

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 30 May 2007

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**The Speaker (The Hon. George Richard Torbay)** took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

**The Speaker** read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## PRIVATE HEALTH FACILITIES BILL 2007

### Agreement in Principle

**Debate resumed from 9 May 2007.**

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.00 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Private Health Facilities Bill 2007, which replaces the Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Act 1988 and is a reintroduction of a bill that was introduced in November last year and lapsed because the Parliament was prorogued. The bill has been brought back with some amendments following discussion with key stakeholders. I have consulted with those groups and I will make comments about their views, but, generally, the Coalition will not oppose the bill. It is part of the review required under the National Competition Principles Agreements. There have been a number of such pieces of legislation and I am surprised this one has taken so long, but I suppose the lapsing of the bill due to the election led, in part, to the delay.

The bill proposes a number of things. It brings the governance of both private hospital and day procedure centres more into line with modern practice. In the early days there was a clear distinction between the two and both have been licensed and regulated by New South Wales for a very long time. However, with modern practice where more procedures are carried out as day only in day centres it is logical that the licensing distinctions have changed and the governance should reflect that.

The first object of this bill is to remove the current licensing distinctions between private hospitals and day procedure centres. I have consulted with all those concerned and on reading the bill they support that proposal. The bill will also remove the current gap in the number of private hospital beds in New South Wales, instead giving the Director General of Health powers to approve or reject facility licensing applications on the basis of geographic and/or clinical need. This provision is also supported by the community sector that is involved in this area because it will reflect the need to provide those beds on a geographical basis and not overlap where there might be an oversupply of beds. The provision also will accommodate the new practice where many patients are treated within 23 hours and do not require a hospital bed at all.

The next object of the bill is to enable licensed private facilities to adopt the root cause analysis system for major adverse events, as it is applied in the public hospital system. The Coalition supports that objective. The Clinical Excellence Commission reports on such adverse events and the only comment we would make is that we believe the results of these analyses should be made publicly available, which is supported by those we have consulted, including the Australian Health Insurance Association Limited. While the Clinical Excellence Commission reports on some of these events, they do not report on all of them. I ask the Minister when reviewing those provisions to require more detail to be provided about things such as hospital-acquired infection. I know that a generic overview is given but there is no detail. In a letter to me relating to the disclosure of safety and quality issues, the Australian Health Insurance Association stated:

In fact, we would go a good deal further if we could ... the AHIA would support publication of performance measures, and there is an argument that this should be combined with higher benefit payments to those health care providers which perform well, lower payments to those which do not perform as well and no payments to those which fail to meet an acceptable standard of services and outcomes.

I suspect that is going a long way down the track, but it indicates that we really should be paying for outcomes. I am not talking about an outcome being a bed occupied—that is an output—I am talking about the outcome for individual patients: what is the individual benefit for them in health terms? I know from publicity surrounding the negotiations of the Australian Health Program that that issue is likely to be on the agenda and I recommend that the Government further consider the matter.

The bill requires licensed private facilities to appoint a medical advisory committee—a proposal generally supported by all I have consulted. They believe that such a panel should be in place and that its role, as set out in the legislation, is appropriate. The provision for greater entry and inspection powers in licensed private facilities seems reasonable. I understand that assurances have been given to the stakeholders who have been consulted that further extensive consultation will take place during the development of licensing standards. There is always great anxiety and, perhaps rightly, suspicion about provisions that are covered by regulation and not able to be scrutinised by the Parliament. I ask that Government assurances are given, and I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss with the Minister's office and/or the department when those regulations are to be put in place. I point out also that the licensing standards are the subject of a regulatory impact statement and public consultation, as required by the Subordinate Legislation Act.

I believe this bill increases safeguards for patients of private hospitals and day procedure centres by providing these additional requirements for the reporting and review of incidents. It is important that the requirements are in place for public hospitals and private facilities and the Coalition supports their provision. In our recent election policies, we highly stressed the importance of quality programs located in each facility, public and private, so the public can be better informed about the outcomes of those facilities and can make informed choices about where they have their treatment.

We support the more structured governance that reflects the new roles of private hospitals and day procedure centres and the provision of inspection rights for the Government, which is, after all, responsible for monitoring the facilities to ensure that if something is untoward, appropriate action can be taken. As I said, I have consulted with a number of groups including the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Private Hospitals Association, the New South Wales Nurses Association, the Rural Doctors Association and the Australian Health Insurance Association. The Coalition will not oppose the bill.

**Ms REBA MEAGHER** (Cabramatta—Minister for Health) [10.10 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her contribution to the debate. The Private Health Facilities Bill 2007 will allow the regulation of the private sector to keep pace with developments in the private sector and will provide for the health and safety of patients in those facilities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Question—That this bill be now agreed to in principle—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

#### **Passing of the Bill**

**Bill declared passed and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.**

### **DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Reba Meagher.**

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Ms REBA MEAGHER** (Cabramatta—Minister for Health) [10.12 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

This bill reflects a new direction that the New South Wales Government is taking in the treatment of a particular group of people who are in extreme situations of long-term and entrenched substance abuse. This group of people already have very significant health and other issues and have been placed at even greater risk because they are no longer able to make decisions for themselves about seeking help and treatment. The bill provides the legal basis for a two-year trial of short-term involuntary care and treatment during which this group would undergo detoxification to rebuild their health and be linked in a planned and considered way to longer-term rehabilitation and support.

The Government does not take the concept of involuntary treatment lightly. Every effort has been taken to ensure the bill provides a therapeutic framework in which people enter the trial only when they will benefit from the treatment with all controls being the least restrictive possible. As honourable members would know,

the New South Wales Government has long been committed to reducing the level and impact of drug and alcohol related harms in the community. We highlighted this commitment through the Drug and Alcohol summits and continue to do so under the new State Plan, which has specific priorities related to reducing the incidence and impacts of illicit drug use and risk drinking. The bill arises from a Government commitment in response to the 2003 Summit on Alcohol Abuse that recommended an inquiry into the Inebriates Act 1912, given concerns that the Act could better reflect modern medical practice treatment options and legal safeguards.

The New South Wales Government asked the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues to undertake this inquiry and we thank those honourable members who were involved for their comprehensive and compassionate work and report on this issue. The Government also thanks the medical, legal, academic, government agency and community representatives who contributed their expertise and experience to the inquiry and its report. The bill gives effect to the Government's response to the inquiry, which was released in January this year. In that response the Government adopted the majority of the committee's recommendations. However, in line with our evidence-based approach to drug and alcohol policy, the Government has agreed to first trial the proposed new framework for involuntary care before considering wider application. I will now take the House through some of the key provisions in this bill, which has been developed in consultation with Emeritus Professor Ian Webster, AO, the chair of the Government's Expert Advisory Group on drugs and alcohol; the Chief Magistrate; Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council; Professor Bob Batey; clinicians from Nepean Hospital; and government agencies that will be implementing the trial.

Part 1 sets out the objects of the bill, which include improving the health and safety of persons with a severe substance dependence through the provision of involuntary treatment. The objects are generally consistent with the committee's recommendation 3. That part also incorporates important principles to safeguard the rights of persons who are detained and treated under the Act emphasising that this is an intervention of last resort and the interests of the person are paramount. The Act will apply only in an area or areas prescribed by regulation. That will be the Sydney West Area Health Service for the purposes of the trial with the possibility of extension to other areas, depending on progress and outcomes. The Inebriates Act 1912 will continue to operate elsewhere in New South Wales. Minors are excluded from the trial under that part.

The definition section includes the important threshold issue of what is severe substance dependence. The bill definition has been developed carefully in consultation with clinicians and aims to include each of the factors that a medical practitioner would consider in diagnosing such a condition. Tolerance to a substance of dependence, which is part of this definition, is a term familiar to medical practitioners and health workers and as it relates to this population refers to a very high level of the substance being required to achieve an effect originally produced by lower doses. The definition of severe substance dependence also brings in the concept that to be eligible for involuntary care the person must have lost the capacity to make decisions about their substance use and personal welfare due primarily to their dependence on the substance. This is consistent with the criteria for involuntary care recommended by the committee and according to clinicians is pivotal to identifying the intended target group of the bill.

Part 2 sets out the process of involuntary detention and treatment. Accredited medical practitioners appointed by the Director General of the New South Wales Department of Health may detain and treat a person under the Act after assessing the person and issuing a dependency certificate. The person will be held in a treatment centre declared for this purpose by the Director General of the New South Wales Department of Health. This will be the Inpatient Withdrawal Management Facility at Nepean Hospital during the trial. Any medical practitioner may ask an accredited medical practitioner to assess a person under clause 9 (1). This process recognises that involuntary detention and treatment is essentially a clinical decision. It will not prevent families and other interested parties from approaching any medical practitioner in the catchment area and asking them to formally initiate the process for detention and treatment under the bill.

The assessment criteria to ensure only suitable persons enter the trial are set out in clause 9 (3). The accredited medical practitioner must be satisfied the person has a severe substance dependence—as described earlier—and needs protection from serious harm: that is, treatment is likely to benefit the person, but the person has refused treatment. There are no other appropriate and less restrictive means of dealing with the person. Throughout the assessment process under the bill the interests of the person remain paramount. However, in assessing the person the accredited medical practitioner may also have regard to any serious harm that may occur to children or dependants of that person. Clause 10 makes provision for compulsory assessments to be ordered by the court and assisted by police where necessary. This will occur if someone appears to meet the criteria for involuntary care but the accredited medical practitioner is unable to access the person. For example, someone might be too ill to go to the facility or they may be uncooperative.

There are powers under clause 20 to transport dependent persons to the treatment centre and use reasonable force if necessary. There are also powers under clause 22 for police or others to apprehend any person under a dependency certificate who escapes and return them to the treatment centre. These are powers of last resort to help give effect to the involuntary scheme. They are modelled on similar provisions in the Mental Health Act 1990 and the Mental Health Bill 2006. Their use, and particularly any police involvement in the trial, will be guided by an interagency memorandum of understanding that will underpin implementation and will be monitored as part of the evaluation. Detention is for up to 28 days under clause 14. This may be extended to three months by court order under part 4 in cases of alcohol-related brain injury. This may occur where more time is required to treat and prepare a discharge plan for the person.

