

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 23 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.

SEASONAL FELICITATIONS

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That the House take note of Christmas felicitations.

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish you and yours the very best for this festive season and thank you for your efforts in the Chair. I have said this to you privately and I say it now in the House that I believe yours is sometimes a very lonely task and a very challenging task in keeping the Opposition—and, from time to time, the Government—in some sense of order. I am confident I can say on this occasion on behalf of the whole House that we appreciate your efforts in your role as Speaker.

Honourable members know that my appointment as Leader of the House has been recent and, to this point, brief. I appreciate the support and encouragement that many people have given me, but none more so than the Government Whips, Gerard Martin and Alan Ashton. They have supported me in my role as Leader of the House and they have worked very hard throughout the year on behalf of the Government to make sure members understand the time constraints and issues in the House. I thank the Whips for their hard work. I acknowledge also the Opposition Whips, Thomas George and Daryl Maguire, who play a similar role.

I acknowledge particularly Barry O'Farrell, the Manager of Opposition Business, who is mostly co-operative, sometimes challenging and sometimes repetitious; nevertheless, he plays a role that makes the Parliament work. I thank the Opposition members whom I have mentioned—Barry O'Farrell, Thomas George and Daryl Maguire—for the way they have worked with me in my capacity as Leader of the House and worked with the previous Leader of the House, Carl Scully. In relation to the support I have received, I acknowledge Stephen McMahon, who has continued the challenge of working with the Leader of the House. I particularly thank him for his efforts and advice, and I am grateful for the way he has taken my advice and decisions on board and implemented them.

I make the point that the community may see the drama of this place but may not see that often both sides of the Chamber work together to put in place legislation. Much of the legislation that passes through this place is supported by both sides of the Chamber because it is sensible and sound and for the benefit of the State. The process often involves a great deal of time constraint and people get a bit frustrated; nevertheless, the work of the Parliament goes on in a mostly constructive way in its major role of introducing, debating and passing legislation, that is, new laws for the benefit of the State.

Of course, none of that happens without the great support of many professional staff of the Parliament, and none more so than the Hansard staff. Sometimes I wonder how they record what is said under the din of this place. I see Hansard reporters nodding to that comment. Three of the Hansard staff members are in the Hansard gallery, and I say a big thank you to them for their efforts and interpretation of what people say in the House. I am sure they will pass on those sentiments to the rest of the Hansard staff. I wish all of them and their families the compliments of the season.

I spoke a minute ago about legislation, most of which comes from the Cabinet Office. In these seasonal felicitations I acknowledge and thank Leigh Sanderson and Don Colaguiari, the Parliamentary Counsel, who have worked very diligently under a heavy workload for this entire year, particularly in the past couple of weeks, as the Government has gone about its task of implementing legislation and having a strong reform and

legislative agenda. The Parliamentary Library also gives great support in meeting members' requirements for research. I say to the Parliamentary Library staff: congratulations and a very big thank you.

The administration and Building Services staff are very helpful, and so are the dining room staff, who are led at the moment by Carlos Andrade. This year has been a challenging time for many departments of this Parliament, and I appreciate and I am confident that all members of Parliament appreciate the professional way in which those people have gone about performing their tasks.

The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Russell Grove, has a challenging role, which he discharges most professionally, courteously and diplomatically. I thank Russell Grove, Mark Swinson, Les Gönye, Ronda Miller and Greg Kelly for their terrific work throughout the year. The Legislative Assembly procedure office staff also deserve mention for their hard work—Cheryl Samuels, Jeff Page, Rebecca Cartwright, Jenny Lamont, John Hatfield and Joe Bardetta. To all the people who contribute to the running of this place, I say thank you on behalf of members and the Government.

I divert from the general aspects of discussion in this debate to extend my heartfelt thanks to my personal staff, both ministerial and electorate. This has been a challenging year for us due to my having taken on greater responsibilities. All those people have responded positively, strongly and brilliantly in supporting me. Any words I might use could not adequately express my thanks to them for their support. Ryan Park stepped up to the role of Chief of Staff particularly well, and I say a very big thank you to all of my people.

Many Government members appreciate the support they receive from the Premier's office, and particularly from the Premier's Chief of Staff—a strong, forthright, hard working and professional woman, Davina Langton, who along with a whole range of others in the Premier's Office provide support to the Premier but also to other members of the Government. I take this opportunity to say thank you to them, acknowledging, as I am pleased to do, the strength I get from being able to work with them.

Seasonal felicitations at this time of the electoral cycle is a time not only to thank the staff of the extended Parliament but also to mention a number of members who have indicated they intend to resign from this place or not seek re-election—some by their own choice, and some by the choice of their parties although they would prefer otherwise. I am pleased to acknowledge the contributions those members have made to the functioning of this Chamber and to their communities. I might say, being as positive as I can, that I expect some members on this side and the Opposition side will not return to this place by choice of their electorates. I wish them well also. I mention in particular members who have taken a decision to move on to another phase of their lives, and I trust that they will have the opportunity to enjoy the company of their families much more than they might have been able to do in their time in this place.

Earlier I mentioned the previous Leader of the House. I want to acknowledge the role discharged so well by Carl Scully as Leader of the House in this Government. He played a significant part in facilitating the Government's dealing with its workload, demonstrating a great sense of leadership to many members on this side of the House. I am happy to express that recognition at this time of seasonal felicitations.

Many of us pause during this time of year to consider what is happening in the world—violence, terrorism and such things. During these times, we reflect on what members of Parliament are about. They are about coming into this place to represent their communities and to put in place laws that make New South Wales a better place in which to live. Members, in that sense, provide leadership in an attempt to make this a better State and, in the wider context, a better world, and so we hold positions of considerable trust. The festive season is a period when we extend best wishes to everyone, no matter what their religious background, in a spirit of personal goodwill. I trust that the community of New South Wales will celebrate this Christmas and festive season with a sense of goodwill, good cheer and good humour. I take this opportunity to thank all staff of the Parliament for their support throughout the year, and wish them and their families, and all members and their families, the compliments of the season.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.15 a.m.]: I am pleased to enjoy this one time of the year when we say only good things about our fellow men and women on both sides of the Chamber. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I want to extend to you and your family, particularly upon your retirement, but also through you to the Speaker and his family, best wishes for the Christmas season. Can I also extend the same to the Leader of the House, and say how much I have enjoyed sparring with him in his new role in recent weeks, and how much I enjoyed doing the same with his predecessor, the member for Smithfield.

Can I say in relation to the member for Smithfield that I think he is the Parliament's greatest actor, and that he would leave most Academy Award winners in his wake—occasionally he gives us glimpses that deep down he is a nice bloke. I say to the member for Smithfield that that is the biggest compliment he will get out of me whilst he is in the Chamber. I hope he is in the Chamber after the next election, but I wish him well in the choices that he has to make now and in the choices that he has had to make over the past twelve months.

The Speaker, the Leader of the House, and shadow Leader of the House form perhaps an unholy trinity in this place, but that is an unholy trinity necessary to ensure this place functions. Equally, Steve McMahon and Davina Langton have been of great assistance to me, if only in trying to assist me in interpreting the signals, messages and machinations that emanate from successive Leaders of the House and the Government. I am particularly grateful to Davina for showing the Deputy Premier's office how to consult in advance about legislation that is being rushed through the place. I am delighted that the Premier's Office can always find time to consult on important legislation. Perhaps one day the Deputy Premier, or the Deputy Leader of the Opposition after the next election, will have that same ability.

I join the Leader of the House in thanking the Whips for the jobs they do here. I am happy to acknowledge the members for Bathurst and East Hills. I have to say to the member for Bathurst that I was a bit taken aback on the weekend when one of my jibes was described as cruel. I am one of those who seek to play the game robustly within this Chamber but, when I walk outside, I ensure it goes no further. I certainly do not intend to be cruel to anybody. I recognise the role of Government Whips, and I particularly want to pay tribute to the Opposition Whips, the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Lismore. They both provide sterling service to the shadow Leader of the House, whoever that person is, and work extremely hard, as all Whips do, to ensure that this House functions as smoothly as is possible.

I thank the Chamber staff and officials for all of their efforts over the past twelve months. I perhaps have a greater insight now, because of the role that I now fulfil. The Clerks and their support staff have been superb. I want to acknowledge the attendants, in particular for their work on sitting days but also for the work they do with school groups that come through this place. To the school groups that come through here—as the member for Epping confessed yesterday in his valedictory speech—I always tell the story about the 12-year-old Andrew Tink coming in here with John Maddison. I do that to encourage the students who come in here to think about coming back, when they are a few years older, to do something good for their community, as the member for Epping has undoubtedly done for his. I thank the attendants for that.

I acknowledge the great effort of Hansard, and members will note that I am speaking a bit more slowly today, as opposed to my normal contribution during private members' statements. I would like to know whether I fitted the most number of words ever into a five-minute speech. I know that Peter Anderson had that record for a number of years and I would happily claim that crown. Hansard does a wonderful job, especially for those of us who speak quickly and get worked up on suspension motions and the like. As the member for Epping said, they make many of our speeches intelligible.

I acknowledge the assistance of Parliamentary Counsel, which, from an Opposition perspective, is often a last-minute attempt to get some amendment from Parliamentary Counsel, but it is always provided with both quality and timeliness. I thank the Parliamentary Library, which does an exceptional job. I am delighted that we have a permanent Parliamentary Librarian in Greig Tillotson. I continue to admire the work done by David Clune, particularly this year with the sesquicentenary of the Parliament, where we have put, in particular, Queensland and Victoria to shame with the extraordinary work, research and publications that were produced to celebrate that significant event in not only this State but also this country's history. The Parliamentary Library does an invaluable job for every member of Parliament regardless of political affiliation and it is integral to our democratic system, as are the Chambers.

I thank the bills and papers office, the security staff, ITS, Building Services and my friend Isaac, who looks after me in the gym occasionally. All those people perform an extraordinary role in ensuring that this place can function. Without them it simply could not function, as has been demonstrated at least once in the last few months. I thank the catering and dining room staff, who look after all members of Parliament and guests who attend the functions we are pleased to host here. It has been a very difficult year for all the support staff in this place. It has been a particularly difficult year for the catering and dining room staff. We have seen many of our best go, and I want to pay particular tribute to Maureen Morgan, who is leaving on 15 December. She is an extraordinary woman, who has witnessed the progress of not just my two young children but that of many members. She has done an extraordinary job and I regret that she is leaving. However, I do wish her well in her Winnebago as she travels this country and enjoys her retirement years.

There are other retirees, some voluntary and others, as the Leader of the House said, who are involuntary retirees. I hope there will be more on the Government side than on the Opposition side. In particular, I acknowledge those on my side in the order of their announcement: Ian Slack-Smith, who came here in 1995 when I arrived, and Andrew Tink, Peta Seaton and Andrew Humpherson. I particularly single out the member for Epping, whose effectiveness as a member of Parliament will remain a matter of record in this place. His skill as shadow Leader of the House and his battles with the then Leader of the House, Paul Whelan, were both legendary and instructive. I will miss his friendship and counsel. I will also miss the expression, "Got a minute?" If he has a media career, it should be in a program called *Got a Minute*, which would last at least an hour! I always enjoyed that and I look forward to visiting him in his new water-borne Bobbin Head office, down the bottom of Bobbin Head Road in my electorate, at some stage after the election.

Finally, I say something to Madam President that I said I would say. A month or so ago I claimed that she had fled the country during a parliamentary session at taxpayers' expense to go to Africa. I had three parts of that right and one part wrong. She actually paid for her own ticket. I still think she should have stayed here when Parliament was sitting. She did point out to me that she paid for her own ticket and I did say to her that I would correct the record during felicitations. But I would make the point, as I made yesterday during debate, that if Parliament were much more accountable and open about these things in relation to freedom of information and questions of presiding officers, those sorts of mistakes could not be made.

I thank my personal staff and my family. On behalf of all of us, I thank all our families, who put up with much. I say to my son, Tom, who asked me to do this, that I am happy to say to Sterlo, Fatty, to the Chief and Reg Reagan, "That's gold". I say to Wil, Dave and Corrine: if you think that *The Glasshouse* is unexpected and fast moving, you ought to come and join this place. I am happy to acknowledge the contributions of everyone and to make the point in our 150th year that the one thing that binds us all as members of this place, as some of the hundreds who have passed through here over 150 years, is the desire to improve the lot of the people we represent. The Leader of the House made the point that most of the Parliament's work is constructive and non-contentious and I note the obvious: that it is the contentious and the divisive that attracts all the media attention.

I was bemused in recent times to see that a member of a minor party that will not be represented in Parliament after the next election from the upper House put out some statistics recently bemoaning the fact that so much legislation went through the Parliament with the support of both sides. Frankly, that is a good thing. The community would like to see more of that. It shows that Arthur Chesterfield-Evans does not seem to have learned much during his time in this place. I wish him well for Christmas and for his career after Parliament.

Parliament is an important place and accountability is important. We look forward in the spirit of felicitations to holding the Government to account over the next four months so that we can be a better government after the next State election campaign.

Mr PAUL CRITTENDEN (Wyong) [10.26 a.m.]: I thank the House for its indulgence in allowing me to speak on seasonal felicitations, which I like to call Christmas felicitations. I thank also the Leader of the House, having given my valedictory speech to the House last night. I thank my electorate staff, in particular, Ann Bokkerink, who has been with me for 12 years. She told me recently that when she started she did not like me but over time we have developed a good rapport. As many members are aware, electorate staff become a second family. The most worrying thing is that Ann now anticipates how I think, which probably is a good reason for me to leave. Colleen Michael has been with me for only four years but before that she was a ministerial staffer, which proves that some ministerial staffers are human. I have enjoyed her hard work and diligence. She has complemented our office in a great way.

As with all families, we have gone through ups and downs, but we have been supportive of each other on those occasions. Electorate staff are the unsung heroes of Legislative Assembly members because they carry the brunt of the hard work in the electorate office. There are fantastic people who work in this place. As I have said before, Hansard is the department of good English. If ever I have wanted advice on grammar or syntax, I have gone to Hansard. The Parliamentary Librarian, Greig Tillotson, and his staff are exceptional people, who do wonderful research and I hope that function in this place continues and is not part of the cutbacks. The library is crucial to any member, Government or Opposition, unless the member wants to use a prepared speech from the Minister's office. The cleaners are always cheerful and happy and do a wonderful job. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, a myriad of people in this place do a great job.

I will not mention many of the people in the upper echelons in case it impedes the progress of their careers. Nevertheless, they know who they are. Although this place has a whole range of people who fulfil a

role, the Legislative Assembly has four or five key personalities who make the place run. To them, my great gratitude. Much has been said about catering, and many of our good friends have taken redundancy, including Stefan Petkov, our Bulgarian mate from the cafeteria; Eric Bradley, who was a chef for more than 30 years; Lois and Gillian, who worked in the kitchen; Jonathan Nicholson, the redheaded fellow who was always good for a laugh; Santiago Rodriguez, a Spanish chap who, and I am not sure why, for the last 15 years spelled my surname with a "t" on the end of it; Ann Leslie, who worked in the Food and Beverage office; Walter Wormald, who was born in Germany and who, I have often suspected, is a very bright man; and Jorge, a Chilean mate. I have a special place for Jorge. When my son was about nine or 10 he was with me in Parliament House because he was too sick to go to school. Jorge found some cough mixture—I am not sure what it was—that made my day a lot easier.

Maureen Morgan, the *maître d'* of the Strangers Dining Room, is a wonderful person, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said. Robert Anitelea, Niki and Galena, who work in the cafeteria, are exceptional people who make great milkshakes. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge David Draper, who worked here for 23 years. A few years ago in Seasonal Felicitations the honourable member for Epping summed it up perfectly when he said that his abiding memory of David was his coming around in the early hours of the morning after a late sitting to collect trays. When we still had room service it was often David who would make a steak sandwich and deliver it to you. Obviously he was doing that to reduce the costs of this place.

I believe what happened to David is one of the more shameful episodes in this whole place. There was much whispering in the back seat, dancing in the shadows, and searching for missing paper clips, but, obviously, none was found missing. Pious words have been spoken in this place about helping Aboriginal people. With the possible exception of the honourable member for Canterbury, David Draper did more to help Aboriginal people in a practical sense than anyone else. He hired young Aboriginal boys and girls, trained them, skilled them up, and gave them self-esteem and self-respect. That is what public service should be about.

Over the past couple of weeks I have been embarrassed by the performance of the Opposition. I think members opposite are happy in their comfort zone, and I think they will remain in opposition when they come back. The other day when we were debating the new standing orders the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who I am pleased to see in the House today, had a go at me for not making enough prepared speeches. I would have made more prepared speeches in this place if I had as much time on my hands as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has on his, but I have a life.

For the benefit of members opposite when they are back in opposition after 24 March, I make these few gratuitous comments about good governance. First, a good starting point for them, which obviously they have not worked out, is to look at the annual reports of the various government agencies. Second, do not treat the public service as your enemy. The spivs in the public service are only at the top. The people who do the work are generally the grade 8s to grade 12s. They work in the policy engine room; they are the ones who make things happen. They have the tapes, they have the photos, and they know where the bodies are buried. Members opposite should start making some links with those people if they want to be a good Opposition. On that gratuitous note, I wish everyone the compliments of the season.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [10.35 a.m.]: I cannot believe another year has gone by so quickly. It has been an extraordinary year. On many occasions this year I have spoken in this place about the drought in my electorate and how hard it has hit every family, whether they are involved in rural enterprise, as so many people are in my electorate, or a small business person relying on rural people to buy their products; or a service station operator whose sales are affected by the high price of fuel but who also relies on rural producers and small business people to fuel up at the service station. The drought has impacted everybody in rural and regional New South Wales. Probably no place has been affected as severely as the electorate of Burrinjuck. I pay a very big thank you to our drought support workers who have worked so hard this year—Dick Kearins from Goulburn, Lloyd Kingham from Wagga Wagga, and Jan Bruce from Cooma. What a thankless task they have. They have done outstanding work in our communities this year.

I also wish to thank the general managers, mayors and councillors of the regional councils within my electorate of Burrinjuck—Chris Corcoran, the mayor of Boorowa; David Phillipott, the general manager; Robert Gledhill, the mayor prior to Chris Corcoran; Paul Stevenson, the mayor of Goulburn Mulwaree, and Luke Johnson, the general manager; Len Tozer, the mayor of Gundagai, and Graeme Tickner, the general manager; Jan Vanzella, the mayor of Tumut, and Chris Adams, the general manager; Brian McCormack, the mayor of Upper Lachlan, and John Bell, the general manager; Nic Carmody, the mayor of Yass Valley, and Kerry McMurray, the general manager; and Phil Hockney, the new mayor of Harden Shire Council, Chris Manchester,

the former mayor of Harden for most of the time over the last year that the drought has impacted the area, and Annabel Miller, the general manager of Harden Shire Council. Councils certainly feel the impact of the drought, as regularly councillors are seen throughout the community and people speak to them when they see them in the street. I thank every councillor, regardless of their political colours, for hanging in there and working hard during this extended drought. We have had only about 12 inches of rain this year when we should have had 22 inches, which is quite devastating.

I also thank the staff of the high schools and public schools in my electorate for serving the public education system so well this year. They include Tom Coll, the principal of Mulwara High School; Jo-Anne Jones, the principal of Nimmitabel Public School, which is a little further to the south but we have had some contact with the school; Trudy Stephens, the principal of Rugby Public School; Jacqueline Crockford, the principal of Reids Flat School; Jennifer Smith, the relieving principal at Rye Public School; Ray Claydon, the principal of Sutton Public School; Graham Johnson, the principal of Goulburn South Public School; Paul Kenworthy, the principal of Goulburn West Public School; Sue Britton, the principal of Gundaroo Public School; Narelle Lloyd, the principal of Gunning Public School; Lynne Colett, the principal of Laggan Public School; Gillian Anton, the principal of Marulan Public School; and Lindy Ross, the principal of Collector Park School, which recently celebrated its 140th anniversary. What a wonderful day that was a couple of Sundays ago. Lindy does outstanding work. I thank also my mate Desley Rowley, the principal of Crookwell Public School, of which I am a proud patron. The school does wonderful things to promote relationships with the international community by taking in Japanese exchange students every year.

I thank the principal of Crookwell High School, Ray Jones, and the principal of Dalton Public School. Dalton is in severe drought at present, and everybody involved with the school needs a big pat on the back. I thank Jeanette Parker at Five Mile Tree Public School—that area is also in severe drought—Richard Batty, the principal of Goulburn Public School, David Sillett at Goulburn East Public School and Dr Phillip Reece at Goulburn High School. Recently we had a lovely women's breakfast club meeting at Goulburn High School, and the food and beverage training unit at Goulburn High School served us very nicely. I thank also Les Percival, the principal of Goulburn North Public School, and Clare Pritchard of Bowning Public School. Clare is doing a great job for the students, as are all the teachers and principals I have mentioned today.

I thank the new principal of Bradfordville Public School, Eric Patatoukos, and Richard Giles at Breadalbane Public School, which is a lovely small school. I thank Col Witchard at Boorowa Central School. Col was integral in organising the Boorowa netball and touch football carnival, at which Boorowa Central School and St Joseph's School put on a dynamic touch football and netball display. About 3,500 students from schools across New South Wales gathered at Boorowa to celebrate their chosen sports. I attended the sports day. We were expecting a Government member to attend but none turned up, of course. The day was hot and windy, and I think more flies were swallowed than food during lunch. Nevertheless it was a great day for sport in the region. Boorowa Central School and St Joseph's School did a fantastic job. Boorowa has been organising that carnival for about 40 years. I can remember as a child at Berinba Public School travelling to Boorowa to take part in the inter-school netball carnival. It was a great day.

Sharon Fahey at Binda Public School is doing a wonderful job, as are the principal of Bigga Public School, Christine Alderton, and the principal of Berinba Public School, Steve Harris. Berinba Public School is my old school. I also thank Peter Westren at Tallong Public School; the principal of Tarago Public School, Ian Quill; and the principal of Taralga Public School, Peter Hull. The Crescent School in Goulburn is a school for children with special needs. The principal, Ian Gallan, always goes out of his way to provide the best nurturing and care for his special students, and I thank him for another year of wonderful service. Sharon Williams is doing a great job at Tirranna Public School, as is Rod White, who is relieving at Wee Jasper Public School. I thank the principal of Windellama Public School, Rosemary Chapman, and the principal of Wollondilly Public School, Pamela Avery. Wollondilly Public School is one of the larger primary schools in the area.

I thank the principal of Yass Public School, John Ford—my mate John. Last Saturday afternoon we had a lovely time at the opening of the Kim Nelson exhibition at the Sheeps Back at Yass. John, we will miss you in the public education system after you retire this year. But you can retire in the comfort and knowledge that your students have performed in the top band of the years 3 and 5 numeracy and literacy exams. You are rightly proud of that. Members of the local community are proud of the job you have done to get the numeracy and literacy standards at Yass Public School so high. Well done! The principal of Yass High School, Paul Bills, is doing a great job.

I thank my electorate staff: the indefatigable David White, who is doing a wonderful job, and Liz Monk, who is always such a smiling, happy voice at the end of the phone and behind the counter when people

come into my office. I am fond of you both, and I appreciate the hard work you do. Gillian Bucknell comes in one day a week. She is another bright, smiley, happy face. Gillian is on the land and is feeling the effects of the drought, with her wonderful husband, Sam, and their three beautiful daughters. I appreciate the work all of you do. Thank you for staying with me for so long. Let us hope that the next few months serve us well. I thank Hannah Bushell, who has been coming into Parliament House temporarily. It has been a baptism of fire and Hannah has done a good job.

To the other special people around me—Kate and Peter Walker, Katie and Michael Walker, Romney White, David Hain, Christine Ferguson and Alison Penfold—thank you all for your help this year. I thank Hansard; ITS; the security staff, who always greet us with a warm smile when we walk into the building in the morning; the clerks; the catering staff—I mention David Draper, whom we all miss; we share a birthday—Vanessa, Maureen, Maria, Charlotte and Jenny Sparkes, who have done a great job all year; the library staff; the cleaners; and the staff on the Legislative Assembly front desk. April, thank you for your sunny smile. I thank the staff in the offices of the Leader of The Nationals, the Leader of the Opposition, and all my State and Federal colleagues.

When members representing country electorates are serving their electorates within the confines of this building for so many days of a year their families suffer. I have two beautiful young children—Hamilton, who is nearly two, and Georgia, who is nearly seven—and a wonderful husband, Jack, whom I just adore. Jack, thank you for your tolerance again this year. I know it is not easy. I also thank the ABC Learning Centre at Yass Central School, and Mount Carmel Primary School for helping so much. To the Yass Early Child Care Association, informally known as YECCA, thank you for everything this year. To the Poidoven family, once again thank you for helping me out when I am in Sydney. Sometimes it is not easy for shadow Ministers—or, dare I say, Ministers, as it will be next year when the Liberal-Nationals Coalition attains the status of government—to juggle all the things they need to juggle.

We are looking forward to 24 March and I am highly confident that we will win. Frankly, after 12 years of a Labor Government, the people of New South Wales have had enough. They are sick and tired of the bureaucracy and the lack of care and attention given to regional New South Wales. I hear it every day of the week, and that instils me with great confidence for our leadership team. The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals have proven themselves to be caring, good, solid and sturdy leaders. Both of them are strong in their leadership styles and consultative. We are extremely fortunate to have two leaders of that calibre.

Mr Steve Cansdell: We are!

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: As the honourable member for Clarence says, we are extremely fortunate to have two such wonderful leaders. I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member for Ballina, who has done a great job this year. I thank all my colleagues for the wonderful work they have done. The Nationals are a close-knit group. We are all from far-flung parts of the State. We come together when Parliament sits and we have three-hourly meetings on Monday afternoons. We go out socially together and we have great communication between each other. There is no in-fighting, back-biting or factionalism. One possible reason is that we are so far away from each other when we are not in Parliament, whether in Lismore, Murrumbidgee, Burrinjuck or Wee Waa, so coming together as a parliamentary party is something special to us.

I value the friendships I have with The Nationals. I mention the two other girls in The Nationals, Melinda Pavey and Jenny Gardiner. Thank you for your friendship this year. We work well together as a unit. I look forward to the Coalition winning government next year and to Coalition members taking their rightful places on the other side of the Chamber. Mr Speaker, I wish you felicitations of the season and a very merry Christmas. Thank you for your service to the Parliament this year. Finally, once again I thank my family, Jack, Georgia and Hamilton. I also thank my mother, Rosemary, who has had a difficult year as my father passed away recently. My mother is an amazingly strong woman and has come back very well. Thanks, mum, for everything you do to allow me to make a contribution in this place on behalf of my electorate.

Ms PAM ALLAN (Wentworthville) [10.50 a.m.]: I have chosen to speak during Christmas Felicitations, which is relatively new and not something of which I have seen a lot over the past 19 years, rather than make a valedictory speech because I believe this is a joyous occasion. I think so not just because the parliamentary year is drawing to a close, which invokes genuine joy, but also because after 19 years in Parliament I feel joy as well as a touch of sadness associated with my decision not to recontest the next State election for the seat of Wentworthville.

This morning I will wish people well for Christmas and perhaps make one or two gift suggestions. First of all I wish joyous tidings to the people in my electorate of Wentworthville. My electorate is essentially the same as it was when I first became a member of this Parliament in 1988. I have been through a redistribution or two, but nevertheless the core parts of my electorate, the suburbs of Toongabbie, Pendle Hill, Greystanes, Girraween, Wentworthville and parts of Seven Hills and Winston Hills, have always remained within the electorate of Wentworthville. Like a tide, I have washed over those areas at various stages in the past 19 years. I certainly wish all the people in those areas well for the forthcoming Christmas Season and for the future, and I thank them for their continuous support since 1988.

I have said previously in this House and in other places that it is joyful to visit places in my electorate that were important parts of my childhood. I particularly want to mention Girraween Public School and Greystanes High School, the schools I attended throughout my entire public school education. Those schools are still within my electorate and I am delighted to note that they are still good schools. I wish the staff, students and school community well and all the best for the next school year. I also wish well the local branches of the Australian Labor Party in my electorate and the various individuals who have been supportive of me over the past 20 years or so. My political career has comprised not just 19 years in the State Parliament but also a four-year term as a councillor on Parramatta City Council and prior to that the preparatory period that is associated with all political careers.

In that context, I really only want to mention one individual, and that is Peter Herlinger, who was the first Labor mayor of Holroyd. I have made various speeches about Peter. He received a Premier's Award when the Premier and the Cabinet visited Parramatta less than two weeks ago. Peter Herlinger is a great person. He has a delightful family—his wife, Pat, his son, Robert, his daughter, Julie, and his daughter-in-law, Mary, and of course his precious grandson, Andrew. These people are absolute stalwarts of Western Sydney and the Labor Party. My Christmas wish for them is very good health for the rest of their lives.

There are other important people to whom I wish to send good Christmas wishes: Alan Overton, the President of the Parramatta Leagues Club, and Denis Fitzgerald, the chief executive officer of the club. All they want for Christmas is a wonderful season next year. I will continue to attend the Parramatta football matches and I certainly hope their Christmas wish comes true. I send Christmas wishes to Trevor Oldfield, who is the President of the Wentworthville Leagues Club. David Clark—this is a different David Clark—is the Chief Executive Officer of Wentworthville Leagues Club and he is a great guy. He is very involved in the local community. I wish David and Trevor tremendous success with the club, and I send my best wishes to their families.

Mathew Taylor is the chief executive officer of Keep Australia Beautiful, which is based in Parramatta. His staff, particularly Coleen McSorley, are fine people who deserve sincere good wishes for Christmas. Many honourable members know Mathew Taylor. From 2000 to 2006 I had the privilege of being the Chair of Keep Australia Beautiful, and a wonderful woman, Dawn Fardell, will take over as Chair this year. She will be very useful to that organisation in future fundraising by assisting lots of agencies to support the activities of Keep Australia Beautiful. Mathew Taylor has done a very good job in working with public servants and politicians of all political persuasions to ensure that Keep Australia Beautiful is successful. I know Mathew is sometimes a little weary because he currently lives in Matthew Morris's electorate of Charlestown and is commuting to Parramatta. He has a very young family. I wish him well with his future. I hope he receives for Christmas what he desperately wants.

I have to say that my electorate office at Wentworthville would not have survived without the kind ministrations of the shop next door. Len Dean is the dry cleaner. He and his colleague Christine Sharkey have been wonderful in keeping an eye on my office. As other honourable members have acknowledged—I recall it being mentioned in Bryce Gaudry's wonderful speech last night—there are challenges associated with electoral offices. All honourable members of this Chamber know just what those challenges are. It is sometimes torturous at the coalface when many people with complex problems walk through the door. Most of the electorate office staff across the State are female, and it is always handy to have a nice strong masculine shoulder to lean on. Len Dean has provided that as well as wonderful dry cleaning for many years. I wish Len and Christine well and I hope they have lots of customers between now and Christmas.

I send the Wentworthville optometrist Phil Moss and his delightful wife, Lorella, my best wishes. The glasses I am wearing came from Phil Moss Optical. Phil and Lorella are a great team. Phil works for Parramatta Leagues Club as well. I wish Phil and Lorella lots of customers, because that is what they want for Christmas. I will slip in a little Christmas wish to Bernie Murphy, who is the boss of the RSPCA. I hope lots of people

come to take pets over Christmas. One of the very delightful aspects of being a member of Parliament is that occasionally people like to give us gifts. Sometimes those gifts are great, and sometimes they are not so great. They are usually little gifts and are very symbolic. They are not expensive and they are certainly not worth more than \$400.

But it is the little gifts that are sometimes very significant. Earlier this year I visited the RSPCA and Bernie presented me with a little black kitten, which my daughter subsequently named Missy. I have to say that Missy has made a great contribution to my family life this year, so I thank Bernie Murphy for his generosity and I commend the work of the RSPCA. I also commend the Government for this year providing increased funding for the RSPCA that will enable the organisation to work even more effectively. Thanks Bernie. Thanks Missy.

