet with the families affected by this terrible tragedy.

On Thursday 9 November 2006 I went to Lismore accompanied by Ian Faulks, the manager of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety. We met with the parents of the boys, visited Kadina High School, and spoke to the headmaster, officials and other people. The parents of these boys—Karen and Michael Eveleigh, parents of Mitchell Eveleigh; Mark New, father of Corey New; Maria Bolt, mother of Paul Morris; and Jacqueline and Robert Wells, parents of Bryce Wells—showed enormous strength and courage to speak on issues associated with the deaths of their sons. There was much pain and grief and there was also anger, so it

was important for me to hear what these parents had to say. Today I will place on the record their concerns and what they said.

Their concerns included the site of the crash and they asked questions about the road surface. Motorists see a difference when they drive from one council border to another. The parents want road barriers to be installed on sections of the road that are known to be dangerous and where there is a two-metre or more drop off the shoulder of the road. They spoke also about increasing the audiotactile road or ghost lines to delineate roads that a driver must follow. The parents want road shoulders to be sealed and they want to see a wider use of speed cameras. They spoke about the novice driver licensing process. They suggested that there should be a minimum two-year learner-driver requirement, with at least 60 hours of supervised driving in the first and second years and about 15 hours of night driving.

They also said that the completion of defensive driving programs should be part of that process. The minimum age for eligibility for a provisional drivers licence, or P1 drivers, should be 18 years of age. The parents noted that learner drivers were trained at 80 kilometres an hour but that that speed was increased to 90 to 100 kilometres an hour when they became P1 and P2 drivers. Parent supervision should continue for P1 and P2 drivers, where required. The parents asked that, as a component of the testing process for a provisional drivers licence, part of the test should include a learner driver being tested while three or four passengers were in the car creating disturbances and distractions.

The parents want restrictions on the number of passengers that P-plate drivers can carry. They referred also to restricting the capacity of a motorcar. For example, P1 drivers should be confined to four-cylinder motorcars. Driving educators should emphasise to learner drivers that when they are carrying passengers they are responsible for the protection of their lives. More graphic advertising is also needed for all drivers. Driver licensing requirements should be amended so there is a better focus on realistic driving situations. The parents suggested a total ban on the use of mobile telephones for P-plate drivers, and there should be compulsory skill-based education.

The parents questioned whether they should be re-tested more often so they can pass on their expertise to their children when teaching them how to drive. They referred also to the establishment of regional driver educational centres. They would like the "dob in a driver" program to be established and they would like there to be on-the-spot three-month loss of licence for provisional drivers who breach restrictions. A component of the sentencing of a convicted driver offender should be a requirement to participate in educating young drivers about the consequences of crashes. The parents spoke about many other issues that I have relayed to the Minister. Two comments made by these parents will remain with me forever. One said:

The message is that it is not about the kids who are killed, it is about us, those who are left behind. I have no time now—no day of the week, no date, it is just every day is the same.

Another said:

We have to do something now. I can't wait and watch another parent go through this.

I have conveyed their concerns to the Minister and I hope something can be done. I express condolences to all the parents who have been affected in this terrible way.

CARLINGFORD RAILWAY STATION

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [11.07 a.m.]: Today I want to speak about housing densities around Carlingford Railway Station, the only railway station in Baulkham Hills Shire. When the Coalition was in Government in 1994 we promised to extend the Carlingford line to Epping. This would have provided a direct link between Parramatta and the northern line. It would have involved doubling the track, rebuilding Carlingford and Telopea and Dundas stations and converting a branch line into an integral part of the Sydney system. All that changed when Labor was elected in 1995.

Labor has had 12 years to fix the transport system in this city, but instead we have gone backwards under the administration of luminaries such as Brian Langton, Carl Scully and John Watkins. In 1998 Carl Scully announced his Action for Transport 2010 plan, which extended the Parramatta to Epping line to the Parramatta to Chatswood line. When the proposal was made, the planning officers at Baulkham Hills Shire Council started scurrying for their pencils because what was proposed for Carlingford was what the honourable

member for Epping has described as a massive railway station with parking for 800 cars, so it could easily accommodate some increases in density.

In normal circumstances I support the idea of increasing densities around transport nodes. It is an idea I advanced in my planning paper "Community Ties" in 2001. If honourable members were to think about it for even a minute or two they would agree that it makes a lot of sense. Building flats or townhouses close to railway stations or bus stations makes the train or bus services more viable and helps get people out of their cars. However, Carlingford station is not like other stations. It is not a Parramatta or a Chatswood or a Hurstville or a Burwood. It is a terminus—the end of the line—with 200 metres of single track plus a platform so short that it accommodates only four-car train sets.

In November 2001—five years ago—the council proposed rezoning the area 2(a2), for townhouses and villas. However, the Government told the council that to get a State Environmental Planning Policy 53 exemption—honourable members may recall that SEPP 53 is the policy that forces councils to adopt increased densities or be stripped of their planning powers—it would have to zone the area around Carlingford station 2(a1), for apartments. Council was told there would be no problem because the station on the new extended line would easily be able to look after the transport needs of the thousands of additional people who would be shoehorned into the area.

However, here is the rub: the line was scrapped. When Carl Scully costed the line properly he found it would be prohibitively expensive to connect Parramatta to Chatswood. Instead, he settled for Epping to Chatswood, which—at a cost of \$2.4 billion, double the original cost of building a line twice as long—goes nowhere near Carlingford. Did this stop the Government from imposing those extra densities on the long-suffering residents of Carlingford? Not a bit of it. In its 2005 Local Environmental Plan, council zoned the whole area around the station—except for a small amount of office space—bounded by Jenkins Road, Pennant Hills Road and Post office Street 2(a1); that is, apartments. Another block to the north on the other side of Post office Street has also been zoned 2(a1). A third block—again north of Post office Street between Jenkins Road and Donald Street—has been zoned 2(a2) for townhouses and villas.

Peter Vogelaar of Thallon Street, Carlingford has alerted me to a likely amendment to a development application for a four-storey unit complex that will allow one five-storey block and one seven-storey block. There are also rumours that eight-storey blocks will be permitted throughout the area. That is way in excess of anything else in Baulkham Hills Shire. Mr Vogelaar says such developments would limit his privacy, block direct sunlight, and impact significantly on his views of the western sky. He also has safety and security concerns. Those concerns are borne out by the fact that schoolchildren have been robbed at Carlingford railway station, and Dundas station, down the line, has been burnt out.

So the number of dwellings in this area will be expanded dramatically. However, far from being enhanced, the transport infrastructure has actually been downgraded. There used to be four direct services a day going through to North Sydney. Since October 2004 there has been one direct service to Central and all the others stop at Clyde. There are no direct services returning to Carlingford. Passengers have to get out of the train and change platforms via an overbridge that cannot be negotiated by the disabled or infirm. The direct service takes 44 minutes to get to Central and the other services almost an hour. A late train at Clyde can mean passengers miss their connection, in which case they have to wait up to 40 minutes, blowing out the travel time from the city to more than an hour and a half.

The trains could also scarcely be described as frequent. The intervals between the morning services are 38 minutes, 28 minutes, 42 minutes and 46 minutes, and the passengers tell me they are often delayed. This is not a service that people would trust to deliver them into town in time to start work and to get home again in time for dinner. It is certainly not a service on which to build what will effectively be a new high-density suburb. To add insult to injury, at the beginning of 2005 Hams Park Transport withdrew from route services, and its CityBus Direct service through Carlingford to the city was discontinued.

After 12 years of this Labor Government the long-suffering residents of Carlingford deserve better. Having just a single line track with four trains in the morning peak and three home in the evening is bad enough. But compounding the offence by shoehorning thousands of extra people is downright criminal. I call on the Government to take a long, hard look at public transport services for Carlingford. Increasing the frequency and reliability of train services is the best option. However, if it is not prepared to do this it must facilitate a direct bus service to the city.