Under clause 14 and part 4 the accredited medical practitioner's decision to issue a dependency certificate is subject to review by a magistrate as soon as practicable after it has been issued. This will generally be within seven days. The magistrate may decide to confirm the certificate, confirm it for a shorter period or discharge the person. During the process of assessment and detention the person will have rights to legal representation and assistance by interpreters if necessary. The person will also have the right to apply to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal for a review of a magistrate's decision. There are powers to treat people in part 3 and under part 5 accredited medical practitioners can take action to protect a dependent person or others in the treatment centre from serious physical harm. This will allow the restraint and seclusion of patients where absolutely necessary and guidelines will be developed for this consistent with occupational health and safety requirements.

The accredited medical practitioner may discharge a person from a treatment centre at any time. This does not require recourse to the courts, again in recognition that involuntary treatment under the Act is essentially a clinical decision. This is consistent with the standing committee's recommendations. There are requirements in clause 25 to consult the dependent person, his or her nominated primary carer and other agencies in planning the discharge of the person and any later treatment or other action considered in relation to the person. This reflects the Government's intention that there will be a strong component of aftercare for dependent persons following discharge from the treatment centre. The detention and treatment of dependent persons under the Act is subject to monitoring by official visitors under part 3. The trial will rely on the existing system of official visitors established under the Mental Health Act 1990 for this purpose.

Part 5 includes standard protections from personal liability for police officers and healthcare professionals in exercising functions under the Act. Finally, the Minister is required to review the legislation in operation and report to Parliament within two years. The Government intends to arrange a comprehensive evaluation of both the legislation underpinning the trial and the new system of short-term involuntary care to be tested. The trial will inform decisions about the future of the Inebriates Act 1912. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mrs Jillian Skinner and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

#### **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AMENDMENT (OFFENDER COMPENSATION) BILL 2007**

##### **Agreement in Principle**

**Debate resumed from 29 May 2007.**

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping) [10.24 a.m.]: The purpose of this bill is to amend the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 so that compensation awarded to prisoners for acts of discrimination against them by the State whilst they are incarcerated is paid to the Victims Compensation Fund. Currently prisoners can bring a case to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal, seeking damages for alleged discrimination. These changes will result in prisoners not being entitled to any monetary compensation for breaches of the Anti-Discrimination Act. These funds will now be redirected to the Victims Compensation Fund. The Act will not interfere with other remedies available to prisoners under the Anti-Discrimination Act, such as abatement of discriminatory conduct, resolution of the problem and apology. Proposed section 111A (6) allows for certain classes of prisoners to be exempted from this amendment, where required. The bill also provides that damages awarded by the tribunal on or after 29 May 2007 will be paid to the Victims Compensation Fund rather than the prisoner.

The Opposition does not oppose the bill. Arguments in favour of the bill are that the changes are in line with the community expectation that prisoners should not be able to profit from their crimes. The bill will not

exempt the Government from liability but direct those funds to the Victims Compensation Fund, which is in line with the notion that those who commit crimes should contribute to the rehabilitation and compensation of victims of crime. The bill is not contrary to the intent of the law as it is not compensatory legislation. The legislation seeks to render unlawful racial, sex and other types of discrimination in certain circumstances and to promote equality of opportunity between all persons.

The bill does not interfere with the intent of the Act, as it still requires monetary compensation for an offender under the Act; it only redirects the payment to the Victims Compensation Fund rather than a prisoner complainant. The distinction between prisoner complainants and other complainants can also be argued on the grounds that as prisoners there is a deprivation of many rights afforded to the rest of the society as part of the punitive component of incarceration.

An argument against the bill is that whether a person is discriminated against as a prisoner or in any other capacity, it is still discrimination and prisoners should still be afforded the benefit of the Act. In discriminating against prisoners as a class of person by not affording them compensation, it could be argued as being in contravention of the spirit of the legislation, which seeks equality of opportunity. It could also be said to be an anomaly for a prisoner to have money that would otherwise be awarded to him because of injury to him go into a fund that he would not normally have to contribute to. Nevertheless, we consider that it is not in the public interest to oppose the bill.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne) [10.27 a.m.]: I support the Anti-Discrimination (Offender Compensation) Bill 2007. The bill amends the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 so that where an award of compensation is made to a prisoner, the money will be paid to the Victims Compensation Fund to compensate victims of crime. In New South Wales the Anti-Discrimination Act is an important part of our social and legal fabric. It represents our society's commitment to the value of a fair go for everyone, regardless of their sex, race or disability. I believe that government agencies should and must act within the framework of these laws. It is incumbent upon all agencies, including those responsible for managing our prisons, to deliver their services in a non-discriminatory way.

Under this bill prisoners will still have the ability to lodge a claim regarding discrimination. If their concerns are warranted, orders will still be able to be made to require an agency to fix the problem, but I believe that prisoners should not profit from their time behind bars. If they are to leave jail, they should do so rehabilitated and ready to be law-abiding members of the community. They should not leave with a payout from their time inside and, whenever possible, they should contribute towards the compensation and rehabilitation of victims of crime. In my electorate, the New South Wales Rape Crisis Centre does a tremendous amount of work in providing support to women and men who have experienced sexual violence. I commend the work of the centre, in particular its manager Karen Willis and her staff, who work tirelessly to offer these services to our community. Every year the centre responds to around 3,500 calls from women who have had their sense of safety and dignity taken away from them. When the perpetrators of these kinds of despicable crimes are caught and locked up, I firmly believe that every step must be taken to ensure they contribute towards compensation of their victims and their wellbeing.

In 2005, \$64.3 million was paid in compensation and counselling to the victims of violent crime in New South Wales. Part of the funding to achieve this outcome comes from restitution paid by convicted offenders. In fact, since the Victims Compensation Scheme was established, more than \$31 million has been recovered from offenders. In the 2005-06 financial year, approximately \$4.08 million was recovered in restitution action, the highest in any year. But we need to do more to make convicted criminals contribute towards the costs of compensating and rehabilitating their victims—victims of violent crime like the 3,500 women who contact the Rape Crisis Centre every year. This bill, by requiring that any financial benefit arising from a prisoner's claim from discrimination goes to the Victims Compensation Fund, does exactly that. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.30 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Epping and Drummoyne for their contribution to debate on this important Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Offences Compensation) Bill. This Government believes that the anti-discrimination laws in this State are a necessary part of our social and legal fabric and that the State should act within the framework of these laws. There is also an expectation that those who have been sent to prison for breaking the law should not profit from their incarceration and should, wherever possible, contribute to the rehabilitation of victims of crime. I note that the Opposition does not oppose this bill and I take into account the view of the member for Epping, who spoke on behalf of the Opposition, that on balance this bill is in the public interest.

I also note the work of the New South Wales Rape Crisis Centre, which was drawn to our attention by the member for Drummoyne. I thank her for bringing their wonderful work to the attention of the House. This bill, by ensuring that any potential financial benefit arising from a prisoner's claim of discrimination will be paid to the Victims Compensation Fund, strikes the right balance. The bill does not seek to deny prisoners access to statutory remedies for breach of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Remedies other than monetary compensation will continue to be available; for example, orders will still be able to be made for the relevant agency to cease the discriminatory conduct, to fix the problem, and to apologise. Of course, an agency can still be financially penalised for unlawfully discriminating against a prisoner, but instead of this payment going to the prisoner it will go to the victims of crime. I commend the bill to the House.

**Question—That this bill be now agreed to in principle—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

### **Passing of the Bill**

**Bill declared passed and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.**

### **BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry Collier, on behalf of Mr David Campbell.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda) [10.33 p.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill provides for amendments to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995, an Act which established a civil system for the registration of births, deaths, marriages, changes of name and changes of sex in New South Wales. The Act also regulates the keeping of registers for the recording of such information, access to the information in the registers, and the issue of certified information from the registers. Historically, the New South Wales Act has been the model legislation for other jurisdictions. State and Territory registrars of births, deaths and marriages coordinate their policies and procedures through the Council of Australasian Registrars. This aims to ensure that a consistent approach to registration is maintained throughout Australia.

The New South Wales Registrar is currently the chair of the Council of Australasian Registrars. It has been several years since the Act was introduced. In those years there have been major developments in a number of areas, which this bill aims to address. I refer, first, to the aim of maintaining the integrity of the register. Item [1] of schedule 1 to the bill creates a new function of the registrar under section 6 to maintain the integrity of the registrar and to endeavour to prevent identity fraud associated with the register and documents issued from the registrar. This recognises the registrar's important role in identity security and identity management. The registrar administers the registers from which key proof of identity documents, such as birth and marriage certificates are issued.

The amendment recognises the increased risk of identity-related crime in recent years and is consistent with Australia's efforts to develop a national identity security strategy. The development of a national identity security strategy is an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments and is being led by the Commonwealth Government in close consultation with the States and Territories. New South Wales is actively participating in the development of measures to combat identity fraud and better manage identity security risk. At the State level the Attorney General's Department chairs an interdepartmental working group that meets regularly to discuss matters relevant to identity security and identity management. The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages is a key member of this working group. The amendment will require the registrar to continue implementing and improving operational policies and systems preventing the information on the register from being used fraudulently.

Item [2] of schedule 1 to the bill amends section 12, reducing the period within which responsible persons—meaning hospitals, midwives and attending doctors—must notify the Registry of Births, Deaths and

Marriages of a live birth from 21 days to 7 days. The reduction of the notification period will improve the reporting of births in New South Wales and, therefore, improve the accuracy and completeness of the registry's birth information. This amendment implements the Coroner's recommendation following the inquest into the disappearance of baby Tegan Lane, that is, that the Government introduce legislation to place greater responsibility on hospitals and midwives to report births to the registry. The amendment will also make the New South Wales time frame for reporting births more consistent with other jurisdictions' notification time frames. NSW Health, the Australian Private Hospitals Association, Catholic Health Australia Incorporated and the Australian Society of Independent Midwives have been consulted on the shorter notification period. These organisations have indicated that they will cooperate with the registry to implement the operational changes necessary to comply with the reduced reporting time frame.

The registry is currently working with these bodies to implement an electronic notification system. The registry has been working with midwives associations, private hospital associations and NSW Health to improve the timeliness and the quality of birth reporting across New South Wales. For example, the registry is piloting a new electronic interface for birth notifications within the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick. The web interface is currently being rolled out to private midwives and other private hospitals. Work is also under way with NSW Health to improve the quality of data the registry receives from public hospitals. Public and private hospitals will need to make changes to their information technology systems in order to comply with the shorter reporting time frame. To allow adequate time for implementation, the Government proposes to commence item [2] by proclamation. The remainder of the bill will commence on assent.