I send very sincere good wishes to my current and former electorate office staff. As many honourable members know, people who work for us have given longstanding service to this Parliament. At least one of my electorate office staff has enjoyed a career spanning 15 years and others have enjoyed careers spanning 10 years. My electorate secretary worked for my predecessor, Ernie Quinn. I particularly thank Kath and Ron Waterson, who worked for both me and my predecessor, and Cathy Parmeter. I wish Cathy greatness. She has a challenging life ahead of her. She may or may not continue to work for the Parliament—obviously the choice is hers—but I wish her good health and happiness with her family. I also thank Fifi Esber, who has worked for me for 10 years, and her family. One does not have a Lebanese staff member: one has a Lebanese family that also becomes part of the staff! I congratulate Fifi and wish her well. One day she will make a great wife and mother, and that is my Christmas wish for her.

I have to say that Bryce Gaudry did an excellent job last night of naming members of the parliamentary staff. That takes pressure off me because I certainly would not be able to remember all the names. I thank all of those he thanked and I completely endorse everything he said about them. I hope they all get what they want for Christmas. Obviously there are a couple of people whom I perhaps know as well as or better than Bryce and vice versa. I wish for Russell Grove a new tracksuit for Christmas. I am tired of looking at the old one; I have looked at it for a long time. I do not look at it closely, but I do see it on occasion when I am running around this place. It is time for a new tracksuit and let us hope that that is what his wife gives him.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Les Gönye very well over the years. I wish him strong cartilage muscles for all the running he will do in the future. Greg McGill could also do with good cartilages. I wish Ronda Miller more time with her wonderful daughter, who is of a comparable age to my daughter. I know how busy Ronda is. I do not know Mark Swinson's peccadillos, so he is off the hook. Let us hope he does not have any; if he does we do not want to know about them. I hope he gets what he wants for Christmas. Bryce Gaudry mentioned Gladys Kleiner last night. I have only one wish for Gladys: robust health. The Parliament needs Gladys to continue a healthy and active lifestyle. Gladys, if you are listening, look after yourself. Lucy Gonano has provided tremendous service to members over the years and to me personally. I wish her well at Christmas.

I warn the library staff that I will ring next year; I will not be able to avoid it. I wish Greig Tillotson and his staff plentiful resources. I do not want to see cost-cutting in the library, because, as I have said often, it is one of the primary services in this place. It provided tremendous help when I was a shadow Cabinet member. Members opposite do not utilise it nearly as much as we did when we were in opposition.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Stop attacking us.

Ms PAM ALLAN: I cannot help myself. You know that, Darryl. I also particularly thank the committee secretariat of the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management. We managed to cut a swathe through that committee. The staff have either left for other jobs or are taking redundancy. They are getting what they wanted for Christmas. At least two are taking voluntary redundancy. Louise Armstrong is going to Deniliquin to work. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Louise is getting what she wanted for Christmas, which is a new permanent job in the New South Wales public sector. Ian Thackeray and Chris Papadopoulos are getting their redundancy payments for Christmas. So I suspect they are going to have very good holidays. I will not get the opportunity to talk about Christmas 2007 because I will not be here, but I hope they have new jobs in the public sector as well. I wish retiring members continuous good health. My predecessor in the seat of Wentworthville died less than two years after he left this place. I do not intend to do that. I hope all retiring members a blissful life after politics and good

health. Bob Harrison, the former honourable member for Kiama, visited me yesterday and gave me a lovely card expressing that sentiment. That is what it is all about. I wish good health to my fellow retiring members.

Friendship cuts across both retiring and continuing members and it is a very interesting concept in politics. I have had 19 years to think about this. It has had its ups and downs. I refer honourable members to Kim Yeadon's lovely speech last night, in which he referred to this issue probably more eloquently than I can. We have longstanding friends in politics who sometimes become longstanding enemies, and enemies who sometimes become friends. I have both of those at the moment. I have longstanding friends, but I also have longstanding enemies, and more recent friends and more recent enemies. It is something we must get used to, but that takes a long time. There are many wonderful members aspiring to be re-elected. I wish them one thing—the thing they want so desperately: success at the next election, and subsequent elections if that is their choice. We can talk endlessly about the expectations and beliefs honourable members have when they arrive in this place, but there is no opportunity to do anything about them unless a member retains his or her seat. There are so many friendly faces that I cannot possibly name them all. There are some on both sides.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Name them.

Ms PAM ALLAN: I will not name them, because it will go to your head, Darryl. I wish honourable members political success. Like Paul Crittenden, and unlike Katrina Hodgkinson, I believe the Labor Party will win the election. That means honourable members opposite will be in the shadow lands for a lot longer. That creates some challenges for people who have been there probably for too long. My time as a member of the shadow Cabinet was one of the most exciting times of my 19 years in this place. However, I wanted to do it for only seven years. Many honourable members opposite have been in the shadow Cabinet for much longer and it is probably time they did something else with their life.

I make particular mention of prospective members. I wish the Labor Party candidate for Toongabbie, Nathan Rees, lots of doorknocking. Get out there, Nathan. I wish Tanya Gadiel, who is also taking over part of my seat, continued success. I know she has been doorknocking, because she has doorknocked my electoral staff. They were very excited to see her. Tanya's warmth and success in her community will guarantee her success in a seat that we lost in 1988, when I was elected. I do not expect Tanya to be unsuccessful in Parramatta. I thank her for the friendship she has shown me. What a great Premier Morris Iemma has become. I have served under only two Premiers—Bob Carr and Morris. They have both been great Premiers and leaders. What Morris has demonstrated in the past few weeks in particular is a command of this Chamber that many people did not think anyone could achieve after Bob Carr. Morris has become a very formidable parliamentary performer. In addition, he demonstrates great warmth in the community. Unfortunately for honourable members opposite, I do not think they will be able to match that in the electorate.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Is this an objective evaluation?

Ms PAM ALLAN: Yes. I forgot Christmas presents! I do not know what to give honourable members opposite for Christmas because they are not getting political success. If they want to retain their seats, that is fine, but they are not getting any more success than that. I thank my family very much. Politics is very demanding. Honourable members understand it, but unfortunately sometimes our families do not. I thank my Mum, who is 91. I wish her continued good health. She has a wonderful sense of humour. She is delighted that I am leaving politics, although she has been totally supportive. The best gift a parent can give a child in politics is to join the local branch, and that is what my mother did. She joined the Toongabbie branch and I have always loved her dearly for that. She is smart enough to know that it is time I did other things in life.

Of course, I thank my partner, Phil. My daughter, Sidonie, is only just getting used to this place and I am about to drag her out of it. Sidonie and my son, Edward, are both political children—both born in the service and public service. Nevertheless, they are remarkably sane, which is excellent. I wish them all the goodies they would like for Christmas. I also have a prospective daughter-in-law, Alice. I wish her and her family well. She has a casual job as a checkout chick in Coles at Roselands. The other day the Premier visited the centre with a television crew to do some filming. That is where Morris Iemma shops. The community at large is going to be reminded of the fact that Morris is very good person who is very involved and well liked in his community. Your worst nightmare is going to come true next year, Brad! I am sure I have forgotten to mention important people. I mentioned Kim Yeadon earlier and I read the kind words he said last night. Mr Speaker, best wishes for Christmas and the future. At this point of the electoral cycle honourable members are focused not on Christmas but on 24 March. Let us hope they get everything they want for Christmas.

Mr SPEAKER: I congratulate the honourable member for Wentworthville on her valedictory presentation to this Parliament and wish her all the very best for her future career and the Christmas season.

Pursuant to resolution debate interrupted.

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

Fifth Day's Debate

Debate resumed from 22 November 2006.

Motion agreed to.

Presentation

The House proceeded to Government House at 11.10 a.m., there to present to the Governor its Address-in-Reply to the Speech His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor had been pleased to make to both Houses of Parliament on opening the session.

The House returned at 12.33 p.m.

Mr Speaker reported that the Address-in-Reply to the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech had been presented, and that Her Excellency the Governor had been pleased to give thereto the following answer:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 23 November 2006

The Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly,

It gives me much pleasure to receive your Address and to thank you for your expression of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales.

I am also glad to have your assurance that earnest consideration will be given to the measures to be submitted to you and the necessary provision for the Public Services made in due course.

I have every confidence that your labours will advance the general welfare and happiness of the people of this State.

The Honourable the Speaker and Members
of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.

VALEDICTORY SPEECHES

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, and member for Blacktown—I am sorry, the member for the Blue Mountains.

Mr BOB DEBUS (Blue Mountains—Attorney General, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for the Arts) [12.34 p.m.] (Valedictory Speech): Mr Speaker, your error is understandable. We were elected on the same day in 1981, and I do not think there are any other survivors on the Labor side.

Mr SPEAKER: I was the member for Blacktown at that time.

Mr BOB DEBUS: For me it is 25 years since I was first elected, 19 years in the Parliament in two periods and about 16 years in the ministry. I have been contemplating the almost accidental nature of some of the most dramatic events in my political career. In 1981 I only sought preselection because I was traduced by a young man from the office of the then Deputy Premier who worked out that the then seat of Blue Mountains was a marginal Labor seat and that if only they could find a candidate of an appropriate demographic and social background maybe they could win it. They went through the lists of the Labor Party membership in the Blue Mountains and could find only one person with a blue-collar job in their thirties with a young family. So in the end, I was importuned to seek preselection. That young man was Michael Knight.

There then followed a full-scale election campaign with Neville Wran—who, everyone will agree, was the best campaigner any of us ever saw—in which I experienced no particular acquaintance with electoral politics at all. Indeed, I count it as a privilege that I have known Wran and Don Dunstan well over the years—the two best political leaders never to be Prime Minister. My Cabinet selection in 1984 was also a peculiar accident. At that time the Labor Party was looking as if it was going to lose a few seats in the general election, and Neville Wran was worried we may be going to lose the seat of Blue Mountains. So he announced to a very startled crowd at the Hydro Majestic Hotel one day that I was going to be in the next Cabinet. That was not only surprising to a number of other Cabinet aspirants but also utterly startling to me because he did not tell me before he made the announcement.

I was duly introduced into Cabinet, and at the time I was the youngest member. Now I am the oldest. Wran was a mentor; Carr and Iemma have been colleagues. In 1988 I lost by 90 votes, finally beaten by the votes of two groups: working-class gun owners and right wing homophobic Christians. They never warmed to me. I was re-elected in 1995, surrounded by the bizarre events precipitated by Barry Morris. I must say they still have a dreamlike feeling about them when I think of them now. At the election in 1999 I was opposed by a mad campaign from a man named John Walmsley, the man with a dead cat on his head who ran something called Earth Sanctuaries. He wasted more money trying to unseat me than the Liberal Party spent in six elections—and I got a swing to me. If people want to know about that, there is a documentary about it which ends with a scene just like the last scene of Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life*. I had expected that my last two weeks in this place would be rather dull and uneventful.

The Blue Mountains has never been on the losing side of an election in the past 50 years. It is very hard for the member for Blue Mountains to be in Opposition, and I have been very fortunate to have been able to represent a place as interesting and attractive as the Blue Mountains. I acknowledge my enormous unobtainable debt of gratitude to the people of that place who have elected me. I have the first question I asked in this place in 1981. I asked:

My question is directed to the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services. In view of the potentially explosive bushfire season confronting the State and the fact that in the past many bushfires have been deliberately lit, will the Minister detail any new measures being taken to combat this grave problem?

All of that reminds us that State politics does go round and round. I will say something very briefly about portfolios that I have held. Between 1984 and 1988 I had a job called Minister for Finance. I dare not say that I created what is now called the Office of State Revenue outside of this Parliament; I have excised it from my curriculum vitae. For reasons that still mystify me to this day, people tend to react rather poorly to that information, when all the office does is enforce fine collections. I have never understood the problem. In that period we reformed the State taxation laws, required as a result of the massive national economic reforms being implemented by the Hawke Labor Government in the mid-1980s that contributed to the establishment of Sydney as the financial centre for the Southern Hemisphere.

In the period since 1995 I have had a number of portfolios and I draw attention to some of them. I was the longest serving Minister for Corrective Services in the past 30 years. We rebuilt and modernised many correctional institutions and closed the deplorable old institution at Maitland. We opened the fantastic open institution for low-security indigenous inmates called Yetta Dhinnakkal at Brewarrina, and another one is being opened on the North Coast now. We created the restorative justice unit and redeveloped Long Bay as a therapeutic environment for inmates with intellectual disabilities and other challenging behaviour. We also greatly reduced the escape rates in New South Wales prisons, but we could not stop Lucy Dudko with her helicopter! That event occurred two days before the election of 1999 and left me more or less paralysed for a whole morning, yet it turned out not to be a political event. There is a book on that episode.

In the area of emergency services, if I had to choose the most inspiring experience of my political career it was the time when I had the privilege of exercising a certain leadership role in the bushfire emergency of 2001 and 2002. Those were two of the worst three bushfire seasons ever experienced. It was as well that in the years beforehand we had increased the amount of money being spent on equipping and training what has now become, all honourable members would agree, amongst the very best volunteer emergency services in the world.

In the area of the environment Neville Wran and Barrie Unsworth were committed to its better protection, but Bob Carr pressed for environmental change. He was relentless and for that reason we, together with Pam Allan before me, expanded the national park estate by more than two-thirds. We created massive new national parks on the North Coast and South Coast and, more latterly, in the inland. Almost 40 per cent of the

coastline of New South Wales is now part of a national park, a figure that cannot be replicated in almost any other jurisdiction in the world. We have some famous World Heritage listings and we introduced the RiverBank Program to buy back water from our stressed inland rivers. Some important national parks have been handed back to the Aboriginal people, the State's pollution laws have been overhauled and we have made new waste laws. We have done other things of which I feel proud.

I inherited the Arts ministry from Bob Carr. I draw attention to the extraordinarily important infrastructure investments in the arts in recent times such as the new Sydney Theatre, the Belvoir Street Theatre, CarriageWorks, which will open in a few months' time, and new work on the Opera House. I draw attention to the Western Sydney Arts Strategy, and the accord with local government that is causing local government to now spend more money on the arts than the State Government. I draw attention to the recently announced refurbishment of the Australian Museum and the massive success of the Sydney Festival, which I hope many members will attend during January. The festival is becoming an event of significance throughout the world, promoting tourism but, more important, providing enjoyment for the citizens of this State. The arts are for everybody. The idea that the arts are an expensive sideshow for elites is wrong and stupid, and every community survey tells us that is so. That is why the State Plan now includes such a strong acknowledgment of the arts.

I have been Attorney General for six years. I followed the iconic Jeff Shaw, a true reformer of the law who created so much of the Labor Government's reform agenda. We have passed 258 legal bills through the Parliament in the past six years; that is one-third of the bills passed by the House. I draw attention to the unprecedented reforms to laws relating to sexual assault offences, court procedures, protections for victims of sexual assault, the establishment of the special commission of inquiry into James Hardie, the establishment of Australia's first Circle Sentencing Program, youth conferencing, youth adult conferencing and various alternative justice processes. That may not quench the blood thirst of some in the community for revenge but, nevertheless, they work.

I refer honourable members to the major reform of civil liability insurance law, recent changes to terrorism laws, activities with respect to human rights charters and the defence of David Hicks. I assert that the performance of the courts in New South Wales is overall the best in the country. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Mr Speaker, I take this moment to acknowledge your assistance over the years because I have never entirely understood the procedures of the House. Many honourable members pretend not to understand, but in my case it is genuine. I will say something about the judiciary, which does not get a lot of wraps in this place. The judiciary deserves praise for the skill, commitment and good grace that they bring to matters that come before them. We in this place do not have to decide bail matters, we do not have to sentence a serial murderer, we do not have to make judgment about whether a mother justly participated in the mercy killing of a child. We do not see damaged human beings, the incapacitated or the mentally ill who come before the courts on a daily basis.

It can be made to sound easy when one reads the bare facts in the newspaper. Those treatments belie the fact that every case a judge deals with has a human dimension for both the victim and the perpetrator. Judicial officers have to sift through facts, the human debris and the law to come to a decision that satisfies all. I assert without reservation that we in this State are lucky. We have a court system that is as effective as any in the world and I insist, with all the detachment that I can muster, that there is no better group of judicial officers anywhere.

As I look back on the changes that I have seen in 19 years, I have often had cause for concern about how Parliament and politicians are viewed by the public. The political dramas that are played out in the pages of newspapers, on talkback radio and in the nightly television news highlight the fact that to be a politician these days can often be tantamount to a term of abuse. The importance of civility in public life cannot be overestimated. They say that nostalgia is not what it used to be, but I think that things were somewhat different when I first started here. There seemed to be more time and more mutual respect between honourable members and a broad acknowledgment of differing views.

This place has always been robust. For instance, the exchanges between Neville Wran and Leon Punch had to be seen to be believed, but it was different. Politics was less of a profession. More people in politics came from another life, and I cannot say that was a bad thing. Today we have people poring over the most innocuous remarks looking for flaws that they can talk up with our opponents and the media. It is often an exploitative and unfair process.

People on the outside contemplating a political career might think about these practices and look at the charges levelled at me in the past week or so and wonder if they should make the effort to enter Parliament. And who could blame them? We are all to blame—politicians, political operators and the media. We make the feeding frenzy what it is. It is the price to pay for reducing modern politics to a cross between a blood sport and an open mike night at the Comedy Store. But the events of the past few days have reminded me that the political process still has the power to redeem, to reveal truths and to deliver justice.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of this Parliament's press gallery and others for demonstrating that the media serves a vital role, after all, in holding us accountable for what we do. In the end political decisions remain extraordinarily important. We cannot do without government. How many fire trucks do we have? Will the Opera House be built? Do children have schools and parks? Who will go to prison? Should we make an effort to keep people out of prison? Only governments can do this.

After nearly 16 years in the ministry I have accumulated too many personal debts of friendship to be able to mention the people I have worked with by name. The same is true of the public servants with whom it has been my privilege to be associated. I simply say that no Minister can possibly be successful without the basic back-up of loyal and trusted staff, and no Minister can successfully conduct a portfolio without confidence in the senior public servants who administer it or without a great deal of support from Cabinet and caucus colleagues. I will carry with me the warmth of my association with so many personal staff, colleagues and public officials, and I know that many will remain my friends always.

Everybody will forgive me for breaking the rule I just laid down to make special mention of my former chief of staff, Jenny Mason, and my former electorate officer, June Wilson, who have over the years given me loyalty beyond comprehension. I will break the rule twice more. The significant environmental reforms for which I have been responsible could not have been achieved without my personal staffers, Mark Aarons and Ted Plummer, or Lisa Corbyn and her executive staff at the Department of Environment and Conservation. I could not have got through the past two weeks—or rather a long time before that—without the support of my partner, Leela.

I certainly could not have got through the past two weeks without everybody in my office, particularly my chief of staff Matthew Chesher, and my press secretaries Alex Cramb and Chris Ward. One day I will write a book about the miracles that they performed at a professional and technical level. Finally, I offer my very best wishes to those around me in the Chamber now. It has been a great privilege to serve with you all. Obviously it is not entirely with a light heart that I leave. Nevertheless, there is a time in one's life when one has to either change or begin to reduce one's enthusiasm, and my intention generally is to go before the latter characteristic begins to assert itself.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AMENDMENT (OPEN GOVERNMENT—DISCLOSURE OF CONTRACTS) BILL

LEGAL PROFESSION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL

RURAL LANDS PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL

SALE OF GOODS AND WAREHOUSEMEN'S LIENS AMENDMENT (BULK GOODS) BILL

SUPERANNUATION ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (TRUST DEED SCHEMES) BILL

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

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

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendment.

Schedule of the amendment referred to in message of 22 November

Page 21, Schedule 2 [4]. Insert after line 31:

- (3) At least one of the senior State government employees appointed under subsection (1) (c) must be either the Director-General of the Department of Planning or a senior executive officer of the Department of Planning

Legislative Council's amendment agreed to on motion by Mr Paul McLeay.

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

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

THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY BANKING) BILL

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

Schedule of the amendments referred to in message of 22 November

- No. 1 Page 7, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127A, lines 21 and 22. Omit "the function of drafting guidelines for the operation of the scheme during a trial period". Insert instead "preparing a report that sets out suggested guidelines for the operation of the scheme during a trial period and examines options for applying the scheme to the clearing of native vegetation (within the meaning of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*)".
- No. 2 Page 7, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127A (3), lines 23-31. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:
- (b) the report has been provided to both Houses of Parliament, and
 - (c) the Minister has caused to be tabled in each House of Parliament a report by the Minister setting out what the Government has done or proposes to do in response to the report of the joint committee.
- No. 3 Page 7, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127A, lines 33 and 34. Omit "guidelines referred to in subsection (3) (a) have not". Insert instead "report of the joint committee referred to in subsection (3) (a) has not".
- No. 4 Page 7, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127A (4), lines 34 and 35. Omit "provided to the Minister". Insert instead "provided to both Houses of Parliament".
- No. 5 Page 7, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127A. Insert after line 36:
- (5) If a House of Parliament is not sitting when the joint committee seeks to provide its report to that House, the joint committee may instead present it to the Clerk of the House of Parliament concerned.
 - (6) Section 63C of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* applies in respect of the presentation of the report of the joint committee to a Clerk of a House of Parliament under this section in the same way as it applies to the presentation of documents in accordance with that Act.
- No. 6 Page 13, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127F. Insert after line 13:
- Note.** Subsection (1) (e) applies in respect of any mining lease under the *Mining Act 1992* that is granted over the land. This may include a mining lease granted over the subsoil of the land or over parts of the subsoil of the land.
- No. 7 Page 15, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127H. Insert after line 35:
- Note.** Subsection (2) (c) applies in respect of any mining lease under the *Mining Act 1992* that is granted over the land. This may include a mining lease granted over the subsoil of the land or over parts of the subsoil of the land.
- No. 8 Page 22, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127Q, line 29. Insert "or that is critical habitat" after "*Act 1987*".
- No. 9 Page 24, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127S. Insert after line 5:
- (4) The maximum number of biodiversity credits that the holder of the mining authority or petroleum title may be required to retire under the direction is the number of biodiversity credits that have been created in respect of the biobank site.
- No. 10 Page 54, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127ZZB, line 22. Omit "Subject to the regulations, information". Insert instead "Information".
- No. 11 Page 55, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 127ZZD, line 27. Omit "Subject to the regulations, information". Insert instead "Information".

No. 12 Page 57, Schedule 1 [6]. Insert after line 10:

127ZZH Special arrangements for creation of national parks and other reservations

- (1) The fact that land is a biobank site does not prevent the land from being reserved under Part 4 or Part 4A of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.
- (2) On the reservation of a biobank site as a national park, historic site, state conservation area, regional park, karst conservation reserve, nature reserve or Aboriginal area under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, the land concerned ceases to be a biobank site and the biobanking agreement applicable to the land is terminated.

No. 13 Page 62, Schedule 2.1 [1], lines 4 and 5. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

[1] Section 75JA

Insert after section 75J:

75JA Biobanking—special provisions

No. 14 Page 62, Schedule 2.1 [1], line 6. Omit "subsection (4)". Insert instead "section 75J".

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.58 p.m.]: I move:

That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed to.

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [12.58 p.m.]: The Opposition does not oppose the amendments.

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council's amendments agreed to.

Resolution reported from Committee and report adopted.

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

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION
AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY BANKING) BILL 2006**

Consideration of the Legislative Council's message of 22 November.

Mr PAUL McLEAY (Heathcote—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.00 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That this House:

- (1) agrees to the amendment to the terms of reference for the Joint Select Committee on the Threatened Species Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Banking) Act 2006 proposed in the Legislative Council message dated 22 November 2006.
- (2) suggests the day and time for the first meeting be called by the Chairman of the Committee, Reverend the Honourable Dr Gordon Moyes.

Reverend the Hon. Dr Gordon Moyes is recovering from major surgery.

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (The Hills) [1.01 p.m.]: The Opposition supports the motion. It is an amended version of a motion I moved in this place some weeks ago establishing the committee. It is not simply a matter of Reverend the Hon. Dr Moyes' recovery. The committee is supposed to meet in the Waratah Room in five minutes, and given that the members of the committee have not yet been appointed, that is clearly impossible. I am not sure why the time and place for the first meeting were set down for today, but I guess the Legislative Council was enthusiastic about getting on with the job. The amended motion also provides for the committee to prepare a report setting out suggested guidelines for the operation of the scheme during a trial period and to examine options for applying the scheme to the clearing of native vegetation within the meaning of the Native Vegetation Act 2003. Indeed, an amendment we have just passed also provides for the committee to examine options for applying the scheme to the clearing of native vegetation.

The Opposition attempted to move an amendment in the other place that would have meant that the biodiversity banking bill would apply to farms, but that amendment was rejected and the Government suggested

an alternative way of dealing with the issue. I note that Jock Laurie, the President of the New South Wales Farmers Association, supported this proposal as an alternative if the amendment were rejected. It is appropriate that the committee examine the possible application of biodiversity banking to farms. At the moment the offset ratios under the native vegetation legislation can be as high as 100:1, and certainly 20:1 is not uncommon. That is far higher than applies to the property industry under biodiversity banking, and farmers naturally feel aggrieved about that. The committee may suggest a solution. I thank the Government for supporting the motion I moved some weeks ago to establish the committee. It is certainly a step in the right direction.

The Attorney General, and Minister for the Environment has just spoken and I want to place on record my thanks for his courtesy over the past four years in making his staff available to explain complex legislation. I travelled in the lift with him after the last threatened species amendment bill was dealt with in this place and I asked him whether he intended to introduce similar legislation. He said there would never be another piece of legislation like that in the history of the universe. Well, we have it before us in the form of the biobanking bill only two years later.

There is no doubt that this threatened species legislation is one of the most complex bills ever introduced in this Parliament. I do not believe that anyone in this place, including the Minister, could claim to understand every nuance of it. People with doctorates will probably be delving into the finer points of the legislation in the future. I wish the Minister well in his retirement. I hope it is retirement rather than transition to the Federal Parliament. Kerry Bartlett, the Federal member for Macquarie is a personal friend of mine and I want him to continue in that role.

Motion agreed to.

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

SEASONAL FELICITATIONS

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [1.05 p.m.]: I wish to offer felicitations to our colleagues on this the sesquicentenary of responsible government in New South Wales. I pay tribute and extend best wishes to my colleagues on this side of the House who are retiring: Andrew Tink, who was Leader of the House; Peta Seaton, who has been a great support to me, as has Andrew; Andrew Humpherson, who made his valedictory speech in this place a few days ago and spoke like a true statesman; Ian Slack-Smith, who is always entertaining with his dry bush humour; and Ian Armstrong, a great advocate for country people and country New South Wales.

I also mention colleagues on the other side of the House, two of whom came into this place with me in 1999: Marianne Saliba and John Bartlett. I wish them both well. John is facing a very serious health challenge. We shared many a time together in our parliamentary committee work. I pay particular tribute to him and wish him good health. I extend my best wishes for retirement to John Price, John Mills, Pam Allan, Kim Yeadon, Paul Crittenden, Bob Debus, Bryce Gaudry and Sandra Nori. I also offer my best wishes to the media for the Christmas season. Ian Slack-Smith got it right in his message to the media: Try walking in our shoes. It is a difficult job and we face daily challenges representing the people of this State. Those words are very poignant.

To the parliamentary staff—Russell Grove, Mark Swinson, Ronda Miller, Les Gönye, Greg Kelly, and the Procedure Office staff, Jeff, John, Jenny and others—thank you for the work you do for honourable members. I also acknowledge the former Leader of the House, Carl Scully, and thank him for working closely with me, Andrew Tink and Barry O'Farrell. I appreciate the banter that occurred sometimes and I certainly miss his antics in the Chamber. I thank Steve McMahon, who worked for Carl and who now works for the current Leader of the House, and Michael Galaresi. They work very hard to ensure that the Parliament runs smoothly. Sadly, they fail from time to time because clearly the Leader of the House is not issuing the correct instructions. I thank Lucy Gonano and Catherine Preschino, who take care of honourable members. To Dennis, Richard, Peter, Ian, Jenny, Richard, Margherita and Terry, thank you for the work you do in looking after our guests and ensuring that the Parliament runs smoothly. I also extend felicitations to my great friend and colleague and Nationals Whip Thomas George, Russell Turner and the Government Whips Alan Ashton and Gerard Martin.

I extend my thanks to the catering staff: Carlos, Maureen and Jenny. Maureen is leaving us and that will be a great loss. I particularly thank Maria and Charlotte, who look after our tables in the members' dining

rooms and who put up with a lot. We appreciate their great service. I thank all the catering staff who have left Parliament this year, particularly Santiago and Johnny. I saw Johnny here this morning receiving his award. I congratulate him and wish him all the best in his retirement. I use the Parliamentary Library almost daily, and the staff do a terrific job and provide a great service. They have been under terrible strain because Michael Costa's budgetary restrictions on the Parliament have had a huge effect on them and under the circumstances they do a great job. I thank the security staff so much for everything they do to protect members, and I wish them well for the season. In particular, I wish all the well, and likewise Ian Faulks, the secretary of the Staysafe committee. He has worked tirelessly to bring about improvements in road safety. He is retiring after 15 years in this place. Not many people know more about road safety than Ian. I wish him and his family well.

There have been new additions to this Parliament in the form of babies born to members on both sides. I congratulate all the proud parents, particularly Andrew and Ainsley Constance on the birth of Zara Gay. All members on our side have warmly welcomed her arrival. Members on both sides take an interest in our children. We have watched Sedone grow up in this place, and Unity. We watched Tom and Will, Hugh and Flinders, and Georgina and Hamilton, just to name a few of the children members take an interest in. I send a special message to a little girl on the Central Coast whose name is Annie and who must be questioning what has happened to her world. I can tell her that there are people in this place who have watched her grow and who care for her very much.

Finally, I thank my staff for their wonderful efforts on behalf of the electorate of Wagga Wagga. They are all here today. Whilst it might seem that I have a big staff, some of them job share. I thank Margaret Pulver, Paula Spencer, Brenda Tritton, Marilyn Lees, Jaci Armstrong and, recently added to our staff, Holly Hearne. Margaret, Paula and Brenda celebrate 58 years of service to the Parliament of New South Wales. Margaret received her 25-year service award today and Brenda received her 15-year service award. I thank them all for the work they do. They put up with a lot. They are at the coalface. Members of Parliament rely on them, and I know our community respects them for the job they do.

The drought continues, wreaking havoc across the State. It is so serious that all members need to understand that it will have a serious impact on the city as well as on the country. We need to ensure that resources are put in place to address drought issues when they are raised. A lot of people are doing good work across New South Wales. Councillors are working hard on behalf of our communities and I offer them felicitations. I thank all who are putting their shoulder to the wheel during this terrible drought, and I encourage all New South Welshman to rise to the challenge this drought will place upon us.

Mr JEFF HUNTER (Lake Macquarie) [1.12 p.m.]: I thank the House for its indulgence in allowing me to make a brief contribution to Christmas felicitations. Earlier I was happy to give way to Pam Allen so she could make her valedictory speech. I join with everyone else in congratulating the staff of Parliament and wishing them all the best for a happy and healthy festive season. I thank Hansard, the library staff and the catering staff for the assistance they have given me over the past 12 months, and I include two people who are no longer with us—Santiago and Robert. I know Maureen is leaving soon, and I thank her. I also thank Chow for the great work she is doing and will continue to do in the dining room. I thank building services, member services, the staff in accounts, the Assembly office staff, the front desk attendants—all the staff of Parliament, past and present, for the assistance they have given me, and my father when he was in this place, for many years.

I particularly thank my electorate office staff, Helen and Wayne, and my regular relief, Bernard, for the great work they do in the electorate and the additional work they have taken on in the past few weeks. My father was elected to this place in April 1969 and retired in May 1991—some 22 years in Parliament. He was very proud to be a member of the House Committee and I know he appreciated the great work of the staff. I was elected in May 1991 and I was pleased to become a member of the House Committee. It is a shame it no longer exists. I faced elections in 1991, 1995, 1999 and 2003 and, of course, I will face an election next year.

I never take the outcome of elections for granted—no member of Parliament should. The Premier has said that next year's election will be a tough one. It is probably going to be one of the closest elections the State has seen for some time. I will certainly be doing my best to make sure the Australian Labor Party retains the seat of Lake Macquarie and that the Labor Government is returned to office on 24 March next year. I thank all the ALP members in the Lake Macquarie electorate and my campaign workers over the years for the great assistance and support they have given me.