GLENDALE TRADE SCHOOL

Mr JOHN MILLS (Wallsend) [11.12 a.m.]: The Glendale Trade School at Glendale Technology High School received a big boost last week: the Government's announcement on Friday 10 November that Reliance Rail Consortium had been chosen as the successful tenderer to build and maintain 626 new train carriages for CityRail. Reliance Rail is a Hunter-based manufacturer. Its consortium partners are Downer EDI—which operates out of the old Cardiff railway workshops, which is where the Millennium trains were built for a number of years until last year—ABN Amro, Hitachi and AMP. That was a really good new announcement for the Hunter region last Friday because it means 250 more manufacturing jobs, more locally based training, more apprentices, and the addressing of skills shortages. It offers real hope of long-term future local employment to the kids now at high school in the Hunter Valley. As part of the contract, one new apprentice will be employed for every nine local workers on the project.

I should explain the link back to the Glendale Trade School. On 7 November I put out a media release because I am a strong supporter of the Iemma Government's trades schools program. Entitled "Trade school industry partners sign memorandum of understanding", the release stated:

... the industry partners of the Glendale Trade School will come together on Wednesday 8 November at Bay Views Function Centre, Warners Bay, at 7.00 pm, to sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

"The Glendale Trade School is an initiative that is designed to address the region's skills shortages by offering the best possible support to students wishing to undertake a school-based traineeship to accelerate their future career opportunities."

"The Trade School is a partnership between Glendale Technology High School, TAFE NSW Hunter Institute and local industries..."

Three skill shortage areas were chosen for the development: automotive, engineering, and aged care. The release continues:

"Classes will commence in 2007 in these specialist industry areas."

"Industry partners will both employ and support students via industry mentors and involvement in the curriculum delivery and assessment. In each industry area of specialisation a package of subjects has been developed to maximise the students' preparation for employment and entry into apprenticeships."

Students who successfully complete the course will achieve their HSC over those two years, a certificate in their relevant vocation, significant industry training on the job, and specific training in these areas of skills shortage. Students are indentured to an employer for the two years. At the ceremony we thanked Di Garis from the Department of Education and Training and Julie Johnston from TAFE for the work they have done in putting the program together. John Mather, the Regional Director of Hunter-Central Coast regional schools said schools must change to meet the needs of modern society, and the trade school is a fine example of that change. In addition, five teachers from Glendale Trade School are currently doing a work in industry program to give the school-based subjects a genuine work-based focus.

Harry Rainbow, the Deputy Director of the Hunter Institute of TAFE, also spoke at the ceremony to indicate TAFE's commitment to ensuring the success of the project. June Hingston, the Principal of Glendale Technology High, called it a lighthouse project. At this stage there are 22 enrolments for next year and it is hoped there will be up to 60 students in 2008. Honourable members should remember that this ceremony was two days before the Government's announcement about the new carriages. I also acknowledge the work of Wendy McTaggart, the co-ordinator of the trades school. Stuart Gordon of the Australian Industry Group in the Hunter said that industry was passionate about vocational education and it sees great value in the trade school concept.

The six industry partners who signed up are Kloster Group and Toyota Australia for the automotive section; Anglican Care, Hunter New England and Novacare for the aged care section; and EDI Rail, which has already signed to take on trade school apprentices in engineering. I met Harry Rainbow again on Friday evening. The trade school partners had been to EDI Rail that afternoon, following the announcement, and there is talk of it taking on many more apprentices than originally planned. The trade school is only one kilometre or so away from the EDI Rail manufacturing plant. The prospects for giving young people excellent training are superb. *[Time expired.]*

HOLBROOK

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [11.17 a.m.]: The town of Holbrook lies some 65 kilometres north of Albury on the Hume Highway and was first proclaimed in 1836. It was originally called Ten Mile Creek. But

following the arrival of German immigrants the name evolved into the official name of Germanton, and this was finally gazetted in 1876. During World War I the town name was deemed unpatriotic, and on 24 August 1915 the town was renamed Holbrook in honour of Lieutenant Norman Douglas Holbrook, a submarine captain whose daring underwater raid in the Dardanelles earned him a Victoria Cross—the first naval VC of the war and the first ever for a submariner.

Norman Holbrook made a number of visits to the town, and his widow donated his medals and later a large financial gift to help the community establish a fitting memorial to Australian submariners. Motorists driving through the town of Holbrook will now see on display the hull of HMAS *Otway*, an Oberon class submarine decommissioned by the Royal Australian Navy in 1995. In an attractive parkland setting visitors can inspect a museum, a model of the HMS B11 submarine commanded by Commander Holbrook, a Mark VIII torpedo, and a soon to be completed re-creation of the control room of HMAS *Otway*.

I encourage members and the general public to visit Holbrook because, like so many of our country towns in farming areas, it has been hard hit by the drought and by the downturn in the building industry, which has seen the loss of 102 jobs at the timber mill since June this year. The flow-on effect of this loss to a rural economy is great and is compounded by the effects of the drought on rural producers and small businesses. The Greater Hume Shire Council and the Holbrook community are actively involved in planning economic development and marketing strategies but they need assistance from both the State and Federal governments.

I was pleased to attend the inaugural meeting of the Holbrook Community and Business Forum last week, held appropriately at the Submarine Cafe overlooking HMAS *Otway*. This forum replaces the Holbrook Chamber of Commerce, and the meeting was extremely well attended by a large number of business, community, and local government representatives. It was a time of celebration as the Chairman, Roger Cooper, had just returned from the Tidy Town Awards. On its first attempt, Holbrook won no fewer than five awards, including recognition of the Miniature Railway, the Ten Mile Creek Corridor of Green, and the Submarine Café. Katherine Bowler took out the Young Legends Award in her category and the town won the Friendly Town Award in its population section of 1,500 residents. It was a proud moment for Leo MacKinlay, Stuart Hulme, Warren and Helen Thompson, and all those who had helped to achieve this statewide recognition for Holbrook.

So, despite the difficulties now confronting the town, the people are resilient and resourceful. This is typified by VSL Australia, a company that set up a branch in Holbrook to supply precast concrete panels, noise walls, and reinforced earth concrete panels for the construction of the Hume Freeway at Albury-Wodonga. It employs around 30 people, and will be looking to continue working with contractors who will soon commence the duplication of the Hume Highway north and south of Holbrook.

Another indicator of confidence and promotion is the fact that Holbrook is now the permanent home of the National Museum of Australian Pottery. I was delighted to be among the guests at its recent official opening, having met the directors, Geoff and Kerrie Ford, in Albury some time ago when they were seeking an appropriate site to display and preserve their magnificent collection. They originally established the National Museum of Australian Pottery in 1995, which is the only museum dedicated to nineteenth and early twentieth century Australian pottery. It represents the culmination of many years of collecting and research, with more than 1,200 pieces of domestic pottery from more than 120 Australian pottery companies established between the 1800s and 1918.

Geoff has been awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his service to the arts and has published many books, including *Australian Pottery: The First 100 Years*, *Encyclopaedia of Australian Potters' Marks*, volumes 1 and 2, and *Convict Potters of Australia 1821 to 1851*. At the official opening in October we were told by guest speaker John Wade that Geoff and Kerrie started collecting documentary examples of pottery to reconstruct the history of the people who produced the artefacts of colonial industry and settlement. Just a month after the colony was established at Sydney Cove, bricks were being made for the new Government House. Enterprising potters were soon establishing small, mostly family-owned potteries to make the jars, pans, filters, bottles and other objects required by households and manufacturers. John Wade declared:

... in nearly thirty years of dedication and perseverance, Geoff and Kerrie Ford have done more than anyone else to reveal the lives of Australia's 19th century potters, through their splendid collection, their research, their publications and their museum.

The museum in Holbrook is an old-fashioned museum, full of carefully researched objects. It is housed in a heritage building constructed in 1910 for A. H. Mackie and Company. The new store opened its doors to the public in June 1911 as Mackie's Palace Emporium and it continued as a general store or food market until 2004, when Geoff and Kerrie Ford purchased the empty building, built a residence, and converted the store into the

permanent home of the museum. The museum was officially opened by Dr Judith McKay, Senior Curator Cultures and Histories Program at the Queensland Museum, who said that she hoped tourists will come to Holbrook not only to see the submarine display but also to see Australia's best exhibition of pottery.