Item [8] of schedule 1 to the bill makes it clear that the shorter notification time frame will apply only to births occurring after the commencement of the proposed amendment. Items [3] and [4] of schedule 1 to the bill amend section 28 to provide that a child's primary care giver, rather than the child's guardian, may apply for registration of a change of the child's name. The meaning of "primary care giver" is based on the definition in section 1 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988. "Primary care giver", in relation to a child or young person, means each person who is primarily responsible for the care and control, including the day-to-day care and control, of the child or young person, whether or not that person is the person with parental responsibility or care responsibility for the child or young person. This amendment is needed because the term "guardian" is not defined in the Act and is outdated in the context of children. By creating consistency with the terms used in child protection legislation, it will be clear who can apply for a change to a child's name.

Item [5] of schedule 1 to the bill inserts a new section 55A to clarify the registrar's ability to collect and maintain separate records of information relating to registerable information. It allows the registrar to provide additional services in relation to that information and other information in the register, such as the provision of historical and genealogical information. The registrar might also, for example, record the location of wills and issue certificates in relation to the location of wills. A charge for such additional services may be determined by the registrar or might be fixed or determined in accordance with the regulations. The amendments proposed in this bill will improve the New South Wales civil registration system and ensure it continues to meet the needs of our community. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Greg Smith and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **WAR MEMORIAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INCREASED PENALTIES) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry Collier, on behalf of Mr David Campbell.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.41 a.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Government is pleased to introduce the War Memorial Legislation Amendment (Increased Penalties) Bill 2007. The bill proposes amendments to the Summary Offences Act 1988, the Anzac Memorial (Building) Act 1923 and the Anzac Memorial (Building) By-Laws 1937 to double the maximum penalties for anyone who defaces, vandalises, deliberately damages or behaves inappropriately around a war memorial. The Anzac Memorial (Building) Act 1923 deals specifically with the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney, and the

Summary Offences Act 1988 creates offences that protect the thousands of memorials in cities and towns across New South Wales.

The bill forms the legislative plank of the Government's "Respecting Our Diggers" policy to ensure ongoing respect for our war veterans and places of remembrance. The bill honours the Government's pre-election promise to double penalties for criminal or inappropriate activity around war memorials. These changes come on top of the serious sanctions that already exist for criminal behaviour in and around war memorials. Depending on the seriousness of the conduct, such behaviour can already be dealt with by general criminal provisions including malicious damage under section 195 of the Crimes Act, which carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, and offensive conduct under section 4 of the Summary Offences Act, which carries a maximum penalty of six penalty units or \$660 and three months imprisonment.

This bill sends another clear message that war memorials are sacrosanct and vandalism or destruction of these monuments will not be tolerated. War memorials honour those who have fought for our country, many of whom made the ultimate sacrifice. These memorials are a physical reminder of the bravery of individuals as well as the immense loss suffered by their loved ones and the nation. The bill reinforces the seriousness of the defacing or damaging of war memorials by doubling the maximum penalty for such offences.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Item [1] of schedule 1 increases the maximum penalty under section 8 (2) of the Summary Offences Act 1988 for a person who wilfully damages or defaces any protected place, including a war memorial, from 20 penalty units, currently \$2,200, to 40 penalty units, currently \$4,400. Item [2] of schedule 1 increases the maximum penalty under section 8 (3) of the Summary Offences Act 1988 for a person who commits any nuisance or any offensive or indecent act in or on any war memorial from 10 penalty units, currently \$1,100, to 20 penalty units, currently \$2,200. Item [1] of schedule 2 amends section 9 (3) of the Anzac Memorial (Building) Act 1923 to provide that the by-laws may create an offence punishable by a penalty not exceeding 40 penalty units, that is \$4,400. The amendment doubles the penalty currently provided for in the Act, which is 20 penalty units, currently \$2,200.

Item [2] of schedule 2 amends section 11 (1) of the Anzac Memorial (Building) Act 1923, which currently provides that a person convicted of an offence under the by-laws may be ordered to pay an amount not exceeding 20 penalty units, currently \$2,200, as the cost of or a contribution to the cost of the repair or restoration of any damage caused by the action that resulted in the conviction. Item 2 [2] increases the maximum amount that a person may be ordered to pay to 40 penalty units, currently \$4,400.

Item [1] of schedule 3 amends by-laws 10, 11 and 13 to 15 of the Anzac Memorial (Building) By-Laws Act 1937, which set out offences relating to the conduct of persons within the dedicated area and prohibiting persons from entering the memorial building during the hours that the memorial building is closed. Item [1] of schedule 3 increases the penalty for such offences from 10 penalty units, currently \$1,100, to 20 penalty units, currently \$2,200. Item [2] of schedule 3 increases the maximum penalty for a person who damages or impairs or does anything likely to damage or impair the war memorial building under the by-laws from 20 penalty units, currently \$2,200, to 40 penalty units, currently \$4,400. The amendments contained in this bill will dramatically increase the penalties for any damage to or inappropriate activity around a war memorial anywhere in New South Wales. I am sure all members will welcome these amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Thomas George and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **TERRORISM (POLICE POWERS) AMENDMENT (PREVENTATIVE DETENTION ORDERS) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry Collier, on behalf of Mr David Campbell.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.47 a.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Terrorism (Police Powers) Amendment (Preventative Detention Orders) Bill. The bill proposes amendments to the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act to ensure that the Crimes



(Administration of Sentences) Act and the Children (Detention Centres) Act, as the case may be, apply to persons detained in custody subject to a preventative detention order under the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act. In September 2005 a special meeting of the Council of Australian Governments on counterterrorism was held. At this meeting Commonwealth, State and Territory governments agreed to enact legislation to implement preventative detention orders to prevent terrorist acts or to preserve evidence relating to terrorist acts. State and Territory governments agreed to enact legislation providing for preventative detention for up to 14 days. As a result of constitutional constraints, the complementary commonwealth legislation provides for preventative detention for up to 48 hours only.

In December 2005 the Terrorism (Police Powers) Amendment (Preventative Detention) Act, which introduced part 2A—preventative detention orders—into the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act came into effect. Part 2A of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act enables a designated New South Wales police officer to apply to the Supreme Court for a preventative detention order to enable the preventative detention of a person aged 16 years or over for up to 14 days in order to prevent an imminent terrorist act or to preserve evidence of a terrorist act that has taken place. A designated police officer can apply to the Supreme Court for an interim preventative detention order for up to 48 hours in the absence of the person against whom the order is sought to be made. Following the making of an interim order the Supreme Court hearing must take place in the presence of the person subject to the interim order for the purpose of confirming a preventative detention order.

Police can make arrangements with the Commissioner for Corrective Services for a preventative detainee to be detained in a correctional centre under section 26X of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002. Section 26X (3) expressly permits the regulations to exclude preventative detainees from being subject to the application of any of the provisions in the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 or the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987. At present no provisions are excluded by the regulation. It is arguable that by making reference to the power to exclude provisions of those Acts—that is, the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 or the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987—it is implied that both Acts do apply to the extent that they are not otherwise excluded.

However, there may be some slight ambiguity as to whether this is indeed the case. In order to ensure there is no doubt that the original intention of the legislation was for preventative detainees to be subject to the same rules regarding their care, control and management as all other inmates and to remove any further doubt, this bill will amend the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 in a generic way to clarify that the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 or the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 apply to preventative detainees. However, as foreshadowed by section 26X (3), there will be provisions in the Acts and in the subordinate legislation that should not apply. Section 26X (3) allows for these provisions to be excluded by way of regulation. It is proposed that an amending regulation will be prepared in the near future to specify which provisions do not apply. These might include, for example, the entitlement of inmates to visits or communication with people outside the detention centre.

I turn now to the detail of the bill. Proposed section 26X (2A) will clarify that the provisions of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 and the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 apply to any person detained under a preventative detention order, except to the extent that any such provision, first, is inconsistent with a requirement of that Act or the arrangement made for the person's detention; second, entitles a person to visit the person or entitles the person to communicate with another person because that Act makes detailed provision for such matters; or, third, is excluded by the regulations. Clause 2 of the bill provides for the commencement of the proposed Act on the date of its assent. Clause 3 is a formal provision that gives effect to the amendment to the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002 set out in schedule 1. The schedule sets out the amendment to section 26X of the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act 2002, as I have outlined.

Terrorism presents our community with some very hard policy decisions. The task that confronts us all is to meet the terrorist threat while preserving the aspects of our society that mark us out as a free and open democracy. If a person is to be detained under a preventative detention order the legislation needs to be clear about which laws pertain to the person under the preventative detention order and which laws do not. This Government is ever vigilant in ensuring that legislation is in fact robust enough and capable of dealing with any possible outcome, and it continues to review and update its laws to keep up with the ever-present threats of terrorism in today's society. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Thomas George and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

**HUMAN CLONING AND OTHER PROHIBITED PRACTICES AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Verity Firth.**

**Agreement in Principle**

**Ms VERITY FIRTH** (Balmain—Minister for Women, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer), Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water (Environment)) [10.55 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

It is my strong view that, wherever possible, governments have a responsibility to act to alleviate human suffering and preserve human dignity. It is for this reason that I am committed to ensuring that constructive and responsible research can be carried out in New South Wales. The Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Amendment Bill allows new research activities to be undertaken within the strict regulatory framework that was enacted in 2003. It allows important and potentially beneficial research that may have a profound effect on major human diseases such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury, and heart and eye disease. Importantly, the bill also allows for research that has the potential to lead to improvement in fertility treatments.

The bill is the New South Wales component of the nationally consistent scheme that prohibits human reproductive cloning and provides for certain types of research to occur. The New South Wales commitment to the nationally consistent scheme goes back to 5 April 2002, when the Council of Australian Governments [COAG], after much discussion, agreed to a national scheme to prohibit human cloning and regulate research involving human embryos. The Commonwealth introduced legislation consistent with this agreement in May 2002. Although the Commonwealth's constitutional powers enabled its legislation to cover the majority of the field, complementary legislation was required by States and Territories to ensure a uniform framework and to avoid uncertainty about the application of the law.