As I said, the next election will be a tough one and it will see a number of my parliamentary colleagues leave this place. They have given valedictory speeches. I have already mentioned Pam Allan, and John Bartlett

gave a farewell speech some weeks ago. I wish John all the best with his health. I send my best wishes to them and Paul Crittenden, Bob Debus, Bryce Gaudry and, on the other side, Andrew Humpherson and, of course, Ian Armstrong, whom I have had the pleasure to work with for a number of years. My colleague John Mills gave his valedictory speech the other night. He is a fantastic man and it has been an honour to work with him. We have been a great pair working for the people of the Lake Macquarie area and the Hunter region. It will certainly be sad to see John leave this place, but he is going to have a great life after politics.

I wish Sandra Nori, John Price, and Marianne Saliba well, along with Peta Seaton and Ian Slack-Smith. Ian Slack-Smith is deputy chairman of the Asia Pacific Friendship Group, which I chair. I wish Ian all the best for when he leaves this place. I have had the pleasure of coming to know Andrew Tink quite well over the years and I extend to him my best wishes. Best wishes also to Kim Yeadon, whose office is next to mine on level 12. I wish the best for those in the upper House who will not be contesting next year's election—Dr Peter Wong, Meredith Burgmann, Jan Burnswoods and others.

I say to the Clerks of the Parliament, thanks very much for your assistance. In particular, I thank Russell Grove's personal assistant, Patricia Broderick, for the great assistance she has given me as chairman of the Asia Pacific Friendship Group and particularly her work in raising funds for the Marist teacher's college at Baucau in East Timor and the ongoing charitable activities of the friendship group. Once again, best wishes to everyone in Parliament, to all the staff, to my electorate office staff and to my parents for their great support over many years. Certainly I would not have been able to represent the people of Lake Macquarie for the past 15½, going on 16, years in this place without the support of my parents and family.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [1.17 p.m.]: It is hard to believe that Christmas is upon us. The year seems to have flown by. When I reflect on issues that happened last year they seem like yesterday. When we walk away from the House today we will be facing an election on 24 March next year, so I am sure the intervening weeks will fly by quickly. I am proud to continue to serve the electorate of Hornsby. I wish to point out some of the roles I have had and the new positions to which I have been appointed to serve the people of New South Wales. I am proud to have been appointed to the Opposition front bench with responsibility for the important portfolios of Mental Health and Community Services—two areas I have had an abiding and longstanding interest in. I love with a passion the assistance I have provided and could provide in the future to people whose lives are so affected. I thank Peter Debnam and his team for having faith in me and giving me that opportunity.

I am very appreciative of all the opportunities I have had in my role as shadow Parliamentary Secretary; I have enjoyed every moment. I acknowledge the Deputy Speaker and Acting Speakers of the House and obviously the ongoing role of John Aquilina, the Clerks and the staff that so ably assist all of us. In the interest of timeliness I will not name them but I appreciate everybody's role in assisting members of Parliament in carrying out their job in this place. I also acknowledge my colleagues on both sides of the upper House and this House. We all do our job to the best of our ability and are here caring about the people who have elected us, and it is a great honour to have that special role.

I send my good wishes to members of Parliament who are leaving immediately prior to the State election next year. By and large they have made their valedictory speeches and I have enjoyed listening to them. I will mention a couple of people who have been extremely helpful to me and have been a mentor on many occasions. The first is Andrew Tink, to whom I extend my sincere thanks and Christmas good wishes, and good wishes for his future life on his Halverson, writing his books. He has been an amazing friend to me. Right from the very start I knew I could rely on him for information and guidance and he has not failed me once.

I knew Peta Seaton prior to her election to Parliament when we were members of the New South Wales Women's Council. I knew her in her pre-selection challenge and subsequent election to the New South Wales Parliament. Peta is an absolutely wonderful person. She has always been available for assistance and advice, and I certainly have not met too many people with her depth of thinking and complex mind, which she brings to this House and the people of New South Wales. I have also gained a great deal of insight and encouragement from John Ryan and Ian Armstrong.

Over the years I have had a number of staff but from the bottom of my heart I thank my current staff, Camille, Vanessa and Christine, for all their work in the office each day. I know that each day they have to deal with the many issues and challenges we face. They are now adapting to the additional role of assisting me in my shadow ministerial capacity. I know they do their best and I am eternally grateful. I also thank Jenny and Donna, who provide relief work and are a wonderful resource in the office. Many people tell me that when they contact

my office my staff are just so lovely, and I know they are, as they listen patiently and try their best to help. Lachlan Mansell comes in as a volunteer. He has just completed his Higher School Certificate and will have a brilliant career as a journalist. He is an expert in cars, and I will watch with great interest to see that young man make his way in the world.

I thank two very special people, Maurie Smith and Shirley Allen. I knew Shirley in my podiatry association days when she actively worked at Ryde Hospital and was committed to podiatry. Now that she has retired she comes into my office once a week and helps me out, and is unfailing. I thank her very much. Maurie Smith rides his motorised vehicle to the office and provides a great deal of help as well. In my electorate there are too many people to name, thank and extend Christmas felicitations to. The schools in my area are second to none and the staff are fantastic in their commitment to the students and the wider community. Many of the schools are not insular but participate in community events. The students have a wonderful educational experience, assisted by the principals, teachers and staff, and they grow up in a wonderful area.

I am thankful for the service clubs and other groups in my area. The three Rotary clubs of which I am very proud to be an honorary member are Berowra, Waitara and Hornsby. I am a member of the Hornsby Lions Club, but also appreciate the Berowra Lions club and the Berowra Apex Club; they each do a fantastic job. I am also a proud member of the Parliamentary Lions Club. Those local clubs make a huge contribution to the fabric of the area in which we live, not the least of which by way of support and the provision of cooks for the Relay for Life, which raised \$88,000 on one weekend. We also have many other sporting and recreation clubs which I will not name for fear of missing one or two.

I have been Parliamentary Secretary to the shadow Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner. As my background is in health it was a great honour to work with Jillian, for whom I have a great deal of respect. She has given me a lot of opportunities to expand my experience and put my stamp not only on policy but on the outreach work we have done. I look forward to working with her as we move towards the election. I also acknowledge various groups and people in my area who work with seniors and people with disabilities. We have a very strong domestic violence network group and I look forward to increasing the focus on domestic violence as an issue we need to address. One of the first things will be an inaugural breakfast in Hornsby Shire Council chambers on 27 November for white ribbon day. Soroptimists have been very committed to many issues, including domestic violence, and Julie Griffin has done a great deal for many projects, including domestic violence.

Two people who passed away recently are sadly missed. John Clarke was a long-standing Berowra Rotarian and was much loved in the area. I will be keeping in strong contact with his wife Margaret. Pat Witt was a long-standing Country Women's Association member and, sadly, she passed away recently. In recognition of her work I nominated her for a Premier's award, and I will have the honour of presenting it to her daughter at the next meeting. There are some fantastic women in my area who have historically provided and currently provide a lot to the area and I am very proud to work alongside them.

It will be a sad Christmas for a number of people, not only for people who have lost dear family members and friends but also for the Anderson family, who lost their daughter, Vanessa, last November and are still mourning and grieving. They cannot move on until a Coronial inquiry is set down. They will have a cloud over their Christmas celebrations because they not only do not have Vanessa but do not have answers to many of the questions about her death and therefore they have not had closure.

Finally, I acknowledge my family. My long-suffering husband, Stephen, cooks every night, does the shopping and undertakes many other tasks—today he is arranging to have a tyre on my car fixed—so that I can perform my duties in this place and my electorate. I also acknowledge my daughters, Jessica and Ashleigh. I am very happy to announce that last Saturday Jessica married Craig Reeve. That was a wonderful day for our family. We welcome Craig into our family with open arms. I look forward to a wonderful Christmas with Craig as my son-in-law. His mum and dad, Jill and Rob, are a much-welcome addition to our extended family. I want to mention my mother, who lives on the Central Coast. She has been a fantastic mother to me. Although she lives alone, she extends arms of support. I want to mention also my father, who passed away in 2000. He is sadly missed and remembered every day, and he still has an amazing influence on my life and my future. Merry Christmas to all.

Mr SPEAKER: I take this opportunity to join with the Leader of the House and other members in extending my Christmas felicitations. I have made the point on other occasions that whilst the public focus is primarily on the members who occupy this Chamber and the representatives of the Parliament, we could not do

our job as members of Parliament without the extraordinary input, support, commitment, dedication and professionalism of the staff who make up the large contingent of workers within the Parliament. As I have done on other occasions, I take this opportunity to particularly extend my felicitations to the various categories of the parliamentary staff. I recognise that without them Parliament could not function.

Initially, I speak of the officers of the Parliament. I recognise the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Russell Grove, together with Mark Swinson, Ronda Miller, Les Gönye and the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms, Greg Kelly. Today the Parliament presented awards for long service to many staff members. Russell Grove received an award for 35 years of service to the Parliament. That is an incredible period of service. The Clerk of the Legislative Council, John Evans, also received an award for 35 years service.

I make special mention also of the attendants and note that an award was also presented today for 25 years service to Joe Andrade, the Speaker's special attendant. I congratulate him on his award and thank him and all the attendants for their hard work. There are many categories of workers in this Parliament. The cleaners are here at dawn and have the place spick and span before most of us arrive. As most members know, I start early and often meet many of the cleaners in the morning. I thank them for the work they do. I thank the security staff, who work 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide us with the security and comfort that we enjoy. I also thank the Building Services staff who undertake maintenance, public works and other activities to ensure that the Parliament continues to run smoothly and that we are at all times well serviced so that we are able to continue to perform the functions we were elected to do.

I give a very special thank you to the Hansard staff. They are probably the least noticeable of all the parliamentary staff, yet without them Parliament would be a very different place. I take this opportunity to thank the Hansard staff for the incredible amount of work they do. They always make our words, no matter how articulate or inarticulate we are, sound like pearls of wisdom. I thank them for that. The Parliamentary Library staff are an invaluable resource to the Parliament. The library is one of the most important institutions in this country and it is keenly supported by the Parliament. Our Parliamentary Library staff have a reputation for their competence, professionalism, commitment and dedication that extends well beyond the parliamentary precincts. I thank them immensely for their hard work, commitment and dedication.

As the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly I make special mention of our electorate staff. They are our front-line troops, running our electorate offices when we as elected representatives are performing our duties in Parliament or throughout our electorates or undertaking our responsibilities as committee members, Ministers or Parliamentary Secretaries. They are in our offices day in and day out meeting the needs of our constituents, responding to our constituents' concerns, communicating constituents' concerns to members of Parliament and often resolving issues that are raised with them. Not only are they an invaluable resource, they are also great human beings who perform their work with commitment and dedication and in many cases with affection for the members who work with them. We recognise the important tasks they undertake.

I make special mention of my personal electorate staff, Sandra Caldwell and Janine Adams, who have worked with me long and hard for many years. I think I am the only employer Janine has ever had. She has worked with me for 18 years, and not always in the capacity of a member of the electorate office staff. She was on my ministerial staff for about six years. Janine is an incredible person. Sandra Caldwell, my senior electorate officer, is also a remarkable person who has shown enormous commitment and loyalty to me. She is extremely well liked by my constituents and is known as a very competent, capable and committed professional. I also thank my executive officer, Rhys Grainger, for the hard work he does. Almost everyone within the Parliament would know him and would recognise his capacity, total commitment and professionalism. I also thank Margo Delaney, who has an almost impossible job trying to keep my diary up to date. It is an almost impossible job not because of the people who make requests on my time but because of the person she works for. I have a habit of overcommitting myself and it is her job to sort it out. Many members would be acutely aware of what I mean by that.

I extend my thanks to the Whips on both sides of the House—Gerard Martin and Alan Ashton on the Government side and Daryl Maguire and Thomas George on the Opposition side—for their co-operation and understanding. They do an excellent job and communicate with each other to reach agreement on many issues. They have performed their duties most efficiently and have made my task as Speaker much easier. I also thank Carl Scully for his work as the former Leader of the House. He worked very hard in that role and was always an accessible and approachable person. The current Leader of the House, the member for Keira and the Minister for Regional Development, David Campbell, is an old friend of mine. I knew him well before he became a member of Parliament. I congratulate him on the work he has done to date. I know he is relishing the task as Leader of

the House and enjoying it immensely. I wish him well in that endeavour. I also thank Steve McMahon, who has worked for both Carl Scully and David Campbell, for the work he performs so efficiently.

Today is the last day of Parliament for many members who have decided, for one reason or another, that they will not return. The House has heard a number of valedictory speeches over the past couple of weeks. The members conveyed to us their achievements and some regrets and concerns, and they delivered their speeches with humour and sentiment. To all those members who are about to change their careers or retire from professional life I offer my congratulations and thank them on behalf of the Parliament and the people whom they have served for the outstanding work they have done. In many ways the Christmas felicitations have more meaning for them than for the members who look forward to coming back to the Chamber. There may be a few surprises in the forthcoming elections, and some members may not have the opportunity to return, as they would have liked. Once again, I extend my sincere best wishes and Christmas felicitations to everyone and many thanks for your hard work and commitment over the past 12 months.

Motion agreed to.

[Mr Speaker left the chair at 1.40 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

PETITIONS

Werrington Railway Station Access

Petition opposing the removal of ramps from Werrington railway station, received from **Ms Gladys Berejiklian**.

Rural and Regional Police Resources

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

Inner and Eastern Sydney Light Rail

Petition requesting the development of an integrated light rail network in inner and eastern Sydney, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Bus Services 326 and 327

Petition asking that the Government urgently reinstate the former timetables of bus services 326 and 327, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

CountryLink Rail Services

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

Forster-Tuncurry Policing

Petition requesting a permanent 24-hour police station at Forster-Tuncurry, received from **Mr John Turner**.

Freedom of Religion

Petition praying that the House retain the existing exemptions applying to religious bodies in the Anti-Discrimination Act, received from **Mr Ian Armstrong**.

Unborn Child Protection

Petitions requesting mandatory statistical reporting of abortions, legislative protection of foetuses of 20 weeks gestation, and availability of resources for post-abortion follow-up, received from **Mrs Dawn Fardell** and **Mr Russell Turner**.

Same-sex Marriage Legislation

Petition opposing same-sex marriage legislation, received from **Mr Russell Turner**.

National Art School

Petition opposing proposed changes to the National Art School, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Rouse Hill High School Construction

Petition requesting funding for the immediate construction of the Rouse Hill High School, received from **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Breast Screening Funding

Petition requesting funding to ensure access to breast screening services for women aged 40 to 79 years and to reverse falling participation rates, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Campbell Hospital, Coraki

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

Sunflower House, Wagga Wagga

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

Mental Health Services

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

Lourdes Hospital Hydrotherapy Pool, Dubbo

Petition requesting funding for repairs to the Lourdes Hospital Hydrotherapy Pool, Dubbo, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Community-based Preschools

Petitions requesting adjustment of funding to ensure viability of community-based preschools, received from **Mr Peter Black** and **Mr Steven Pringle**.

Sow Stall Ban

Petition requesting the total ban of sow stalls, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Recreational Fishing

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

Bells Line Expressway Proposal

Petition requesting support for the proposed Bells Line Expressway, received from **Mr Ian Armstrong**.

Grafton Bridge

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

Inner City Bicycle Lanes

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

Blacktown Traffic Arrangements

Petition requesting the permanent closure of Dunstable Road at Sunnyholt Road, Blacktown, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Alcohol and Drug Services

Petition requesting increased funding for, and expansion of, inner city alcohol and drug services, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Totalizator Act Review

Petition requesting a review of the Totalizator Act, received from **Mr George Souris**.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report

Ms Noreen Hay, as Chairman, tabled the report No. 19/53 (No. 162), entitled "Managing Animal and Plant Diseases", dated November 2006.

Ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC BODIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

Reports

Mr Matthew Morris, as Chairman, tabled the following reports dated November 2006:

Report No. 8/53, entitled "Report on the Premier's Annual Reports Award: An Overview of the Inaugural Premier's Annual Reports Award"

Report No. 9/53, entitled "Report into the Public Trustee of New South Wales"

Ordered to be printed.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Reports

Mr Kim Yeadon, as Chairman, tabled the following reports dated November 2006:

Report No. 9/53, entitled "Quarterly Examination of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, April-June 2006, Incorporating Edited Transcripts of Evidence"

Report No. 10/53, entitled "Quarterly Examination of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, July-September 2006, Incorporating Edited Transcripts of Evidence"

Report No. 11/53, entitled "Examination of the 2004-2005 Annual Report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Incorporating Edited Transcripts of Evidence"

Report No. 12/53, entitled "Review of the Protected Disclosures Act 1994, Incorporating Selected Submissions and Edited Transcripts of Evidence"

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ELECTRICITY BLACKOUTS

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that blackouts and brownouts have already started, will he—

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is to the Premier. Given that blackouts and brownouts have already started, will he finally own up to underinvestment in electricity generation and maintenance, leading to a summer of blackouts?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The first thing the Leader of the Opposition has to do is change the pay scales in that office of his. Give the job to the receptionist. The receptionist will do a better job than that in writing questions for him. I will come to electricity in a second, but let me start with the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Why don't you start answering the question?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Well, he is not focused on electricity or leadership.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease calling out. I call the honourable member for Lane Cove to order.

Mr Donald Page: Point of order: By his own admission, the Premier is in breach of Standing Order 138. I ask you to direct him to answer the question. Answer the question! It is about electricity; it is not about the Leader of the Opposition!

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question. At this stage the Premier is perfectly in order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: In relation to the second part of the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, the advice from EnergyAustralia is as follows. In Sydney yesterday the interruptions to supply were caused by grass fires in Rookwood Cemetery creating a surge in the system.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members of the Government will stop pointing at the honourable member for Coffs Harbour.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Coffs Harbour would know all about grass fires. The interruptions were not caused by high demand for electricity. At the peak yesterday, about 12,375 megawatts of electricity was being used, or around 800 megawatts less than the highest level of demand recorded in New South Wales. To give the Leader of the Opposition—the temporary Leader of the Opposition—an indication of how much supply New South Wales can access, the State can access more than 16,000 megawatts of electricity on any given day. So, 12,300-odd megawatts was being used yesterday, which is 800 megawatts less than the highest demand ever recorded. We can access 16,000 megawatts. In relation to the other part of the question, about electricity infrastructure, with a great deal of pleasure I inform the House that the New South Wales Government has already embarked on a four-year, \$9 billion upgrade of our electricity infrastructure.

Mr Frank Sartor: How much?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is \$9 billion over the next four years. To enlighten the honourable member for Southern Highlands, who is farewelling us today—

[*Interruption*]

You will be missed. I wish you the best in your retirement. It is a sad reflection on the Liberal Party that it cannot find room on its frontbench or backbench for someone as talented as the honourable member for Southern Highlands.

Mr John Watkins: One of the best Liberal minds in a generation.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: As my colleague the Deputy Premier said, she is one of the best in a generation. We farewell her today. Infrastructure investment for this year is \$2.3 billion. Let me turn to the nation's expert when it comes to electricity, the National Electricity Market Management Company

[NEMMCO]. What does NEMMCO say about New South Wales preparedness, infrastructure, reliability and supply?

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

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I invoke Standing Order 139 and forbid the honourable member for Wakehurst from debating the question.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The national electricity market—I underline the word "national"—

[*Interruption*]

Listen, you just go and find out where you can get that half a billion to buy the Vacluse tunnel. Get out the abacus. For the benefit of the honourable member for Southern Highlands, the NEMMCO report states that even with extreme temperature conditions we can meet or exceed one of the toughest electricity generation reliability standards in the world this summer. Mr Paul Price, the spokesperson for NEMMCO, on 25 October on radio 2UE had this to say about New South Wales electricity infrastructure and its supply ability:

New South Wales is better placed than pretty much any other state in the country to meet its power needs.

Mr Price went on to say:

There is ample supply in the New South Wales system to meet those demands.

And what is the reliability? The reliability level across the State is 99.9 per cent. The majority of unplanned interruptions are caused by environmental factors affecting overhead networks, typically contributing to 70 per cent of all outages. That examples what I have said in relation to reliability.

[*Interruption*]

I heard an interjection about Vales Point. Vales Point is part of the \$90 million upgrade.

[*Interruption*]

The advice from the Electricity Commission is that the maintenance program for Vales Point is on track.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Southern Highlands will cease calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: You might love to see it happen, but there is no basis in fact for what the Leader of the Opposition asserts, or indeed what the departing member for Southern Highlands asserts. In relation to the existing generators, the following is occurring. At Liddell, at three of the largest power stations in the State there is a 340-megawatt upgrade of the existing generators. Consistent with what the NEMMCO report says, that future generation capacity will be required by 2010-11, particularly in the area of peaking capacity. It is not a plan, and not a proposal, but construction is under way at Tallawarra power station. Do you know Tallawarra power station? The members from the Illawarra would remember Tallawarra power station.

Mr Gerard Martin: They closed it down.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Bathurst said, "They closed it down". They sure did. One of our best and biggest power stations was closed and sold off by the Greiner Government. That was the Greiner Government's planning for the future electricity needs of this State: close down the power station and sell it off. Well, a power station is being reborn at Tallawarra, in the Illawarra—a 400-megawatt, gas-fired peaking power station to meet the peaks of summer and winter.

[*Interruption*]

For the benefit of the environmentalist members of The Nationals, it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70 per cent. A 400-megawatt, gas-fired power station is under construction. It will supply

electricity to the New South Wales grid and to 200,000 homes. Consistent with the Government's determination to plan for the future, planning is well under way for the second gas-fired power station, at Lake Munmorah on the Central Coast. The construction of our second gas-fired power station will commence in 2007, to meet the prediction of NEMMCO and the forecast about the requirement for extra generation capacity during peak demand. The comprehensive four-year, \$9 billion upgrade of our existing electricity network—the lines, the transmission cables, the powerhouses—has the flow-on benefit of creating many jobs in rural areas. The Leader of The Nationals might be interested in this fact. In rural areas 1,000 apprentices have been employed to carry out this massive upgrade of our electricity infrastructure.

That is the investment that is taking place right now. This year \$2.3 billion will be invested, and over the next four years \$9 billion will be spent on upgrading the State's electricity system. By way of planning for future electricity demand, a 400-megawatt power station that will supply electricity to 200,000 homes is already under construction at Tallawarra. That is the place where the Coalition, when it last had the chance to run the Treasury benches, actually closed down a power station and all its generators. The Coalition shut it down, mothballed it and sold it off. A 400-megawatt, gas-fired power station—the second one to come online, with construction starting in 2007—will be available for the New South Wales electricity system well before 2011, which is when the National Electricity Market Management Company says we will need the extra peaking capacity. Do not take the word of a man who chose to put his trust in a child sex offender above the words of the victim's mother. That is what is behind the question: whether we should trust a man who chose to put his faith in a convicted child sex offender—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: Standing Order 138 requires the Premier to be honest. In this case he has got to explain to the House why we had a blackout yesterday—

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Yesterday the Opposition asked a question about dividends but unfortunately we did not have enough time to answer it. It is a pity the Opposition did not read the Auditor-General's report in which he said there was no evidence whatsoever of dividend policy having any impact on the maintenance of the power stations. The fact is that dividend policy has no bearing whatsoever on either the financial strength or the capital expenditure requirements of electricity companies. I wish the honourable member for Southern Highlands good luck in her future career. The Leader of the Opposition has no focus on electricity policy—just as yesterday he had no focus on knives policy. What a fraud that was yesterday. The Leader of the Opposition was caught out.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: Standing Order 138 requires the Premier to be relevant. The question he was asked was about blackouts in New South Wales and about why we had a blackout yesterday.

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

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst is interrupting the proceedings of the House. He will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The focus of the Leader of the Opposition is on his leadership, which is hanging by a thread. That is what the buzz is around the place. The Opposition would love to get rid of him but it cannot because there is nobody on that side who has got the ticker to stand up and take on the leadership.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Bathurst will cease calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: There is no-one over there with the ticker to do what they really want to do: dump the Leader of the Opposition from the leadership. In the words of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the majority want Barry. But the only problem is David Clarke will never allow Barry to become the leader. All that stands between the Leader of the Opposition and oblivion is David Clarke and the extremists. On my analysis, my vote goes to Barry. I am backing Barry: number one.

STATE PLAN

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE: My question without notice is addressed to the Premier. What is the latest information on the Government's new direction for New South Wales, and related matters?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I thank the honourable member for Drummoyne, who is focused on doing her job in representing her constituents—unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who is focused on his leadership, which is hanging by a thread. While members of the Opposition have been wading through smear and innuendo, and placing their faith in a convicted child sex offender, we have been getting on with the job. A quick look at what the Government has been doing in the past couple of weeks shows that we are focused on improving performance and service delivery for the people of New South Wales, creating jobs, and keeping New South Wales powering ahead.

The following are just some of the initiatives of the past few weeks. In policing, we unveiled the new police riot squad. It was good to be asked a question about knife laws yesterday. It is a pity the Leader of the Opposition did not see that legislation go through last week. We are continuing our efforts to equip police with resources by releasing extra resources in riot squad vehicles. We opened a new Children's Court at Parramatta.

[Interruption]

As the Attorney General says, it is a landmark development. We developed a new green energy policy, with renewable energy targets of 10 and 15 per cent. We opened a new wing at Westmead Hospital, embarking on the biggest redevelopment of Westmead Hospital since Gough gave us Westmead, much to the annoyance of the then Coalition Government. We released the comprehensive blueprint for the State; signed a deal for new jobs and environmental protection with BlueScope Steel in the Illawarra, protecting 6,000 jobs in the steel industry; and turned the first sod of soil on the new Tallawarra power station. The Leader of The Nationals should get that branded on his arm: "Tallawarra power station". The Opposition closed it; we opened it and are giving it new meaning. All this is topped off with a \$660 million urban transport plan for the people of Sydney. They are just some of the additional plans to improve services and infrastructure for the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Has the Leader of The Nationals done a count on the Cross City Tunnel?

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of The Nationals to order.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Country is aspirational.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Leader of The Nationals is quite aspirational in wanting to buy the Vaucluse tunnel. He has an obsession with the Vaucluse tunnel. In November last year the Leader of The Nationals was prepared to spend \$1 billion bailing it out and now, at the first sign of trouble, he wants to bail it out again, at half a billion dollars.

Mr Andrew Stoner: You fool. I ruled out buying it before you did.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That is not what the Leader of The Nationals said last week. Last week he was quite prepared to cough up half a billion dollars to buy it out.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of The Nationals will cease calling out. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: They are just some of the Government's initiatives in protecting jobs in the steel industry, getting power stations under way, taking extra measures on transport, road, rail and buses. It is all in stark contrast to a party that loses one frontbencher a week to the extremists, who have taken it over.

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

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Willoughby will cease calling out. I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: David Clarke is sweeping through those preselections one after the other. They are all going under.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: All the Leader of the Opposition has to fall back on is the miserable 29,000 commitment and the \$25 billion Peter meter. He has only two policy positions: one that will see nurses, teachers and police dismissed from our public services and will put our hospitals under more pressure, and the \$25 billion worth of promises that would put at risk the State's triple-A credit rating. The 29,000 commitment stands as his one big policy position.

[Interruption]

Yes, George, he has been trying to wriggle out of it ever since. The fact is that the Opposition's candidate in Clarence has really given the game away. Every time we pull out the statement that the 29,000 stands, the Leader of the Opposition says, "That's not my statement. I never made up the 29,000." The candidates out there in the field just keep giving the game away. Trevor Kahn, an upper House candidate based on the North Coast, had this to say:

Let me put the record straight by observing that the Coalition has promised to reduce the size of the public service in NSW by 29,000 positions.

Not sack, just reduce the size. The more the Leader of the Opposition gets himself tangled up in the 29,000 cuts, the more he is someone who will just say and do anything. He is someone who is just too big a risk. He is someone who lacks the judgment, the character and the integrity to hold the office that he hangs onto by a thread, let alone get a promotion to Premier of New South Wales.

TWEED HEADS DISTRICT HOSPITAL

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr ANDREW STONER: I direct my question to the Premier. In view of local Dr Graeme Burger's statements that Tweed hospital is under-resourced, ambulances are being turned away from the accident and emergency department and routine surgery is postponed and cancelled because there are insufficient beds, will the Premier finally accept that there is a crisis in rural and regional health and support The Nationals call for an independent inquiry?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: This Government has rebuilt Tweed Heads Hospital and 1,100 nurses were recruited across the New South Wales health system in the last 15 months, in addition to 1,700 extra beds for the New South Wales hospital system.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: And half of them are at home.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: No, those 300 supported accommodation places are part of the State and Commonwealth agreement to do more to manage chronic illness in the community and keep people out of hospitals.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: You count them as hospital beds. Patients are very worried about that.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for North Shore will cease interjecting.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: It is called fraud.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is transitional care. Those are transitional care places.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Whether they are in aged care facilities or in people's homes, like the Hospital in the Home Program.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: They are hospital beds in someone's bedroom, are they?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Go and talk to the patients, Jillian. They think it is pretty good. Go and talk to Professor Tilly Rosenfeld, one of the finest clinicians in the State, who is developing programs like Hospital in the Home and transitional care because of our ageing population.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for North Shore will cease interjecting.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: We believe that the elderly in this State are entitled to first-rate health care, only qualified by the fact that the honourable member for North Shore does not know what she is talking about. We believe that the elderly have a right to first-rate health care, which is why such programs exist. The honourable member for North Shore should not make silly statements about the 300 transitional care beds. That was a foolish statement. They are part of a national program to provide for more transitional care places because they give the elderly better health outcomes and enable the elderly to recover from hospitalisation and avoid readmission to hospitals so that they can live with their families and friends and have social support networks. In relation to Tweed Heads Hospital—

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The question relates to Dr Burger in Tweed—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. If the honourable member for North Shore listened more intently to the answer rather than interjecting, she would be able to hear the answer. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for North Shore conveniently ignores the fact that in the area of maternity, for example, half the patients come from the Queensland side of the border. Our philosophy is to treat everyone in New South Wales public hospitals, regardless of people's income, where they come from or the colour of their skin. We have that philosophy because on this side of the House we believe that access to health care should depend on how sick people are, not on how rich they are. For the Leader of The Nationals to get up and ask a question about a country hospital after the Coalition sold off Port Macquarie Base Hospital and we had to buy it back, shows what a hypocrite he is.

Mr Andrew Stoner: We built it.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: You built it and sold it off. I would not boast about the fact that you built it; you sold it off.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for North Shore will contain herself and cease interjecting.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Members opposite still have not stood up to Tony Abbott when he gave the invitation three weeks ago to start privatising public hospitals.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: They will not stand up to Canberra and make sure that our public hospitals remain public.

TRANSPORT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr BARRY COLLIER: My question without notice is directed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, and Minister for Police. What is the latest information on the new direction for transport and law enforcement in New South Wales and related matters?

Mr JOHN WATKINS: I am pleased to update the House on the Iemma Government's achievements in the important areas of transport and law and order. We have been working hard to grind out improvements to our rail system. Commuters have been exceptionally tolerant over the last few years and they are now starting to see the rewards for that understanding and tolerance.

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

Mr JOHN WATKINS: From January this year to date, 91.8 per cent of peak services were on time compared to 72.7 per cent for the same period last year. The improvements are backed by growing patronage: an extra 118,000 people have come back to the rail system weekly since the new timetable in September of last year. The Iemma Government has been pouring huge amounts of money into our rail system—\$15 billion over the next 15 years.

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

Mr JOHN WATKINS: Some of that expenditure is for the Epping to Chatswood rail line, due to open in 2008; the \$1.5 billion rail clearways program; the new rail links to Sydney's north-west and south-west, the CBD under the harbour link; and \$4 billion on new rolling stock. Whilst we have done this, the Opposition has revealed just one transport policy, the reintroduction of trams into the CBD 50 years after they were taken out—pure fantasy, but expensive fantasy. They are suggesting this will cost \$200 million. It will force 15,000 passengers off buses at Central and put them on to trams to finish their journey. It will force the quarantining of George and Castlereagh streets, causing traffic jams at each east-west corridor up and down the CBD. We will not do that to commuters in New South Wales. The tram plan from the Opposition is expensive, and it will not work. But we do know how the Opposition plans to fund it—public sector job cuts, thousands of them. It has form because back in 1989 the State Rail Authority took the axe to 8,000 jobs. If this freak show opposite were elected, there would be similar headlines in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that they are slashing jobs, 29,000 of them.