NORTH AND NORTH WEST COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [11.22 a.m.]: Community legal centres play an important role in providing equity and access for people who normally cannot afford to pay lawyers to seek their advice. According to a recent media report, these non-profit centres provide referral and advice to 350,000 people across Australia every year. That report also stated that the centres face a funding overhaul from the Federal Government. There is a fear in my local community that this will mean cuts to a service that is run on a shoestring budget but upon which many people rely for help and advice.

The North and North West Community Legal Service—which was a product of the justice statement—opened officially in 1996, although it had begun operating a little earlier using local volunteer solicitors. When it opened its doors—I was pleased to be at the opening—it became part of a Commonwealth-wide network that aimed to ensure that all members of the community could access the justice system and address their legal concerns to a qualified solicitor at no cost. The Armidale-based service employs four staff, including two solicitors, an administrative assistant and a financial officer. The solicitors see clients in Armidale. They also travel fortnightly to Tamworth and see clients monthly while on circuit to Glen Innes, Inverell, Narrabri and Gunnedah. They undertake both advice and casework, and also participate in a community legal education program.

The program is regarded as very important in light of major changes to employment law and family law in 2006. The centre's clients come from the most socially and economically disadvantaged sector of the community and require simple, yet thorough, explanations as to how the changes will affect them in their workplace and in their family situations. The new workplace reforms are also very complex—even for legal professionals—and clarification is needed for people in many different work situations, particularly in rural communities. The funding agreement under which the service has operated for the past 10 years requires the service to do what it can to research legal issues and respond to requests for information.

The service negotiates on behalf of clients in a range of matters, from credit and debt through to discrimination and family law. Where possible, solicitors are trained as mediators so that they are able to help their clients understand and benefit from alternative dispute resolution procedures. There have been a number of very significant outcomes for clients in victims compensation matters, particularly in protecting the rights of victims who are children or vulnerable. As our ageing population will increase over the next decade, the service has focused on senior law and it has given many talks on enduring powers of attorney, guardianship and wills and has assisted clients in drawing up these documents.

Service providers throughout the New England and north-west regions are very supportive of the North and North West Community Legal Service. If it ceased to exist the impact on the community would be disastrous. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department has been the service's main source of funding since it opened its doors. It is unfortunate that funding has not increased in line with the resources needed for the compliance requirements of the funding body, and in the past 12 months the service has had to amalgamate the position of principal solicitor with the position of administrator. The service prides itself on the large regular circuit service it provides to towns up to 300 kilometres from its head office in Armidale, and the cost of continuing the circuits has a big impact on the overall budget.

The service is part of a network of community legal centres based in rural areas, and the principal solicitor is the convenor of these rural centres on the Board of the Combined Group of Community Legal Centres. With the continuing drought causing worries in rural communities and having a flow-on effect to regional centres, rural community legal centres could take many opportunities to work closely with the community if they had the necessary financial resources. Also, the administrator, the principal solicitor, not only manages the legal practice but works with the board to grow the service. Community development is in very close liaison with LawAccess, the central New South Wales hotline referral call centre, which helps to strategically develop services to match the needs of the catchment communities. I would like to see the State Government work co-operatively with the Commonwealth to ensure these community legal services are adequately funded and expanded to deliver the services needed by their client base, in particular, in regional, rural and remote communities.

CRONULLA RIOTS REPORTS

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [11.27 a.m.]: As we approach the anniversary of the Cronulla riots we recall that reports were made available to this Parliament and to the media. Those reports were the Enoggera report and the Hazzard report. I am concerned that the Hazzard report, which related to the events on 11 December 2005, and the Enoggera report, which related to the revenge attacks, were made available to this Parliament but have never been made available to the public, despite requests and concerns from right across this State, Australia and internationally. Access to the reports could be very easy by placing them on a web site, which gives general access. That would be in everybody's interests if this Government were an open government rather than a freedom-from-information government. What is particularly disappointing for the general public, in particular my constituents, is the lack of information about how the convoys of racist criminals who committed crimes in Cronulla, Maroubra and Brighton-le-Sands were allowed to travel to and from their destinations without being impeded.

Mr Andrew Fraser: It is a disgrace.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: It is a disgrace, and people want to know why and how it happened. The Minister for Police repeated what was said by this Government after the Redfern and the Macquarie Field riots: "Let's move on. Let's put this behind us."

Mr Andrew Fraser: The Government would like us to put it behind us.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: They would like to put it behind us. However, if we move on without addressing the cause of the problems then we move on with those problems. It was not long after the Enoggera report when people started to be arrested for allegedly taking part in the riot at Cronulla that I received phone calls from local constituents who said, "Why have these people been arrested and yet the people who committed very serious offences on the Sunday and Monday night on the revenge raids have not been dealt with?" I said, "The events on Sunday were captured on camera and the police have been saying there was no video evidence." In fact, on a number of occasions the police commissioner said there was no video evidence in relation to the revenge attacks.

Subsequently it became apparent, as a result of investigations carried out by Jason Morris from 2GB, that there was video evidence. In fact, when video evidence was released by police in relation to an attack that occurred outside a youth hostel in Cronulla the commissioner said he was not aware of it when he made his public denials. The commissioner then removed Dennis Bray, the officer in charge of the task force in relation to Enoggera, but was forced to reinstate him as second in charge as a result of the reaction of members of that task force. Graeme Morgan, the top detective, made a further submission in relation to that video evidence that does not accord with the views of the commissioner.

I also point out that Sutherland Shire Council has asked that the zones that prohibit alcohol be rationalised because of confusion. The Sutherland shire lifeguards have asked that they be allowed to provide training for people from south-western Sydney to breakdown the insider and outsider culture that can prevail, but that has been refused. The Government has also refused funding for a suggested picnic. [*Time expired.*]

KANWAL PUBLIC SCHOOL GALA CONCERT

Mr PAUL CRITTENDEN (Wyong) [11.32 a.m.]: Last Saturday night it was my great pleasure to attend an excellent performance by musicians at Kanwal primary school. The annual gala concert of the Kanwal Public School was certainly up to its usual high standard, with a large number of people attending this growing cultural feast in the Wyong electorate. I encourage not only proud parents and grandparents of the children but also others in the community to listen to the excellent musical talent from the area. These functions do not happen without a number of people competently organising them. Mr John Saunders, who has excellent organisational skills and musical talents, co-ordinated the band activities. I am sure the gala concert would not occur without his driving influence.

John's son, Neil Saunders, who is completing a PhD in mathematics at the University of Sydney, rushed from the cricket ground, having scored 57 runs, and performed a vital role on the night. Neil supports individual students in solo performances at the concert. Neil was school captain of Gorokan High School and I am encouraging him to apply for a Rhodes scholarship next year, despite the large competition from this State. I believe he has all the prerequisites to make a brilliant Rhodes scholar.

The committee that organised the event comprised parents Joanne Ippolito, Linda Pereboeff, Jo McPhan, Lyn Caldon, Marita Castiglione, Kerianne Alderson, Gill Laundess and Rhonda Eaton. I also acknowledge the band master Mr Rowan McBride—no relation to the Minister for Gaming and Racing—Miss Jessica Foy, Mr Jason Foy and Mr John Saunders for their great expertise and commitment to the band at such important public performances. The special guest was the principal of Gorokan High School, Mr Allan Arkins, and his good wife, Jeanette. I always enjoy meeting them at this function each year because they take a great interest in not only Gorokan High School but the feeder primary schools. I am sure that Gorokan High School will have several more hugely talented musical students in year 7 next year.