In 2004 the Council of Australian Governments signed an inter-governmental agreement committing all States and Territories to introducing and maintaining nationally consistent legislation to ban human cloning and establish a national regulatory regime for the use of excess assisted reproductive technology embryos in research. All jurisdictions except the Northern Territory introduced and passed complementary legislation. The New South Wales Human Cloning and Other Prohibited Practices Act 2003 and the Research Involving Human Embryos Act 2003 were assented to on 7 July 2003. When the 2002 Council of Australian Governments agreement was struck the possible introduction of today's bill was already envisaged, with the need to review the proposed legislative scheme being a key facet of the agreement.

The Commonwealth passed its legislation in December 2002 and was required to complete and table a review of the legislation within three years of assent—that is, by 12 December 2005. New South Wales was also required to conduct a review but could do this either independently or as part of the Commonwealth process. The New South Wales Government chose the latter course, and the review report on the New South Wales legislation will be tabled in the House today. The Commonwealth review was conducted by an independent committee comprising experts in law, ethics, medical practice and science. The committee was chaired by Justice Lockhart. I would like to acknowledge the significant work of Justice Lockhart and the members of his committee in conducting a comprehensive and sensitive review. Justice Lockhart's passing is a great loss to Australia.

The Lockhart review was tabled in Federal Parliament on 19 December 2005. Subsequently in October 2006 Senator Kaye Patterson introduced a bill that sought to give effect to some of the most important Lockhart recommendations. This bill was assented to on 12 December 2006. On 3 May 2007 the Victorian Parliament passed legislation to correspond with the Commonwealth amending Act. When the Commonwealth legislation comes into effect on 12 June 2007, there will no longer be a nationally consistent legislative framework in this area. Accordingly, at the 13 April 2007 Council of Australian Governments meeting, State and Territory leaders signed a notice of variation to the original intergovernmental agreement, renewing their commitment to nationally consistent arrangements for the prohibition of human cloning for reproduction and the regulation of human embryo research. This means that all States and the Australian Capital Territory will use their best endeavours to introduce corresponding legislation into their legislatures by 12 June 2008 and to maintain nationally consistent arrangements over time.

The New South Wales amending Act that I introduce today mirrors the Commonwealth legislation. The New South Wales Act is structured in two sections: The first sets out the practices that remain prohibited outright; and the second sets out those practices that are prohibited unless authorised under licence. In order to understand the new bill it is important to note that the original New South Wales research Act incorporated the Commonwealth research Act by reference, making it the law of this State. It primarily sets out a licensing and monitoring scheme that is administered and enforced by the Commonwealth. Therefore, the original New South Wales research Act did not repeat in detail the provisions of the Commonwealth Act. Consequently, little detail is required in the New South Wales bill to give effect to the Commonwealth amendments. Conversely, the original New South Wales prohibited practices Act did not incorporate the equivalent Commonwealth Act by reference because it contained a large number of serious offences and it was considered preferable to spell out the offences and the penalties.

In introducing the bill today I want to stress that prohibition on human cloning for reproduction remains, as do the heavy penalties for this offence. As well as the prohibition, other practices will remain prohibited and attract heavy penalties. The practices that remain completely prohibited can be found in schedule 1, item [8], part 2, division 1. They include collecting a viable human embryo from the body of a woman; the sale or trade of sperm, eggs and embryos; creating a human embryo by fertilisation of a human egg by a human sperm other than to achieve pregnancy in a particular woman; creating a chimeric embryo; developing a human embryo outside the body of a woman for more than 14 days; and creating or developing a human embryo by fertilisation that contains the genetic material provided by more than two persons. The bill also provides that some practices that are currently prohibited will be allowed under licence to support Assisted Reproductive Technology [ART] research and clinical practice or the study and treatment of disease. The maximum penalty for undertaking practices that are completely prohibited is 15 years imprisonment and for undertaking research without a licence is 10 years imprisonment. The enabling provisions are subject to restriction on the length of time the embryo is allowed to develop and a prohibition against implantation.

In order to appropriately oversight the scheme, the powers of the Commonwealth licensing committee have been strengthened and extended. Practices that are prohibited unless authorised by licence are set out in schedule 1, item [8], part 2, division 2. Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer—or therapeutic cloning, as it is commonly known—will be allowed should this bill be passed. Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer refers to the creation of an embryo using a somatic cell and an ovum. A somatic cell is any cell in the human body apart from sperm or eggs: a skin cell is an example of a somatic cell. The Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer process involves removing the nucleus from the ovum and replacing it with the nucleus from the somatic cell. The resulting entity is then stimulated to cause it to divide. This division is allowed to occur until there are about 100 cells—that is, to the blastocyst stage—and then the stem cells are extracted.

The important point to note about Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer is that the process aims to reproduce cells, not to create a person. The embryos produced by Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer do not involve an egg and a sperm. They are never intended for reproduction or for implantation into a woman; indeed, implantation is prohibited. Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer is about creating stem cells. These stem cells are genetically almost identical to the person from whom the somatic cell was taken. This genetic similarity is significant as it vastly reduces the likelihood of rejection should the stem cells be transplanted back into the individual. The genetic similarity is also significant because it allows the scientist to study a patient's disease at the cellular level. At this point Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer is regarded as particularly important for understanding normal and abnormal cell development and for models to study disease processes and genetic disorders.

Proposed section 17, which is inserted by schedule 1 [8] of the bill, permits Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer by allowing an embryo to be created by means other than fertilisation but only under licence. The practice is subject to prohibitions contained in the New South Wales bill and through the interaction of this bill with the Commonwealth legislation, which prohibits development beyond 14 days or implantation. The practice is strictly for research and development of treatments and not for reproduction. As indicated, the legislation prohibits the embryo developing beyond 14 days or being implanted.

That same provision will also allow for the creation of a human embryo by parthenogenesis for research purposes. Parthenogenesis refers to a process by which the ovum itself is caused to divide and develop to form an embryo-like entity. No sperm or other living cells are involved in this process. Parthenogenesis may provide an alternative source of stem cells. Importantly, it may also assist in the study of ovarian tumours or mitochondrial disease. In item [8] of schedule 1, clause 18 of the bill allows the creation of a human embryo for research purposes using the genetic material from more than two people, so long as the embryo is not created by the fertilisation of a human egg and sperm. This will allow research into problems such as mitochondrial

disease. The mitochondria are the engines or powerhouses of the ovum and are contained in the watery substance surrounding its nucleus. Diseases that are caused by defects in the mitochondria affect all children born to a woman with this condition. Mitochondrial diseases are complex, severely debilitating and often fatal. Research into this condition, therefore, has the potential to alleviate the major physical and emotional burden that is placed on women who have this condition and their families.

The creation of a hybrid embryo, using an animal egg and human sperm, will also be allowed solely for the purposes of testing sperm quality and for a period up to but not including the first cell division. That is less than 48 hours development. This research is important in understanding and treating infertility. It should be noted that this practice was allowed in New South Wales prior to the introduction of the national legislation in 2002. It is also important to note that the creation of a hybrid embryo for any other purpose or for a longer period is strictly prohibited. The limitations on the creation and development of hybrid embryos are given effect by the interaction of the New South Wales bill and the new Commonwealth legislation. A further Assisted Reproductive Technology practice that will be allowed should the bill be passed is research on embryos found to be unsuitable for implantation. This will allow for the study of disease processes and embryo development. This change is underpinned by requirements to strengthen existing National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines.

I draw the Parliament's attention to the new definition of "human embryo" that is contained in the bill. It is based on the definition developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The original definition referred to very early stage activity, that is, just after the moment of fertilisation, which is almost impossible to visualise in practice. Accordingly, it was agreed that a new definition should be inserted in the bill. It is worth commenting that in developing the new definition, the National Health and Medical Research Council and, indeed, the Lockhart Committee, noted that the matter of defining an embryo was extremely complex and that there was no consistent or widely used definition. The new definition in the bill is intended to provide practicality, simplicity and certainty. It defines an entity as an embryo from the first cellular division that occurs after fertilisation is complete—a moment that can be visualised and defined in practice. The new definition will ensure that Assisted Reproductive Technology research to improve the treatment of infertility is able to be undertaken, but will prohibit any research on egg and sperm embryos, which is consistent with community attitudes. There are a range of other machinery and administrative amendments contained in the bill, but I believe those I have outlined represent the major changes that need to be drawn to the attention of the House.

The issues that we are here to debate cross party political lines; they even cross religious, ethnic and community lines. I have carefully considered the debates that took place when the original legislation was brought to the House. I acknowledge that there are some people in the community and members of the House who do not accept the rationale behind the 2003 Act and will not accept the rationale behind the introduction of this amending legislation. I respect but cannot agree with their perspectives. I support the bill and urge others to do so because the research that will be allowed is being undertaken to improve fertility treatment and practice and to provide insights, therapies and cures for a variety of diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, cancer, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injury and motor neurone disease.

All of these diseases carry a huge emotional burden and significant socioeconomic impacts for individuals, their families and the broader community. Throughout history, medical breakthroughs, especially significant ones, are often initially viewed with concern. That is fair enough; these breakthroughs do push the boundaries of what society is used to, and it is proper that we ask questions. Objections were raised to both heart and kidney transplant technology when it first began. However, I ask members to think of the wives and husbands, the children and the grandchildren who have been given the gift of many extra years with the people they love because of the success of heart transplants. Breakthroughs in medical research deliver outcomes not only for the individuals afflicted but also for their family and friends. Who are we not to allow the research that could provide similar breakthroughs for people suffering from diabetes or motor neurone disease? Who are we to deny a family the hope of a cure for the person they love?

I will never forget the analogy used by the Reverend Ivan Head when we were discussing the ethics of pursuing stem cell research. Reverend Head referred to the chocolate wheel of life; that is, the lottery that we all face when it comes to our health and the conditions or accidents that can befall any of us. If the technology exists which can relieve this human suffering and which can provide hope to those of us whom fate has delivered a particularly cruel blow then surely it is our moral duty to act on that knowledge, to do everything in our power to alleviate human suffering where we find it and to preserve human dignity.