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

Mr JOHN WATKINS: That is the Opposition's plan and how it pretends to pay for it. I turn now to the achievements that have occurred in 15 months in law and order. In 15 months we have continued to back NSW Police with the laws, powers and resources they need to do their job. Latest crime figures from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research show that not one crime category in New South Wales is going up. All figures are stable or are falling and in several there have been truly remarkable falls over recent years. We are ensuring record police numbers, with a record 750 over authorised strength, boosting numbers to 15,206. At the same time members opposite will sack 29,000 public sector workers. One cannot do that without it impacting on front-line teachers, train drivers and police.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: The Minister got rid of 380 police just in his time.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to debate this matter, the standing orders provide him with the means to do so. Taking a point of order is not the way to do it. The Minister has the call.

Mr JOHN WATKINS: We have introduced new laws to protect New South Wales against terrorism, crack down on organised crime and protect this community's most vulnerable, while the Leader of the Opposition has been smearing our police commissioner. That is what he does day in and day out. While we have introduced criminal infringement notices, freeing up 56,000 police hours a year, the Leader of the Opposition has promised to boost police resources with an Australian flag on all police vehicles. That is how he will help—a little Australian flag on a police car. While we have toughened knife laws in this State, the Leader of the Opposition has slept and then yesterday he pulled that disgusting stunt in this Chamber. While we have introduced a public order and riot squad—recently doubling its numbers—and given police tough new lock-down powers, the Leader of the Opposition has recklessly promised that they will simply go out and rake in 200 people of Middle Eastern appearance.

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

Mr JOHN WATKINS: We have made real progress. We have removed the presumption of bail for the offences of riot, affray and public disorder. We have reformed double jeopardy. We have introduced new laws with tougher penalties for the cultivation of hydroponically grown cannabis, tough new offences and penalties to crack down on organised gangs, and tougher penalties for animal cruelty offenders. We have protected families at sporting events by banning hooligans, and we have introduced lifetime supervision of lifetime parolees. The Leader of the Opposition is a huge risk to the people of this State.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A number of members on the Opposition benches have decided to embellish question time with a Gregorian chant. If those members have no interest in the proceedings of the Chamber I ask

them to remove themselves from the Chamber and continue their chant elsewhere. The rest of us have a serious job to do. The Minister has the call.

Mr JOHN WATKINS: We have always shown that we will back the New South Wales police—the fine group of men and women who put their lives on the line every day they put on their uniform. The Leader of the Opposition is simply too risky for this State, too risky for the men and women and the families they are endeavouring to protect.

WATER RESTRICTIONS

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that there are just 100 weeks worth of useable water left in Sydney's dams, in the absence of significant rain is the Premier predicting that level four water restrictions will be introduced before or after the March election?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Leader of the Opposition's focus is neither electricity nor water. He is focused on rescuing his unrescuable leadership, to which he hangs by a thread. He asked another question that he desperately hopes will stabilise something that simply can no longer be stabilised. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is there. It is just that David Clarke will not allow it.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition would not know this; he has been too busy having discussions, collecting information or simply gathering the latest rumour and innuendo with child sex offenders. It does not surprise me that he would not know this information. Nevertheless, the metropolitan water plan—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The Opposition appreciates that the standing orders require the Government to tell the truth. Standing Order 138 requires the Premier to explain when he will introduce level four water restrictions.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is answering the question. The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat.

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Wakehurst will resume his seat. Members wish to hear the Premier's response. I call the honourable member for Wakehurst to order for the second time.

Mr David Barr: Point of order: The question is predicated on the assumption that the Government will win the election next year. Members opposite may have thrown in the towel, but the Independents have not. We all know who the winners will be at the next election, and they will be the Independents.

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

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order: The honourable member for Manly indicated his preference by taking the point of order on the other side of the Chamber.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I do not think the House needs the honourable member for North Shore to point out what was distinctly obvious. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: There he goes again! Just like with electricity—reckless, irresponsible and reprehensible statements from the Leader of the Opposition. It is yet more evidence that he lacks the character to do his current job, let alone to ever be promoted to the position of Premier. Whatever information he requires about water is available in our metropolitan water plan. A whole range of measures will ensure that Sydney's water supply is secure for the foreseeable future.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: The question is simple: level four restrictions before or after the election?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call. I call Government members to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Sydney's water supply is secure for the foreseeable future because of the metropolitan water plan, which secures a whole range of measures, including a massive increase in recycling from six billion litres to 15 billion litres, then to 70 billion litres by 2015. Those projects are already under way. Australia's biggest industrial recycling scheme is under way at BlueScope in the Illawarra; the button has been pushed and it is under way. Australia's largest residential recycling scheme is under way at Rouse Hill.

Mr John Watkins: Massive!

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Deputy Premier rightly says that it is massive. There will also be a massive scheme at Camellia when the expressions of interest process is concluded. Those measures are all part of the investment that is taking place to lift recycling from six billion litres to 15 billion litres, and then to 70 billion litres. Other measures include deepwater access in our dams, groundwater and the water efficiency savings fund, which is for local council and local community projects to replace precious drinking water with recycled water on golf courses, and in parks and gardens across Sydney. The metropolitan water plan guarantees Sydney's water supplies for the foreseeable future. The Leader of the Opposition has asked about water restrictions on many occasions, and the response remains the same.

The fact is that the Coalition has no plan. What would a Coalition Government do to secure Sydney's water supply? The answer is nothing. Why? Because David Clarke has not yet told members opposite. That is the reason. Liberal members have been too busy fighting the unrestrained elements in their party. That is why they do not have a plan or a policy. Today the Leader of the Opposition has simply confirmed everything that has happened over the past fortnight. He is reckless and irresponsible. He will say and do anything just to get a headline. We knew that before the attack on the Attorney General. That is all he has done today, in the last question time before the Parliament rises.

He is simply incapable. He has been promising a water plan for 12 months, but he has not produced one single word. He criticises the Government, but what would he do? The simple fact is that he cannot produce it because he is incapable of taking the time to develop any policy. We know that he cannot exercise proper judgment. All he can do is take the word of the first person who walks through his door. Unfortunately for him, last week that was a convicted child sex offender. The Leader of the Opposition's problem is that that demonstrated how much judgment he lacks and why he should never be considered as an alternative Premier. There is still no withdrawal and no apology to the Attorney. The Leader of the Opposition is still without integrity and character. He still does not have the authority, the leadership or the power to run his party, let alone run New South Wales.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The Premier should comply with Standing Order No. 139, which requires honourable members not to debate the issues. We are happy to debate the issue because we want—

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

[*Interruption*]

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

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Mr STEVE WHAN: I direct my question to the Minister for Education and Training. What is the latest information about the new direction for education in New South Wales and related matters?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I thank the honourable member for Monaro for his interest in education and training. The Labor Government has a very proud record of achievement in education. It understands the fundamental importance of education and of vibrant public schools in New South Wales. It has strengthened public education.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much interjection and calling out. I warn honourable members that if they are ejected today, it could have dire consequences, this being the last day of sitting. The Minister has the call.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Government has strengthened public education and better equipped New South Wales for the challenges of the twenty-first century by almost doubling investment for each student, delivering smaller class sizes in the early years and employing an additional 2,200 classroom teachers and 4,500 support staff. This Government has boosted the pay of experienced teachers by 78 per cent, built 79 new schools, invested more than \$3 billion in upgrading existing facilities and more than doubled the school maintenance budget. It has also increased annual funding for technology initiatives tenfold, connected every school to the Internet and delivered almost 250,000 new computers.

The Government has established Australia's first professional organisation for teachers—the Institute of Teachers—to oversee accreditation and teaching standards. It has strengthened the State's world-class end-of-school credential, the Higher School Certificate, implemented a suite of sophisticated, world-class testing programs, more than doubled funding for students with special needs, tripled funding for literacy and numeracy programs and established the \$16-million Priority Action Schools Program to support the State's most disadvantaged students. These reforms and this extra investment are underpinned by the most rigorous and well-regarded curriculum in Australia.

Commentators and education experts alike acknowledge that New South Wales has a gold standard curriculum. Importantly, this Government also understands that the curriculum cannot stand still; it must continue to evolve with changing educational, economic and social circumstances. That is why the Government has simplified the primary school curriculum by placing a renewed focus on the basics—numeracy and literacy skills—made the study of history compulsory for high school students and is the only State that has introduced a mandatory civics and citizenship test in year 10. The Government has also provided significant opportunities for students to undertake vocational education and to prepare for the world of work.

I assure the House that, despite the magnitude of its achievements, the Lemma Government continues to reform and invest. In just 15 months the Government has addressed the maintenance backlog and initiated the largest ever school building program, announced the creation of the State's first 10 trades schools, introduced new plain English student reports to provide parents with clearer and more easily understood information and reaffirmed the important values of respect and responsibility. Coupled with extra investment, these reforms are improving educational standards.

The reading skills of our 15-year-olds rank second only to Finland. In the latest international *Trends in Mathematics and Science Study*, New South Wales was ranked first in Australia in year 8 maths and science. This year the numeracy results achieved by our year 5 students were the best on record. The literacy results were also an improvement on last year. Not only are our students consistently outperforming their interstate and overseas peers but the community also recognises that fact. As acknowledged in this week's AC Nielsen poll, the community has confidence in this Government's stewardship of this crucial area of public policy. More importantly, the community recognises the risk that honourable members opposite pose to education in New South Wales. If the Leader of the Opposition had his way, education in New South Wales would be decimated. Members opposite should hang their heads in shame about their funding record.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation on both sides of the Chamber.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: When honourable members opposite were in government, New South Wales had the lowest per capita education spending of any State. That is a shameful record. In addition, they closed 74 schools and slashed 2,000 teachers from the public school system. They sacked teachers, closed schools and underinvested in the education in New South Wales. We do not forget things like the *Daily Telegraph* headline in August 1988: "Chaos: It's just the beginning". We know that it would all be repeated should honourable members opposite ever gain the Treasury benches. The Leader of the Opposition has a policy to slash 29,000 public sector jobs in New South Wales.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The education sector's share of those 29,000 jobs would be 7,500 teachers, support staff, and those working in curriculum development, testing and assessment. The class size reduction program would go and kindergarten class sizes would rocket from 19 to 25.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The number of students in year 1 classes would increase from 21 to 28 and year 2 class sizes would increase from 24 to a massive 32. The New South Wales community cannot afford this; it cannot afford the risk that honourable members opposite pose to education in New South Wales. Education is simply too important.

ROUSE HILL HIGH SCHOOL

Mr STEVEN PRINGLE: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Education and Training.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Hawkesbury will be heard in silence.

Mr STEVEN PRINGLE: When will the development application for the proposed Rouse Hill high school be submitted, and what temporary arrangements are being considered so that students can be educated locally?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I know the provision of a high school at Rouse Hill is close to the heart of the honourable member for Hawkesbury. I had the opportunity recently to meet with members of the community whom the member brought to meet me. The Government is working hard to meet the schooling demands of the expanding population in the greater Sydney area. Understandably, the Rouse Hill community wants to ensure that the educational needs of local children are adequately addressed. The Government is committed to building 19 schools through two major infrastructure projects. The first nine schools are open. One of those schools is a new primary school, Ironbark Ridge Public School at Rouse Hill. At the meeting with the honourable member for Hawkesbury and his constituents I received very positive feedback indeed about that school, its achievements and the fantastic education it was providing for students.

Mr Michael Richardson: Point of order: I want to indicate that Ironbark Ridge is in my electorate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister for Education and Training has the call.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: How relevant is that? What a fantastic contribution! The constituents who came to see me were still sending their children there. They were not going to talk to the honourable member for The Hills because they know they will get no service from him. They have to go to the honourable member for Hawkesbury to have their issues raised. They know where they will get an outcome.

Mr Steven Pringle: Point of order: Ironbark Ridge Public School is in the Hawkesbury electorate. It is right on the border. It is in my electorate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government and Opposition members will come to order. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I am happy to provide the honourable member for The Hills with a list of the schools in his electorate if he needs it. With regard to a high school at Rouse Hill, I am advised that the Department of Education and Training is currently in discussion with the local council to facilitate the earliest possible lodgment of a development application. I point out that the construction phase of a high school is considerable.

Mr Wayne Merton: Point of order: There may be some confusion about Ironbark Ridge but there is no confusion about Crestwood Public School.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Baulkham Hills will resume his seat. The Minister for Education and Training has the call.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The construction phase is considerable and can only occur following detailed preparation, in which the department is currently engaged. The department will work closely with the Rouse Hill community to provide local schooling to children in the Rouse Hill area. Children from the Rouse Hill catchment area are currently included in the Riverstone High School campus of Wyndham College. I assure the honourable member for Hawkesbury that the department is committed to delivering this world-class educational facility to the Rouse Hill community as scheduled.

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Ms TANYA GADIEL: My question without notice is to the Minister for Community Services. What is the latest information on the new direction for community services in New South Wales, and related matters?

Ms REBA MEAGHER: As Parliament draws to a close the job of protecting the State's most vulnerable children carries on. The Iemma Government is getting on with the job of building the strongest possible network of care for vulnerable children and families across New South Wales. We are rolling out our \$1.2 billion reform program to build the best child protection system in the country. When it is fully implemented we will have created an additional 1,025 caseworker positions. That will double our front-line capacity. These caseworkers are being deployed across the care spectrum to deliver the best possible results—354 in early intervention, 375 in child protection and 300 in out-of-home care.

Central to the new direction of the Iemma Government's child protection system is the early intervention program. Early intervention is helping families to tackle problems early, before a crisis develops. Early intervention uses specialist caseworkers who are trained to work with families to identify their strengths and needs, as well as to link them to vital support services. Early intervention is a critical element of our reform because it seeks to stop child abuse and neglect before it starts. Early intervention is about quality child care. It is about giving young children the educational and social experience they need to succeed at school. It is about parenting programs that help parents develop the skills and knowledge they need to better look after their children. It is about home visiting to help parents and children deal with day-to-day issues in their own homes. Those services are co-ordinated by trained caseworkers who can help families access other specialist help such as accommodation and counselling services.

The Iemma Government is providing \$130 million for early intervention services across New South Wales and recruiting an extra 350 early intervention caseworkers. It does not end there. To accommodate new caseworkers and other front-line staff, more than 80 community services centres across the State are being relocated, expanded, refitted and reconfigured. Fully resourced enhanced service delivery sites have been rolled out at Maitland, Tweed Heads, Gosford and Shellharbour. Another 20 sites will be upgraded this financial year in Bathurst, Parramatta, Raymond Terrace and Sutherland. The Iemma Government will spend more than \$23 million on those upgrades alone. They will give the families and the caseworkers who use those facilities the best possible conditions in which to do a very difficult job.

The Iemma Government is caring for the needs of more than 10,000 children and young people in New South Wales who are unable to live at home safely—kids who have been denied a loving and nurturing start in life; kids that deserve a better go. Our \$613 million investment in supporting children in out-of-home care offers those children the hope of a better life. The Iemma Government has also recognised the invaluable work of foster carers by greatly increasing their allowances. It was the Iemma Government that gave foster carers the most generous allowances anywhere in the country.

Department of Community Services [DOCS] staff do a very good job in complex and often distressing circumstances. I take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for that commitment. Quite often DOCS workers will come to the attention of the media and the public when things go wrong, but they do not often get the recognition they deserve for the contribution they make in saving children's lives every day. It is recognition that should be afforded them by this Parliament and by the community generally. There is not a child protection system in the world that can solve every family's problems or save every child, but the Iemma Government is determined to build the strongest child protection system possible.

We do that while members opposite embark on a muckraking campaign to traduce the reputations of members sitting on the Government side of the House. We are getting on with the job of governing New South Wales and members opposite have never applied themselves to the real policy debate involving families and children in New South Wales. The measure of integrity of any individual or any society is how far we are prepared to go to assist those more vulnerable than ourselves. It is on that simple measure that the Leader of the Opposition stands condemned. He stands condemned on that measure because he has made \$25 billion worth of unfunded promises to every interest group that has knocked on his door, but every time I have asked him to make a promise to the children of New South Wales, that request has been met by cold and hardhearted indifference.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The Minister for Community Services has the call.

Ms REBA MEAGHER: The Leader of the Opposition stands by his policy with cold and calculating ruthlessness.

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

Ms REBA MEAGHER: The Leader of the Opposition is nodding. His policy is to cut \$700 million from the Department of Community Services, reduce staffing by 675 caseworkers and dismantle the child sexual assault investigation units. That is what he stands for.

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

Ms REBA MEAGHER: The Leader of the Opposition will make \$25 billion worth of promises to every interest group in this State, but he will not stump up the cash for kids. He stands condemned on that point. One would think that a conservative party with religious values like the one opposite would be interested in family policy. Over the 20 months that I have been the Minister for Community Services they have had five shadow spokespersons and not one of them has asked me a question about family policy in New South Wales. They wrap themselves in the cloak of family values, but they are charlatans. They are only interested in muckraking and trying to buy their way onto this side of the House. The Leader of the Opposition is too great a risk for the children of New South Wales. The children cannot come and knock on his door and ask for help. They will never have the privilege or opportunity to do that. It is the measure of the conscience of a man that he provides a service and network of care for the vulnerable. The Leader of the Opposition will not do that. He is reckless, hardhearted and indifferent.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! A number of members are deliberately attempting to disrupt the proceedings. I remind members that being removed from the Chamber today could have dire consequences, as this is the last sitting day and Parliament will not resume until after the election. Any member who is removed could remain outside the precincts of Parliament until after the election. Question time will be completed in an orderly and proper way.

ASPIRATIONAL GOVERNMENT PROJECTS

Mr PETER DEBNAM: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier said, "Well, Action for Transport contained a number of specific projects and then there were aspirational projects", after 12 years of broken promises will he now tell the people of New South Wales whether the north-west rail link, the dual carriageway on the Pacific Highway and the northern beaches hospital are aspirational projects?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: That question sums up why the Leader of the Opposition's leadership hangs by a thread.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Government members will not engage in private conversation with Opposition members. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Leader of the Opposition's party would love to get rid of him, but they stick with him because there is no-one else with the ticker who will stand up. The party does not respect him or want to follow him, but it stays with him. The Leader of the Opposition's question sums up why the only thing that stands between him and oblivion is David Clarke.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. Are the projects specific or aspirational? Which are they? The Premier nominated aspirational projects. Which ones are aspirational?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier will be allowed to answer the question.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Government has aspirations, ambition and vision for the people of New South Wales. The answer to the question is: yes, yes, yes. Do we have a vision for the people of New South Wales? Yes. We make no apologies for having ambitions for the people of New South Wales. In 12 months the Leader of the Opposition has not been able to come up with one single policy that represents a vision for the people of New South Wales. He has a grab bag of promises that will cost more than \$25 billion and a promise to get rid of 29,000 public sector workers, which puts more pressure on nurses, teachers and police.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: As the Parliament draws to a close, that is all the Leader of the Opposition has been able to come up with—and, of course, W26. The Leader of the Opposition's question sums up why it is

that his leadership hangs by a thread and why that lot would love to get rid of him. The fact is there is no-one with the ticker to take on the leadership. The only thing that stands between him and oblivion is David Clarke, because David Clarke will never, ever wear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition as leader. My vote goes to Bazza. Come in, BOF!

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The Premier is not giving an answer to the question. On the last day of the sittings of Parliament you would think the Premier would try to answer a single question.

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

[Interruption]

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

STATE PLAN

Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO: My question is directed to the Premier. How will the Government's new direction for New South Wales continue to improve services, deliver solutions and support hard-working families, and related matters?

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The honourable member for Penrith is doing her job. As the Fifty-third Parliament comes to an end and we prepare to face the judgment of the electorate, the last two weeks have provided everything the voters need to know about the choice that lies ahead. It was already a clear choice between a Government spending prudently on the areas that matter, services for people, and an Opposition that has recklessly piled up \$25 billion worth of glib, glossy promises.

[Interruption]

They include light rail. I am pleased the honourable member for Willoughby mentioned that. She has provided another clear choice between us and them. We will not upset the people of the inner west. Thousands of people who rely on buses would have to come into the city, get off at Central and then get onto the light rail, at extra cost. It will be more expensive and involve a double change in transport mode.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Willoughby will cease calling out.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The answer to the interjection from the honourable member for Willoughby is, "No, we will not do that to the people of Sydney." In contrast, the Opposition offers glib, glossy promises, including the light rail, worth more than \$25 billion. Those promises are unfunded, unaffordable and undeliverable.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Opposition's grab bag of crowd-pleasing promises will pull our triple-A credit rating out from under the people of New South Wales. That is very clear, and it has become more so in the past fortnight. The events of recent days have made the choice even more stark. It is a choice between a Government getting on with the job and an Opposition wallowing in the gutter, peddling smear and innuendo.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 138, which relates to relevance. The question was about new directions. As to electricity and blackouts, I offer this to the Premier—

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

[Interruption]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of The Nationals to order for the third time. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: The Opposition is peddling smear and innuendo, courting the views of a convicted paedophile and defaming a good, decent man, the Attorney General, without a shred of evidence to back up their claims. As the Parliament comes to a close, there is still no backup, no backdown, no apology, no

withdrawal. When the Leader of the Opposition was not busy spreading lies and slander, he was bunkered down hiding from the media. He knew his sources were devoid of substance.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Requests to repeat his smear outside the cowards' castle drew the following responses: "No comment", "I'm not going to answer that", and "That's not a matter for you." Those were his responses at his very few appearances in the press. During those infamous four days he responded, "No comment", "I'm not going to go into that", "That's not for me to say", "I'll wait until Parliament resumes", "I don't have an answer on that", and "I'm not going to answer that question. You can ask it, but I'm not going to answer it." They were the infamous responses to four infamous days because he knew if he had repeated his smear outside the House he would have been landed with a defamation writ for having slandered a good, decent, honest man. The choice has become even more stark in recent times.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order and resume their seats. A number of members are on various calls to order. I now deem all those members to be on three calls.

[*Interruption*]

Mr SPEAKER: Order! That warning applies to Government members as well. The Premier has the call.

[*Interruption*]

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Back in the old days the honourable member for Myall Lakes used to have a sense of humour. It must grate on him that he has had to spend his best years wallowing in Opposition. The choice is clear: a Government that backs working families and stands up to Canberra or an Opposition that will sell out those families and roll over to John Howard's every wish. It is the choice between a Government that backs the public sector and public services and believes in the power of the public sector to provide services for all, no matter where they come from—their income level or their socioeconomic background—and an Opposition that wants to gut the public sector and tear the Department of Community Services to pieces again, just as it did when the Coalition was last in office. It is the choice between a Government that represents ordinary families and an out-of-touch leader heading a hate-filled and divided party. They sit there with their hatred and their division, plotting the downfall of the next member—a party under assault from right-wing extremists.

Meanwhile, we on this side of the House are getting on with the job because we know that there is much more to be done. Progress has been made in 15 months, but there is much more to be done. In contrast, the Opposition is distracted by the unrestrained war that is taking place within its ranks; it is distracted by sleaze. The achievements of the past week demonstrate that the Government is getting on with the job and the Opposition is mired in smear. The Government's agenda is positive: extra resources for police, a new justice precinct at Parramatta, extra services for Westmead Hospital and the commencement of the biggest redevelopment of that hospital, construction of a new power station, securing the jobs of steel workers, driving investment and jobs—all in the last couple of weeks.

The Government is getting the State moving and delivering services for the people of New South Wales. That is the sort of investment they expect, and the Government is delivering. That is in addition to the progress that has been made in the past 15 months: the abolition of the vendor duty, establishing trade schools, a new direction in education, after-hours general practitioners at public hospitals, and 750 police ready to hit the front line in January. There has been a massive injection of resources, giving new hope to people with mental illness and a disability. Topping it all off is a big win for the victims of James Hardie's asbestos. In other words, a Labor Government getting on with the job.

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

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: It is what Ben Chifley called "the light on the hill". It is all about delivering compassion, decency and a fair go to those in our community who are most in need.

Mr Peter Debnam: Point of order: As you know, under Standing Order 67, this is tedious repetition. We have been listening for 12 years—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: Tedious repetition is the purview of those Opposition members who are briefing and providing background material to the journalists in the gallery and in the corridors. That is tedious repetition. Tedious repetition is, "Geez, I wish we could get rid of him, but we just can't, because no one has the ticker to stand up to him." That is tedious repetition. Members opposite might find it tedious to inject \$2 billion into mental health and disabilities, but we do not.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Point of order: In view of the number of Government members yawning and having discussions, they are clearly bored—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr MORRIS IEMMA: As I said, the Government is delivering decency, compassion and a fair go for all. The Parliament ends today but our efforts will continue—good, fair, decent policies for a good, fair, decent New South Wales. We serve the people and we will accept the people's judgment. It is their election, it is the time for them to have their say, and we will give them real and defined choices.

Questions without notice concluded.

HARRY'S PARK, MILSONS POINT

Ministerial Statement

Ms SANDRA NORI (Port Jackson—Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation, Minister for Women, and Minister Assisting the Minister for State Development) [3.45 p.m.]: I welcome the announcement that Mrs Penelope Seidler has reached agreement with Luna Park Sydney Pty Limited today to convert the cliff-top site at Milsons Point into a public park. Luna Park will forgo developing the site, which will be converted into a park. Mrs Seidler will pay Luna Park \$5 million and carry out the initial landscaping of the park. That agreement follows a recent meeting between me, my colleague the Minister for Planning, Mrs Penelope Seidler and Luna Park Sydney Pty Limited. The park will be known as Harry's Park in memory of Mrs Seidler's late husband, the architect Harry Seidler.

Luna Park and the Luna Park Reserve Trust have also provided a covenant that the site will be maintained as a public park. Completion of the arrangement is subject to the successful subdivision of the Luna Park cliff-top site, and the approval of the Luna Park Reserve Trust and relevant New South Wales Government Ministers. Those matters are being progressed. Luna Park acquired a 99-year-lease on the site as part of its \$75 million investment into the development of the Luna Park fun park, which reopened in 2004. The site occupies an area of 575.5 square metres, bordering on Glen Street. Luna Park will maintain the park and has committed to landscaping and maintaining a further 1640.1 square metres of land on the cliff-top area overlooking Luna Park, which will have public access. Luna Park will also maintain and protect four heritage-listed fig trees.

With that I conclude my contribution to the New South Wales Parliament after 19 years in March. I thank my colleagues on this side of the House. I have a few colleagues on the opposite side and I have had a few fun moments with some members opposite, in the nicest possible way. I thank my mum, my late stepdad, my kids and my former husband for all the help they have given me over the past 19 years. It has not always been easy, and this is why I did not want to make a valedictory speech. I conclude by saying that today was the easiest question time I have ever taken part in. I was extremely nervous in the beginning, but members opposite were not smart enough to work that out. I cannot leave this place without saying that there has been no question relating to tourism addressed to a Minister for Tourism since 17 June 1997. I say to my Labor colleagues, "Please door-knock hard. Forgive me, because I will not be joining you, but please make sure that you come back because I could not stand it if anyone opposite got hold of the tourism portfolio."

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore) [3.48 p.m.]: I speak as a person who has, over many years, expressed my concern about Luna Park, and in particular about the cliff-top site overlooking Luna Park. It is interesting that the Minister for Planning is interjecting, because much of this statement will be directed at him. On behalf of the community I am delighted that that area will be a park and that it will be called Harry's Park. There are many questions to be answered in relation to this.

Why does Penelope Seidler have to pay \$5 million for a site that is already owned by the public? Why does an individual have to pay for something to be regained by the public that was already owned by the public? Why has Multiplex been involved in negotiations for the sale of this site? How much did Multiplex pay Luna Park, the Minister for Planning and others for this site? Is it true that a \$1 peppercorn rent was paid by Multiplex for this site? And who is getting the \$5 million that Penelope Seidler is paying for this site? These are questions that this Government must answer. I find it appalling that this has been the subject of a ministerial statement at the eleventh hour of this Parliament and that this will become a matter that is referred to another body for investigation, because my constituents have been asking this question on many occasions in this Parliament through the estimates committee process for years.

Mr Frank Sartor: Is this your idea of how to be gracious, is it? You are a congenital malcontent. You have got to learn not to be so angry.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Come forward and explain, Frank. Have you got the money? Where has the money gone? [*Time expired.*]

RETIREMENT VILLAGES DRAFT LEGISLATION

Ministerial Statement

Ms DIANE BEAMER (Mulgoa—Minister for Western Sydney, Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Commerce) [3.51 p.m.]: By leave I table the Retirement Villages Amendment Bill as an exposure draft for consultation.

Exposure draft bill tabled.

New South Wales has more than 750 retirement villages, which are home to more than 40,000 residents. In the main they are wonderful places to live in: tight-knit communities of elderly citizens who have sought a quieter life. Retirement village residents should be able to live in the comfort and knowledge that their rights are protected and their future is secure. The Government enacted the Retirement Villages Act in 1999 to achieve this, and a statutory review of the Act has been conducted. Earlier this year I announced that the Government had endorsed a range of new policy directions following the review. These new directions will deliver significant benefits to both residents and operators, but particularly the residents, many of whom are vulnerable, are on limited incomes, or are afraid to speak up.

Over the past year I have had the great pleasure of visiting many retirement villages right across the State. During this time I met with more than 1,000 residents and operators who are, in the main, supportive of the direction the Iemma Government is heading with these laws: stronger rights for residents and a reduction of red tape for village operators. I look forward to many more visits. These reforms are extensive and complex in their scope, and so the Government has decided to first make available a consultation draft. The bill I have tabled today gives effect to the Government's new directions.

The Government is committed to finalising these reforms as quickly as possible. Among the many major improvements, significant elements of the consultation bill include provisions to improve the disclosure of information to incoming residents; a new settling-in period so new residents can decide whether village life is what they want; greater security of resident contributions; limiting the continuation of charges once a resident leaves; reducing red tape for operators by simplifying accounting and budget procedures; clarifying the responsibility for maintenance and budget deficits; improving safety procedures, including annual safety inspections; and improving dispute resolution procedures. The Iemma Government's reforms will improve certainty for residents and assist operators in running happy and well-managed villages. The bill will be available on the Fair Trading web site for interested people to review, and I look forward to receiving comments from all interested parties.

Mrs Judy Hopwood: Point of order: My point of order is that the Minister is a little bit too late to help the people of Woolcott Court or the rest of the State.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! There is not a point of order. The honourable member for Hornsby will resume her seat.

Mr JOHN TURNER (Myall Lakes) [3.54 p.m.]: The honourable member for Hornsby has set out clearly in her point of order the very problem with the bill that the Minister has tabled. If it were not for the honourable member for Hornsby the Woolcott matter would never have been resolved. This bill could have resolved Woolcott, yet it is being tabled as an exposure draft bill in the last minutes of this Parliament. This bill is the result of a statutory requirement to review the Act. The review was undertaken in 2004; the report was released in March 2005 with 50 recommendations; and a joint submission was made by all interested parties from the not-for-profit organisations and residents.

That was submitted to the Government more than a year ago and other submissions have been received, yet another year has gone by. This situation has been ongoing from 2004 to 2006 and the Minister still cannot introduce the legislation. As I said last week in a press release issued on this matter: lazy, lazy, lazy. There is no excuse for this legislation not being introduced during these sittings. Everybody wants it; everybody is talking off the same sheet. So why has the Minister not been able to introduce it? This is important legislation. There are 750 retirement villages housing 40,000 residents.

Mrs Judy Hopwood: Where is she?

Mr JOHN TURNER: Yes, where is the Minister? The key words in her speech were that these people are vulnerable. Yet for 2½, nearly three, years, she has ignored these vulnerable people who want this legislation that will protect them and will give village operators a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The legislation will ensure that things like deficits, which are a worry for these elderly people, will be clarified; it will require disclosure documents to be put forward to these people; and it sets out new improved safety procedures. Yet, this Minister could not introduce this legislation even after 2½ years—close to the life of this session of Parliament.

The Minister has had the carriage of this legislation and through sheer incompetence she has not been able to introduce it. This is typical of the Government. It is lazy, it is arrogant, and it is tired. It has been 12 years in government and this action epitomises how this Government works; it epitomises this Minister; and it epitomises the Government's entire front bench. They are leaving vulnerable people at risk of being thrown out of their homes—as we saw at Woolcott. Thanks to the great work of the honourable member for Hornsby some compromises were made with Woolcott. It took the Opposition to take the first step with Woolcott: it took the honourable member for Hornsby to do that, not the Minister. Yet this legislation is tabled as an exposure draft, and goodness knows what will happen during the time it sits there. That is not good enough; it exemplifies the 12 lazy years of this tired, arrogant Government—leaving vulnerable people exposed to risk in retirement villages.

DEPARTMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2005-2006

Motion by Mr David Campbell agreed to:

That if the House is not sitting, the reports of the department of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliamentary Joint Services for the year ended 30 June 2006 be received by the Speaker and printed with the authority of the House.

PRINTING OF PAPERS

Motion, by leave, by Mr David Campbell agreed to:

That the following papers be printed:

Report of the State Electoral Office on the Legislative Assembly District of Macquarie Fields by-election held 17 September 2005

Report of the State Electoral Office on the Legislative Assembly District of Maroubra by-election held 17 September 2005

Report of the State Electoral Office on the Legislative Assembly District of Marrickville by-election held 17 September 2005

Report of the State Electoral Office on the Legislative Assembly District of Pittwater by-election held 26 November 2005

Half Yearly Report of the State Water Corporation for the period ended 31 December 2004

Half Yearly Report of the Superannuation Administration Corporation, trading as Pillar Administration, for the period ended 31 December 2005

Half Yearly Report of the Sydney Ferries Corporation for the period ended 31 December 2005

Half Yearly Report of the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation for the period ended 31 December 2005

Report of the Wild Dog Destruction Board for 2005

Government Response to the recommendations contained in the Public Accounts Committee's Report entitled "Value for Money from NSW Correctional Centres"

Report of the Lake Illawarra Authority for the year ended 31 March 2006
 Report of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for 2005
 Report of the Animal Research Review Panel for the year ended 30 June 2005
 Report of the Professional Standards Council for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the New South Wales Bar Association for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of Riverina Citrus for the year ended 30 April 2006
 Report of the New South Wales Grains Board for the period 1 September 1999 to 9 November 2000
 Report of the New South Wales Grains Board for the period 10 November 2000 to 23 October 2001
 Report of the New South Wales Grains Board for the period 24 October 2001 to 30 September 2005
 Report of the Attorney General's Department for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Legal Profession Admission Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Lord Howe Island Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of Privacy NSW for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Public Trustee for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Zoological Parks Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Rental Bond Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Authority for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Nature Conservation Trust of NSW for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report on the Administration of Agricultural Statutory Authorities for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Health Foundation for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the New South Wales Medical Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Institute of Psychiatry for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Cancer Institute NSW for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Anti-Discrimination Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Art Gallery of New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Australian Museum for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Legal Aid Commission for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Office of the Legal Services Commissioner for year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Department of Local Government for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Department of Juvenile Justice for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Department of Lands for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Library Council of New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the New South Wales Film and Television Office for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Local Government Grants Commission for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Protective Commissioner and Public Guardian for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Serious Offenders Review Council for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Natural Resources Commission for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Community Relations Commission for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Cabinet Office including the Parliamentary Counsel's Office for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Department of State and Regional Development for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Department of Community Services for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of NSWbusinesslink and NSW Businesslink Pty Ltd for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the NSW Food Authority (parts one and two) for the year ended 30 June 2006

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business: Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL (Keira—Minister for Water Utilities, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for the Illawarra) [3.57 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) provide for the following routine of business for the remainder of this sitting:
 - (a) motions for urgent consideration
 - (b) the giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices)
 - (c) consideration of General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 231 standing in the name of the member for Heffron, with one Government speaker followed by one non-government speaker for up to 10 minutes each
 - (d) private members' statements;

- (2) allow private members' statements to be interrupted at any time for consideration of messages from the Legislative Council;
- (3) if necessary, allow the House to continue to sit at the conclusion of private members' statements to consider messages from the Legislative Council or for the Speaker to leave the chair for the ringing of one long bell.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.58 p.m.]: I look forward to the motion to be moved by the honourable member for Heffron and I will be speaking to it. But I make the point that again today members on both sides of this place have been denied similar opportunities to raise equally important issues. The way in which this Leader of the House has in such a short time mismanaged this place makes the honourable member for Smithfield look like the saint that he is not. I do not intend to detain the House too long, but the issues raised by the honourable member for Myall Lakes and the honourable member for Hornsby relating to the Mental Health Bill tabled this week demonstrate the mockery that has been made of Parliament.

Significant issues that should be dealt with in a spirit of bipartisanship are ignored or perhaps introduced many months after they were expected to have been dealt with, yet when it suits the Government certain motions can be advanced and the House can continue to sit and other business can simply be set aside. There is no point on the last sitting day of Parliament before the election on 24 March in seeking to oppose the motion, because, at the end of the day, to do so would simply make it harder for legislation that has been progressing through this place to be passed into law. This motion, yesterday's motion, and the motions moved by the Leader of the House over the past two weeks—more suspensions of standing orders than had been moved in the entirety of the last Parliament—demonstrate that the Government not only cannot manage Parliament but cannot manage the State.

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 120 (1) (a), which states:

The Members giving the notices shall be permitted to make statements of up to 5 minutes so the House may establish the priority of such matters.

We have not had a definitive ruling. I ask that you take advice from the Clerk so we know that Standing Order 120 (1) (a) will be applied in the way it is written and that Government members will not take points of order. We will abide by your ruling.

Mr David Campbell: This is boring repetition.

Mr Andrew Fraser: It is a standing order, you clown. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask you to rule according to the standing order.

Mr David Campbell: It is desperation.

Mr Andrew Fraser: It is not desperation. You have to learn the standing orders.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! When the contributions are made the honourable member for Coffs Harbour will receive the answer he wants. There is no point in asking hypothetical questions in relation to the standing orders. They are very clear.

CONSIDERATION OF URGENT MOTIONS

The Nationals Election Candidates

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [4.03 p.m.]: My motion is urgent and should take priority because there are just four months until the State election and the people of New South Wales need to know where The Nationals stand on issues that are important to rural New South Wales and whether they plan to stand in all the key country seats. The Government has provided many opportunities for The Nationals and the Liberals to present policies for the election but they have failed to do so. They have even failed to stand candidates in some seats. My motion should have priority because people are worried about what is happening to The Nationals. Country Labor members want to give them the opportunity to regain their former status of representatives of country people.

In 1988 The Nationals had 20 representatives in this place; now they have 12. They have allowed the Liberals to take over the seat of Goulburn. Did they just give up that seat or was there any consultation with the Leader of The Nationals? The Nationals will not run a candidate in Bega, Albury, Wagga Wagga, South Coast

or Kiama. Supposedly the candidates for Monaro and the Tweed are ashamed to admit that they are Nationals; they call themselves Coalition candidates. My motion should take priority because this could be the last chance the Legislative Assembly will have to hear from The Nationals as a party because quite possibly at the next election they will fall below the level needed for party status.

I will not talk about the Liberal Party today because people in New South Wales already know that the Liberals are a joke and that the Liberal Party is riddled with division. That matter does not need to take priority. The Liberal Party front bench is a bit like going to the show and seeing the clowns: "Roll up. Every child wins a prize." Everyone gets a turn on the front bench, except the poor member for Lane Cove. Government members cannot understand why that is the case, but we have sympathy for him. My motion is important. There is a threat from the Independents. The honourable member for Bega has a lot to say in this place, but the former mayor of Bega is opposing him.

[*Interruption*]

I opened the Queanbeyan show last year. We hear a lot of interjections from the honourable member for Burrinjuck, who this morning demonstrated The Nationals' great knowledge of their electorates by thanking and congratulating a principal who left the school two years ago. That showed her great knowledge of her electorate. The Nationals should be given the opportunity to tell people why they did not stand up to Canberra on deregulation of the dairy industry and the rice industry, why they did not lobby for exceptional circumstances assistance, or lobby against moves to undermine the quarantine system. They must say why they have not spoken up against interest rate rises, petrol pricing, GST, and groundwater, and why they are going along with the Liberal Party's plans to sack 29,000 public servants.

I need to speak about the great Country Labor candidates. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour is waving. I hear he has a strong mayor opposing him. David Kennedy, a Country Labor candidate, will give him a good run for his money. We need to hear more from the Coalition than we have heard in the last few weeks—the grubby smears, the innuendo, the grotty plans—and particularly whether The Nationals will run candidates in all their seats. [*Time expired.*]

State Infrastructure

Mr PETER DEBNAM (Vaucluse—Leader of the Opposition) [4.08 p.m.]: I am pleased to follow Oncer Whan, who has just demonstrated why the Government is in trouble. He just stands up and abuses; it is all rhetoric and no substance. That is why I wish to move a motion condemning the Government for failing infrastructure over 12 years of Labor. That is the point. When I came into Parliament about 13 years ago people fought State elections on health, education, law and order. In 2006, in the lead-up to March 2007, people are still talking about health, education and law and order, but right up at the top they are talking about infrastructure. Why?

The standing order I used in question time dealt with tedious repetition. The fact is that the Government simply talks about projects but never delivers them. In New South Wales 13 years ago people did not use the term "infrastructure" when talking about State issues. If they did, they asked what issues we were referring to, rail or road? Now everybody uses the term "infrastructure". Whether they are in Bourke, Bondi, Tweed or Albury they are talking about how after 12 years the Labor Government has failed to deliver infrastructure. It is a fact of life that when people in New South Wales now talk about infrastructure they feel there is a great sense of urgency to do something about it, and the first thing they must do is throw out this Government.

Ms Linda Burney: There has been record spending on schools!

Mr PETER DEBNAM: The honourable member for Canterbury refers to record spending on schools. Does she know why the community talks about infrastructure in schools? Because there is a backlog of \$114 million in school maintenance. I did not believe the Government would go to the election—

Mr Gerard Martin: Point of order: Once again the Leader of the Opposition is not arguing priority. He is trying to debate the substance of the urgency motion. He must establish priority, not debate the substance of the motion. Obviously he is a slow learner.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Leader of the Opposition has finished his preliminary remarks and will return to establishing priority.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: I did not believe that the Government would go to the election with a \$114 million backlog in school maintenance, but it is. I thought the Government would commit the June budget to clearing that backlog in the eight months before the election. It did not. The Minister said the backlog would be cleared over the next four years, which means that it will never be cleared. That is why the community is angry. People in the Canterbury electorate are angry; people in every electorate are angry.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I remind honourable members that the last time the Coalition was in Government it sacked 2,000 teachers. Remember Terry Metherell? Remember the protests?

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Canterbury will resume her seat. That is not a point of order.

Mr PETER DEBNAM: People are especially concerned about water infrastructure because there is a prolonged drought across country New South Wales. There is a water crisis in metropolitan areas, especially the Central Coast, and in many rural areas, and the Government simply has not done anything about it. That is why I keep making the point that a Coalition government would declare a state of emergency on water. Why? Because there is no shortage of measures that can be taken to alleviate the water crisis across New South Wales. The Government is simply not doing anything. It is paralysed by the bloated bureaucracy it has built up over 12 years—it loves that bureaucracy. A Coalition government would declare a state of emergency on water, and it would cut straight through.

A Coalition government would ensure that we begin drought-proofing New South Wales—something the Labor Government has not considered in 12 years. We will also address the roads that the Government has failed to invest in. People feel a sense of betrayal because the Labor Government has failed to upgrade roads across New South Wales. Their sense of betrayal is greatest on water because they know that the Government's incompetence has effectively changed their lifestyle. That is the problem. But it is not just water, roads and rail; there are also problems with schools and hospitals. Many people across New South Wales who go to their local hospital simply cannot believe that the Government has run down hospital infrastructure so much. The Government has simply starved hospitals of dollars at the front line. All the money has gone to the bloated bureaucracy, and that will be corrected.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 71

Ms Allan	Mr Hartcher	Mr Piccoli
Mr Amery	Ms Hay	Mr Price
Ms Andrews	Mr Hazzard	Mr Richardson
Mr Aplin	Mr Hickey	Mr Roberts
Mr Ashton	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Sartor
Ms Beamer	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Scully
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Hunter	Ms Seaton
Mr Black	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Mr Brown	Ms Keneally	Mrs Skinner
Ms Burney	Mr Kerr	Mr Slack-Smith
Mr Cansdell	Mr Lynch	Mr Stewart
Mr Chaytor	Mr McBride	Mr Stoner
Mr Collier	Mr McLeay	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Constance	Ms Meagher	Mr Tink
Mr Corrigan	Ms Megarrity	Mr Tripodi
Mr Crittenden	Mr Merton	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Daley	Mr Mills	Mr R. W. Turner
Ms D'Amore	Mr Morris	Mr Watkins
Mr Fraser	Mr Newell	Mr West
Ms Gadiel	Mr O'Farrell	Mr Whan
Mr Gaudry	Mr Page	Mr Yeadon
Mr George	Mrs Paluzzano	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Gibson	Mr Pearce	Mr Maguire
Mr Greene	Mrs Perry	Mr Martin

Noes, 7

Mr Barr
Mrs Fardell
Mr McTaggart
Ms Moore
Mr Torbay

Tellers,
Mr Draper
Mr Oakeshott

Question resolved in the affirmative.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! In accordance with the resolution the House will now deal with General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

THE NATIONALS ELECTION CANDIDATES**Urgent Motion**

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [4.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the right of the New South Wales Nationals to run a candidate in every seat for the upcoming State election.

I am thrilled that today, for the first time since I arrived in this place, The Nationals have voted to debate an urgency motion I have moved. It is a great note on which to conclude the session. Over the past four years The Nationals have opposed the many urgency motions I have moved about the drought, the Telstra sale and a range of other important issues for country New South Wales that needed to be debated. They voted against debating those motions because they always bow to their city-based Liberal Party masters and do what they tell them to do.

The Nationals now have a terrific opportunity to confirm to the people of New South Wales not only that they want the right to stand candidates in every seat but also that they will stand candidates in all those seats in country New South Wales instead of doing what they have done in Goulburn so far—that is, roll over and allow the Liberals to take over the electorate. The seat of Goulburn has been held by a Nationals representative, the honourable member for Burrinjuck. If The Nationals genuinely want to represent country New South Wales they should be giving the people of Goulburn that option.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: The honourable member for Monaro takes great interest in areas outside his electorate, but he would do much better to focus on issues of health in his electorate.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The honourable member for Burrinjuck will resume her seat. The honourable member for Monaro has the call.

Mr STEVE WHAN: The honourable member for Burrinjuck made a speech earlier and congratulated the principal of a school who left two years ago.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: He did a very good job too.

Mr STEVE WHAN: And he is doing a very good job at Queanbeyan South, which is where he has been for the past two years. This motion is important and I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about The Nationals declining presence all around rural New South Wales. Monaro is a prime example. The Nationals could not find a candidate who lived in Monaro. They had to find one from Burrinjuck. The Opposition has three candidates who live in Burrinjuck running in this election.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I would like it noted in *Hansard* that this is a valedictory speech.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Monaro has the call.

Mr STEVE WHAN: That is up to the standard of the honourable member for Bega—pretty pathetic. The people in the south-east have noted his elevation to the Opposition front bench, as a sop to the moderates in the party, who will be gone when the Right have the numbers after the next election. The honourable member could be the shortest-lived frontbencher. He will have sat on the front bench for three days, and that will be about it I would say.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance.

Mr STEVE WHAN: The leader of the moderates.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Don't use unparliamentary language about me. My point of order relates to relevance. I find a bit rich what is coming from the member who was replaced by the honourable member for Wollongong as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. He could not remain chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, despite his qualifications, and he was replaced by the honourable member for Wollongong.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Monaro may continue.

Mr STEVE WHAN: I appreciate the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's confidence and consistency in putting forward my qualifications. The point is that The Nationals have a history of not standing up for country New South Wales. We have seen their numbers in this place decline from 20 to 12. After the next election we expect to see the number of The Nationals fall below party status. They did not stand up to Canberra on deregulation of the dairy industry. They did not stand up against rice deregulation, or for exceptional circumstances drought support. They have not lobbied actively against potential moves that undermine Australia's quarantine system.

The Nationals have not spoken out against interest rates. They have not spoken out on petrol pricing and fuel subsidies, or on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission inquiries into petrol gouging. They have not spoken up about the GST and demanded our \$3 billion back. They have not spoken up on groundwater or stood up against the plans to sack hundreds and hundreds of workers in Queanbeyan, Cooma and other rural centres that will be hurt by the Opposition's plan to sack 29,000 public servants. All we have seen from The Nationals over the past four years is a lack of policy, a lack of vision and an absolute obedience to their Liberal city masters.

We know the Leader of the Opposition cannot run the Liberal Party, but there is one group he can count on to always do what he says, and that is the New South Wales Nationals. They will always do what he says because all they are now is a branch office of the Liberal Party. We need to look at the things they should have been putting forward and at their failures in policy. We have given them opportunity after opportunity in this place to put forward concrete policies for the next election, but they have failed. We have pointed out before that on drought The Nationals put out a one-page press release. They said they had a drought plan, but it did not exist.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: www.nationals.org.au will be able to provide a very valuable link for the honourable member for Monaro, who clearly does not appear to be technologically competent.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Monaro has the call.

Mr STEVE WHAN: I have searched the new web site of The Nationals. I am glad they have the new web site working because on the old one The Nationals leader looked like the Joker. At least they have a slightly better photo now. The one thing that is not on that web site is a drought policy. There is no drought policy on The Nationals web site. There is no broad policy for this State. We have raised this point over and over in this place, but they have no measures, no specific costings and no action plan. It is not there; I checked the web site.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: The honourable member for Monaro is seriously misleading this House.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! There is no point of order. The honourable member for Burrinjuck has been in this House long enough to know the standing orders. The honourable member for Monaro may continue.

Mr STEVE WHAN: We can see the weakness of the Opposition front bench and the reason it is hard for anyone to put their faith in the Opposition when we hear such a weak attempt at a point of order. The Opposition thinks we should spend half a billion dollars on the Cross City Tunnel debacle, money that could be going to country roads. The Government builds toll roads in Sydney so we can spend 63 per cent of the funds on country roads, and that is where the money should be going. The Leader of the Opposition said today that we should declare a state of emergency over water. Is the Opposition going to roll out the troops to do a rain dance, close off the towns or send the people away? That is what a state of emergency is about: locking down towns, rather than solving water problems. Perhaps the Opposition is going to get the soldiers to do a water dance. That would be as solid as its other policies.

We all remember the land-clearing debacle, when the Opposition leader went off with the Wilderness Society to look at land clearing but did not tell The Nationals. Most importantly, as I have said, these Nationals so-called candidates will not admit to being Nationals candidates. The candidate who lives in Burrinjuck and who is running for Monaro is proudly proclaimed on his web site as a Coalition candidate.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I do not think it is appropriate for the honourable member for Monaro to attack people who cannot defend themselves.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! That is not a point of order. The honourable member for Bega should learn the standing orders. The honourable member for Monaro may continue. The honourable member for Bega will resume his seat.

Mr STEVE WHAN: The honourable member for Bega, the floated-in candidate from Sydney who is representing Bega, is totally irrelevant. Once again The Nationals have displayed their lack of policy. In the 15 years they represented Monaro they delivered nothing. In four years I have delivered, with this Government, 170 separate achievements. The new Queanbeyan hospital is under way, Bombala hospital is under way, there are two new schools and there are road improvements—170 separate achievements. All we hear from The Nationals in this place is a list of failures. I am pleased that The Nationals will support the motion, but they should put their money where their mouth is. They should stand their candidates. They should stand up for country New South Wales, because so far they have not displayed the guts.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [4.37 p.m.]: First I note that the valedictory speech given by the honourable member for Monaro was largely a speech in support of The Nationals. His motion suggests that we are so strong and so capable and the people have so much confidence in us that we should run a candidate in every seat. His supporting The Nationals' right to run in every seat clearly indicates that he has confidence in The Nationals' ability to represent country areas. I thank him for that concession, and I thank him for choosing his valedictory speech to make that significant point. Having said that, however, this motion is symptomatic of a government in paralysis, a government in denial, a government that does not want to deal with the real issues. To be dealing with this issue today, the last sitting day prior the next State election, says a lot about the Government's lack of capacity to address the real issues. Government members simply try to play politics and score cheap political points. I move:

That the motion be amended by the addition of the following words, "and to have a Coalition Government to address the failings of this tired Labor Government."

The motion as amended would read:

That this House supports the right of the New South Wales National Party to run a candidate in every seat for the upcoming State election and to have a Coalition Government to address the failings of this tired Labor Government.

The motion raises a substantive issue—that is, the right of a political party to stand in any seat. If the Independents vote against the motion, they will vote against democracy. They will vote against the right of The Nationals to stand in every seat in New South Wales. We support the principle that our party should be able to stand in every seat. Indeed, anyone can stand in any seat. That is a democratic right that should be upheld. However, in New South Wales The Nationals are in coalition with the Liberal Party. We are determined to get rid of the Labor Government, and our best chance to get rid of this tired Labor Government is through our coalition arrangement. The Nationals represent and promote the interests of country areas. We are not interested

in running in metropolitan seats; that is the job of our Coalition colleagues, the Liberal Party. It is their job to run in city seats; it is our job to run in and win country seats. Through our coalition agreement we have the best chance of making a change in government, which the people of New South Wales sorely want.

The issue is that we have the right to stand but we choose to be in coalition with the Liberal Party. Liberal Party candidates essentially run in the city seats and we essentially run in the country seats. That is our best chance of winning government. The hypocrisy of Country Labor knows no bounds. The honourable member for Murray-Darling, who is present in the Chamber, said in the House on another occasion that Labor had done a deal with the Independents so the Independents can be promoted in seats that Labor cannot win. He let the cat out of the bag when he referred to the Dubbo election that was held a couple of years ago. He said:

Who had the best tactics? Labor did not stand a candidate because it knew it could not win the seat ...

We chose not to stand a candidate in Dubbo, and the tactic worked.

That statement shows that the Labor Party has done a deal with the Independents that if they run they run dead or they do not run at all. The consequence is that Country Labor has forsaken country people. I will detail how it has forsaken country people. In the seat of Northern Tablelands the Labor vote in 1999 was 9.17 per cent and in 2003 it dropped to 4.74 per cent. In Port Macquarie the Labor vote in 1999 was 26.9 per cent and in 2003 it dropped to 8.4 per cent.

Mr Neville Newell: What was The Nationals vote?

Mr DONALD PAGE: A lot higher than that. In Tamworth the Labor vote in 1999 was 12 per cent and in 2003 it dropped to 11 per cent. In Dubbo the Labor vote in 1999 was 20 per cent and in 2003 it dropped 15 per cent. The average drop for all those seats was from 17 per cent down to 7.2 per cent.

Mr Steve Whan: Point of order: In keeping with the standard of points of order taken by the Opposition, I am pleased that the honourable member for Ballina has just outlined four formerly National party seats which are now held by the Independents, because of their fading irrelevance as a party.

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): Order! That is clearly not a point of order. The honourable member for Ballina has the call.

Mr DONALD PAGE: Labor has forsaken country residents. It has done a deal with the Independents. It is either funding them or they are running dead. They put up a candidate and then support the Independents. The honourable member for Murray-Darling claimed credit in this House for having helped the outcome of the Dubbo election. The Labor members do not brag in the House about what they are doing for country residents. Their support in country areas is in decline, as I have just outlined, and their branch network recognises that fact. They are going backwards in country areas. Country Labor should not show hypocrisy about who stands up for country people. The Nationals stand up for country people, as we always have, going back to the 1920s. We have not always been in coalition with the Liberals. We have done deals with other parties as well because we are a strong, independent party, and we always will be. Let us not hear any more of this nonsense about The Nationals not being an independent party. We are an independent party; we always have been and we will continue to be.

The Nationals will run in all the seats in country areas that we need to win government. In the Tweed our candidate is Jeff Provest, and he is supported by the Liberals. He is campaigning very strongly and will be the next member for Tweed. If the honourable member for Tweed participates in this debate, it will be his valedictory speech. In Dubbo, Councillor Greg Matthews is a very strong candidate for The Nationals and is campaigning well in that electorate. In the Murray-Darling our candidate is John Williams. The honourable member for Murray-Darling must be scared because John Williams is a very popular person, not only in Broken Hill but all along the Murray Valley. He has the honourable member for Murray-Darling worried.

David Madew, our candidate in Monaro, is doing fantastic work. The honourable member for Monaro is worried. That is why he has moved this stupid motion. He is in panic mode. David Madew has been living in the electorate three times longer than the honourable member for Monaro has. He is better known and his family is well known, yet the honourable member for Monaro tries to paint him as an outsider. David Madew is a man of the people and he will be part of the next Coalition government. As the honourable member for Monaro knows, the seat of Monaro has always gone with the government. Bye bye, Mr Whan, you will be out of here!

It is interesting that the honourable member for Monaro has chosen as the topic of his valedictory speech The Nationals right to stand in seats across the country. He knows we are a very strong party. In Port Macquarie our candidate is Leslie Williams and in Tamworth our candidate is Kevin Anderson. Kevin Anderson is a strong candidate who will win the seat of Tamworth. Again The Nationals are standing up for regional areas. In the Northern Tablelands we have Phillip Kelly. He has a big task ahead of him, but he is determined and is making the voice of The Nationals heard. That is significant. Although it is a big ask, he is out there campaigning hard and he is fair dinkum. He should be given credit for his efforts, as should all our candidates.

This petty, stupid motion is a waste of time. It is designed to obtain some political advantage. In fact, the Government has not got any advantage out of it at all. My amendment makes it plain that this State is in need of a change of government. Our health system is in crisis and our infrastructure is in decline. There has been a lack of investment in infrastructure over 12 years. Our economy is bumping along the bottom of all State economies in Australia. We should be the powerhouse of the country, but we are one of the worst-performing States. We have very low growth, and with two negative growth periods we are technically in recession. The State has serious problems with country town water and sewerage. The Government closed down the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line and four branch lines in country areas. The Pacific Highway project of a dual carriageway from Hexham to the Queensland border is not progressing fast enough. Blackouts will occur this summer. A blackout occurred in Parliament House yesterday afternoon, and it is symptomatic of what is to come. There is a backlog in education and a water crisis—and they move a stupid motion.

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [4.48 p.m.]: I suggest that the only blackout we had here yesterday was the Leader of the Opposition. The honourable member for Ballina has inspired me in my contribution to this debate. He is inspirational because he has solved one issue for me. I go back to 2002 when The Nationals held a State conference at Broken Hill and the infamous letter, authored by Andrew Fraser, was delivered under my door. The argument was that The Nationals should not be in coalition in Opposition. That was the point that was made. We have debated that document. Andrew Fraser said The Nationals should not be in coalition in Opposition.

The New South Wales Nationals made a fundamental mistake because they have been caught with the blackout that the honourable member for Ballina referred to: the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is a walking corpse, and The Nationals know it. Half the people in New South Wales know it. The others do not know it because the news has not filtered out to the west yet. That is because we do not get the *Sydney Morning Herald* or the *Daily Telegraph*. However, the news will get out that The Nationals are in league with a walking corpse, and that is a major problem for them. The honourable member for Coffs Harbour said it all. I had an inkling—and he agreed with me at one stage—that it may well have been Andrew Stoner who put that document under my door because he was not the Leader of the Nationals at that time. George Souris was the Leader of The Nationals.

Mr Donald Page: That is speculation.

Mr PETER BLACK: Yes, it is only speculation, but I now know which way the honourable member for Ballina voted. He voted against the honourable member for Coffs Harbour; he has just said as much. That document was supposed to have been distributed only to elected members of The Nationals, but that has also been a matter of doubt. In fact, Walt Secord did not believe that it was fair dinkum.

[*Interruption*]

Don't talk about Andrew Tink! He is a great fellow. I mean, he said, "Don't change the Leader of the Opposition until after 24 March."

Mr Steve Whan: We agree.

Mr PETER BLACK: Of course we agree, but the honourable member for Ballina has to agree too, because he made the tactical mistake of being in coalition in Opposition. But then you have to look at the reasons against that. The honourable member for Ballina talked about votes. When Joh Bjelke-Petersen was Premier of Queensland he had an average of 36 per cent of the vote. At the last Queensland election it was 17 per cent. What about Victoria? What the Liberals have done in Victoria is marvellous. It has given its preferences to Labor instead of the Greens in four seats. The Liberals are out to annihilate The Nationals in Victoria. One has to ask why. Are The Nationals so embarrassing to the Liberals in Victoria? What is happening

in Victoria? What is happening in seats such as Mildura, where I will be on Saturday? The answer is that the Liberal Party has deemed The Nationals to be redundant.

I return to the proposition put forward by the honourable member for Ballina: If The Nationals were not in coalition they could be standing candidates in Sydney seats. Just think about it. Out west we have all those travelling stock routes and public watering places. The honourable member could be standing for a seat that encompasses Oxford Street and he could have a stationary stock route—if, of course, he got to be the local member. There is no reason why he could not if The Nationals could contest every seat. But the honourable member is saying The Nationals cannot stand a candidate in every seat. Look at the percentages: 29 country seats—a mutually agreed figure between us all—of which The Nationals hold only 12, the Liberals hold five, the Independents hold four and we hold eight.

The Nationals hold 12 seats out of 29. I had hoped that if the debate was to go ahead we could have heard from Ian Armstrong, because his views are very different to those of the modern Nationals. He has a very different set of views indeed. He is not about turning The Nationals into a notional party and then into a North Coast party. But that is where The Nationals are going. I believe The Nationals have a good chance of losing three country seats, and I will name them: Barwon to an Independent, who happens to be the mayor; Orange to an Independent, who happens to be the mayor; and Goulburn to an Independent, who happens to be the mayor. They are three seats that I believe The Nationals could lose.

[*Interruption*]

The honourable member for Murrumbidgee interjected to say, "Don't forget about Newcastle." The point is that he has forgotten about Newcastle. He could stand in Newcastle if he wanted to. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee) [4.53 p.m.]: The debate about the seats in which political parties choose to stand is interesting. Today we heard the Labor Party criticise The Nationals because they do not stand a candidate in every one of the 93 electorates. Neither does Labor. I did not see the name of a Labor candidate on the ticket for the Dubbo by-election a couple of years ago. What about that? What about the Dubbo a couple of years ago? I think Labor may once have held the seat of Dubbo, but the Labor vote in the last by-election in Dubbo was zero. In the by-election for Pittwater there was no Labor candidate and once again the Labor vote was zero. The Labor Party chooses not to stand a candidate in every electorate. Good on it! The true strength of democracy is that people have a right to choose who will be their elected representatives and political parties have a right to choose the electorates in which they will stand a candidate.

I say "Good luck" to The Nationals if they choose not to stand a candidate in every seat. We have absolutely one objective on 24 March next year: to get rid of this rotten, stinking Labor Government. Labor has had 12 years—most people would say 12 very long years—to get things right in New South Wales. Suddenly, a couple of weeks ago, the Government announced its master plan. After 12 years Labor has decided to tell us what it will do in the next 10 years. What happened in the 12 years that we have had to live through? There is complete lack of confidence in our health system, and the rail transport system in Sydney has been a complete disaster. The only thing that has improved the statistics is the fact that the Government halved the number of services and declared that a train is not late unless it is running more than five minutes late. It redefined "late".

The Government solved the problem by changing the way statistics are gathered. Now we see thousands of people waiting on train platforms right across the Sydney rail network. Throughout rural and regional New South Wales the Pacific Highway is still a death trap. I cannot remember the exact figure after 12 years of Labor, but there is approximately \$1.2 billion of Commonwealth money on the table to fix various parts of the Pacific Highway. The Commonwealth is waiting for the New South Wales Government to pick it up. In some instances the Commonwealth has been waiting four or five years, and it is still waiting after 12 years. The Government says, "Trust us because we have a plan for 10 years." I say to the people of New South Wales—and I will be saying it in my electorate in the lead-up to the election on 24 March—"Judge these people on their record: their record on the Pacific Highway, their management of the State's health system, and their record of a \$140 million backlog in school maintenance."

Why, in 2006, do we have to send children to high schools with substandard facilities? Half of the dormitories at Yanco Agricultural College, in my electorate of Murrumbidgee, are not airconditioned. For the benefit of those in the public gallery, Yanco Agricultural College has a piggery that is airconditioned while half of the dormitories at that college are not airconditioned. Yesterday or the day before the temperature reached 42 degrees at Yanco. The pigs were all right because they had airconditioning, but the students in the dormitories

did not. Why, in 2006, do students have to put up with that? That is the record of the Labor Government. It will try to tell the electorate that it has a plan, but I say, "Look at Labor's record and at the dissatisfaction in the community after 12 years of Labor."