The students from Gorokan High School who trained the primary school students included Bronwyn Cugley on tuba, Brea Young on trombone, Lindall Bailey on trumpet and Mark Ayers on percussion. It is great to see teenagers giving up their time to help younger kids, which improves community spirit. It is important to acknowledge these sensible and community minded teenagers because all too often we only hear of negative things about teenagers. They do a great job.

In the short time allocated to me I can mention only some of the individual performers; however, I will refer to a few. Ashley Giles performed with three instruments on the night, the bassoon, the clarinet and the violin—and in a duet Ashley was accompanied by Rebecca Whitaker. Ashley is a person of huge musical talent, although I confess I am in no way musically qualified to judge that. Catherine Frohlich, school captain at Kanwal, played the saxophone brilliantly—certainly much better than Bill Clinton, in my view. Jonathan Schubert, a year 6 student, gave a great rendition of "Summer Time". I hope all will continue their musical endeavours into high school. I congratulate all involved on this wonderful project.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour) [11.37 a.m.]: Seldom does a week pass without yet another death occurring on the Pacific Highway. Last Saturday an undercover policeman, travelling south on the Pacific Highway just north of Coffs Harbour at Arrawarra, braked to avoid some debris on the road and was hit from behind by a truck, his car was forced onto the other side of the road and collided with another vehicle travelling north that was towing a caravan. The police officer, the father of two young children, died at the scene. His companion, to my knowledge, is still in hospital in a serious condition.

This tragedy highlights once more that dismantling of the black spot funding program by this Government has caused yet another death on the Pacific Highway. Last week saw the turning of the sod for the Bonville deviation. I note that on the day the sod was turned—an event attended by Jim Lloyd, whom I thank for the provision of \$5 million in safety works on the existing road at Bonville—the final environmental and planning approvals had not been given. The sod turning went ahead although the works cannot begin on that section of highway because State government departments have not given approval for those works. As I have said before in the House, it amazes me that the Minister for Planning and the Government can declare as critical infrastructure almost every development in Sydney and in other areas—although that declaration is not wanted—but that the Pacific Highway, which is costing a life a week, cannot have that classification attached to it.

If there had been a wire barrier down the middle of the Pacific Highway just north of Woolgoolga—as has been provided at Bonville by the Federal Government—I doubt very much that the police officer would have been killed in the accident last weekend. Sergeant Kerlin and Constable Meese were in New South Wales on undercover police work. What a tragedy it is that those two law officers were involved in that serious accident. If a dividing barrier had been provided in the centre of the road it is quite likely that, whilst they may have been injured, Sergeant Kerlin would not have been killed.

This week I have been advised by members of the Roads and Traffic Authority that road maintenance funding has been cut back even further. Unlike other parts of the State, the North Coast has had exceptionally high rainfall over the past few weeks. As a result, the road surface is breaking up due to lack of maintenance. Now, highly trained road maintenance engineers are being paid to go out and erect signs on the Pacific Highway to warn of rough surfaces—rather than using the money and their skills and talent to fix the road. It is my understanding that maintenance funding for this particular section of road has been cut back—on a section of road that causes the deaths of 50 people a year, almost one a week.

I call on the Government to make adequate road maintenance funding available immediately. In about a week's time a large number of young drivers will be heading north for schoolies week. These inexperienced

drivers—they are not bad drivers, but they are inexperienced—will be driving on a road surface that is poorly maintained and on a highway that has claimed many lives. I have driven it a number of times in the past six weeks, so I know that basically from Port Macquarie to the north of Coffs Harbour the road surface is breaking up everywhere. Visualise these young inexperienced drivers on a poorly maintained highway, travelled by 30,000 heavy vehicles a month, and you can see that it is inviting yet further tragedies.

It is incumbent on the Minister for Roads—who did not turn up to the sod turning at Bonville a week ago—to immediately make that maintenance funding available to ensure that no more lives are needlessly lost on this section of highway. These young people will be travelling north full of hope and aspirations, and I fear that some of them will be involved in motor accidents and be injured or killed, purely because of the lack of maintenance funding by this Government. The Minister must act immediately to ensure that funding is made available so that these accidents do not occur, especially in the lead-up to the Christmas period.

WOY WOY PENINSULA COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Ms MARIE ANDREWS (Peats) [11.42 a.m.]: One of the many pleasing aspects of being a member of Parliament is being able to acknowledge constituents who have made outstanding contributions to the community. Today I would like to outline to the House Allan Maidment's involvement in the Woy Woy peninsula community. It has given me great pleasure in recent times to present Allan with a New South Wales Government Community Service Award. Allan is a long-time resident of Umina Beach. He has been married to Susan for 30 years, and they have a daughter, Kelly, a son-in-law, Philip, and a son, Robert. Allan and Susan also have a granddaughter, Melissa, and are expecting another grandchild in a few weeks time.

Allan has been involved in, and has supported, a number of community groups and organisations, including the New South Wales Justice Association, Central Coast Branch—he is a Justice of the Peace himself—Neighbourhood Watch, Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, the local Australia Day Committee, the Safety House Program, and the Umina United Soccer Club, where he has coached, managed and been a club official, as well being a sponsor. He has also sponsored Umina Beach Bowling Club tournaments and the Woy Woy Cricket Club. Allan has also assisted the following organisations in the form of fundraising and sponsorship: Central Coast Sport Shooting Club, Woy Woy Lionesses Club, Umina Scouts, Peninsula Netball, Umina Surf Lifesaving Club and Cat Care.

Allan worked for Simplicity Funerals for 15 years, and he showed extraordinary compassion and understanding in assisting people in their time of grief. Sadly, Allan had to resign from his position as he has recently been diagnosed with motor neurone disease. Allan is a brave man and retains an optimistic outlook on life. He is grateful that in his time of need he has the love and support of his family and friends.

Another constituent of mine, Gwen Morgan, was recently presented by me with a Community Service Award. Gwen has contributed enormously towards Woy Woy hospital through her membership of the United Hospital Auxiliary. Her perseverance in advocating for more nursing home beds and dementia care facilities on the peninsula is well renowned. Other organisations in which Gwen has been actively involved include Meals on Wheels, in both Auburn and Woy Woy, Girl Guides—Gwen was a commissioner of Girl Guides in the Auburn district prior to moving to the peninsula—the Uniting Church, Woy Woy Community Aged Care, Hammond Care South Woy Woy, and the Palliative Care Centre in Woy Woy.

At a special function held recently in Gwen's honour at Cooida Village, many tributes were paid to Gwen, including one by Darnie Thompson, who recited a poem that he had specially written for the occasion. Tributes were paid by well-known local residents Heather McKenzie, Joan Fenton, Reverend Bruce Edgell of the Umina Uniting Church, Glenva Dixon and Melva Nixon. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate both Allan Maidment and Gwen Morgan on being such worthy recipients of the Community Service Award. I wish them and their families well for the future.

NORTH-WEST T-WAY

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [11.47 a.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a matter of great importance and concern to many residents of Winston Hills. On 1 September I made representations to the Minister for Roads on behalf of Mr and Mrs Erdmanis, who have resided at 117 Goliath Avenue, Winston Hills, for some 35 years. Mr and Mrs Erdmanis contacted me to express their concerns about changes to the environment opposite their home due to the proposed construction of the north-west T-way, and the shared

pathway and cycleway that are being constructed along Old Windsor Road. Back in 1994 I raised in this House the concerns of residents in this part of Winston Hills who were experiencing unacceptable noise levels from traffic travelling along Old Windsor Road.

At that time the Roads and Traffic Authority was not prepared to take any action to rectify this situation to help these people. It took my representations to the then Minister for Roads in the Coalition Government to get action to assist these residents. An earth mound was constructed and, in a great show of community spirit, all the families in the neighbourhood planted dense shrubs and trees on top of this mound. Over the intervening 12 years these shrubs and trees, which were meticulously cared for by the residents, acted to alleviate noise and dust emanating from the traffic along Old Windsor Road. The traffic along this road has increased dramatically over the past 12 years with the opening of the M7 and the great population explosion within the north-west sector.