The New South Wales bill re-establishes national consistency and enables research to be undertaken under licence and in an ethically appropriate way that includes appropriate safeguards, provides public good and has benefit or potential for which there is support from the broad scientific and general community, notwithstanding variations in community opinion on some issues. I have established two major information sessions for members of Parliament and other interested parties who may wish to understand the proposed bill and the thinking and processes that led to its development. I encourage all members to attend these sessions and look forward to an informed and compassionate debate on these issues. In so doing, I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Thomas George and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **GUARDIANSHIP AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Kristina Keneally.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY** (Heffron—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services)  
[11.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The guardianship legislation is a vital component of the Government's commitment to supporting people living with a disability. Guardianship in the twenty-first century is about the empowerment and protection of disabled members of our community. The Guardianship Act 1987 provides an important legislative framework for promoting and safeguarding the welfare and best interest of adults with a decision-making disability. Not all adults with a disability need the protection of the Guardianship Act. The Act recognises that while freedom of decision making by adults with a disability should be restricted as little as possible, some people need assistance with decision making in areas such as lifestyle, health or financial matters. The Guardianship Act was passed in 1987 with bipartisan support. It established the Guardianship Tribunal to determine when it is in the best interests of an adult with a disability to have someone else appointed as their substitute decision maker.

The legislation requires that the tribunal conduct its business with as little formality and legal technicalities as possible. The tribunal fosters maximum participation of people with a disability, their families and carers. Taking away an individual's right to make decisions and placing that responsibility with another person is one of the most sensitive areas about which the Parliament can legislate. It is vital for the successful implementation of such laws that the body charged with the responsibility to make these decisions has appropriate systems and procedures to fulfil the charter given to it by the Parliament. The purpose of this amendment bill is to enhance the tribunal's ability to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of adults with impaired decision making, their families and carers by improving the way the tribunal conducts its business.

Over the past 20 years there has been a significant increase in the jurisdiction and workload of the tribunal. In the past financial year the tribunal managed more than 8,000 matters and the number of new applications made to the tribunal increased by 9.3 per cent as compared to the previous year. Demographic changes, such as the ageing of the population, present challenges to the community and to the Government. It is vital that the tribunal's services keep pace with the changing demands of the community. The majority of people now accessing the guardianship system in this State are people who suffer from age-related disabilities, particularly dementia. The guardianship legislation and the Guardianship Tribunal are the Government's key and very successful responses to addressing the needs of ageing people living with a disability.

The Government is very mindful that improvements in efficiency should not compromise the rights of adults with a disability. To ensure individual rights are protected, the bill includes safeguards. In recognising the important and sensitive role that the tribunal performs in the community, the Government was keen to seek community and stakeholder views about possible improvements to the operation of the tribunal. A discussion paper detailing the proposed amendments was released in November 2006. The discussion paper called for submissions and major government and non-government stakeholders responded. There was strong support to the proposed amendments as well as suggestions for the refinement of some proposals.

In summary, the amendments deliver four key changes to the Act and to the operation of the tribunal. The amendments make the criteria for non-reviewable guardianship orders clear and more flexible. They add to the range of functions to be performed by a tribunal comprised of fewer than three members, they clarify procedural and other functions that may be performed by the registrar of the tribunal, they allow for the review of those decisions by the tribunal and they extend the maximum term of appointment for a member of the tribunal from three to five years.

I will now provide members with some detail on each of the key changes. The first relates to non-reviewable guardianship orders. At present when the tribunal makes a guardianship order, it specifies the term of the order. The legislation requires that a review be undertaken at the end of the term unless the order is made non-reviewable. At a review the tribunal determines whether the order should or should not continue. Section 16 (2) (a) of the Guardianship Act explains when a non-reviewable order can be made. I am advised that in the tribunal's experience the wording of the current provision has created some confusion. The amendment will avoid confusion by clarifying that non-reviewable orders can be made if the tribunal is satisfied that in all the circumstances it is appropriate and in the best interests of the person with a disability that the order not be reviewed at the expiry of its term.

The Guardianship Tribunal conducts its hearings in an informal manner and it seeks to ensure that the experience is as comfortable as possible for the participants, particularly people with a disability. However, attending a legal hearing can cause distress and anxiety. Non-reviewable guardianship orders remove the need for people with a disability, their family and carers to attend a review hearing that might simply confirm that an order is no longer required. The amendment promotes hearing arrangements that are less intrusive and less demanding for the people concerned. The Act already contains safeguards for a person with a disability under a non-reviewable guardianship order. Those safeguards are that if a person's circumstances change and family or carers think the order should be reviewed, an application can be made to the tribunal for a review. Additionally, the tribunal itself can initiate a review if it is considered necessary. These safeguards will continue.

The second change is increasing the functions of a tribunal comprised of fewer than three members. In recognition of the complex issues under consideration in the guardianship area, the legislation requires that the matters before the tribunal be considered by a multidisciplinary panel comprised of a presiding legal member, a professional member with experience in assessing or treating people with a disability, and a community member with experience in disability issues. As I said in my opening remarks, the tribunal's role is a sensitive one. The tribunal's determinations are significant and can have far-reaching consequences for people. The Act will continue to mandate that all determinations about initial guardianship and financial management orders must be considered by a three-member tribunal.

The Government recognises that these determinations require careful consideration by a panel of experts with a cross-section of skills and experience. The multi-member, multidisciplinary panel is a safeguard which ensures proper consideration of legal, social, medical and financial issues, before the decision-making rights of the person with a disability are affected. These benefits extend to the family and carers of the person with a disability before the tribunal. The current Act allows for certain procedural matters to be heard by a tribunal constituted by fewer than three members. The amendments build on the existing provisions and allow a tribunal of fewer than three members to review guardianship and financial management orders and to give consent to some medical treatment. The president of the tribunal will have discretion to determine when it is appropriate for a tribunal of fewer than three members to be constituted.

When the tribunal conducts reviews of guardianship or financial management orders, consideration of the matters covered at the initial hearing, such as decision-making capacity, is not always required. Some reviews are more straightforward than others. In many reviews, if there is no further dispute about the decisions to be made, often the guardianship order can be allowed to lapse. In some reviews it is clear that very little has changed since the making of the original order, and for this reason it will be in the best interests of the person for the order to continue. The amendments are needed because in straightforward review matters the tribunal should be able to be constituted by one or two members without any compromise in the quality of the service the tribunal provides to its clients and stakeholders. Similarly, simple medical decisions can be made by a one or two-member tribunal without disadvantage to the person with the disability. However, if the issues are complex or if there is a dispute, the president of the tribunal has the discretion to arrange for a three-member tribunal to conduct the hearing.

The third change concerns the role and functions of the tribunal registrar. The Guardianship Tribunal, as a legal tribunal, has a range of procedural functions. The Act establishes the position of Tribunal Registrar

but provides little guidance about the role and responsibilities of the registrar, specifying only two functions which he or she may exercise. The amendments will clarify the registrar's role in performing certain procedural functions. This will enhance the tribunal's ability to manage its caseload in a responsible and efficient manner without compromising the rights of people with a decision-making disability. Improved workflow processes have clear benefits for the tribunal's clients in terms of enhancing the timeliness and quality of services provided by the tribunal.

Specifically, the amendments will give the registrar, at the discretion of the president of the tribunal, the functions of dismissing applications where the tribunal does not have jurisdiction to hear the matter or for want of prosecution; refusing requests to review guardianship or financial management orders; recognition of interstate orders; joining parties to a proceeding; granting leave for a person to be legally represented or requiring the appointment of a separate representative for a person; giving directions on proceedings prior to a hearing; adjourning proceedings; and consenting to the withdrawal of applications. These changes are consistent with the operation of other tribunals in the State and with guardianship tribunals around the country. Significantly, the amendments make it clear that the registrar's decision is not necessarily final. The tribunal can change a decision of the registrar, and if a person is dissatisfied with the registrar's decision there are options available to have that decision reviewed or changed.

The last change is increasing the maximum term of appointment for tribunal members. The Guardianship Act currently allows for the appointment of tribunal members for a maximum term of three years. The Governor appoints members on the recommendation of the Minister for Disability Services. The amendment will increase the possible maximum term of appointment of tribunal members from three to five years. Enhancing the security of tenure of tribunal members increases the community's confidence in the tribunal's independence and impartiality. The amendment is consistent with the practice of guardianship tribunals in other States and Territories. Another significant benefit of the amendment is that it will allow the tribunal to redirect the administrative and human resources it would otherwise employ in the appointment and reappointment process towards other areas to further enhance the quality of tribunal services to people with a disability, their families and carers.

Tribunal members are appointed through an open, merit-based selection process. They are subject to an extensive induction, training and mentoring system. Professional development and performance appraisal programs support members to maintain appropriate professional standards. The tribunal's clients are some of the most vulnerable people in the State, and they deserve a guardianship system which is able to respond to their needs in a timely and efficient way. I would like to sincerely thank the people and organisations across the State who took the time to contribute to the development of these important reforms. These amendments will ensure that the Guardianship Tribunal will continue to deliver responsive and high-quality services to the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Thomas George and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

#### **DUTIES AMENDMENT (FIRST HOME PLUS ONE) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Michael Daley, on behalf of Mr Frank Sartor.**

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.27 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Frank Sartor: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Duties Amendment (First Home Plus One) Bill 2007 implements a new stamp duty concession for first home buyers, announced by the Treasurer on 23 February 2007. First Home Plus One delivers yet another concession to first home buyers to complement the existing benefits and concessions provided under the First Home Owner Grant Scheme and First Home Plus stamp duty scheme. Since its introduction in July 2000 to the end of April 2007, First Home Plus has provided assistance to over 247,000 first home buyers in New South Wales, with stamp duty savings totalling over \$1.6 billion. In 2005-06 over 93 per cent of first home buyers who applied for stamp duty exemption paid no duty on the purchase of the property.

In the three years since the First Home Plus scheme thresholds were increased, over 121,000 first home buyers have taken advantage of the increased thresholds, with transfer duty savings of over \$1.1 billion,

representing an average benefit of over \$9,770 per person. In addition, the New South Wales Government has distributed \$2.1 billion to 287,000 first home buyers through the First Home Owner Grant since the scheme began in 2000. In the quarter ending March 2004, first home buyers in New South Wales represented only 7.9 per cent of housing finance loans. By December 2006, the quarterly share of first home buyer housing finance had increased to 16.4 per cent. Under the new scheme, First Home Plus One, first home buyers who enter into a shared equity arrangement are eligible for a new stamp duty concession, with effect from 1 May 2007.