Talking about things relevant to my own electorate other than Yanco Agricultural College—and I look forward to a change of plan with respect to airconditioning those dormitories—water is a problem. There has been no planning in respect of water and no additions to any of the water storages throughout western New South Wales, not to mention the lack of planning here in Sydney and on the Central Coast. We are facing an absolute crisis, and that is because we have had 12 years of Labor. The priority of The Nationals and the Liberal Party will be to get rid of them on 24 March, and I very much look forward to it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.58 p.m.]: I join with my colleagues on this side of the House in assuring The Nationals that they have the right to stand a candidate in every seat in New South Wales. They were once a great party, but they are on the wane at the moment; some would say it is on a steep, slippery slope. Today we have heard countless examples of the way The Nationals are failing to stand up to Canberra on crucial issues. The honourable member for Monaro mentioned some of those crucial issues. They include national competition policy, dairy deregulation, rice marketing, and so on. I would also throw in another issue about which they are also failing to stand up to Canberra: the likely implosion of the Australian Wheat Board and single-desk policy. That is crucial to wheat farmers in New South Wales, and yet The Nationals are letting the Liberals, particularly those in Western Australia, run as strongly as ever on it.

Another issue on which The Nationals are not prepared to stand up to Canberra is national parks. On the North Coast national parks provide a lot of money to our local area, directly and indirectly, through jobs. There will be job cuts if there is ever a change of government. The only policy the Opposition has for national parks at the moment is to allow horse riding there. The Opposition has got to do a little bit better than that. The Nationals have just bowed down to what the Liberal Party has said in relation to a crucial issue in my electorate. I am referring to the Liberals' opposition to the Moreton Bay project at Chinderah, a private enterprise project that will deliver 200 jobs to my electorate when it is up and running. The Nationals have walked away and let the Liberals do all the running on that issue; they have opposed it every step of the way. At every dot of the "i" and cross of the "t" the Nats have been doing the bidding of the Liberals in opposing the project. It is a disgrace.

Is it any wonder that the candidates in both Monaro and the Tweed have been distancing themselves from The Nationals? They have been referring to themselves as Coalition candidates rather than Nationals candidates. I can add another reason why they are doing that: it was a National Party-dominated council in the Tweed that had to be sacked because of its conduct. If I were a National Party candidate in the Tweed I would be doing exactly the same thing. I would be distancing myself from the stench The Nationals left behind. The candidate has had to put up with the legacy of former mayor Polglase and what he did in relation to pushing along inappropriate developments. The same occurred with former councillors Murray, Lyn Beck and Gavin Lawrie. I will not say anything about the late Bernie Bell.

At one stage good old Gavin, a supporter of the National Party-dominated council, had the temerity to vote against a high-rise on the Tweed coast. But they got to him. They put in a rescission motion, took him aside, had a few strong words to him, and the next week they had the numbers. Gavin went for the high-rise on the coast; he went for the extra storey on that particular development. It did not take much to turn him around. I mention also former councillor Bob Brimsmead. I do not have to say too much about poor old Bob. He says enough about himself—more than I can say, and more than I would want to say.

There is plenty of evidence as to why The Nationals candidate in the Tweed does not want to identify himself with the Coalition. Nevertheless, he is a National Party candidate and that is something he is going to have to live with. I mentioned the Australian Wheat Board and how it is likely to implode, and the single-desk policy under John Howard's guidance. The Liberal Party determined to run to private enterprise, not realising that sometimes there has to be government intervention and regulation to make sure that our farmers get a fair return. The Nationals have gone to water and let the Liberals take over water policy. It has been handed to a guy who is probably one of the richest men in Australia and comes from the richest electorate in Sydney—and Australia. What is he doing? He is not giving any credence to what The Nationals might say about water policy. He wants to take water out of my electorate and the electorates of Ballina, Clarence and Lismore, and pump it into Queensland. That is ridiculous. We are not prepared to countenance that, but he has flagged that and he has run with it.

Mr Donald Page: Point of order: That is absolutely not true.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL: He is quoted in the paper as saying that. Read today's paper! Let me finish by saying I would congratulate The Nationals if they were prepared to stand up and put candidates into all seats, but obviously they are not prepared to do that.

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro) [5.03 p.m.], in reply: I thank all honourable members who have participated in this debate. Obviously the Government will oppose the amendment. I will come to the reasons why in a moment. I will address some of the issues that have been raised in this debate. The Deputy Leader of The Nationals said it is The Nationals' job to run in country seats. That is the whole point of this argument. We believe that if The Nationals were genuine representatives of rural New South Wales they would be running in all seats. They would not have given up Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, and all those other seats that have Liberal members. Albury, Bega and South Coast are all areas where the Liberals have taken over. At a Federal level the same thing is happening, but I do not have enough time to go into that. Today we heard a number of arguments from The Nationals but they did not take the opportunity to put forward a credible program for country New South Wales. [*Quorum formed.*]

The amendment moved by the Opposition, which suggests that this House should, for some bizarre reason, vote to have the Opposition form government in New South Wales, is obviously totally inappropriate. Why would anyone in New South Wales want to elect a Coalition whose policy is to charge everybody \$1,200 a year more to make up for the black hole in its policy costings? An economically irresponsible \$25 billion worth of promises have been made and there is black hole of approximately \$15 billion. I saw an example of the economic illiteracy of the Opposition in Monaro last week when The Nationals put out a press release which attempted to flail the Government for allowing Federal money to be involved in the construction of schools in the Monaro electorate. The Nationals said it was appalling that we got that Federal money.

Anybody with even a vague notion of the Commonwealth-State financial relations would know that the Commonwealth has 80 per cent of the taxing power and that money has to be transferred to overcome vertical fiscal imbalances. It goes to show how little The Nationals know about running the economy. We in Monaro are criticised by The Nationals for "throwing money at the electorate". Recently there was an announcement in the Monaro electorate of an extension to the Cooma gaol, but The Nationals opposed it. They put out a press release saying we should not throw money at Cooma gaol. The Nationals and the Liberals show a lack of interest in rural electorates.

The honourable member for South Coast has not even been in here today. The South Coast is another electorate where The Nationals are not running a candidate. The honourable member for Heffron is so worried about that situation that she asked the honourable member for Lachlan to be a candidate for that electorate. That demonstrates my point. The honourable member for Lachlan is one of The Nationals' strongest members, yet they asked for his electorate to be abolished. It is little wonder that The Nationals are disappearing into irrelevance. After 15 years in government the Coalition delivered nothing for the people of Monaro. In the past four years the Labor Party has delivered. Indeed, Country Labor is delivering for all electorates, which is what the people of New South Wales want. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 33

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

Noes, 44

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

Pair

Mr Armstrong

Mr Bartlett

Question resolved in the negative.**Amendment negatived.****Motion agreed to.****DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

Madam ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Marie Andrews): I warmly welcome to the gallery Mr Jozsef Papp, the Consul General of the Republic of Hungary.

HUNGARIAN UPRISING FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY (Heffron) [5.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that 23 October 2006 was the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian uprising against the communist regime of the Soviet Union;
- (2) remembers the approximately 20,000 Hungarians who stood for freedom on 23 October 1956, sparking a nationwide protest and encouraging similar anti-communist protests in Europe;
- (3) notes that Australia had provided sanctuary to approximately 14,000 Hungarian refugees by the end of 1957, and that today the largest Hungarian population in Australia resides in New South Wales; and
- (4) appreciates that many of these migrants have made significant contributions to various aspects of Australian life and to their ethnic Hungarian community.

I join Madam Acting-Speaker in welcoming Mr Papp to the gallery. It was my pleasure to spend some time with Mr Papp recently at the New South Wales Federation of Community Languages dinner. I am pleased that on my invitation he is here today. I also acknowledge Mr Béla Kárdos, President of the Hungarian Council of New South Wales. I thank him for joining us here to mark this historic occasion in Hungarian history. I am proud to move this motion as a member of Parliament who represents a local government area [LGA], the city of Randwick, that has a large Hungarian population. Indeed, it has the fourth largest Hungarian population in this State. Randwick, its neighbouring LGAs of Waverley and Woollahra, and Blacktown LGA have the largest portion of the Hungarian population in New South Wales.

I am also proud to move this motion on a personal level. My ethnic background is German but I grew up in a city in Ohio that was populated largely by people of German, Polish and Hungarian descent. My soccer coach in high school, Mr Újvági, escaped from Hungary with his family. It was at his house that I first ate

pierogi and other delights of Hungarian culture. Notice of this motion was given some time ago, and the anniversary, 23 October, was a few weeks ago, but it is probably appropriate that we debate the motion today. A few days ago was the feast day of St Elizabeth of Hungary, who is an important saint for the people of that country. Indeed, next year marks the 800th anniversary of her birth. The Hungarian revolution lasted for just 13 days, between 23 October and 4 November. It was a key event for Hungary but it also proved to be a decisive event in the fall of communism and the political events of last century. I quote the words of Hungarian President László Sólyom:

The memory of 1956, when a small nation stood up courageously against the mighty forces of a brutal communist dictatorship, will always live on in Hungary. This event of history has also acquired new significance as more and more people across the globe express the desire to live in free societies.

It is estimated that 3,000 to 4,000 Hungarians were killed during the uprising, and tens of thousands more were injured. On that day some 20,000 Hungarians joined together in a peaceful call for democracy and an end to the oppressive Soviet-dominated Hungarian communist Government. This uprising has been called the first tear in the Iron Curtain. On the day of the uprising security police fired upon these peaceful protesters, killed hundreds, and triggered a bloody fight for freedom and democracy behind the Iron Curtain.

I mentioned my soccer coach, Mr Újvági. His brother is a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, representing my home town of Toledo, and he moved a similar motion in his House. I note that the Hungarian community has been actively moving motions noting the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising in representative Parliaments and Chambers around the world. The motion moved in the Ohio House of Representatives—indeed, it was moved in many Chambers throughout the world—stated in part:

The Hungarian uprising happened because millions of ordinary Hungarians stood up, risked their lives and took a stand for freedom and democracy. They were able to establish a revolutionary Government that released political prisoners, including major church leaders. They took steps to establish a multi-party democracy, they called for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary, they announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw pact, and they requested the United Nations' assistance in establishing Hungarian neutrality.

The Soviet Union launched a massive military counter-offensive against the uprising. Thousands of Hungarians were tortured, tried and executed by the post-1956 Hungarian Government, including the Prime Minister, Imre Nagy. That is why I think this motion should not only commemorate but also express condolence to the people of Hungary and their families who lost loved ones during the uprising, as well as those who were killed in the years following the uprising. The Hungarian uprising dramatically underlined how strongly the people of Hungary supported democratic principles, and their right to determine their own national destiny.

Some would say that the Hungarian freedom fighters failed because it took a whole generation for freedom to reach Hungary. I do not subscribe to that view. The Hungarian uprising was the spark that lit the revolution that then took place across Eastern Europe and behind the Iron Curtain. It led to opposition movements coming forward in neighbouring countries, eventually culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall. My motion also notes that Australia provided sanctuary to Hungarians following the uprising. Hungarians had come to Australia prior to 1956, either during the Gold Rush or during the Depression that struck Hungary in the 1890s and the early 1900s. Following World War II Hungarian Jews sought refuge in Australia. But the most significant group migrated from Hungary to Australia following the uprising in 1956.

Australia provided sanctuary, bringing the total of first generation Hungarians to 30,000 by the end of 1957. These post-1956 refugees included a large number of young tradesmen and factory workers. The Hungarians who came to Australia were hardworking and family oriented. They brought a strong sense of not only community and heritage but also civic pride, and they valued democracy and freedom. They not only stood as an example to us of family values and community pride but also provided an excellent example of what it is to be a member of a democratic society. The experience of the Hungarian migration to Australia reminds Australians today that we have been, and can continue to be, a country that welcomes refugees and people fleeing oppressive and brutal governments.

This can be a country that supports and welcomes people who come here seeking a better life. Like members of the Hungarian community, many people who come to Australia remind us of the importance of our gifts: democracy, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly. They remind us to value those things, and they stand as an example of citizenship, community and civic pride, and what a great country Australia is. They also remind us that we have been enriched by the multicultural groups that make up this wonderful country. It is most fitting today, on the anniversary of the uprising, to acknowledge that the Hungarian community has made a significant contribution to Australia, and specifically to the State of New South Wales. I will end my

contribution in a spirit of bipartisanship. The honourable member for Gosford reminded me about the great song that was sung as the tanks rolled across Hungary: "God bless, Hungary".

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.30 p.m.]: In welcoming the Consul General of Hungary and the President of the Hungarian Council of New South Wales to the Chamber it is hard for people of the age of the honourable member for Heffron and me to imagine the events of those 13 days in 1956. We are the heirs of the sacrifices made then and in the world conflict that preceded the events of 1956. Many of our constituents take for granted much of what people fought and died for. It is important at times like this that we pause to consider not only what happened in 1956 but also the aftermath and the fact that some people in this country—indeed, some in my electorate—still vividly remember those events, still suffer the pain of the sacrifice, but remain eternally proud of the spirit that was demonstrated over those 13 days and what it led to.

What was clear at the time in this country was the spirit and warmth with which Australians received refugees from Hungary. The level of the conflict was also very clear at the time. Australia hosted the Melbourne Olympics in 1956, and those of us interested in Olympic history and those who saw a movie made a couple of years ago will always remember the blood in the water during the water polo match between Hungary and Russia. God willing, Hungary won four to nil and went on to win the gold medal. In a violent, but thankfully not lethal way, that represented the same spark of independence occurring in Hungary. As the honourable member for Heffron said, the events of those 13 days, which may well have shaken the world, are significant in terms of the following 32 years of world history—until the Berlin Wall fell and in 1991 when Soviet troops finally left Hungary and the then Soviet Government finally apologised to Hungary for its actions during the uprising.

When thinking about my contribution today I was reminded of the words of Miklos Molnar, one of the 1956 activists who was put to death along with his former Prime Minister in 1958. He said in his *A Concise History of Hungary* that the uprising that established "totalitarianism was not an empire destined to last a thousand years". Wherever people fight for the right to assemble and self-determination, we should honour them and seek to support them. If by chance they fail, we should pay homage to their memory. Australia has benefited from the contributions of many migrants from Hungary who came here prior to the events of 1956, and also from the 15,000 who came here as refugees. We continue to benefit to this day from their descendants and, importantly, from people who still come to this country from Hungary. I am pleased to be the Deputy Leader of a party that was led to its last electoral success at the ballot box by Nicholas Greiner, who is of Hungarian descent. I am delighted to have spent some time with his father, who lived in my electorate. He was a wonderful man and he continued to visit Hungary until his death.

As a member of the Liberal Party I am particularly proud of the actions of the Federal Government in 1956 in welcoming the refugees. I am also proud of a subsequent leader of the Federal Liberal Party, Harold Holt, who was the Minister for Immigration at the time. I think he went beyond the ordinary to ensure that every possible ease of access was provided to the 15,000 Hungarians who came to this country. In some cases that treatment was in stark contrast to what was happening to those seeking to go to other countries. In addition to Nick Greiner, Les Murray of SBS television fame—Mr Soccer—and a number of industrialists, including the late Sir Peter Abeles, migrated to this country from Hungary. I think that I am right in saying that one of the Clerks-Assistant in this place, Mr Leslie Gönye, is also of Hungarian descent.

I also acknowledge another person who inhabits this place, on level six. He is one of those people who at times is regarded as anathema to members of Parliament. However, we must use them to spread our message. Imre Salusinszky is *The Australian* political reporter in Parliament House. He wrote an extraordinary article in the 21-22 October edition of *The Australian Weekend Review*. When I knew this motion was to be debated I went back to that article because it details his family's experience during the uprising. In 1956 his parents were affected because they lived in Budapest. He learned from his father's memoirs what happened during the uprising. His father decided to finally flee when it was announced that Russian troops were entering Hungary, which was the night of 3 October and the morning of 4 October. His father wrote:

The car was a Fiat 500, in fact a two-seater with an inside space for some luggage. This space was usually taken up by the two daughters, while we two sat in the front, Lily holding the 1 1/2-year-old baby. Thus of course we couldn't take really any luggage, the car was full anyhow with nappies for our son.

That son was Imre Salusinszky. The memoir continues:

The main belongings we could take were two small Persian rugs on which the girls sat and some cocoa and coffee to be able to make drinks for the children and ourselves. So at 1 o'clock in the afternoon we closed the door of our house, fully paid and very well furnished, took leave from an aunt and uncle who came to say goodbye to us, and drove off.

They packed up their life to flee the Soviet troops. They spent their first night at Győr, which is about 80 kilometres from the Austrian border. The article continues:

"Next morning when I looked out through the window, a terrible sight: A Russian tank stood in front of our hotel. We decided to get into our car and try to continue towards the border. Several people warned us that this may be very dangerous but I felt staying may be even more dangerous.

"So, after paying the hotel for another day to be on the safe side, we got into the car and drove into the empty streets.

"Lily tried to hold up the baby to indicate our peaceful purposes and indeed without any harm we drove around the tanks through the streets of Győr and got out of the town."

Unfortunately they were soon stopped by a tank commander and sent back to the town, where Imre's parents learnt that permits for travel to the border areas could be obtained from a Russian army officer. The article continues:

When the officer put it to my parents that they really wanted to escape, my mother demonstrated a presence of mind that became the stuff of family legend: "I never claimed to be a brave man," my father writes, "and my heart sank to the lowest possible level. But not so with Lily. She jumped up and said: 'How do you dare to even suppose such a thing? My husband is a known researcher with an excellent position. Why would he want to escape?'"

The officer then relented, and they drove to a border town where Imre's father convinced some local farmers to lead them to a gap in the Austrian border. Imre's article went on:

"I was driving slowly after three of them running in front of the car. After some 100m we turned to the left on a track which after some 500m disappeared and I was driving in a field following the farmers. Suddenly the front wheels of the car sank into a ditch.

"It was a ditch from which the barbed wire was dug out a few months earlier when as part of the appeasement policy the request of the Austrian government was met and the barbed wire and the minefields were removed.

"We all wanted to get out but the family was told to stay in the car and I with the three others lifted the car over the ditch. A few metres further there was a tree plantation and my helpers just pulled the trees apart so that I could pass with the small car.

"A few more metres and then we stopped: we were in Austria.

The account finished by saying:

"So I started driving towards a new life through the fields."

That story of the Salusinszkys is typical of what those Hungarian people went through. It is something I cannot imagine. When I read that piece on 21 October I was deeply moved. Imre had never told me the story. Imre was the 1½-year-old child. He had told me about his settlement in Melbourne. He had told me about learning how to support his Melbourne football team as a migrant in this country, but that story sums up so much of what has happened to these people who simply wanted freedom, self-determination and the right to go about their lives. They saw in the death of Stalin an opportunity to do so. They saw in the events of Poland as perhaps a signal of a freeing up within the Soviet pact system. They were brutally proven wrong and too many lives were lost. Thankfully, at the end of the day we are a stronger country and so is Hungary.

Motion agreed to.

VICTIMS SUPPORT AND REHABILITATION AMENDMENT BILL

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

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY BANKING) BILL 2006

Mr ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Paul Lynch): I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that having considered the Legislative Assembly's message of 23 November 2006, regarding the Joint Select Committee on the Threatened Species Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Banking) Act 2006, it has this day agreed to the proposal in the message that the day and time for the first meeting of the Joint

Select Committee on the Threatened Species Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Banking) Act 2006 be called by the Chair of the Committee, the Reverend the Honourable Dr Gordon Moyes.

Legislative Council
23 November 2006

CHRISTINE ROBERTSON
Deputy-President

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SANDY POINT COMMUNITY CENTRE

Ms ALISON MEGARRITY (Menai—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.41 p.m.]: On previous occasions I have spoken in this House about the unique community of Sandy Point in the electorate of Menai. The term "unique" is often thrown about these days but a publication entitled *Sandy Point Secrets: A History of Sandy Point* demonstrates the appropriateness of this adjective in relation to the geography and residents of this place. Author Louisa Singleman, who compiled the publication on behalf of the Sandy Point Progress Association, wrote:

Sandy Point continues to be aptly coined as "unique" and truly so, for unlike other suburbs of Sydney it has no adjoining suburbs and is bordered on three sides by water, the Georges River and Deadman's Creek while the fourth boundary, to the south, is Crown Land.

The Georges River offers residents an aquatic playground as well as unsurpassed views from almost all of its waterfront properties, while Deadman's Creek provides accessibility to the Georges River and a peaceful verdant outlook.

This uniqueness is also true of its topography ranging from gentle slopes to precipitous cliffs of Hawkesbury sandstone to low lying flood-plains. Eucalyptus and angophoras tower above the skyline interspersed with native wattles, bottlebrush, grevillea and banksias; a constant reminder to residents of its vulnerability to bushfires.

The diversity of its wildlife is evident with the sulphur-crested cockatoo dispelling the need for an alarm clock. The brush tailed possum and their friendly cousin the ringtail seek the haven of the Sandy Point bushland while venturing close to the homes at night in search of handouts.

Ms Singleman also provided some very entertaining glimpses of the spirit and capability of the residents of this community in her publication. Honourable members may be unaware that in October 1980, 350 or so residents decided to voice their displeasure about the fact that Sandy Point was not included in the postcode section of the Sydney telephone directory. To make matters worse, the Sutherland shire map did not indicate the true location of Sandy Point on the western extremity of the shire. In order to right these wrongs, to put Sandy Point on the map and to raise some money towards the construction of the Sandy Point Community Centre, they decided to secede from the Commonwealth of Australia on the weekend of 12 October 1980.

A Secretary of State, Bob Robinson, and a Chief Justice, Reg Nichols, were appointed to administer the principality. Peter Sorensen designed a crest and Joan Nichols embroidered a flag featuring that crest. Border gates were set up at the entrance to the Sandy Point principality, with redcoats stationed at the sentry box, and the Sandy Point Navy patrolled the Georges River. Indeed, it was a pedal-powered raft racing 14 other crews along a one-kilometre course. History records that the eventual winner was the 1st East Hills Venturer Scouts and the Illawong bushfire brigade was runner-up. Anyone wishing to enter the principality on that weekend had to be issued with a visa and a passport—for a small fee. Ms Singleman wrote:

Invitations were extended to the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Malcolm Fraser, the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Neville Wran and, of course, Queen Elizabeth II. Unfortunately all these dignitaries were otherwise engaged on this day but their apologies were accepted with regret.

An estimated 5,000 visitors took part in the weekend's festivities. There were food and craft stalls, chocolate wheels and, of course, raffle tickets, as all campaigners in this place know. A grand independence ball was held under the big top with suitably attired guests. Thousands of dollars were raised over that weekend towards supplementing what the State Government and the Sutherland Shire Council had provided for the construction of the community centre. Honourable members will be pleased to note that on the Monday Sandy Point returned to the Commonwealth of Australia.

The necessary funds were finally raised and the plans for the community centre were approved, and the first sod was turned in 1985. The grand opening of the centre, some 13 years after the land was made available, is a testament to the determination of Sandy Point residents. Today the centre is adorned by a remarkable tile

mural, hand done by the families of Sandy Point. It is a pictorial representation of Sandy Point. The whole project was capably managed by local resident Coralann Shead. Almost every family in Sandy Point participated in this project by purchasing and decorating their tiles, and it was unveiled in May 2001.

The Sandy Point Progress Association, formed in 1951 at a public meeting at the home of Mrs Brooks in St George Crescent, is still an extremely active organisation and one that I deal with almost on a daily basis about issues. The Sandy Point Rural Fire Brigade is also very active. I visited there recently with the Minister for Emergency Services, the Hon. Tony Kelly, to hand over a \$240,000 tanker to volunteers. One firefighter who was sorely missed that day was Terry Fidler, who had been killed in June in a tragic accident on Heathcote Road. He was a 30-year resident of Sandy Point and an active member of the Sandy Point Progress Association. As the Sandy Point Progress Association and the residents of Sandy Point face Christmas, I know they will all be missing Terry. I know he would have endorsed the Australia Day celebrations in which the Australian flag will be flying high in the trees and a large crowd will be gathering on the Georges River.

KU-RING-GAI ELECTORATE BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS AND TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.46 p.m.]: Again I raise matters of planning or, more correctly, overdevelopment issues, within the electorate of Ku-ring-gai. This is Parliament's last sitting day before the election and I note in passing that this subject has been the issue most raised by me during the term of the Fifty-Third Parliament. My focus on the issue reflects its importance to the residents who make up the Ku-ring-gai electorate and whom I have the privilege to represent. As I have said previously, few residents believe in a "fortress Ku-ring-gai" mentality. They overwhelmingly understand the need for Ku-ring-gai to take its share of the city's population growth, as it has done for a century—a point which emerges from the recently published centenary history of Ku-ring-gai council, *Under the Canopy*, by Pauline Curby and Virginia Macleod.

But residents are clear: they do not want developments that threaten Ku-ring-gai's unique residential character or contribute to existing problems with traffic and other State services that they currently suffer. Residents expect, but so far have failed to receive from this State Government, a commitment that there will be improvements to infrastructure and services to overcome existing problems and to cater to the proposed population densities being imposed. "Imposed" is the correct word, given the heavy-handed dealings of the Department of Planning with my local community through its council.

Currently, residents are trying to deal with town centre rezonings. As I have said previously, it is not easy for residents to access and digest information on proposed rezonings affecting their street, neighbourhood or community, subsequent changes proposed by council officers or councillors, and council's final detailed deliberations on town centre plans. Many individuals have given great time to this process, others have struggled to keep up, and still others have been unaware until after a decision involving a significant change affecting their property or surrounds. It is not made easier by council's continued failure to have 3D imaging of its town centre proposals on its web site—a failure that continues despite repeated assurances given to me.

But the single biggest cause of this problem is the timetable proposed for this process, a timetable that seeks to have the process for all six town centres concluded by year's end and one which was accepted by Ku-ring-gai council during the mayoralty of Elaine Malicki. It is a timetable that, by any measure, was and is impossible and unacceptable. I understand that in exchange for accepting this timetable council was promised something like \$250,000 to help defray planning costs. While the assistance with those costs may be welcomed by some residents, others wonder what the final cost to the Ku-ring-gai community will be of the mad rush that the timetable imposes upon the process. I have concerns about the timetable and the way the planning process is being conducted—an issue I last raised a month ago. I also have specific concerns about some of the proposals and rezonings that have been proposed.

For example, I am concerned that as a result of the council's obsession with keeping open the option of an indoor pool in the Turramurra area, the rezoning plans have been skewed. I am concerned that the decision has not only resulted in a stupid proposal to shift a supermarket a couple of hundred of metres but it has also meant the footprint of the proposed town centre rezoning is larger than it might have been if the indoor pool proposal for Turramurra did not exist. I add that I am disturbed that the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] in its assessment of the proposed Turramurra town centre seems to have ignored this issue. Keeping an option open means that such a facility could be visited upon the Turramurra town centre. It seems incredible that this issue apparently did not feature in the RTA's traffic advice on the town centre rezoning. I also place on record my

view that if Ku-ring-gai Council can afford an indoor pool, the complex should be located at Bicentennial Park, in West Pymble, which is our major regional park.

I wish to raise another Turramurra matter. As a former user of the excellent services offered by Turra Tots I share residents' concerns about the impact of a proposed new road on this important facility. This narrow roadway is used by all trucks, buses and cars travelling from the eastern retail area to the Pacific Highway and involves a sharp turn outside the Turra Tots. Most people would regard the situation as a potentially dangerous mix. I am equally concerned by the proposed new so-called G traffic arrangements at Gordon, which again involve a new road that is designed to replace the existing right-hand turn onto the Pacific Highway from what I term St Johns Avenue east. This proposal and the proposed rezonings contained in the local environmental plan [LEP] will have a devastating impact upon one of Ku-ring-gai's most beautiful streets. Further, this and other proposed traffic arrangements have equally unsupportable consequences for bus passengers using services to the Gordon bus-rail interchange.

As I said a month ago, I have concerns about the lack of studies and justifications to support rezonings such as that proposed for Precinct L. I am unclear, as are local residents, as to how the Pearson Avenue-Park Street intersection will cope with the traffic loads that would result from the zonings proposed for the precinct. Residents in this area and elsewhere have a range of questions, concerns, issues and proposals. The proposals are not always about saying no to development. They are about ensuring that any development is complementary to the prevailing amenity, is supported by appropriate infrastructure, and incorporates space or public areas. Across all the town centre rezonings I am concerned about the proposed footprints, that is, the size of the proposed areas included in rezonings. I want to ensure that existing commercial footprints are best used.

I am fearful that by including other residential areas developers will take the easy option rather than the harder but less intrusive option of better consolidating an existing site. For example, at Gordon I have always believed that the potential of the site bounded by the Pacific Highway, Park Street, the railway line, and St Johns Avenue east of the highway could be better maximised other than by extending the footprint further south along the highway or into areas such as Precinct L or St Johns Avenue. It is a view based upon my other major concern: the need to provide effective interface to avoid developments that on paper may be five-storey buildings but in reality, because of the lie of the land, are as high as eight storeys being built alongside single-storey and double-storey homes. The State Government rejected effective interface arrangements in its May 2004 rezonings along the Pacific Highway. It was an outrageous and appalling decision.

While I understand that councils are limited in what they can do, I share residents' confusion about their council having a sensible proposal in Pymble for a three-storey interface with adjacent single-storey homes but an absence of similar arrangements being proposed elsewhere in the council area. Residents understand the pressure faced by the council, and I sympathise with the pressure placed on councillors. However, the issue for councillors is to try to ensure, despite all the constraints, pressures and State planning directives, that the best possible planning proposals are submitted. I share residents' concerns that that situation does not occur. When I have previously raised these issues with councillors, both privately and publicly, I have been told, "You don't understand. It's tough when you have to make decisions." I well understand the need to present and respond to residents' concerns, the importance of preserving Ku-ring-gai's prevailing residential amenity, and the need to always try to make the best possible decisions.

CANCER COUNCIL RELAY FOR LIFE

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne) [5.51 p.m.]: From 28 to 29 October this year the State electorate of Drummoyne was once again proud to host the Cancer Council of Australia's Relay for Life event. Relay for Life, a community team event to fight cancer, boasted over 850 participants spread across 70 local teams. During a gruelling 24-hour period the teams walked continuously around Sid Richards Oval, in Concord, in a bid to raise money for cancer research and promote awareness of the disease. Relay for Life attracted groups from infants to the elderly, and participants ran or walked. Importantly, this year more than 75 cancer survivors participated in the event, which was a resounding success and raised more than \$150,000 for the Cancer Council.

On Friday 18 August 2006 an official launch dinner was held at Five Dock to support the fundraising effort of the Relay for Life event. The dinner raised more than \$50,000. This year I was very proud to participate with my infant son, Favian. I participated along with other mothers, with our children in their prams. Behind the scenes a team of 15 people worked for six months to achieve the perfect preparation on the day. I take this

opportunity to acknowledge them individually and congratulate them on all their efforts in raising funds for cancer prevention and cancer support services.

These committed individuals include life members Frank and Barbara Ritchie, City of Canada Bay Mayor Angelo Tsirekas, Deputy Mayor Jeanette O'Hara, Joanne Booth and Jenny Horton from the Cancer Council of New South Wales, the ever-hardworking chair and manager, Larry Musolino, and his wife, Lisa Muso Lino, David Johnson from the State Emergency Services, and Steve Toranto representing Rotary. Other people who worked for this event include Linda Anderson, Gus Erickson, Narelle Hanly, Amy Hanly, Robert Hmadate, Jaturat and Noppom Huvanandana, Kris Russell, Gianpaolo Sciara, Chris Spackman, Nancy Tear, Anne-Louse and Tony Van Den Nieuwenhof, and, finally, Ron Yeo, who, as a fellow Rotarian, has raised thousands of dollars for our local community and communities abroad.

To those selfless and apparently tireless individuals, I extend my heartfelt thanks on behalf of the participants and the local community, who welcome this event every year. I also thank all the participating teams who made the event such a success. The Relay for Life event has a buzzing carnival atmosphere, and participants and residents alike enjoy the entertainment and activities, including dance groups and jumping castles for the kids. The moving twilight Candlelight Ceremony of Hope and Remembrance reminds us of the struggles faced by people and their families each and every day in the privacy of their homes and in hospital beds all over the country. They must not be forgotten.