When Mr and Mrs Erdmanis contacted me on 31 August they advised that, without any notification to their neighbours or themselves, they discovered that the design for the proposed shared pathway and cycleway had been altered and moved, with the top of the mound that was constructed 12 years ago having been removed. All those shrubs and trees that had been lovingly cared for by the residents had also been removed. I again emphasise that all this occurred without any consultation with the residents. This lovely cul-de-sac is once again open to the noise and dust from traffic on Old Windsor Road. At night, lights from the traffic travelling north-west come straight into the families' homes. To top it off, the residents have been informed that the proposed lighting associated with the length of the pathway being constructed will be lit for access 24 hours a day.

At the request of the residents, on Monday evening 13 November I attended an on-site meeting at which the RTA was supposed to present a plan to improve the situation for these residents who have been waiting for this promised plan since September. However, no plan was presented to the meeting that I attended on Monday. I was informed that a community liaison meeting was to be held on Tuesday evening 14 November at the site office in Balmoral Road, Kellyville, where this matter was to be discussed. As State Parliament was scheduled to be in session that evening, I requested that my electorate secretary attend this meeting as my representative. She has lived in Winston Hills for 36 years and she is well known to the residents of Goliath Avenue.

Just after 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday, my secretary was advised that the RTA had declared that members of Parliament and their representatives are not allowed to attend community liaison meetings. This is the first time in her 24 years as an electorate secretary that a secretary has been banned from attending any meeting where she has gone along to support residents. As a member of Parliament and the representative for the people of the Baulkham Hills electorate, I believe that this Government and its agencies should be open and transparent in all their dealings. If residents of my electorate feel they need support by having me or my representative attend a meeting with a government agency, surely that is their right. Could the RTA be frightened that my secretary and I have long memories? We can both remember the stalling by officers of this agency back in 1994 when I tried to assist these same residents. It was only the intervention of the Minister in the Coalition Government who stepped in and took the reins from the RTA that enabled action to be taken.

Here we have a Labor Minister who quite obviously appears not to be prepared to intercede on behalf of residents. I wrote to him on 1 September and I am still waiting for his response. These people in Goliath Avenue simply want what has been taken away from them. They want protection from the noise and dust emanating from the increased traffic on Old Windsor Road. The lack of consultation by the RTA with local residents once again is to be deplored. I spoke in this house on 7 September and 20 October about this lack of consultation in relation to the proposed bus only lane along Old Northern Road. I recently spoke about the refusal of the RTA to allow traffic lights to be erected at the intersection of Russell Street and William Street at a site where 112 dwellings are to be built on the old Baulkham Hills Public School site.

I made representations to the Minister for Roads as far back as 28 October 2005 on roads issues for which I am still awaiting responses. By his lack of action the general public can assume that the Government appears to have little concern about our local communities. This is symptomatic of a Government so out of touch with people that only the election of a Liberal-National Coalition government will see proper attention given to the genuine concerns of people, such as those in Goliath Avenue, who live within our local communities. These local people have had their lifestyles disturbed, and the Government seems to care very little about what is happening. I demand urgent action on their behalf.

NEW ZEALAND REAL ESTATE SALES SCHEME

NATIONAL ART SCHOOL

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE (Strathfield) [11.52 a.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a matter of extreme importance and urgency in my electorate. Recently a young man—I will call him Mr Y—visited my electorate office in Burwood, extremely stressed and anxious. It would appear that he and a number of other local constituents, up to 25 and possibly even 50, have lost deposits of \$10,000 and possibly up to \$65,000 in a real estate scheme selling New Zealand-based properties. At this stage I will not name the Australian company or the New Zealand developer, but if necessary I am prepared to do so at a later date. I have referred these two companies to the Minister for Fair Trading so that a full investigation can be carried out as a matter of urgency, and also to the Burwood Local Area Command.

The scheme involves a Sydney-based marketing company that distributes sales and promotional material in shopping centres, and advertises in some newspapers, promoting New Zealand-based properties for sale. Potential interested parties are then invited to attend a sales seminar, a number of which are run in my area, perhaps in other honourable members' areas and perhaps even around the country, during which feature videos are played and lots of positive messages are broadcast about the huge potential for capital gains when purchasing these properties. Mr Y informed me that all along he and others were under the impression that what was for sale was not a serviced apartment but a residential apartment. They were also told that the developer would assist them with finance—home loans of up to 80 per cent—and if the bank could not cover it the developer could top it up.

When Mr Y went to the bank he was unable to get finance on a serviced apartment. Mr Y informed me that during this whole process the contracts were signed at people's homes or in the office of the Sydney-based marketing company. Mr Y told me that they were not advised to get advice from lawyers or their own accountants. As a result, many of my local constituents stand to lose, or already have lost, thousands and thousands of dollars. One couple is about to put their House on the market. This raises a number of questions: Where are the deposits of these people now being held? Were the contracts legal? Was there a cooling off period? It appears that the company and its partner company have, at the very least, behaved immorally and unethically. They have preyed on vulnerable people who have English as a second language and who do not have a full understanding of how to read a plain English contract. The legal language can be tricky even for those of us whose native language is English. This matter is urgent. I am very troubled and very anxious about it.

I turn now to the National Art School in Darlinghurst. Honourable members may be aware that I have a longstanding interest in, and passion for, the arts and creative industries in general. Recently I was asked by Wenona Matthews, secretary of the students' union, to visit the campus to listen to their concerns and discuss issues relating to the future direction of the National Art School, one of the key deliverers of fine art education in this State. I was given a comprehensive tour of the site, and I was very impressed with what I saw. The quality of the work done by the students under the guidance of excellent teaching staff was exceptional. The school has about 350 full-time and 1,300 part-time students. People who are creative need to immerse themselves in their field. This is a very good example of a hands-on approach to creativity. I saw students engaged in creating sculptures, doing installation work, and painting and visual arts. I had a preview of an outstanding exhibition by the graduate students, which is about to open.

The library facilities were being well utilised, as were all the materials. I am aware there is concern about the preservation of the school's unique identity, particularly the Atelier model based on the concept of one instruction mentoring. This is a core element of the school's identity and its maintenance of its artistic and educational philosophy. As a result of my visit to the school and speaking with students and staff, I have been actively lobbying the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, about these issues. I am sure the New South Wales Government is committed to achieving the best possible outcome for the National Art School and will ensure that its place as the pre-eminent provider of fine art education in New South Wales is maintained. I look forward to a satisfactory outcome to enable our creators to do what they, and only they, can do best: create. [*Time expired.*]

HORNSBY ELECTORATE INTERSECTION UPGRADES

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [11.57 a.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to issues relating to intersections along the Pacific Highway in my electorate, ranging from Asquith up to Mount Colah. I state for

the record that over nearly five years I must have written literally hundreds and hundreds of letters to express residents' concerns. It is absolutely appalling that at this point very little has been done to address those concerns. I make an appeal to the Minister for Roads, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport to take a good, long, hard look at his Government's approach to making these intersections safe. I begin by referring to an intersection on the Pacific Highway in Asquith that is adjacent to the strip of shops and next to the railway station where Baldwin Avenue feeds onto an overpass and channels traffic onto the highway. It is the scene of many accidents. I will read onto the record a letter from Graham and Kay Bidstrup dated 16 July. I note the date because the Minister finally decided to respond four months later. The letter states:

On the night of July 9th, as my wife and I left the cinema, after enjoying a film, we received a phone message that all parents dread. "This is the emergency dept at North Shore Hospital. Your son has been involved in a major motor vehicle accident. Please call us immediately."

He was one of three passengers in a car that had been "T-boned" as the vehicle made a U turn north onto Old Pacific Highway from the railway bridge at Asquith Station. All three boys remarkably walked away from a car that had been hit at high speed and flipped onto its roof. However the driver, a mother of one of the boys, was not so lucky and she received serious spinal and internal injuries.