A shared equity housing arrangement can take a number of forms and includes an arrangement under which a person acquires a less than full interest in his or her home with the remaining interest acquired by another person. Shared equity arrangements can assist first home buyers by helping people who could not otherwise afford to buy a home to enter the property market, by reducing the time needed to save for a share in a home, or by allowing first home buyers to buy a home of higher value than they otherwise would have been able to afford.

First Home Plus One will further assist these first home buyers by providing a duties concession worth up to \$18,000. If the equity partner acquires no more than 50 per cent of the property, an eligible first home buyer will be entitled to a proportion of the First Home Plus duty concession. For example, an eligible first home buyer taking a 50 per cent share in a \$500,000 home will save \$8,995 in transfer duty and would save \$14,392 in duty if taking an 80 per cent share. In addition, a mortgage given to assist the financing of the purchase would be eligible for the full mortgage duty discount of up to \$1,941.

The bill provides two further concessions under First Home Plus. First, if an equity partner acquires no more than a 5 per cent share, the full First Home Plus concession applies as if the eligible first home buyer were buying a 100 per cent interest. This will ensure that the purchase of a small share by a loan guarantor as part of the financing arrangements does not reduce the concession available to the first home buyer. Second, the bill requires only one of the eligible first home buyers to satisfy a residence requirement to occupy the home as their principal place of residence for six months commencing within 12 months of settlement. This addresses the obvious point that the equity partner will not occupy the home, and is also consistent with the First Home Owner Grant Scheme.

The bill also makes consequential amendments to the Land Tax Management Act to ensure eligible first home buyers are not subject to land tax on their share of the home if it would otherwise be exempt from land tax as that person's principal place of residence. First Home Plus One is the latest step in the Government's continuing focus on providing assistance to first home buyers. New South Wales continues to have the most generous stamp duty concession scheme for first homebuyers in Australia, with the highest property value limits and the most inclusive eligibility criteria. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Thomas George and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Order of Business**

#### **Motion by Mr Michael Daley agreed to:**

That the business before the House be interrupted:

- (1) at 12 noon to permit the presentation of inaugural speeches by the members for Maitland, Smithfield and Granville; and
- (2) at 7.30 p.m. to permit the presentation of inaugural speeches by the members for Davidson, Hawkesbury, Barwon, Murray-Darling and Shellharbour.

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

**Private Members' Statements, by leave, taken forthwith until 12 noon.**

### **PADSTOW ROTARY CLUB**

**Mr ALAN ASHTON** (East Hills) [11.34 a.m.]: Today I inform the House about the fiftieth birthday celebrations of the Padstow Rotary Club that were held last week in my electorate at the Revesby Heights



Ex-Servicemen's Club, known by everyone and almost every other club in the district as Heroes Hill—a term the club encourages people to use. The Padstow Rotary Club began on 27 May 1957 and its charter president was Mike Cannon, who was the first principal of East Hills Boys High School. Padstow Rotary meets each week and its members are all actively involved in doing good works and raising funds for the needs of the local and wider communities in Sydney and New South Wales.

Padstow Rotary members give their time and spend their own money assisting with health and education programs in what we might call developing countries, particularly those in Asia. Raffles are conducted and Padstow Rotary is almost always the sausage sizzle provider at local school and community fund-raisers in my electorate. Padstow on Parade is a very big function held at the end of the year and it often raises countless thousands of dollars for worthwhile organisations. The spirit that Rotary exhibits is to serve for others and lead the way. It is an international organisation and it does good work everywhere.

I once stood on the spot in Chicago where Rotary began; I think that was in 1905. The movement grew from there and spread across the world. Paul Harris was the founder of Rotary International. Padstow Rotary president Keith Roffey said that the fiftieth anniversary dinner was an exciting and enjoyable evening. There were many members of the community there—councillors, me and other members of Parliament, apologies being received from members of Federal Parliament, which was sitting at the time. Many past presidents attended the dinner and on the night the club presented a cheque for \$9,500 to the Caroline Chisholm School in Revesby to be used towards funding a climbing frame for the children, as well as \$4,500 to the Sarah Hilt Foundation to support people with meningococcal disease. Padstow Rotary, in conjunction with Granville Rotary, also gave \$1,000 to a drought relief program in the State's Far West.

Joyce Barnard, the wife of former Padstow Rotary president John Barnard, received the rarely given Paul Harris Fellowship Award. As members familiar with Rotary would know, the Paul Harris Fellowship Award is one of the most significant awards given out by the Rotary foundation. It is awarded to those who have made a real difference in the community—not only in the local community but also in the much wider community. Padstow Rotary has also been actively involved in the Youth Exchange Program, under which young people come to Australia from overseas, attend local schools and stay with local Padstow Rotarians or their friends and families for a year. In return, Padstow Rotary sends students from the Padstow area and from the East Hills and Bankstown electorates to overseas postings to spend the year. My daughter, Gemma, had the advantage of spending nearly a year in Denmark, and she thoroughly enjoyed her experience.

I know other members of my community have also been given the opportunity to participate in the program. Without making it sound like a family tradition, my brother's son spent a year in Sweden, and one of his daughters has just come back from the Czech Republic. It is a partnership program that gives young people the opportunity to go overseas. Fewer students in Rotary are travelling overseas so people should take this opportunity to become active in their local Rotary organisations, and I know that good members of Parliament will do so. I congratulate Keith Roffey on the work he has done in the last year, as well as Keri Sweet, Barry Thompson, Joan Wells, Gary Metcalfe, Trevor Withnall, Veronica Necyporuk, the Principal of East Hills Girls High School, Allan Sweet, Warren Bond, a very good friend of mine, Ken McMillan, and Terry Martin. They are all people I have had a lot to do with in my eight years as a member of Parliament. I congratulate Padstow Rotary on its celebrations and its continuing good work.

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.39 a.m.]: I thank the member for East Hills for bringing to the attention of the House Padstow Rotary Club's fiftieth anniversary. All members would join him in congratulating Padstow Rotary on this special occasion. I thank this club and all other Rotary and service clubs for the magnificent work they do for their communities. The member for East Hills mentioned drought relief and children's charities. We appreciate the work they do. We pay tribute also to Joyce Barnard, who received the Paul Harris Fellowship from Padstow Rotary. I thank the member for East Hills for his continuing fine work representing those people in the House.

### **HAT HEAD CARAVAN PARK**

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [11.40 a.m.]: I wish to draw to the attention of the House and the Minister for Lands an issue of concern to the community at Hat Head, which is a beautiful coastal village on the magnificent mid North Coast near Kempsey. Hat Head has a permanent population of around 300 people, which swells to around 4,000 during peak holiday periods. This influx of population is of great benefit to the local area, indeed the entire Kempsey shire, which has been identified as one of the State's most disadvantaged in terms of socioeconomic indicators.

The Hat Head Caravan Park is an important facility where most of these people are accommodated. It is State-owned Crown land managed by Kempsey Shire Council. It is an extremely popular caravan park as can be gauged by the number of people who move temporarily to Hat Head during holiday periods. Many are local people. My neighbour from Wauchope traditionally spends his Christmas holidays in the Hat Head Caravan Park. Indeed, people from the Macleay Valley, the Hastings Valley, the Nambucca Valley and many other mid North Coast people take advantage of this beautiful caravan park.

The Hat Head Community Group Incorporated is extremely concerned about a master plan for proposed improvements to the Hat Head Caravan Park. The plan, passed by the Lands Department, states that council must consider the creation of a new cabin precinct for at least 12 additional cabins in the future. Already two cabins have been built and two are in the process of being built as a result of a \$150,000 loan from the State Government, to be repaid from the proceeds from the caravan park. The problem is that the proposed cabin precinct significantly alters the way in which the caravan park can be enjoyed. The unpowered campsites for tents and caravans, which are extremely popular with families, will be taken over by the cabin precinct and access for helicopter rescue and medical services in times of emergency will be impeded.

The President of Hat Head Community Group Incorporated, Glen Brown, and his wife, Elaine, John and Helen Bourne, and secretary Philomena Curry drew up a petition that was expected to gather 1,000 signatures. In fact, almost 2,000 people have signed the petition to object to council's decision to establish a second cabin precinct on the south-eastern hillside within the reserve. It supports the existing three-way use of the land for unpowered campsites, retention of open space, access for helicopter rescue and medical services in times of emergency and calls on the council to reconsider the second council precinct as it is a high cost to ratepayers, reduces the number of holiday-makers to the shire in peak times, does not benefit the local community and ultimately restricts access to the coastal foreshore and safe swimming area.

The group was also concerned about bollards which have been installed by the council to divide the open space in a way that now renders the area unsuitable for helicopter operations that for over 30 years were performed safely in times of need. I am pleased that the Mayor of Kempsey shire, Betty Green, has taken up the issue. She doubts that more cabins will be installed. She said that the plan is for a five-year period only and that more cabins are not planned at this time. As this assurance is for five years only I ask the Minister for Lands to heed the local community and not let the almighty dollar outweigh community lifestyles. This is an extremely important facility to the local area and the locals want to keep the status quo.

### MONARO ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.45 a.m.]: I highlight some of the terrific things that happened during Education Week in the Monaro electorate. Three public schools joined together to promote the great quality education they provide. Monaro public schools held a progressive learning journey starting at Cooma North Public School, with the work being undertaken on computers and great projects in a range of areas, including engineering. We also saw the film and artworks of students. We then continued on to Monaro High School for a fantastic concert featuring talented students from all local public schools. It was an inspiring night, leaving everyone excited about the talent of our young people. I congratulate everyone who organised this great showcase of public education.

A couple of days later I had the pleasure of attending the Excellence in Education Awards for the Illawarra and south-east held at Queanbeyan Public School. Again, everyone was inspired by the commitment and dedication of the school communities, teachers, support staff, students and parents. Locals who gained well-deserved recognition included individual excellence awards to Linda Semmler, a parent at Jerrabomberra Public School, a member of the parents and citizens association, and someone who works virtually full time in the school to help to develop the school; Nathan Underwood, a former student of Monaro High School, who is currently studying medicine in Sydney and who received an award for his work as a student and former captain; Brent Peters, a student with special needs from Monaro High School; and Julie Collins, a teacher at Bemboka Public School. Commendations went to Chris Hunter, Principal of Jerrabomberra Public School, for her terrific work in developing the school that has grown from 100 students to more than 720 and to Betty Longhurst for her work at Monaro High School. I congratulate and thank all those people.