Although we can claim local success for the Relay for Life, I acknowledge that it began in the mid-1980s in Tacoma, Washington, where it was pitted as "The City of Destiny 24-hour Run Against Cancer." In 1985 local surgeon Dr Gordy Klatt decided to combine his love of running with the need to raise funds for the American Cancer Society. The Australian experience of Relay for Life began in 1999 with just one event in Melbourne, comprising 34 teams. That event raised \$75,000. Since then it has spread throughout New South Wales, giving people hope that one day we will find cures for all forms of cancer through the dedicated research of our clinicians. By 2004 Relay for Life had raised nationally a whopping \$7 million-plus. This alone indicates how vital the event is to so many people on so many different levels.

These days Relay for Life is a round-the-world explosion of commitment to cancer fundraising, from the United States of America, which holds approximately 4,200 events and raises \$300 million annually, to Argentina, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and, of course, Australia. Relay for Life has been welcomed with open arms across the four corners of the globe. Although raising vital funds is a huge part of Relay for Life, it must be acknowledged that the unique experience of the event allows for celebration of success, grieving for loss, and an undeniable hope for the future, which sustains all of us as individuals. In short, Relay for Life reminds us that even in our darkest hour we will never walk alone while there is a ray of hope to guide us.

I want to acknowledge the hardworking organising committee. I note that much of the event's success can be attributed to the organising committee, in particular Larry Musolino, who is a well-connected person in our community. He worked day and night to ensure a successful event and the raising of \$150,000. As the local member of Parliament I am pleased that the event was hosted next to Concord Hospital. I hope that a large proportion of the money raised is directed to our local hospital, to assist our clinicians to find cures for cancer. I acknowledge Dr Stephen Clark at Concord Hospital for his work in cancer research and alternative therapies to assist cancer patients to have a better quality of life and prolonged life. Chief Executive Officer Danny O'Connor has done a great deal of work. I enjoy meeting with him regularly to ensure that our oncology units are well funded. I look forward to working with them all in the future.

WAGGA WAGGA DEVELOPMENT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN APPROVAL

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [5.56 p.m.]: I want to raise an issue of lengthy delays in property development approvals on behalf of Mr Philip Day, a constituent of mine. Teppan 389 Pty Limited is a company that was formed purely to purchase a parcel of land in Travers Street, Wagga Wagga, in 1996. The land was then to be developed with 18 two-storey townhouses. It was decided to subdivide the land into a neighbourhood plan pursuant to the Community Land Development Act 1985. Wagga Wagga City Council gave approval and a local builder, David Hurst Constructions, was engaged. Work commenced in March 2005. Substantial completion occurred in August 2006, and the plans were released by council, forwarded for registration to Land Property Information NSW [LPI], and lodged on 1 September 2006. When the property was purchased in 1996 there were four titles, two of which were under the old system. Qualifications were recorded against the titles when they were issued to the developer in 1996.

In order for the four lots to be consolidated into one and a neighbourhood plan registered, it was necessary to lodge with the LPI a primary application and a surveyor's plan defining the boundaries. The primary application has not been finalised, although it is imminent. Neighbourhood plans cannot be lodged until primary applications are dealt with. The developer has been advised that it will be a further six weeks before the neighbourhood plan will be examined and certified following lodgment. The developer cannot understand why it cannot be done at the same time. This ongoing delay is ridiculous. A surveyor's report has been completed as to identification and there is no adverse interest. The developer has held the property for 10 years, and two mortgagees have been involved during that time. I reiterate that the developer has completed the construction of eight of the two-storey terraces. There are five exchanged contracts for sale and four are awaiting exchange. There is also a sunset clause that expires on 18 December 2006. Should the developers not be in a position to settle, the purchasers have the right to rescind the contracts.

The continuing delay is untenable. Not only is the developer suffering financial hardship as a result of the debt it incurred to the National Australia Bank while construction was taking place but the builder has not been paid his final payment and subcontractors have therefore suffered as a result. Since 1 September the continuing delay has cost the developer \$600 per day in bank interest. I understand this delay is simply a case of the non-availability of staff to handle reasonably straightforward tasks. The developer is prepared to pay a reasonable fee to employ someone to carry out this task in order to ensure it is completed efficiently. This ongoing delay will result in the decision being made around Christmas, when the building industry shuts down. The builder is pressing for payment in order to pay tradesmen who have young families and are relying on payment for the Christmas break. I wrote to Tony Kelly about the matter, and he responded on 18 October as follows:

Requests for urgency in the processing of Primary Applications and associated plans of survey are given due consideration, but as you will appreciate, most parties lodging such applications consider them worthy of urgent attention. For this reason, Applications are processed strictly in order of lodgement in all but exceptional cases of hardship. The request for urgency made by Teppan 389 Pty Ltd to LPI on 6th September 2006 does not fall within this category and therefore has not been granted.

Initial processing was completed by LPI on 11 September 2006. The Application is awaiting allocation for title searching and examination of the chain of deeds. There are currently thirteen Applications ahead of this matter and based on the availability of the specialist resources required to process the Application, the commencement of the searching and title examination stage is anticipated to begin in late October or early November 2006. A brief assessment of the chain of title indicates that a period of one week would be required to complete the necessary deed searching and documentation. Assuming a satisfactory outcome from the examination of the chain of deeds, the associated survey plan will be allocated for assessment of the boundary definition.

I put it to the House that this is a disgraceful event and that the department is under-resourced. The Premier is crowing that New South Wales is open for business. Here is an example of a government that has failed to deliver to the people of New South Wales. This business has a legitimate complaint and a legitimate problem that needs to be addressed. The company even offered to pay the fee. But what did it get? Just two paragraphs saying, in effect, "You have to stand in line." This is outrageous, and I demand that the Minister do something about it. [*Time expired.*]

GRANVILLE BUS SERVICES

Mr KIM YEADON (Granville) [6.01 p.m.]: I want to speak about bus services in South Granville, in my electorate. Honourable members will be aware that the Government has been systematically working on strategic bus corridors across Western Sydney. That process has been going on in the electorate of Granville for about the last 12 months. When the process started Transit First, the bus company, issued a proposed program for bus routes within the Granville electorate. There was a long and involved public consultation process around that initial proposal, and there was an unprecedented level of public feedback. I am happy to say that at that time the Ministry of Transport and the bus company took on board a whole range of suggestions put forward by the community and me.

In response to that feedback South Granville residents retained a link to Merrylands shops, Granville TAFE, Auburn shops, Auburn Hospital and Bankstown on the new route 908 service that operates six days a week. The service also reduces the walking distance for residents in Clyde Street, between Mona Street and Wellington Road. That was a significant improvement, in that initially the proposal was to have no service down that section of Clyde Street. A loop covering Guildford shops and the station was retained on route 906 and a link between Chester Hill, Old Guildford and Guildford was retained on route 916, to enable students and residents to access local schools, rail stations and local shops.

That proposal, when finalised, was put in place about three months ago. I have had numerous discussions with the Government since that time in order to point out some serious ongoing deficiencies in the

provision of bus services. They include, primarily, the need for a continuous bus route down Clyde Street into the Granville central business district [CBD]. That could involve the extension of either service 911 or service 908. Both those services currently travel to Auburn station. While we certainly need the provision of a route to Auburn station, there is a serious deficiency in that there is not a direct route down Clyde Street into the Granville CBD. I would be the first to acknowledge that the Granville CBD does not provide an exemplary shopping centre, but it is still a very important community location for people in South Granville.

People attend the Granville library, and the Country Women's Association meeting is held in Granville. Granville RSL Club provides bingo and other entertainment for elderly people who live in South Granville, and the youth and community centre in Granville has a high level of use by people from South Granville. Importantly, a large elderly community resides in South Granville around Clyde Street, particularly between the Duck River and Clyde Street, and it is simply too far and too onerous for them to have to walk up to Blaxwell Street in order to catch a bus. Indeed, even when they walk to that location they do not get a direct service into the Granville CBD.

The other feature of that area is that rising from the river is a very steep gradient up to Clyde Street and beyond Blaxwell Street that is simply too difficult a task for the elderly and disabled community that lives in South Granville. I again call upon the Government to seriously look at providing a service that goes into the Granville CBD, right down along Clyde Street. I also encourage the Government to provide a bus service on Sundays down Excelsior Street, as one is not currently available. There does not need to be a continuous service all day, but least one or two services, heading both north and south along Excelsior Street on Sunday, is imperative. I ask the Minister and the Ministry of Transport to look seriously at the deficiency that currently exists. People simply cannot get to the Granville CBD, which is an important location for so many people in South Granville and for that reason it should not remain the way it is now.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE WOMEN COMMUNITY LEADERS

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [6.06 p.m.]: This evening I want to talk about women in the Hornsby electorate who have made a difference over many years. I congratulate each and every one of them. Nancy Hepburn, who lived until well into her nineties, was a member of the Order of the British Empire. She defied her father and joined the United Action Party at the age of 17, and was a tireless worker for the community. Catherine Prime, who is also deceased, was the first woman actuary in Australia. Vera Rowley, a war widow, was one of the first nurses at Hornsby Hospital, and she is a credit to her profession.

Pat Witt, who died recently, was a member of the Country Women's Association [CWA] and will be long remembered. Other members of the CWA include Margaret Ure and Pat Witt's daughter, Lyn Braco, who is the current president. In guides and scouting there are many women. Sheila Blackmore, who died this year, will also be well remembered. I also pay tribute to the Trefoil Guild. Penny Becchio has done a lot with the Gang Show. Nan Richards still provides a guiding contribution as well as many other community interests. In relation to the Aboriginal community, Jenny Saunders is an outstanding woman in the area. She looks after Aboriginal interests and concerns in the area, as well as caring for a number of her grandchildren. With regard to disability services, Sue Byatt and Wendy Escott head up Studio Artes, which is an absolutely fantastic service for people with a disability. Cheryl Scott is another very hard worker. She is co-convener, together with Lee Milner, of the Hornsby Rockets, a disabled tenpin bowling group.

In relation to Rotary, at one stage last year there were three female presidents: Janette Bailey, Heather Hogan and Nola Ezzy. In relation to Lions I pay tribute to three women—Pauline Henebery, Maureen Bassett and Gay Pinch—for their work with the Berowra and Hornsby Lions clubs. A number of teachers and principals in the area are females. I mention Judy Learmonth, Narelle Ryan, Cherie Bourke, Kerri Brickley, Maree Sumpton and Jan Townley. I also mention a past principal of Asquith Girls High School who is held in great esteem, Dr Kris Needham. In Legacy, heading up the Rosemary Club and the War Widows are Wyn Reddan and Mary Rogers. In regard to post-natal depression, Carolyn Gibbs and the women of the Baby Bumps group are exceptional. Catholic Health Care sees Pauline and Kerry Lovell as significant.

In the Soroptimists I mention Veronica Taffs, Janelle Hendy and Julie Griffin. In the Red Cross I acknowledge Jean Watterson, without a doubt. There are numerous other groups: the VIEW Club, Probus, and other seniors groups. Anita Doherty comes immediately to mind. In relation to education, Elaine Harris is the principal of the community college and Audet Benson is the director of Hornsby TAFE. Mignon Woods made a fantastic presentation as a police officer at our recent young driver forum. In relation to the council, Nan Horne

has been with Hornsby Shire Council for 19 years, Felicity Findlay is the current deputy mayor, and Kathie Comb, the editor of the *Bush Telegraph*, was a councillor who served for 8 years in years gone by.

In business there are a number of women who head up their own business, but Bonnie at Olipoli stands out, being an award winner in the last business awards. It is also important to mention Julie Dominish from the Salvation Army. In the arts community Barb Angell, Lyndall Beck and Ruth White have worked extremely hard to raise the profile of arts in our community as well as respect for our very strong heritage. We also have a number of women presenting themselves in church groups, and the Minister of the Hornsby Uniting Church, Anne Hogan, does a lot of extremely hard work. Meals on Wheels recognises Megan Hall, and Edna Cooney who has been part of the team for 40 years.

I am very proud to be the first female member for the seat of Hornsby, and I love representing the people of Hornsby. I pay tribute to the wives of the men in my electorate who do a tireless job in their various community groups. It is very important to show our younger generation that they are important and that we provide them with adequate role models. I can honestly say that the role models that the young people, both male and female, have in the Hornsby electorate are exceptional—second to none—and I congratulate each and every one of them on the wonderful job they do.

BROKEN HILL CORE STORAGE FACILITY

MINERALOGICAL SOCIETIES SEMINAR

Mr PETER BLACK (Murray-Darling) [6.11 p.m.]: This is my first private member's statement this year. Tonight I speak on two matters relating to the mineral industry: first, the establishment of the Broken Hill Core Storage Facility; and, second, a mineralogical societies seminar I attended, representing the Hon. Ian Macdonald, the New South Wales Minister for Primary Industries. With regard to the first matter, we in the west know just how important the mineral industry is to Australia. Australia is on the crest of a mining boom, and Western New South Wales is making its contribution through the boom that is taking place in Cobar. Most importantly, in my hometown the boom is taking place through an operating company, two other companies that will operate in the district, and Consolidated Broken Hill, which intends to reopen the south mine.

On 6 October I had the pleasure of being with the Hon. Ian Macdonald in Broken Hill for the opening of the Broken Hill Core Storage Facility. This facility will be known as the E. C. Andrews Drill Core Facility—E. C. Andrews being perhaps the most famous New South Wales geologist ever. The facility will hold up to 80,000 metres of drill core and, in effect, it provides a storage facility for drill core that would otherwise be lost. It will be available to any exploration company wishing to carry out exploration in Western New South Wales.

The second item I want to mention is the Twenty-ninth Annual Joint Mineralogical Societies Seminar held at the University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, on 10 and 11 June this year, at which I had the pleasure of representing the Minister. I should mention, inter alia, that at that meeting were Kyle Beckwith, the managing director of Beckwith Minerals, his father, Peter Beckwith, and Peter's wife, Debbie. The organising committee, headed by Pete Williams, Professor of Chemistry from Western New South Wales, comprised Penny Williamson, who is well known from the University of Wollongong; Jim Sharpe; Graham Ogle; Arthur Roffey—a legend within the mineralogical societies of Sydney; George Laking; and John Chapman, one of our best employees in the department and responsible for minerals. I understand that John Chapman will represent New South Wales at the Tucson, Arizona, conference in February next year.

Every year Tucson puts on an international minerals show; it is the leading show in the world. Its topic for next year is "Minerals Downunder". Last year it was minerals from Canada. So we get to feature also on the international stage in respect of what we are doing. It will be an absolutely first-class exhibit of New South Wales' minerals specimens. At the seminar there was a series of addresses. There was an introduction by Pete Williams, who was followed by Alex Bevan. Laurie Lawrence—who is arguably one of our greatest professors in geology ever in New South Wales—was to turn up but, unfortunately, he passed away that week.

Other presenters included Penny Williamson, Bill Birch, Lin Sutherland, Erik Melchiorre, an American, Ian Graham, Paul Carr, Ralph Bottrill, with whom I had the pleasure of attending the W. S. and L. B. Robinson College when I was doing my degree, George Stacey, Becky Talyn, Rod Martin, Dermot Henry, and the last speaker, Ian Plimer, to whom I gave 10 out of 10. It was one of the most brilliant speeches I have ever heard him give. The topic of his speech was the origin of the mineralogical complexity of the Broken Hill ore

body, New South Wales. It is always an honour to represent the Hon. Ian Macdonald. These two matters demonstrate our commitment to mining in western New South Wales.

[Private members' statements interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Consideration of Legislative Council's Amendments

Motion, by leave, by Mr David Campbell agreed to:

That the amendments made by the Legislative Council in bills reported be considered in one Committee of the Whole.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION AMENDMENT (BIODIVERSITY BANKING) BILL 2006

Membership

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

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that the following members have been appointed as members of the Joint Select Committee on the Threatened Species Conservation Amendment (Biodiversity Banking) Act 2006:

Mr Cohen
Mr Colless
Ms Robertson.

Legislative Council
23 November 2006

MEREDITH BURGMANN
President

TREES (DISPUTES BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS) BILL

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (UNREGISTERED HEALTH PRACTITIONERS) BILL

Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills with amendments.

In Committee

Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.

*Schedule of the amendment to the Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Bill
referred to in message of 23 November*

Page 14, Schedule 2. Insert after line 5:

- [5] **Section 34A Proceedings to which on-site hearing procedures apply (as amended by the Crimes and Courts Legislation Amendment Act 2006)**

Insert at the end of section 34A (1):

- (f) proceedings in Class 2 of the Court's jurisdiction that are brought under section 7 of the *Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act 2006*.

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

Schedule of the amendments to the Health Legislation Amendment (Unregistered Practitioners) Bill referred to in message of 23 November

- No. 1 Page 13, Schedule 1 [2], proposed section 10AK (2), line 30. Insert ", in accordance with the regulations," after "notified".

- No. 2 Page 14, Schedule 1 [2], proposed section 10AK (3), line 7. Insert ", in accordance with the regulations," after "notified".
- No. 3 Page 15, Schedule 1 [2], proposed section 10AM, line 2. Omit "**Code**". Insert instead "**Codes**".
- No. 4 Page 15, Schedule 1 [2], proposed section 10AM, line 3. Omit "a code". Insert instead "codes".
- No. 5 Page 15, Schedule 1 [2], proposed section 10AM. Insert after line 10:
- (2) Before a code of practice is prescribed under subsection (1), the Minister is to:
 - (a) give public notice of the code in a form and manner determined by the Minister, specifying where the code can be inspected and the time and manner in which submissions may be made, and
 - (b) place the draft code and an impact assessment statement for the code on public exhibition for not less than 21 days, and
 - (c) consider any submission received within 21 days (or such longer period as the Minister may determine) after the end of that exhibition period.
- No. 6 Page 17, Schedule 2 [2], line 10. Omit "the code". Insert instead "a code".
- No. 7 Page 18, Schedule 2 [12], proposed section 41A (1) (b), line 20. Omit "the code". Insert instead "a code".
- No. 8 Page 19, Schedule 2 [12], proposed section 41A (5), lines 21 and 22. Omit "the code". Insert instead "a code".
- No. 9 Page 19, Schedule 2 [12], proposed section 41B (1) (a), lines 34 and 35. Omit "the code". Insert instead "a code".
- No. 10 Page 21, Schedule 2 [12], proposed section 41C (1) (a), lines 5 and 6. Omit "the code". Insert instead "a code".

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

Resolutions reported from Committee and report adopted.

Messages sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolutions.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr David Campbell agreed to:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 6 March 2007 at 2.15 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

[Private members' statements resumed.]

YOUTH DRIVER FORUM

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [6.21 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the *Northern Star* for its Protect Our Youth Program. I congratulate the editor, Russell Elridge, Jane Gardner and the team on conducting a Youth Driver Forum in Lismore last night. Unfortunately, I could not attend the forum because Parliament was sitting. Young drivers, appropriate training and restrictions have long been a major concern to me. As a result of community anxiety about young driver accidents over the past 18 months and prior I have organised for State parliamentary representatives to visit the area and meet with key organisations, stakeholders and individuals.

Following a tragedy at Kyogle the former Minister for Transport, the Hon. Carl Scully, met with student representatives from all local schools in the Lismore electorate. He had a very successful meeting with young people who had, or were in the process of getting, their learners or provisional licences. Following another tragedy in the area, Staysafe committee chairman Paul Gibson met with the parents of the boys tragically killed in the horrific smash near Byron Bay—Karen and Robert Eveleigh, Robert and Jacky Wells, Mark and Ann New, and Maria Bolt. Even in their grief those parents were able to address the forum and make some recommendations in the hope that other parents do not have to suffer what they have gone through. I thank them sincerely for that. In attendance at the Youth Driver Forum were approximately 200 young drivers, police, grieving parents and concerned citizens.

The theme of the forum was that driver education must be in schools now. Young people believe they need more driver education. Courtney Golding, a young girl who went to school with the four boys tragically

killed, said that young people were prepared to travel as far as Brisbane to attend driver training school. We must encourage young people to gain that education. A number of suggestions were made last night and they will be presented to me, the Minister and the shadow Minister. Accidents on our roads are a problem for all electorates throughout the State and the nation. I pay tribute to Superintendent Bruce Lyons, who spoke at the forum. I also congratulate Constable Peter Ellis from the police rescue unit who travels around the schools, showing students police rescue equipment and accident scenes. I commend the *Northern Star*, the young people, the parents and others involved in last night's forum. Driver education is so important because of the many tragedies on our roads. I hope that governments of all persuasions can take on board any suggestions to make our roads safer for our young people. We are certainly mindful of the concerns so clearly expressed at last night's meeting.

[Private members' statements interrupted.]

TABLING OF PAPERS

Mr Neville Newell, by leave, tabled the following reports:

Report of the Chiropractors Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Dental Technicians Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Nurses and Midwives Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Optical Dispensers Licensing Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Optometrists Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Osteopaths Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Physiotherapists Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Podiatrists Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006
 Report of the Psychologists Registration Board for the year ended 30 June 2006

Ordered to be printed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

[Private members' statements resumed.]

URBAN CONSOLIDATION

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Bligh) [6.26 p.m.]: The electorate of Bligh and the city of Sydney have the greatest concentration of apartment buildings in the State, reflecting the growing change from the traditional Australian quarter acre block with a detached house. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, building approvals for higher density apartments are rapidly increasing, with flats, units and apartments accounting for over 86 per cent of building approvals in the inner suburbs of Sydney between 2001 and 2005. Urban consolidation is a major policy in the Government's Metropolitan Strategy and it is expected that another 40,000 people will move to the inner city in the next 10 years. Urban consolidation brings with it new challenges that require government policies to ensure apartment living is sustainable.

As a result of Federal and State government policy over the past two decades, urban consolidation has led to a dramatic increase in residential population. But there has not been a corresponding increase in open space essential for people's health and wellbeing. The State Government has failed to conduct an assessment of open-space needs. The city council is now carrying out significant works in all our major parks, and it has purchased more than 5.1 hectares of new green open space in the past few years. High-density apartments should also be environmentally sustainable. Recently in Parliament I sought a commitment to improve energy efficiency targets in high-rise apartments, following the Government's depressing backdown on BASIX.

Apartments need to be built to high standards to ensure adequate apartment living amenity, and I have made a number of submissions calling for improved sound insulation standards, independent building supervision and new measures to resolve cases of defective building. Apartment management, particularly for larger blocks, is also vital. My submissions to the State Government's review of strata schemes in 2003 and 2004 focussed on management issues, particularly in blocks of 100 lots or more. While subsequent legislative amendments have provided some improvement, there is a growing need for further reform.

A recent forum at Sydney Town Hall organised by the City of Sydney Residents Network highlighted increasing incidents of overcrowding and unauthorised use of residential buildings for short-term tourist accommodation. The trend is having serious impacts on safety, amenity and access and maintenance to

facilities. Residents say that visitors from unauthorised tourist accommodation leave access cards in common places where anyone can find them and then freely enter the building, putting residents at risk. They also report furniture and belongings left in fire stairs, and they are concerned that escape plans do not cater for the increased number of visitors. Visitors in holiday mode disrupt peace and amenity through frequent social gatherings and continuous coming and going. Unauthorised short-term tourist accommodation increases water rates for residents because large numbers of visitors increase the overall water use of the building. Large numbers of tourists also use lifts and facilities more frequently, increasing maintenance costs and lift waiting times.

Unauthorised short-term and tourist accommodation services also unfairly compete with legitimate tourist accommodation and affect standards of tourist accommodation and the experience of Sydney. Earlier this year the city took action to prevent overcrowding and short-term stays in future residential apartment buildings. Our standard conditions of approval for new apartment developments now include new conditions to restrict the number of adult residents to two adults per bedroom with the total number of adults not to exceed twice the number of bedrooms, a requirement for tenants to be subject to a residential tenancy agreement for a term of at least three months, a prohibition on advertising for short-term or share accommodation in the building, and limiting the use of car parking space for storage related to residents in the unit for which the space is associated, with no storage in car parking spaces for commercial businesses.

The city's new measures can prevent unauthorised accommodation in new apartment buildings but tenancy and planning law reform is needed to impose similar restrictions on existing residential apartment buildings. Restrictions should ensure that all apartment lots are subject to minimum tenancy agreements of three months, subleases are prohibited, affected owners corporations or neighbours can terminate leases where a landlord permits unauthorised short-term accommodation, and council rangers are authorised to enter and inspect lots if there is evidence of breaches. Council has been working with the New South Wales backpackers task force but the issue of unauthorised short-term accommodation extends beyond unauthorised backpackers to include unauthorised serviced apartments and other short-term lettings. The restrictions I have outlined will reduce incidents of short-term letting in residential apartments. I call on the Government to introduce measures to reduce the serious problem of overcrowding in high-density apartment blocks.

CRONULLA RAIL DUPLICATION

Mr MALCOLM KERR (Cronulla) [6.31 p.m.]: Honourable members will recall seeing a letter that the former Minister for Transport, the honourable member for Smithfield, wrote to the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* on 7 May 2002 in which he claimed that a Labor Government built the Cronulla railway line under Premier McKell. That was extraordinary because Mr McKell did not become Premier until 6 May 1941, 17 months after the line was officially opened in December 1939. In fact, it was Joe Munro who pushed for seven years for Sutherland Shire Council to build the line using labour provided by returned soldiers during the Depression. Obviously, the honourable member for Smithfield did not graduate from a McKell school. The honourable member also mentioned in the letter that in May 2002 the Carr Government announced that it would allocate more than \$1 million to begin planning for the full duplication of the Cronulla line. That is significant planning. Although the duplication was promised during the 2003 election campaign, it has not been done.

Mr Barry Collier: In the next Labor Government.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: Interestingly, that is what the honourable member for Miranda said last time. In 2003 the honourable member said that we would get the duplication in the next term of the Labor Government. This Labor Government has only until 24 March to complete the work.

Mr Barry Collier: It will be under way.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: The honourable member says that it is under way, but not one shovel load of dirt has been lifted. He should start campaigning; he has only until 24 March. Time is running out. Indeed, the Cabinet is running out; there are two fewer people in Cabinet these days. The labour force is being reduced. The people of Cronulla and the Sutherland shire would like to know how that \$1 million was spent in terms of planning. For example, did planning for the duplication include a bicycle track, which is necessary? It is time the Government said whether a bicycle track will be constructed when the duplication takes place, and where that bicycle track will be located. I am sure that \$1 million would have provided planning for a bicycle track.

Mr Barry Collier: We both support the track. You know that.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: I do support the track.

Mr Barry Collier: So do I.

Mr MALCOLM KERR: The honourable member can get on his bike, but the track will need to be completed before he does that. As I said, time is running out. The honourable member only has until 24 March to honour that promise. I wish him luck. I promise that he will get a productivity award if he is able to get the Government to complete the duplication. It is time for a decision to be made about the bike track, which I support, as the honourable member for Miranda and the Liberal candidate for Miranda, Graham Annersley, do. It is time for the planning that cost \$1 million to be made public in the same way as the police reports on the Cronulla riots were finally made public. It is essential. Public money was used for a public purpose, and the public has a right to know.

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY CAMPAIGN

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.36 p.m.]: I shall report to the House on what is, despite its sobering content, actually a good news story. I am referring to a project by year 9 students at All Saints Catholic Girls School, Liverpool, concerning the Make Poverty History campaign. Work from the project has been sent to me by the year 9 co-ordinator at the school, Maria D'auria. I have also spoken to the school's religious education co-ordinator, Pauline Nolan, who oversees social justice projects at the school. At a time when this place has seen behaviour even more destructive than usual, and some tabloid media outlets concentrate more on entertainment and transient peripheral issues, it was refreshing to receive the products of a serious project about serious issues from young women in my electorate.

The school has active social justice programs that are a great credit to the school, its teachers, parents and students. The students have participated in a number of events already, including the Stand Up campaign and being part of the *Guinness Book of Records* entry about the Make Poverty History campaign. There is a good and active social justice group at the school. When I was speaking to Pauline Nolan I suggested to her, rather cheekily, that it reminded me of one of my favourite writers, the Colombian priest Camilo Torres, who once said:

The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in a state of mortal sin.

One must be careful of the audience one is addressing when one uses that quote. I received copies of letters from a number of students and several petitions about both the Make Poverty History and Drop the Debt campaigns. The letters were from Keiara, Nalisha, Himakshi, Natasha, Tamara, Tiarne, Simone, Sheena, Jasmina and Ashmita. I shall refer to some of the letters I received; I do not have time to read all of them. However, I make the point that I was impressed by all the letters I received. The first letter, from Keiara and addressed to Treasurer Costello, stated:

Dear Treasurer Costello

Please take this opportunity to help make poverty history across the world.

The G20 meeting of finance ministers that you will be chairing in Melbourne in November is a great opportunity for Australia to take a leading role in the global movement to reduce poverty.

Over the two days the G20 is meeting, more than 50,000 children will die from poverty-related causes; 2,800 women will needlessly die in pregnancy or childbirth; and more than 16,000 people will die as a result of HIV and AIDS. This reality demands that poverty be on the agenda of the G20.

The G20 has previously acknowledged that it "should play an active role in addressing critical development issues" and has committed to a "shared vision for global development". At its meeting last year, the group determined to "carry the momentum forward" on combating poverty. However, sadly at this point, this ongoing commitment to combat poverty does not seem to be reflected prominently in the G20 agenda.

As such, I am writing to ask that you take a leading role in putting poverty reduction firmly on the agenda of the G20. Specifically, the G20 could and should address:

- The need for debt relief to be extended to all countries struggling to meet MDG targets
- Increased levels of aid and its targeting towards poverty reduction
- US and EU intransigence in the WTO negotiations

The G20 meeting is a unique opportunity to increase global co-operation as it brings together some of the world's richest nations along with some of the world's most important emerging nations. We ask you not to miss this opportunity for Australia to play a leading role in the battle against poverty.

Another letter states:

Poverty, the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support; condition of being poor; indigence. Should any one person alive have to be put through this ordeal? Should any one suffer for something that they didn't do? Should we upper class people have to watch people suffer tremendous hardship, all because they can't get enough relief? What's wrong with the world today? People are dying every few seconds and not just in third world countries, they're also dying in our own backyard. As a high developed country we should cater to the needs of people who have no more of a chance in life than to work in a rice patty field. Although our lives shouldn't be dedicated to doing something for someone else and not helping ourselves, it's so hard to believe that the luxuries we take for granted every day would be like heaven to a person who had never seen a bath tub before or a nice warm bed.

I have a number of other letters, but I do not have enough time to refer to all of them. As I said, it is was a pleasure at this point in the political cycle to receive serious letters on a serious topic from young women in south-west Sydney. It is an affirmation of the wish for social justice among young people in my area, and it is a useful antidote to some of the pathological anti-youth rhetoric we sometimes hear. I have never accepted that rhetoric, but this is concrete evidence against it. It is very impressive work by the students, teachers and parents of the school. Clearly, that is a good news story.

ICE (CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE)

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [6.41 p.m.]: This afternoon I bring to the attention of the House a major problem facing youth in New South Wales, and probably throughout Australia. I refer to the methamphetamine or ice menace. Last week a lady came to see me about her daughter, who went missing for a weekend. When she was found, it was discovered that she and a friend had consumed ice with friends at a party and that the friend had been admitted to hospital. Over two weeks this woman's daughter experienced extreme psychotic behaviour, including screaming and laughing at her mother and lying on the ground in a foetal position and sobbing uncontrollably. A doctor who was consulted said that he was concerned that she was not the only young person he had seen in that condition in the past few months. Other young people in the area tell me that it is almost as easy for minors to get ice as it is to get alcohol. I have done some research about ice and I found an article that states:

Methamphetamine, a.k.a. speed, crank or meth, is the fastest growing drug threat to America.

The same is true in Australia. The article continues:

It is inexpensive, easily made from readily obtainable chemicals and has a longer lasting effect than cocaine.

Another article I read pointed out that the hit from cocaine lasts from six to 20 minutes. The ice hit lasts between two and 12 hours. It has serious effects and can cause psychotic behaviour and permanent brain damage. The article continues:

Methamphetamine is highly addictive and can cause violent and psychotic behaviour ... Side effects include convulsions, dangerously high body temperature, cardiac arrhythmia and stroke.

Another article states:

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant that can be injected, snorted, smoked, or ingested orally.