From talking to locals, this was not a rare occurrence and I have had a couple of close calls myself as I try to traverse six lanes of traffic to complete the turn. It occurs to me that the simple installation of a dedicated turn arrow and an extra red stop light that would require cars to stop well before the crossing would make this corner much safer.

There are many cars loaded with children making this turn every day and for a small outlay the council and RTA could help avoid a repeat of this new tragedy. If the cost is too prohibitive, I would suggest the option to complete a U turn at the Highway be curtailed immediately, before someone has to plan a funeral.

I received an acknowledgement on 8 August and a final response from the Minister on 8 November, which is absolutely appalling. The Parliamentary Secretary for Roads wrote to me and stated:

The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) considers the signalisation of this intersection would provide limited road safety benefits ...

I have not been promoting signalisation. I would like to see a complete reconfiguration of that intersection, where there is a roundabout adjacent to the BP service station, so that cars cannot turn right into the Pacific Highway from Baldwin Avenue. We desperately need something that removes the danger from that intersection. The Government's response shows the absolute ignorance of the RTA's suggestion. The Parliamentary Secretary's letter goes on to state:

The RTA has indicated that an alternative route for motorists wishing to travel northbound onto the Highway is available by turning left from the ramp onto the Highway, turn right at the signalised section at Wattle Street, turn right into Amor Street and then left on to the Highway.

Wattle Street is an extremely narrow two-way lane, and that is all it is—a lane—so that is a totally inadequate response. I call on the Minister to act immediately in relation to this unsafe traffic area. I might add that this morning residents saw another accident at that intersection involving an L-plate driver and some cyclists. Among other intersections of concern is the intersection at Yirra Road and Pacific Highway, Mount Colah, that desperately needs arrows to direct traffic. It is a major intersection with approaches that lead onto the F3. The intersection has been completely overlooked by the Minister.

The next intersection to which I refer is the intersection at Parklands Road and Pacific Highway, Mount Colah, where a fence has been erected between the railway station and the strip of shops. That has impeded visibility for people travelling south along the Pacific Highway who are trying to turn right into Parklands Road. The traffic circumstances are appalling. People have complained to me on numerous occasions. The responses I have received are basically non-answers. Mr Robert Gordon from Mount Colah has pressed the point and has written a number of times to the Minister. Recently he was told that the Government had put up the fencing but has no dollars for the right-turn arrow and is thinking about lowering the fence. Recently I saw someone jumping the fence. What is the point of having a fence if people can jump over it? The point of the fence was to ensure that people use the lights. Although the upgrade is a top priority, the RTA has no money to do it. That is an absolute disgrace. Time does not permit me to again mention the Foxglove Road-Excelsior Road intersection, which I have complained about ad nauseam. [*Time expired.*]

MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING CENTRE

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Bligh) [12.02 p.m.]: I again draw to the attention of the House the achievements of the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Kings Cross [MSIC]. The centre has been operating since May 2001, and held a successful forum in Parliament earlier this year to report on its first five years. To the nearly 9,000 registered injecting drug users, this health facility means that they do not die from overdoses but instead receive early treatment for health problems and are linked into drug treatment. The majority have entrenched drug addictions with no previous contact with health services. Drug experts say we must take services to these most marginalised drug users and build trust so that they can address their addictions.

The centre is a gateway into treatment. In five years clients were referred to other health services on 5,380 occasions, nearly half of these being to drug treatment and rehabilitation. The independent evaluation of the MSIC estimated that more than 70 per cent of the local drug injecting population was reached within the first 18 months. This figure is now thought to be approximately 90 per cent. Many of the drug users live in Kings Cross or have a long association with the area, and this facility is successfully tackling a local problem. The MSIC has supervised approximately 310,000 drug injections that would have otherwise occurred in less safe circumstances. Over five years, 1,742 overdoses were successfully resuscitated—with no deaths. Each overdose could have resulted in the death of someone's child, brother, sister or friend. I am proud to support this work to save lives.

In 1999 there were 677 ambulance callouts to heroin overdoses in the area, most within 100 metres of the centre's location. The MSIC has addressed this shocking situation. In the five years to 2004 the New South Wales Ambulance Service reported an 84 per cent decrease in overdose callouts, thereby releasing ambulances and funds for other calls for help. St Vincent's Hospital reports that emergency department beds are now rarely needed for drug overdoses because intervention at the MSIC prevents overdoses and other medical crises. As well as saving lives, this early intervention also prevents serious brain and other vital organ damage—a terrible fate for those individuals and their families, and a huge cost to the health system. Kings Cross residents and businesses have seen improvements in safety and amenity due to the MSIC. Before its establishment, residents regularly contacted me in distress about public injecting and overdoses, but these reports are now infrequent.

Reports of used syringes in public places are also not as common as they were prior to the establishment of the centre. The MSIC takes an average of 250 injections off Kings Cross streets every day. Drug-related crime in Kings Cross has declined since 2000, with major robberies down by 40 per cent and major stealing incidents down by nearly 30 per cent. Kings Cross police report that the MSIC has helped to reduce problems associated with drug use so that police resources can be directed to drug dealing. Local area commanders have unequivocally supported this facility. According to independent research by the National Centre for HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, local support for the MSIC has increased over the past five years. This latest report shows even higher levels of support for those who live closer to the facility, and 80 per cent support from residents who have been living in the area for more than five years.

Nearly three-quarters of residents and businesses that have been surveyed support the MSIC, with support from businesses rising from 58 per cent in 2000 to 68 per cent in 2005. The overwhelming majority of local people see what the MSIC has achieved and support its work. While I respect the strong feelings of those who do not support this health facility, the vocal cries from a few opponents do not reflect the wider community. Some have suggested that the MSIC might be better located in a hospital. However, this is simply not appropriate. Even when St Vincent's Hospital was going to operate the centre, prior to being directed not to, it was never contemplated that such a centre would operate from its hospital campus because the centre needs to be located where drug use has been concentrated since the early 1970s. The current site of the MSIC is close to this concentration.

I emphasise that funding for the MSIC is provided from the confiscated proceeds of crime—not from the health budget. This is an appropriate use of the ill-gotten gains of drug trafficking and dealing. I thank Reverend Harry Herbert and the Uniting Church of Australia for taking on the challenge of trialling this new approach, and Dr Ingrid van Beek and her compassionate and professional team at the centre. These dedicated health workers help people who have been alienated and excluded, and give hope to addicted drug users, reminding us not to forget those who have been afflicted with addiction.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.07 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Bligh for reporting the success of the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre, which provides access to not only a safe injecting area but also a pathway to treatment. The centre educates the public about the need

for the most marginalised in our community to have access to treatment. The honourable member said the number of drug injecting users in the area having contact with that centre has risen from 75 per cent to 95 per cent. She spoke of the importance of the tremendous work done by Dr Ingrid van Beek and the workers within the centre. Honourable members would recall the discussions during the Drug Summit of the importance of establishing that centre. It is good to hear about its very positive results.

[Private members' statements interrupted.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Mills): I welcome to the public gallery the former member for Pittwater, and former Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Jim Longley.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

[Private members' statements resumed.]

F3 EXTENSION

Mr JOHN PRICE (Maitland) [12.09 p.m.]: The proposed flyover on the New England Highway at Weakleys Drive, Beresfield, marginally affects the electorate of Wallsend, but principally the electorate of Maitland. As the honourable member for Wallsend, who is in the Chair, knows that proposal has affected both electorates and continues to be a blight on the progress of traffic on the New England Highway travelling north through Maitland and beyond. Preliminary work has finally begun on the project. The survey teams have attended and I look forward to the major work commencing by March 2007. The Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] is responsible for the design, construction and supervision of the project. However, the project is principally federally funded with some assistance at the State level.

When constructed—I understand construction time will be at least 18 months—the flyover will complete the link between the Maitland suburb of Thornton and the Newcastle suburb of Beresfield, and also the John Renshaw Drive as an alternate link. It will connect with the link road that the honourable member for Wallsend and I jointly opened some years ago. It was originally to be federally funded but finished up being funded by the State to the tune of \$7 million because of the reticence of our Federal colleagues. The project will make an incredible difference to the progress of traffic along the New England Highway. The flyover will remove three sets of traffic lights—a tremendous boon to the area—including those at the intersections of the New England Highway and Thornton Road, Weakleys Drive and Anderson Drive.