The other highlight of the Excellence in Education Awards at Queanbeyan Public School was the choir, which was equal to the highest standard I have seen at both junior and senior level. The final event that I attended recently that highlighted the great quality of our schools throughout New South Wales was Karabar High School's performance of *Guys and Dolls*, which featured a number of extremely talented students,

including my son, Lachlan, who played the role of Nicely-Nicely Johnson. That performance showed Karabar's very high standards in the performing arts, including drama, music and the internationally recognised Redbacks Marching Band, which recently travelled to the United States to participate in Rose Bowl events.

When I spoke at the education awards I took the opportunity to point out how proud we should be of the work done in our public schools and how we should acknowledge more often their wonderful achievements. I point out that people in the media who criticise our public schools are sometimes very out of touch. When one hears statements from the Federal education Minister suggesting that our schools have a Maoist approach to education, one realises how out of touch some people are with what is happening in schools. The comments of the Leader of The Nationals in this place objecting to people being called parents or carers and claiming that our schools are engaging in left-wing indoctrination, as he claimed in a recent press release, show how out of touch the Federal and State Coalition is with the great work of our schools. One of the features of Mao was his attempts to restrict what people in China could think and be taught in schools, to control literature and to restrict free speech. That seems to be much more aligned with the sorts of things we are hearing from the Federal education Minister than it is with what we are seeing happening in our wonderful schools around New South Wales.

We want to produce kids from our public schools who can make critical decisions, who are able to make judgements and think for themselves. That is exactly what our teachers, our parents and school communities in New South Wales are doing at the moment. They are helping our children to learn to think and make decisions. They are not producing little automatons who do what they are told; they are teaching people how to think and how to learn. That is what we want to see from our schools. That is what I saw happening in our local schools during Education Week. It is a great tribute to everybody involved and I congratulate them all on their continuing efforts on behalf of our children.

#### **BEGA WEST PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [11.50 a.m.]: Keeping to the theme of education, it is somewhat typical of the Government to make statements about education in this place without realising its own responsibilities in relation to school maintenance and infrastructure. We have fantastic schools in this State and fantastic school communities, teachers, and parents and citizens associations. Yet this Government continues to neglect funding for basic maintenance and infrastructure. I call on the Minister Education and Training to look at some schools in the electorate of Bega that require that work, particularly Bega West Public School, which I took the opportunity to visit on a number of occasions this year to see firsthand some of the problems the parents and citizens association is trying to address through the school community. In relation to education we on this side of the House believe in the equality of opportunity, not the equality of outcome. Unlike Labor, we are committed to ensuring that our schools have appropriate school infrastructure and facilities so they are the best in the land and the best in the world. Until we get the basic maintenance and infrastructure right schools continue to suffer badly.

A number of issues need to be resolved in relation to Bega West Public School, including the provision of covered walkways and the complete lack of hot water at the school. The toilet facilities are not up to scratch and the students do not use them. The school has demountable classrooms that are more than 20 or 25 years old. They continue to leak and do not have airconditioning. On the day I visited the school the temperature was 37 degrees. These schoolchildren are trying to get the best education in unacceptable conditions. There is a lack of covered walkways between the various school buildings. Often the Bega Valley receives significant rain and conditions at the schools become very difficult when the appropriate covered walkways are not in place. The Government, through its asset management review process, needs to look closely at Bega West Public School, Candelo and a number of other schools, particularly on the far South Coast, that need to have these issues addressed.

The parents and citizens association at Bega West Public School, under the stewardship of Trish Warby, is doing a fantastic job to try to address these issues. Letters have been written to the Government. A petition is now circulating amongst the Bega community in relation to the school. Again I call on the Minister to either visit the school or meet with the parents and citizens association in Sydney to discuss its concerns. If that does not happen the school, which was not built for the current school population, will continue to struggle under the demands of the population growth of Bega.

The Government needs to look closely at Bega West Public School and its future. It has to look at whether the school will be relocated to a greenfields site, which was always planned with the construction of the

Bega bypass. With the onset of major retail development in Bega and the new \$100 million regional base hospital, the school needs some certainty about the Government's intention to relocate the school to a greenfields site in the nearby Glebe area. In the short term the Government needs to invest in the school by providing airconditioning, fans in the disability toilet, new toilet facilities and classrooms and covered walkways between buildings. It needs to look at the parking situation as well. I hope the Minister for Education and Training takes these points on board and will make himself available for a meeting with the parents and citizens association.

### KIRINARI FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.55 a.m.]: On Saturday 19 May I had the pleasure of attending the fortieth anniversary celebration of Kirinari at Sylvania Heights in my electorate of Miranda. Kirinari means "place of learning". Kirinari provides Aboriginal students from country and remote areas with hostel accommodation in Sydney while they complete their studies at local high schools. The fortieth anniversary celebration was a special event for all in the community. It attracted distinguished guests, former students, present students and staff from right across the State—from Grafton to Batemans Bay, from Maroubra to Brewarrina and Bourke. Guests included Mr Ivan Simon, PSM, the President of the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society; General Secretary Mr Frank Gorrel, OAM; directors Hazel Wilson, OAM, Christine Mumbulla, Don Lang, and Eric Frater. also in attendance was Aboriginal elder Mr Merv Ryan, who is also chair of the Kurranulla Aboriginal Corporation, house parents Rhonda and Garry Lake, and principal of Gynea Technology High School, Mr John Bedwell, as well as Lincoln Woods, grandson of the great Herbert Groves, and Mr Keith Clarke, General Manager of Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Former and present students spoke at the event, including present student Ms Saige Masson, who has aspirations of undertaking a career in medicine. Also speaking was one of the first students at Kirinari, Harry Williams, the former soccer international and one of the Socceroos in Australia's 1974 World Cup squad, when Australia first made the World Cup finals. This was a day to look forward and to look back to the beginnings and at the achievements of Kirinari. It was a day to acknowledge all those who have contributed to Kirinari, from the founders to present day workers, to thank them for their important work in providing opportunities for a better future for our Aboriginal children and to thank them for their role in making this a more just and fair society.

The history of the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society [ACAS] and Kirinari is the stuff of which local legends are made: a group of young women in the late 1950s billeting Aboriginal children in their homes in Gynea, also in my electorate. There was the formation of the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society in 1963 at a public meeting in Miranda by our own present-day director and a former deputy mayor, Hazel Wilson, the then local Federal member of Parliament and later Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Les Johnson, AM, and six ladies from the Gynea Congregational Church.

I acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the great Herbert Stanley Groves, who devoted his life to the advancement of his people and the opening of the first Kirinari on National Aborigines Day in 1967, just four years later. Of course, in 1967 the Commonwealth Government finally took responsibility for Aboriginal people with 90 per cent of the population voting yes in the referendum. By the time of the referendum Kirinari was well under way, if not complete. It became the forerunner of other hostels dedicated to the education and advancement of Aboriginal students. I congratulate the founders, the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society and all the workers and supporters who have contributed to the success of Kirinari.

I also acknowledge the work of my Labor predecessor in the seat of Miranda, Bill Robb. He and his wife, Heather, have been very active members of the society since its foundation. I also acknowledge the assistance given to Kirinari by my Liberal predecessor, the Hon. Ron Phillips. I do so because I believe the advancement of our Aboriginal peoples should go well beyond partisan politics. The work and commitment of the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society and Kirinari continues. Children who come to Kirinari from country and remote areas live under the experienced and watchful eyes of the house parents, Garry and Rhonda Lake, and the staff. They attend Gynea Technology High and Endeavour Sports High. The children move from the country to city and live with house parents away from their families. The transition is obviously not an easy one. But they know with the help of the society, Rhonda and Garry, their teachers and other students, they have the opportunity to study and achieve in many walks of life and subsequently take their place in the modern world. At the same time they are given the opportunity to learn about, understand and preserve their own culture.

The personal success stories of children who have gone through Kirinari include people in public and private employment, such as the public service, entertainment, police, trades and engineering. The list goes on.

Their stories bear witness to the fact that the continued hard work and commitment to the students at Kirinari have turned the vision of the society's founders into reality. I cannot underestimate the importance of the work of the Aboriginal Children's Advancement Society and Kirinari. The advancement of our Aboriginal children is one of the foundation stones of a true, meaningful and lasting reconciliation. I acknowledge that there is more to be done. Today I want to say, "Happy birthday, Kirinari."

**Private members' statements noted.**

**INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI** (Maitland) [12.01 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your appointment. It is an historic appointment, and I wish you all the best.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI:** I note the presence of my family and friends in the gallery—in particular my mother, Angela Terenzini, who I know is very pleased to be here. Although it is somewhat daunting for her, she is very pleased. Today is indeed a special day for several reasons. I have the honour of standing in this House as the elected representative in this Parliament for the seat of Maitland. It is also an opportunity for me to set forth my objectives as a newly elected member. It is also appropriate on this occasion to reflect on past events in my life and those of my family. Inaugural speeches that are made in this House often contain personal accounts and life stories. My contribution today will be no different. The question, of course, was where to start my story. As the son of Italian immigrants who chose this country to make a new beginning, the answer was obvious: the story must start with my parents. In fact, my inaugural speech today tells just as much about their lives as it does mine.

In April 1952 my father, Giuseppe Terenzini, stepped off a ship docked at the port of Melbourne into a new life. He was aged 20 years. He was single, penniless and unable to speak one word of the English language, but he was very excited. Of course, he had good reason to be. He had made the best decision of his life—he had chosen Australia as his new home to make a new beginning. As he stepped off he was given a 10-pound note, which he spent very quickly. Unfortunately, it would be a long time before he owned another 10-pound note. My mother arrived here with her family in 1956 as a 16-year-old and started her new life in the Hunter.