Heroin may be a highly addictive drug, but users must inject it before they can get any effect. Ice can be simply drunk, taken in tablet form or snorted. The real danger is that kids can buy a lick of ice, which is a piece of aluminium foil with a smear of ice, for \$5 and have a high for up to four hours. A former ice addict was interviewed for the local newspaper. The article states:

I went two weeks, I went on it for 14 days without sleep, without stopping, without eating, without sleeping. Imagine what it does to your body.

"You have no restraints. Whatever you think you could do, you do. If you think you could fly, you would most likely get to the top of a building and then jump."

Getting off Ice was hard ... but staying off seems harder ...

He suffers from anxiety attacks as a result and has been diagnosed as having schizophrenia.

He takes prescription drugs like Valium and Xanax to calm his panic disorders and warned, an increasing number of methamphetamine addicts were being attracted to their calming effects.

The person referred to in the article said that he is not hooked, but he feels a lot better when he is taking those drugs so he keeps taking them. He has simply transferred his addiction, but at least he is using legal drugs. A senior police detective told me a few days ago that the police need better search powers and easier access to warrants. At present the police must approach a magistrate to get a warrant. If the magistrate concerned takes a civil libertarian approach, the police cannot get a search warrant quickly without producing a great deal of evidence. He said that a senior detective should have the power to carry out a search. One thing I have learnt from my research over the past couple of weeks is that we must educate young people that this is not a game, that they are playing with their lives and that taking ice could have a major impact on their future. That education program should be available in schools. We must also deal with the people who supply these drugs. We should treat them the same way we treat paedophiles: lock them up and put them on a dangerous persons list.

GRAYS POINT AND AUBURN PUBLIC SCHOOLS CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [6.46 p.m.]: In a diverse society like Australia the key to harmony is the mutual respect that comes from understanding each other's cultures. That understanding best comes from contact and interaction with those from communities with cultures, backgrounds, beliefs and lifestyles different from our own. Today I draw the attention of the House to a unique project which is doing just that. Australians Let Us All Rejoice is a cultural exchange program that brings together the communities of Grays Point Public School in my electorate and Auburn Public School. This project aims to help the pupils, parents and staff from each school community better understand the diversity in the people and places of Sydney and what it is to be an Australian in today's modern world. It is about promoting the twin pillars of a culturally diverse society: respect and responsibility.

Australians Let Us All Rejoice is much more than a one-off visit by students to each other's school. This is an ongoing, four-term program that extends beyond the pupils to their parents and the wider school community, challenging their ideas, beliefs and understanding of other communities. Importantly, the program has defined aims, objectives, a variety of programmed activities linked to the primary school curriculum and an evaluation process. As a former high school teacher, I am very impressed with the structure of the project and with the work of two outstanding principals—Philip Rouland of Grays Point Public School and Mr Glen Stelzer of Auburn Public School—in putting the project together.

The project began with students completing a survey about their attitudes to and expectations of the project. Year 4 children from each school were matched with a "buddy" for the year. Grays Point students then wrote to their Auburn buddies introducing themselves, describing their hobbies, family, school and life in their neighbourhood. Of course, the Auburn students responded to their Grays Point buddies. The communication continued in term two through letters and emails. In term three, the schools each hosted reciprocal cultural exchange visits. The first, on 12 September, saw pupils, teachers and members of the Grays Point Public School community travelling to the Auburn Public School to meet their buddies face to face for the first time. The parents travelled in a second bus, stopping on the way for a guided tour of the Gallipoli Mosque. After spending time with their buddies, the students, parents and teachers watched cultural performances by Afghan and Arabic student dance groups. That was followed by a walking tour of the Auburn local business area and lunch at the school.

On Wednesday 8 November, it was the turn of Auburn Public School to visit Grays Point Public School, which is on the very edge of the Royal National Park. Auburn students, staff and parents met their counterparts from Grays Point at the park's visitors' centre. All participated in activities arranged by the two national parks officers—Mrs Wendy Affleck and Aboriginal ranger Mr David Wright. These activities focused on bush tucker and bush medicine presentations by Mr Wright. The rangers, teachers, staff and parents then walked together along the bush track back to Grays Point Public School. I met the group a short distance along the track as they neared the school. It was simply wonderful to see the happy children from both schools together, some walking arm in arm, chatting and enjoying each other's company in a true spirit of harmony and goodwill—and all this in an Australian bush setting. I could not help but think that this is how it really should be—all of us together, all Australians united under one Australian sun. I was reminded of how much we can learn from our children and how bright our future in this country really is.

As we entered the school gate the children from Auburn were welcomed by captains Elise Munro and Ryan Sorensen, vice-captains Grace Henry and Liam Unicomb, as well as prefects Kate Menzies, Ryan Agar, Diahann Munro and Toby Hooker, all resplendent in their striking red school blazers. We were all delighted to have the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, my colleague the honourable member for Auburn, and Secondary School Education Director Mrs Gail Schwedler join us at Grays Point to celebrate this fantastic cultural exchange program. After an address by the Minister we witnessed fabulous dance and choir performances by the children under the covered outdoor learning area. Then it was off to the classrooms, with the children working together, and lunch with each of their buddies in the school playground. Lunch was provided by the Grays Point community, being sensitive to the dietary needs of the children and community from Auburn Public School.

An evaluation of the program is under way and I am looking forward to seeing what I am certain it will be positive outcomes and a continuation of the program in 2007. I congratulate and thank everyone involved in this inaugural cultural exchange program. This is about two school communities learning from each other. It is about bridging the gap through understanding not just the differences but the similarities between two different cultures within Sydney. The program "Australians Let Us All Rejoice" was devised by two very committed school principals, Mr Philip Rouland of Grays Point and Mr Glen Stelzer of Auburn Public School. This program is a credit to public education in New South Wales and it is a lesson to us all.

BURRINJUCK ELECTORATE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

BURRINJUCK ROADS AND AIRPORT

RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [6.51 p.m.]: This evening I wish to speak about issues that relate to my electorate of Burrinjuck, particularly education, transport and the current bushfires. I would like to continue from the felicitations I gave earlier when I highlighted some of the schools in the northern and central parts of my electorate, and the excellent work they are doing in educating our children. In country areas that is never easy, and I express my heartfelt thanks to the principals and the teachers of the many schools in my electorate. I refer now to the schools and the principals in the southern part of my electorate, including Adelong Public School, where the principal is Dianne Strong; Batlow Central School and its principal Neil Solomon; Bongongo Public School in Adjunghilly, where Robert Rutland is the principal; Brungle Public School, where the principal is Geoff Naylor; Franklin Public School, a special school, with its principal Darryl Ryan; Gadara School, another special school in Tumut, where Carol Deacon is the principal. They are all doing a great job.

At Gundagai High School Peter Franks has been with us for many years. He is a delightful principal and a strict principal at that. At Gundagai Public School Brad Griffith is doing a great job. Gundagai South Public School has Pip McAlister. I enjoyed the anniversary of that school the other weekend and I am sure the former students had a wonderful time. Russell Peck is the principal of Jugiong Public School, and at Nangus Public School near Gundagai, Bronwyn Annetts is the principal. At Talbingo Public School Ted Conroy is the principal. Talbingo is a beautiful school—the home of Myles Franklin—and for an isolated community the children are impeccably presented. It is a delight to visit that school. At Tumut High School Peter Browne is doing an outstanding job. He is a wonderful principal. I thank the staff at all those schools and at Tumut Public School as well. Thank you for your service to the electorate of Burrinjuck and to the public education system in the State.

We need an urgent commitment of funding towards transport in the electorate of Burrinjuck for Main Road 241, the Lachlan Valley Way and the Burley Griffin Way, and also for the Hume Highway overpasses and bridges. I cannot emphasise that enough. I mention it in many speeches but the number of heavy vehicle movements—grain and livestock trucks—travelling on those roads means they deteriorate rapidly and we need a commitment towards their urgent maintenance and upgrade. The Coalition will fix them when it is in government, but we need the Labor Party to commit to their funding.

Airport services in the Burrinjuck electorate are currently located at Wagga Wagga and Canberra. There is no airport within the electorate. We need a regional airline operation to service the northern side of the electorate. Cowra would be a perfect location for that. I have met with Rex Airlines, who have said it would have to be a shared risk, which I totally understand. Everything is a risk when it comes to airlines, and we have seen many collapse. I encourage the Cowra Shire Council to offer to share the risk with Rex or another airline to get an airline operation up and running in Cowra. It is time. Cowra is a dynamic, thriving region with a strong

industrial area and many people travel from Cowra to Sydney. It is also only 45 minutes from Young so it could also service that area, as well as Boorowa. This needs to be looked at as soon as possible. I would like to see it happen straight away.

Bushfires are raging across the State. We have affected areas in Burrinjuck, including at Collector, where the fires are rampaging over the hill towards Lake George. Also, Big Hill has been seriously affected over the past couple of days. I offer my heartfelt and very sincere thanks to the Rural Fire Service volunteers who are fighting those fires at the moment. I can just picture them. They will be covered in soot. They would be absolutely buggered—excuse the French; they would have just about had it by now. They would have been climbing in and out of their trucks and be covered in ash. Hats off to them, to the State Emergency Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association and all emergency services in all areas fighting fires and doing back-burning. Our prayers are that these fires will soon be extinguished and you will all be back home safe. [*Time expired.*]

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL TRANSPORTATION

Mr PAUL GIBSON (Blacktown) [6.56 p.m.]: Recently, as part of the inquiry into the safety of railway level crossings, the Staysafe committee reviewed issues associated with vandalism, intentional damage and theft involving rail infrastructure, and issues associated with the carriage of dangerous goods, both in railway wagons and on road trucks. We should not be complacent about the dangers. A Staysafe committee public hearing was held on Monday 13 November 2006, and on the afternoon of Wednesday 15 November the passenger train *Overland* slammed into a loaded truck at a passively protected level crossing on the main interstate corridor in Victoria between Adelaide and Melbourne. Unfortunately, the truck driver was killed and the truck was extensively damaged, as was the locomotive. Fortunately there were no injuries to the 127 passengers on the train. This level crossing crash is being investigated by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, along with the Victorian police.

It is now commonplace to see security fences along railway tracks that pass through urban localities to prevent trespassing and many other things. What is disturbing is that the railway bridges—that is bridges over railway tracks—often now have security fences fitted. It is interesting to see that the Five Mates Bridge at Gerogery has a full set of fences installed similar to what we see on overpasses and many of our roads such as the M4. What makes throwing objects from bridges on to trucks and trains exciting, I do not know. The truck involved in the fatal crash in Victoria last week was carrying a load of rocks and the train was carrying passengers.

What if the truck had been carrying hazardous materials or if the train had been a freight train with rail wagons carrying hazardous materials? Hazardous materials range from non-toxic material such as compressed nitrogen, to highly toxic gases such as chlorine, to flammable liquids such as aviation fuels. The rail industry uses tank cars to transport large amounts of petrol and diesel, but the majority of dangerous goods are transported in normal shipping containers, with some liquids transported in "transi tank" containers. The rail industry also routinely transports high consequence dangerous goods in containers, including explosives, ammonium nitrate, radioactive material and sodium cyanide. All these products are a risk and may become an uncontrolled hazard in the event of a level crossing accident.

High consequence dangerous goods include many things. such as ammonium nitrate. I was very disturbed to hear of a recent theft in North Sydney of more than one tonne of this chemical. The ammonium nitrate was manufactured in Newcastle and placed on a train for shipment to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. The theft occurred in the early morning of 6 October 2006 during a 30-minute stop at the Sulphide Junction siding in the Hunter Valley. Ammonium nitrate is used in Australia mainly to make an ammonium nitrate-fuel oil mixture and ammonium nitrate emulsion explosives to be used for blasting in the mining industry. Australia produces about one million tonnes of ammonium nitrate each year. About 95 per cent of it is used in the mining industry and 5 per cent as a fertiliser. There is a long and notorious history of ammonium nitrate misuse. It was the component that was used in the Bali bombings.

In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the head of NSW Police counterterrorism, Assistant Commissioner Nick Kaldas, has been reported as saying that after a re-enactment of the theft it was believed that only 400 kilograms of ammonium nitrate was taken and most of it had dropped to the ground and probably seeped into the earth. In a later interview he said the theft of the ammonium nitrate may have been a carefully planned job. I am unaware of a remotely similar theft happening anywhere else in Australia, either on the roads or from rail. Ammonium nitrate is readily available legitimately. Security of the rail network and road transport system should be given a higher profile. The theft that occurred at Sulphide Junction and the high level of theft

that is being recorded in other transport areas are a worrying aspect. Tougher controls and regulations should be introduced on the transport of potentially explosive substances such as ammonium nitrate and a review undertaken of the transport of dangerous goods by road and rail.

FILM INDUSTRY

Mr DAVID BARR (Manly) [7.01 p.m.]: Recently, together with my Independent colleagues, I had the pleasure of meeting representatives from the New South Wales Film Makers Group who advocate on behalf of more than 10,000 freelance film practitioners and associated businesses in New South Wales. The industry is a significant contributor to jobs, investment and tourism in New South Wales. Indirectly the industry supports more than 12,000 small businesses across New South Wales. We have some of the world's best talent and some of the best facilities available. However, in the last few years Sydney and New South Wales have lost quantity and quality of film production. In the last available financial year, 2004-2005, production in New South Wales decreased by \$164 million, reaching a level of \$245 million. That is the second lowest figure in 10 years and is a more than 40 per cent decrease on the 2003-04 level of \$396 million.

According to the New South Wales Government's multiplier, the film and television industry employs 37 people per annum per \$1 million spent. That means the decrease in production last year resulted in New South Wales losing more than 6,000 jobs in the economy. That is happening in a State that the Government says is "open for business". One of the reasons for the dramatic downturn is a direct result of the uncompetitiveness of the New South Wales Government's incentives compared with those offered by other States. New South Wales is building a reputation for being an expensive and difficult place to make films. According to the State Funding Summary of June 2006 the Victorian Government spent \$20.6 million on project development and investment, industry and audience development incentives and digital media. Queensland spent \$12.7 million. New South Wales spent a paltry \$10.7 million.

The Australian Film Commission's website claims that New South Wales has about 50 per cent of film production in the country. Yet funding to this industry in New South Wales is significantly below that level, even compared with other States. Similarly, Victoria's Film Vic and Queensland's Pacific Film and Television Commission receive more funding than the New South Wales Film and Television Office. If New South Wales is to regain its position as the leading State and meet its claim of being "open for business", the Government needs to increase its incentives to the film industry in line with that offered by other States. The Government must ensure that New South Wales is more competitive, or at least is on a level playing field. It must implement better co-ordination in attracting international production and provide better support for the New South Wales Film and Television Office.

Every State except New South Wales has a comprehensive incentive package for local and offshore films. Melbourne has now taken over Sydney as Australia's film making capital, despite films like *Matrix*, two *Star Wars* episodes, *Mission: Impossible 2* and *Superman Returns* being made in Sydney. This is not about handouts. It is about attracting the jobs, investment and tourism that are generated by the film industry. As an example, a friend of mine who makes props for the film industry has not had work in the film industry for over a year. He made props for the successful miniseries *Mary Bryant*. Some of the episodes were shot on the banks of Manly dam. The shingle huts he made as part of the set were made from styrofoam but looked as though they had been made from timber. He has a clever and unique talent but once the film industry deteriorates beyond a certain point, people like him will not be able to easily get back into it. They will have moved on to other careers and will be lost to the film industry.

I urge the Government to implement the recommendations of the New South Wales Film Makers Group in their submission to the New South Wales State Plan so that Sydney and New South Wales are again number one in filmmaking in Australia. Earlier today in Parliament the Premier emphasised that the arts were an important factor in New South Wales. It is time the Government put some money where its mouth is.

GUNNGAH BINNUNG LISTEN UP EXHIBITION

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.05 p.m.]: It is my great pleasure to inform the House of an exhibition I was fortunate enough to attend on Friday 10 November 2006. The Gunngah Binnung, or Listen Up, exhibition was the last of a series of works and activities that had been held throughout 2003 to 2005 and extending into 2006 in the Tweed as part of the fifth City of the Arts program. As honourable members would recall, I had great pleasure advising the House three years ago that Tweed had been selected as

the fifth City of the Arts. The Listen Up exhibition was the last of many successful exhibitions that have been held as part of that very successful City of the Arts program.

I want to report to the Parliament on some of those activities, as well as the ongoing legacy that the fifth City of the Arts program has given to the Tweed. Under the program, the Tweed shire received \$300,000 in funding from the Ministry of the Arts to develop arts activities within the shire. It has been an extremely successful program. I pay tribute to the Tweed Shire Council cultural advisory committee, which has applied the money to various projects. The committee consists of Max Boyd, Judith Sutton, Barbara Carroll, Gary Corbett, Jackie Chapman, Barbara Allen and Lesley Mye. The committee has been very successful in the activities that have been undertaken and has achieved magnificently the cultural vision and goals of the fifth City of the Arts program.

Some of the projects and policies, such as the place-making policy and the festival and events policy, have promoted the Tweed's sense as a unique place and its cultural diversity. Some projects were designed around events that were already happening. With the extra funding the activities were expanded and in some cases have been instrumental in people obtaining work. The cultural diversity program consisted of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural program, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community stories, of which Gungah Binnung was the last, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander special events. The disability arts program was keenly received and there was a section for home-grown film works. The City of the Arts Space, which was located in the old art gallery on Tumbulgum Road, was successful in staging many exhibitions.

Some 20,000 people participated in the various programs, either as a member of the audience or as a participant in one of the many workshops. As a result of the City of the Arts program, approximately 142 artists or art industry workers have received short-term to medium-term employment, which is a tremendous outcome, a great outcome. I would like to comment on the opening of the exhibition and the interactive performance event, to give honourable members some idea of the flavour of this final program, "Gungah Binnung". It began with a "welcome to country" by Aunty Kath Lena and Aunty Bakoi Boulton. The Ginibi Dancers also gave an exhibition and welcome.

After some food and drink there was an official opening and a presentation by Lesley Mye, the council's Aboriginal Liaison Officer and Project Manager for the Gungah Binnung exhibition; a short screening on the making of the City of the Arts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program; and an official opening by Patsy Nagas, who is a councillor on Kyogle Council. It was a great evening and a fitting tribute to a program that has resulted in so many benefits for the Tweed. The cultural program there is certainly alive and developing well under the tutelage of the advisory committee and the Tweed Council and I commend them for their great work.

BELLA VISTA WATERS ESTATE

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [7.10 p.m.]: This is the last occasion on which you will be presiding, Mr Deputy-Speaker, and I wish you all the best. On 3 January this year I was contacted by Michael James of Bella Vista, seeking support for him and approximately 500 other residents who are opposed to the rezoning of the large green area near his home. The area in question is described as 50-58 Edgewater Drive, Bella Vista. Mr James told me that everyone had purchased their homes on the understanding that the area was to be green space.

Contact was made with the Council of the Shire of Baulkham Hills to ascertain exactly what the position was regarding this matter. Information was supplied to the effect that the land in question was currently zoned 6A by Baulkham Hills council as part of a 5.72 hectare site referred to as the Hilltop Park. The site was to incorporate a greenway link 25 metres wide and district park facilities, including playing fields and associated facilities such as play provisions; car parking, amenities buildings, pathways, planting, lighting et cetera.

In much 2005 the developer, Northwest, submitted a letter asking that council acquire the land. In other words, the developer, as it was entitled to do, asked council to pay for the land that it required to be zoned for open space some years ago when the plan of subdivision was approved. However, on 24 May 2005 Baulkham Hills council considered a report on strategies to reduce the projected shortfall in section 94 contributions to reduce the land acquisition costs in that area.

The rezoning of the land would mean that only a small part of the area originally designated open space would remain parkland, and the greater majority of land would be zoned the same as all other land in the area, residential 2A. In solving this green space, council was offering the residents playing fields to be established at Boundary Road, Maraylya. Maraylya is not a neighbouring suburb but many kilometres away, and would involve at least a 30-minute car journey. Council advised that advertisements had been placed in the press on 13 December 2005 and 17 January 2006, giving notice of what was intended. The residents have asked why Baulkham Hills council advertised the plans during the Christmas holiday period, when many people were not at home.

As the decision had been made by council on 24 May 2005, there was plenty of opportunity to advertise the plans outside the Christmas vacation period. I repeat that almost all of the residents of Bella Vista Waters Estate purchased their land on the understanding that the area in question would be developed into a recreational area. The estate was marketed as prestigious living with amenities and facilities not seen in other estates across Sydney. It was perceived as a unique blending of land usage where commercial and residential living would be harmoniously integrated. I make it quite clear that in my opinion the developer is in no way responsible for the present situation. It rests entirely with council.

The park for the cornerstone of this strategy was provided to counteract the dominance of the commercial buildings located within the surrounding areas. The land within the Bella Vista Waters Estate has always had a significant price premium compared with other land releases throughout the area. In fact, some buyers paid up to \$100,000 extra to live near the park. Considerable revenue was paid to Baulkham Hills council in the form of section 94 contributions. However, it would appear that the council has a potential \$76 million deficit for contributions under Plan No. 8 for the Kellyville-Rouse hill area. The residents felt assured that there were sufficient funds to provide the proposed amenities.

The residents of Bella Vista Waters Estate are very angry with Baulkham Hills council. My constituent Michael James has said that many residents are questioning why the council allocated this open area as part of the original development application if it does not also have the required budgetary and contractual arrangements in place to see the proposed amenities completed. They believe that the Minister for Planning should have a close look at this situation. In a nutshell, the people of Bella Vista Waters Estate are not getting what they paid for and are very concerned about the situation. They paid a premium price because they wanted to live in an area located close to parkland. The reality is simply that the residents, including young people in the area, who want to play cricket or any other activity will now have to travel many kilometres away. It is clear that Baulkham Hills council should be made accountable to provide the facilities it required as a condition of the development for the use of residents today in that prestigious development.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [7.15 p.m.]: One of the great platforms of our democracy is our free public education system. It has been outstandingly successful in offering equality of opportunity for all children regardless of race, religion, economic status or aptitude. But equality of opportunity is not to be confused with equality of outcomes. Regardless of how good a system is, it cannot guarantee that every child who enters the education system will achieve equal results. That depends on too many other factors. What we can and should do is ensure that the opportunities are there and that students are given the chance to reach their full potential if they apply themselves. I am an unashamed advocate of the public education system and, travelling around the great public schools in my electorate, both small and large, has done nothing but reinforce my faith in the system.

At present the public education system is under siege from ideologues, often directed by economic rationalist and market driven groups, individuals and politicians. I would say there has been nothing wrong with the ideology behind our public education system in the past, and nor is there today. It is basic and simple, a free education that offers opportunity for all. Even the most market-driven fanatics cannot deny that a well-educated and skilled population is the most advantageous for our nation in terms of economic growth, as well as building social capital. The danger lies in the allocation from the public purse for public education. As a nation we have agreed to have a pluralist education system, conforming to generally agreed standards. What we have not agreed to as a society is elitism, where the State gives more support to wealthy, privileged or noisy single-issue groups at the expense of the poor and disadvantaged.

In my view the State has a responsibility to ensure a fair go for all and to guarantee that the public system is well resourced and accountable and provides an education to equip students with the skills and

knowledge they need to reach their goals and contribute positively to society. What the State should not do, in my opinion, is allow this excellent public education system to become the whipping boy for opportunistic and politically based ideologues who undermine its credibility and, by inference, cast aspersions on the teachers whose responsibility it is to provide our children with a well rounded education.

By all means we should continue the debate about curriculum content and accountability. We should not lose sight of the aim of public education to ensure a high level of literacy and numeracy skills in primary school so that students in secondary school are best equipped to follow their talents in preparation for their future careers. Today, with my Independent colleagues, I met with members of the New South Wales Public Education Alliance regarding its Cornerstones Conference Communique. They are concerned, as I am, that governments should provide more financial resources for public education. Their platform for future growth is reasonable and based on achieving the best outcomes now and in the future.

The five planks of their policy include free public pre-school education for all children; additional targeted resources for smaller classes and specialist programs in years 7 and 8 to make the transition from primary to high school more successful; greater support for students with identified needs, particularly students with an Aboriginal or non-English speaking background or those with disabilities and learning difficulties; more opportunities for professional development for teachers; and capital works and maintenance programs to ensure that schools are modern and well-equipped, and are able to produce the best learning environment for teachers and students. I commend these recommendations. They are reasonable and positive. Basically, it means staying on track to produce the best possible public education system, and I can see no reason to quibble with that.

PREMIER AUTOMOTIVE GROUP TAMWORTH DEALERSHIP CLOSURE

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [7.20 p.m.], by leave: Tonight I wish to speak on the disgraceful decision by the Premier Automotive Group [PAG] to abandon country motorists who have purchased Land Rover, Jaguar and Volvo motor vehicles. As the owner of a Land Rover Discovery, and as a motorist who intended purchasing another Discovery next year, I am appalled at the company's unilateral decision to cease trading in Tamworth, with the nearest authorised dealer now located more than four hours drive away in Newcastle. This ridiculous decision has its origins in the purchase of Land Rover, Volvo and Jaguar in Australia by Ford Motors International in 1999. Three years later Ford created a luxury arm, which incorporated these three brands into the Premier Automotive Group. In 2004 PAG recruited a new chief executive officer, Doug Speck from Canada, and one of his first decisions was to pull these three brands out of country New South Wales without any consultation with country dealers or country motorists. While Mr Speck has since left the group, PAG has stood by his decision, placing dealerships and owners of these vehicles in a very difficult situation.

The leading dealership stocking these vehicles in north-western New South Wales is Tamworth's Woodley's Motors, which has a well-deserved reputation for quality. In 2003 Woodley's was told by Volvo that unless it was prepared to take on also Land Rover and Jaguar, eventually Volvo would pull out of the dealership. As Woodley's had been the region's largest Volvo dealership for 35 years, its operators had little choice but to submit to this heavy-handedness and take on Land Rover and Jaguar. As a result, Woodley's was required to upgrade its workshop by purchasing more than \$20,000 worth of equipment to service and repair Land Rover and Jaguar, and employ two extra mechanics to cope with the increased workload.

Just 12 months later, to the complete astonishment of Woodley's, the dealership received written notification from PAG that the group would be removing all three brands from the area within two years. One of the two newly employed mechanics was forced to leave shortly after the delivery of that directive. That two-year period expired in September this year, leaving owners who purchased their vehicles before September 2004 without a dealer within 300 kilometres to service and repair their vehicles. The majority of these vehicles are not cheap, and motorists have invested upwards of \$60,000 in their purchase. Shortly after the decision was made, Woodley's informed every prospective owner of a Volvo, Land Rover or Jaguar that by September 2006 the dealership would no longer possess the equipment to repair any electrical or mechanical faults. This resulted in a massive decline in sales of all three brands. As Woodley's had established its reputation on Volvo, its operators fought the decision long and hard, but they recently conceded defeat as the service equipment was taken from their workshop.

When driving around Tamworth there are a large number of all three brands evident in this area, and each owner purchased their vehicle in good faith. Woodley's estimates that roughly 300 motorists in the Tamworth area own one of these vehicles. Both the local Federal member of Parliament, Tony Windsor, and

I drive Land Rovers, and both of us have sung the praises of the make far and wide. The decision to cancel this franchise was bad enough, but PAG is further penalising local buyers by taking away the diagnostic equipment used by the formerly authorised dealer to determine faults. Mechanical or electrical faults in motor vehicles can rarely be anticipated, and when they do occur the motorist's first thought would be to take the vehicle back to the previously authorised dealer. What a shock it is when you go in and are told that they cannot determine what the problem is and that to do so they would have to send the vehicle to Newcastle. I recently went through that very disturbing experience and I am a very unhappy motorist.

Given the contraction in dealerships in country New South Wales, I presume these invaluable instruments are now gathering dust in a back office in Sydney or Melbourne, rather than being used to assist people who backed the three brands by purchasing vehicles in good faith. The decision is clearly commercially driven, and if the numbers do not stack up then that is understandable; I am not going to criticise a commercial decision. But what will never be understood is why PAG has decided to penalise people who supported the three brands in good faith.

I have contacted PAG on this matter and have spoken with one of its representatives, but as yet I have not received an adequate explanation as to why this decision was made and what the company will provide for motorists across the north-west who have invested in these vehicles. According to Woodley's, Land Rover, Volvo and Jaguar could see an 80 per cent decline in sales as a direct result of PAG's decision to abandon country motorists in New South Wales. I am not aware of any corporate entity that could cope with such a downturn in sales, and I seriously question the company's reluctance to rethink a decision made by a person who clearly had no idea of the impact it would have on country dealerships and motorists. I bought my vehicle in good faith, and I have been very pleased with it. I have spoken widely of the virtues of the brand. I had intended to buy another one, but I most sincerely state that while I am driving a car I will never buy another vehicle from that dealership.

MOUNT HUTTON PUBLIC SCHOOL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATTHEW MORRIS (Charlestown) [7.25 p.m.], by leave: This evening I want to share some good news with the House in relation to Mount Hutton Public School and its recent fiftieth anniversary. I had the absolute pleasure of joining the school community on an open day to provide an opportunity for students, parents and the broader community to reflect on 50 years of contribution to our great public education system. Mount Hutton is a shining example of a very much community-focused local primary school, under the leadership of Mr Jim Findlay and Allison Gill, who is the president of the parents and citizens association.

Collectively the school has a long, proud history of supporting students, making sure they have opportunities, that they get the education they deserve, and that they are provided with the skills for later on in life. Tonight is an ideal time to place on the public record my appreciation for the school's leadership and its contribution to not only the students of Mount Hutton Public School but also across the education and schools network in my electorate. We have an outstanding resource in our teachers—a very fine, professional group of teachers, of whom I am very proud and who undertake a massive, but very important, task in educating our young ones and preparing our young ones, and some not so young in our high schools, for their adult lives.

I often share with the schools a view I have in relation to our public education system. School years are a one-way trip. We get one go at moving from entry into kindergarten through to primary and secondary schooling. If we did not dedicate the resources, time and energy to give students of all ages the maximum opportunity to take away a raft of skills and knowledge, we would be certainly negligent. Mount Hutton Public School and the 26 other public schools in my electorate do an outstanding job.

It has been very pleasing for me to support those schools through achieving additional funding to help maintain the buildings and infrastructure on the school grounds. That ranges from information technology equipment and computers through to getting carpets replaced, painting work and roof repairs, and, in some cases, roof replacements carried out. But, collectively, across the school network a good outcome for students is only achieved by a contribution from many. That starts with professional teachers through to active parents and citizens associations, who are helping to support and lead the school, through to general support across the broader community. I am very proud of all the schools in my electorate, both government and non-government; they are all very committed to looking after students and giving them the best opportunities.

But there is still more to be done in terms of our education system. For me personally, I look forward to future opportunities to help support those schools further, with more works and getting our public school

facilities up to a better standard than they are. If we are to give our students the maximum opportunity in relation to their learning outcomes we need to provide a suitable setting in which students can learn. Airconditioning, clean and well-maintained schools, and school grounds are all part of the package of facilities. I do take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank my staff, Stephanie Herbert, Bronwyn Williams and Melissa Langford, for their contribution. They primarily deal with the face-to-face issues of schools in the electorate. They do a marvellous job and make a huge contribution, and I am proud to have them on my team and running the office. I wish everyone well for Christmas.

Mr NEVILLE NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.30 p.m.]: I compliment the honourable member for Charlestown on bringing to the attention of the House the great work that is going on at Mount Hutton Public School led by the principal, Jim Findlay, and Allison Gill from the parents and citizens association. All members have an opportunity to raise issues concerning their electorates and the good work done by many constituents, and the honourable member for Charlestown has certainly done that during his private member's statement. I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Deputy-Speaker and Chairman of Committees, on your careers and the great work you have done. I note that the honourable member for Epping and the honourable member for Lake Macquarie are also in the Chamber. I thank also the two Clerks, Mark Swinson and Les Gönye, for their great work. I extend my thanks to Hansard and the attendants, who do all the work and look after us. I wish everyone a happy Christmas and a great festive season. With the exception of members who are retiring, we will see you all back here next year.

Private members' statement noted.

Mr DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I would like to wish everyone a happy and holy Christmas, and a very robust and enjoyable election year in 2007.

The House adjourned at 7.32 p.m. until Tuesday 6 March 2007 at 2.15 p.m.