The proposed turnaround in the design is adequate, although not the world's most flamboyant project. It will be extremely effective and one that allows a straight-through passage in the 90-kilometre-an-hour zone in those two major provincial cities in the Hunter Valley. This matter highlights another problem: The only way traffic flow can be reduced is for the Federal Government to get on with funding the F3 extension through Branxton onto Seahampton. Because of the cost of going through the mountains at Seahampton, an alternative proposal takes the new highway through Kurri Kurri and along John Renshaw Drive to the Beresfield roundabout on the existing temporary F3. I do not particularly care which way it is done; the cheapest way in the long run is to go between Seahampton and Branxton.

We are already committed by agreement between the State Government and the Federal Government to providing 20 per cent of the money for that project. However, the Federal Government has absolutely refused to fund the project. The RTA has done a lot of preliminary design work and has started on negotiations with the owners of properties that may need to be purchased in the resumption process. Until the money is on the table, we cannot move. That is the only project that can possibly reduce the density of traffic on the New England Highway heading north. To even contemplate further bypasses around the towns and villages on the way is a ridiculous expense and would do nothing to reduce the ultimate congestion. It would only slow the through traffic. This project must get under way, as it is vital to the area. Why the Federal Government refuses to undertake it as a matter of urgency astounds me.

The Federal Government cannot persist in ignoring the road safety conditions on the highway north of Maitland. The roadway is down to two lanes. Through the village of Lochinvar, three separate lights are required to protect schoolchildren at the two Catholic schools and the one public school that adjoin the highway. This action is imperative. I appeal to the Federal Government to rethink its stand on this project. This is not

necessarily a party political issue because it affects all voters between there and the Queensland border. Get on with it. We need it and the citizens of Maitland would certainly support it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.14 p.m.]: The honourable member for Maitland has been an advocate for improved traffic flows in the Maitland area for the whole time he has been in Parliament. The number one priority for that area is the Seahampton to Branxton extension of the F3. As the honourable member for Maitland clearly pointed out, it needs to be funded, and it has to be funded. The Federal Government needs to come to the party on funding that essential link to ease long-term traffic issues in the area. That matter has been the number one priority of all members of Parliament from the Hunter area, and the number one priority of the Hunter Business Chamber, and for traffic management in the community. However, it requires adequate funding, as the honourable member so clearly outlined today. I thank him for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

GLOBAL WARMING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [12.16 p.m.]: I speak on the topic of global warming and the exploration of renewable energy to prevent the much discussed predictions of catastrophic challenges that may face coming generations possibly living in a hotter and drier future. With the recent Stern report painting a dire picture of the effects of global warming, governments worldwide are only now beginning to take seriously what scientists have been warning for decades. As the worst drought in Australian history continues to decimate water storages in rural Australia, few can deny that we are already feeling the adverse effects of global warming. Of the past 12 years in Australia, 10 have been the hottest on record, and rainfall for the months of September and October in New South Wales was the lowest ever recorded. As we face a long, hot, dry summer, the situation can only worsen and all governments need to co-operate and take urgent action to adopt strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Recently in this place I was pleased to contribute to a matter of public importance raised by the honourable member for Manly on renewable energy and biofuels. He urged the Government to get serious about exploring greater uses of renewable energy and biofuels in light of declining world oil reserves and global warming. I congratulate my colleague on raising the issue. Recent debate on Australia's ability to cope with a hotter and drier future prompted a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Premiers of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales to discuss measures of improving and maintaining our precious water resources. While it is pleasing to see such a meeting take place, very little seems to have been achieved in addressing the cause of drought in this country—global warming.

The cynic in me suggests it was merely a publicity stunt by the Prime Minister in response to growing criticism over his Government's inaction on global warming, and to deflect attention from a rise in interest rates. Hard decisions need to be made to secure this nation against potential disaster should this drought continue into the future. A recent report by the CSIRO revealed that climate change could see a 60 per cent reduction in rainfall in the Namoi catchment, an area that is home to 100,000 people and contributes \$1 billion each year to the State economy. Urgent measures need to be taken to avoid the many negative effects such a large reduction in rainfall could have on that highly productive area.

One problem contributing to global warming is our reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels, which are cheap and abundant but come at a great cost to the environment. Currently, only 8.5 per cent of the New South Wales electricity supply comes from renewable energy, a figure that has decreased from 10 per cent in 1993. Of that 8.5 per cent, 7 per cent comes from the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. The remaining 1.5 per cent is gathered from solar, wind and bioenergy. The burning of coal has been highlighted as a major contributor to carbon emissions. While I am not against the use of coal, all governments need to work with industry to explore ways of reducing carbon emissions from the burning of this resource.

As the population continues to grow in New South Wales more power stations will be required to feed the energy demand, but it is clear that current practices must be altered to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Global oil reserves are also declining, threatening our very way of life through our reliance on oil as a cheap mode of fuel. Alternatives to these non-renewable fuels must be developed before their depletion. Recent moves to establish a \$100 million ethanol plant at Gunnedah must be supported for other regional centres across this State. More support should also be provided to business ventures employing the use of renewable energy.

A recent ABC radio report focused on the plans by Solar Heat and Power to construct a baseload renewable electricity plant in our area that would be capable of meeting the energy needs of a city the size of

Tamworth. Such ventures deserve government support but this particular entrepreneur may be forced to move his enterprise offshore, due to Australia's lack of carbon trading schemes, to make his venture competitive in the Australian marketplace. The Premier recently promised that legislation would be introduced after next year's election to ensure that 10 per cent of the electricity consumed in New South Wales by 2010 would come from clean energy sources such as solar and wind power. He pledged that this would rise to 15 per cent by 2020. Such news is welcome, but the jury is still out on whether that would be enough to combat climate change.

Biogas sequestration, biogas from food treatment plants, breweries, wind power, wave power and solar power are the main sources of renewable energy. Sadly, little support has been forthcoming from State and Federal governments to provide the infrastructure that is needed to begin replacing or complementing existing power sources to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Strategies to address global warming can be conducted at three levels in this nation—globally, through agreements such as the Kyoto protocol; through policy change, legislation, funding of projects, change of energy production methods and adequate funding of research; and locally, through community projects, lobbying, education and the ongoing development of strategies for individuals and households to practice. We are facing a serious challenge. We must act co-operatively and we must act now.

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.21 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for raising this critical issue. In future global warming will be the world's greatest challenge, and governments and individuals must meet that challenge. It is astounding that, on a per capita basis, Australia is the number one emitter of CO₂, which comes down to a profligate use of energy. We also have to come to terms with combating global emissions. The recently release Stern report, which suggests that global warming could shrink the global economy, made a recent convert of the Federal Government on the issue of global warming.

I refer honourable members to the work being done at the moment by the CSIRO Energy Centre in Newcastle. A series of lectures on renewable energy and the importance of dealing with coal-fired power stations are being held at that centre. I am hopeful that, at the conclusion of those six lectures, the centre's report will be available on the Internet. We must educate ourselves on sustainability and on the need to address renewable energy. Currently, as we are dependent on coal-fired energy we must establish whether any mechanisms are available to reduce emissions from coal-fired power stations. I thank the honourable member for Tamworth for raising this important issue.

RIDGE GOLF DRIVING RANGE

DANCING CLASSROOMS GRAND FINALE

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY (Menai—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.23 p.m.]: "Want to get in the swing? Then tee off at an award-winning location." That very enticing proposition is to be found in the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* of 31 October in a notice that announced that the Ridge Golf Driving Range was the winner in the health and fitness category of the 2006 *Leader* Small Business Awards. The Ridge Golf Driving Range was opened to the public in December 2003. Based on the feedback I have received, it has very good reason to claim on its web site that it is increasingly being considered as the most state-of-the-art golfing venue in Sydney. It features 52 floodlit bays over two tiers, with individual bays incorporating quality mats and seating.

I invite all honourable members to check it out, and while they are there they should hit a few balls. My encouragement is not only motivated by a desire to ensure the continued financial success of the operation; I am sure we could all do with more exercise and stress release. Members could also check out the other impressive facilities at the Ridge sports complex. A massive capital investment of \$71 million over a 10-year period from WSN Environmental Solutions, a State-owned corporation formally known as Waste Service NSW, is providing the necessary funds to redevelop an old tip site at Barden Ridge into a major sporting facility covering a total of 104 hectares.

The development started about six years ago. As components of the area named the Ridge Sporting Complex are completed, they are being opened for community use. The complex is progressively becoming our very own field of dreams because of the diverse range of quality facilities available. It is also a great example of the recycling and rehabilitation of a degraded site into a significant community asset. In addition to the Ridge Golf Driving Range, other works completed to date include the six playing fields and associated amenities buildings, 12 netball courts, and a synthetic athletics track known as the Ridge athletics track. It is a world-class synthetic athletics track and athletes can compete in all weather conditions.

The eight-lane track and field event area meets International Amateur Athletics Federation standards and is floodlit for day-night competition. There is also a large grassed spectator bank, large storage shed and an amenity and operations centre. The unfailing support and advice from local sporting organisations such as Menai District Sports and Illawong Athletics Club were critical to the quality facility we see there today. Back in September 2004 it was my great pleasure to officially open the Ridge athletics track, together with the then Deputy Mayor of Sutherland Shire Council, Councillor Steve Simpson. In fact, WSN Environmental Solutions is developing the site in close partnership with Sutherland Shire Council and the council will be given the ownership of the completed facilities.

Support from WSN Environmental Solutions includes civil engineering works, contributions to Sutherland Shire Council's sport and recreation fund, and funding obligations for finished works. Council is responsible for finishing works, such as track surfaces, buildings and so on, but WSN is contributing \$19 million to council works through payments to council's sport and recreation fund. I am aware that the work is under way on the 18-hole championship golf course. However, I am concerned that it appears that work on the first section of the course, which will be the first nine holes, is a little behind schedule. In response to my inquiries on this issue I have been assured that WSN, Sutherland Shire Council and the Cleary Brothers contractors are working hard to ensure that the first section opens as soon as possible, or perhaps a modified version of the first section will be delivered in the interim.

I appreciate that a complex design process is involved and I acknowledge that the additional works that contributed to the apparent delay were aimed at producing a higher standard of golf course than was originally envisaged. However, I share the concerns of Menai District Sports and others that anything less than a regulation nine-hole golf course in the first section opened to the public has the potential to impact on its attractiveness to golfers and, therefore, its financial viability. The club facility for golfers and other sportspeople to be constructed at the site will also be an important component of the growth and ongoing maintenance of the Ridge complex. I am continuing my inquiries into the time line for the delivery of the first section of the golf course and I might have more to say on this topic at a later date.

In the time remaining to me I want quickly to update the House on the grand finale of the Dancing Classrooms Program at the Sofitel, Wentworth, on Sunday 5 November 2006. I was a very proud local member as I stood next to some even prouder parents and watched six grade 5 couples from Menai Public School dance splendidly to come through the early rounds and come a very close second in the gold medal dance-off with Crown Street Public School. As I have told the House before, these students are a credit to themselves, their families, the school and the wider community. *[Time expired.]*

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.28 p.m.]: I thank the honourable member for Menai for bringing these matters before the House. It is great to see the community get involved in the small business awards. The Barden Ridge tip site has been developed into a first-class sporting facility, with the input of sporting groups. The honourable member for Menai continues to advocate for the very best facilities on that site. I congratulate her on raising the issue.

LAKE MACQUARIE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Mr JEFF HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [12.29 p.m.], by leave: The Lake Macquarie improvement project is a very important initiative that must be completed in order to ensure the future environmental health of Lake Macquarie. The honourable member for Charlestown and I have been working together to gain additional government funding for the improvement project. The Lake Macquarie Project Management Committee was appointed in 1999 by the then Minister for Land and Water Conservation to oversee the implementation of the Premier's task force report on Lake Macquarie. Between 1999 and June 2005 the Government gave the project management committee \$9.35 million in two three-year stages and local government contributed a further \$7.29 million.

In June 2005 the former Premier announced the Government's 2005-06 contribution of \$1.36 million towards a new \$6.36 million three-year plan of environmental improvements for Lake Macquarie. In October 2005 the Minister for Natural Resources, Ian Macdonald, advised that the Government's \$1.36 million support for the environmental improvements in Lake Macquarie comprised a \$400,000 grant to the project management committee from the Estuary Management Program and \$960,000 for works implemented through the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority. The Government's estuary management grant for 2005-06 was subsequently increased by \$250,000 to \$650,000, and the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority provided a further \$250,000 in direct funding assistance to the Lake Macquarie improvement project. That money went directly to the project management committee.

Some of the project management committee members, as well as the local media, have interpreted the former Premier's June 2005 announcement as a commitment that the Government would fund the committee's activities directly in the amount of \$1.36 million a year in 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08. The Minister for Natural Resources has advised local members of Parliament that under his portfolio alone the Government allocated more than \$1.6 million to environmental improvement works in the Lake Macquarie catchment in the 2005-06 financial year. These moneys include the \$650,000 in estuary management funding and \$250,000 in catchment management authority funding for the Lake Macquarie improvement project that went directly to the project management committee. So the committee received \$900,000 directly. In addition, about \$720,000 of catchment management authority funds was allocated to other environmental improvement works in the Lake Macquarie catchment through the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority investment strategy and in-kind support.

Despite the fact that more than \$1.6 million—more than Premier Carr announced in June 2005—has been allocated for environmental improvements in the Lake Macquarie catchment, the honourable member for Charlestown and I have sought to have additional funding allocated to the project management committee in order to support the continuation of its work. In response to a request from the Minister for Natural Resources, I believe the project management committee has provided the Department of Natural Resources with a program of works for the 2006-07 period which will cost an estimated \$2.8 million. In order to implement the proposed program the project management committee will require approximately \$1.3 million from the State Government to supplement the \$1.5 million committed by Lake Macquarie and Wyong councils.

The honourable member for Charlestown and I, as local members of Parliament, believe the improvement project should continue, and we have made that clear to the Government. In addition, we have asked the Government to make extra funding available to the project management committee so that it may continue its program of works. I acknowledge that \$1.6 million was allocated last year, but I would like to see additional funds go directly to the project management committee. So today I ask the Government to give favourable consideration to providing additional funds directly to the project management committee for the Lake Macquarie improvement project so the committee can continue its vital improvements to Lake Macquarie and ensure its future environmental health. [*Time expired.*]

Mr BRYCE GAUDRY (Newcastle—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.34 p.m.]: I acknowledge the continuing advocacy by the honourable member for Lake Macquarie and other honourable members for improvements to Lake Macquarie. This fantastic saltwater lake—which I understand is the largest in the State—is recognised locally, regionally and statewide as a noted recreational and environmental asset. It is also a haven for recreational fishing. Commercial fishing is no longer permitted in the lake. Over time there has been much advocacy for improvements to Lake Macquarie and the parklands that surround it. Although the honourable member for Lake Macquarie is grateful for the current funding, he has indicated that the Lake Macquarie improvement project requires additional money. He has asked the Minister for Natural Resources for that extra funding, and I am sure the Minister will consider his request carefully.

Private members' statements noted.

APIARIES AMENDMENT BILL

CHARITABLE TRUSTS AMENDMENT BILL

PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT (CRIMINAL CHARGES AND CONVICTIONS) BILL

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

SYDNEY WATER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (WARRAGAMBA) BILL

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.

Consideration of amendment deferred.

The House adjourned at 12.38 p.m. until Tuesday 21 November 2006 at 2.15 p.m.