Both my parents were born in the same small mountain top village in central Italy in the region of Abruzzo. The village, which was built in medieval times, was so small it could never be found on a map. As fate would have it, however, it became located directly in the firing line of two opposing sides in the Second World War. In October 1943 destruction of the village was swift and complete, when all the inhabitants were ordered to leave within two hours. My father was aged 13 and my mother was aged 3. The village was razed to the ground. What then took place in the many months of confusion and mayhem that followed was a perilous struggle to survive. My mother was taken away to safety with her family. My father was not so lucky—he was on his own. His family had scattered and was nowhere to be seen. At that tender age he, like many others, had witnessed and experienced firsthand the abhorrent nature of a cruel environment, that being wartime in no man's land. I can only imagine what he went through as a 13-year-old boy fending for himself whilst avoiding being taken in by the authorities. In fact, he was rounded up and captured twice, and he escaped both times. After months of looking death squarely in the eye on a daily basis, he was ultimately taken in by friends and family. Of course, the fact that he survived to that point was amazing. Obviously that great authority on high had other plans for him.

My father's dream to come to Australia was formed during the years after the war when he had heard stories about the wide-open fields, the farms, the beaches and the way of life. He had no doubt where he wanted to go, and once the opportunity arose by way of the assisted immigrant scheme he knew exactly what he wanted to do. He never looked back. After spending nine months in a migrant camp in Albury, he eventually moved to Newcastle. He worked tirelessly at whatever jobs he could find, all in heavy industry as a labourer. My mother, typically, worked in clothes houses and factories. They were hard times for them both, but regardless of how hard it was, they relished the opportunity to make something of their new lives in their new country. My parents met and later married in 1960. I was born in 1961. I have a younger brother, Peter Terenzini, who is also here today.

I was born in the Hunter Valley and have lived there all my life. I remember growing up in a house that was empty of material comforts. I remember my mother and father scraping a living out of a meagre wage.

I remember them going to great lengths to do whatever they could so that my brother and I had the essentials. I cannot remember going without or feeling as though I had missed out on something. My brother and I had the ultimate in a privileged childhood. I was educated in the public system and at 16 left school to take up a trade. That was considered a great opportunity by my family. On my first day as an apprentice boilermaker at the BHP Steelworks I walked in through the gates and clocked on. Members would know that BHP was not conducive to aesthetic quality. When I noticed barbed wire around the perimeter fence, I questioned why anyone would want to break into BHP. Of course, I was told by my supervisor that it was to stop me from getting out. That was my first day at work.

My father, who had begun his working career as a labourer, was now a boilermaker and a very strong union man. In fact, talk of politics in my home was a daily event, particularly since 11 November 1975, when it became an obsession with him. My father was pleased that I had a job. He proffered some advice to me that I have never forgotten. He told me that we were living in a great country and opportunities would come my way and I was not to waste them. Of course, that did not mean a great deal to me as a 16-year-old who had just left school. I had spent years dealing with the normal, typical playground racial banter. I did not anticipate many opportunities coming my way, but of course he was correct.

After a while at BHP, I started and completed an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. I spent the next 10 years in the motor repair industry. I then worked as a motor vehicle inspector with the Department of Motor Transport. I reached the point where I felt a need to give my experience back to the trade, so for the following six years I taught apprentices at TAFE in the School of Automotive Engineering. That is where I obtained my Diploma in Teaching. I remember my family being very proud of me. It was then that I first began to apply myself to academic study—something I thought I would never or could never do. It was at that point I began to contemplate a possible reality, something that had fascinated me all my life and become a great passion—the law. It goes without saying that I consider myself privileged to have been accepted into a university to study law. Whilst it is commonplace today, it was not so common for people of my background to achieve that goal. I remember realising this childhood dream on 30 June 1994 when I was admitted as a solicitor.

I spent some time in private practice before moving to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In my 10 years as a prosecutor, I was truly privileged to undertake the role of a model litigant, whose task is to be an advocate in a courtroom representing the public. It has been a great honour to serve the community in this way and to carry out the special duties attached to that role. The greatest source of satisfaction, however, was using that qualification for the purpose of imparting my knowledge to the community. Whether I dealt with pensioner groups, senior citizens or high school students, I gained a great deal of satisfaction by teaching them about the legal system and the law and assisting them with their legal problems. It is something I still do to this day.

My decision to stand for Parliament reflected my wish to directly serve the community of Maitland in a more direct way, and to be in a position to make a real difference to the everyday lives of the people in my community. I am here today because the people of Maitland have given me that opportunity, for which I am truly and sincerely grateful. I am very proud to represent them in this House. Maitland is unique and its story is integral to the history of early New South Wales. Indeed from the early days of white settlement in the 1820s it was the agricultural centre of the Hunter, abundant in resources. Its rich and fertile flood plains alongside our famous Hunter River made the area the greatest source of timber and farm produce. For decades timber cutters came to take away the cedar to adorn the wealthiest houses in the colony—most of which were in Sydney, of course. Rich alluvial flats and some of the most fertile soil in all of Australia were worked to feed the settlements. As it grew, Maitland became the biggest and busiest town in New South Wales, with the exception of Sydney. The area played a crucial role in the settlement and development of the Hunter region.

With a population approaching 70,000 and with an annual growth rate of 2.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 1.3 per cent, Maitland today is no different—it is the fastest growing region in New South Wales. It has well and truly earned its right to retain the title as the hub of the Hunter. New areas for development continue to be opened up and business investment continues to be strong. As well as residential development, we have established modern industrial estates, employing thousands of people. More such projects are on the drawing board. This means that not only do we house a growing population; we will also be able to provide them with jobs. New residential developments will soon have their wastewater treated and returned to them as grey water to be reused and we will have saltwater trading schemes in our rivers. These initiatives will ensure that Maitland continues to be the focal point of sustainable growth in the Hunter region. We continue to be what we were from the start: the driving force of growth in the Hunter Valley.

In Maitland there exists confidence to invest in business and industry. This gives rise to opportunity. It has always been my view that confidence and opportunity are the two key objectives of government. Where these two factors exist, people in our community can rightfully expect to make something of their lives; to provide for themselves, their families and to make plans for their children. Providing the essential services is the key to maintaining this confidence. Improving the everyday lives of people in our community is the fundamental goal of state governments. In a direct sense, this is especially so in the case of the vulnerable and the disadvantaged who rely on government services for assistance and support. In Maitland, we pride ourselves on helping those less fortunate. The measure of a great community is the extent to which its members perform volunteer and community work. I take this opportunity to pay special tribute to all our volunteer community and welfare groups who do such an unbelievable job looking after our less fortunate citizens. I have met so many people in Maitland who give up a great deal of their time in looking after the aged, the frail, the sick and the disadvantaged in our community. I congratulate them and I pledge them my ongoing support.

It must also be acknowledged that Maitland is feeling the growing pains of a rapidly expanding area. There is the challenge to continue with the provision of services and infrastructure to keep up with this growth. It has been estimated that over the next 25 years a further 160,000 people will be living in the Lower Hunter. Maitland is well placed to lead the way in sustainable growth and expansion, but the task and the challenge is to keep services in line with growth. Some of my key priorities are: a new and expanded emergency department at Maitland Hospital to maintain our high standard of health care; early commencement of the third river crossing to relieve our traffic congestion; the continued upgrading and maintenance of our public schools to ensure a good productive learning environment for our children; and the continued support of our community and welfare workers. I will work tirelessly for the people of Maitland for the continued provision of these services to our region. Given my experience as a prosecutor, I will also advocate for more use of guideline judgements, in particular, with protection of the police, more reform of the regime dealing with repeat offenders, and ensure that victims of crime have a clear and easier path in the justice system—for example, having to give evidence on only one occasion. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Juries must have some say in the sentencing process when it comes to the importance of the facts or aggravating features. One day I will be a former member of this House. When that day comes, I hope I can look back and say that I made some contribution to improving the lives of people in my community and the State. Many people have played their part in my election to this House. I wish to thank them. I turn first to those who gave so much in my campaign: Ian McNamara, Darrin Rodrigo and Matt Dixon—the three so-called young Labor Turks—who worked at the frontline of the operation around the clock literally, performing above and beyond the call of duty. I thank Peter Bentley and Korena Flanagan for their crucial daily support. I thank Ann Wills for her extraordinary efforts in organising my fundraisers and setting aside her time to work at the campaign office.

I thank my cousin Norrie Stevens, whose time and help knew no bounds—and still does not. I thank Tony Keating for his tremendous assistance in the campaign. He gave me the benefit of his experience. I was very lucky to have enormous support and assistance from the branch members. Success would not have been possible without them. They are too many to mention, but they all know who they are. I have a special note of thanks to my long-time close friend Daniel Smyth, who has always been there to proffer valuable advice all the way through my life. I thank him for his friendship and for making my life much easier on so many occasions. My former staff and colleagues at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions have been a great source of support and encouragement to me over the past 10 months. I thank Graham Bailey, David Leech, Peter Barnett, David O'Neill and Greg Coles for their support and long friendship.

I was blessed to have at my side a man by the name of John Price—the retired member for Maitland and former Deputy-Speaker. This man, from the day I became the candidate right up until election day, was always there to give me his time and attention. John Price is a truly remarkable man of great character who brought to the office of member of Parliament the highest standard of principle and integrity. Today I wish to pay special tribute to him because of his total dedication according to those standards for all of his 23 years as a member of this House. I also thank him for the personal support and endorsement he gave me, his continuing friendship and, I am very happy to say, his continuing advice. He has left me with very big shoes to fill. I wish him and his wife, Elizabeth, all the very best.

I turn to my immediate family: my wife, Susan, and my daughters, Angela and Katherine. I am very lucky to be part of such a very close and supportive family. As to my wife, Susan, no-one could ever ask for a better and closer friend. Her unswerving and unbridled support has never wavered. I have been truly blessed to have her as a partner in my life. I thank her for being that rock of support, for doing so much and for always

being there when it counted. As to my daughters, I thank them for putting up with me during the past 10 months. It is not an easy task on any day of the week. I thank Angela for giving me so much assistance throughout the campaign, especially on election day. She was, and is, my greatest publicist and my biggest fan. She made me very proud. All of us together experienced the highs and lows of the election campaign. However, through it all, we experienced that great bond of family that only strengthened as the days went on.

I return to where I started—to my parents. I have not spoken to, nor have I known, my father for some years now. He has been claimed by the progressive illness of dementia, so he is not aware of where I am today, although he has been told many times. It is unfortunate that he cannot be here, but of course, as we know, destiny makes her own appointments. These are matters beyond our control. As to my mother, I am glad that she can be here today. Looking back, it would be a gross understatement to say that my mother was the hardest worker of all of us. Her statement of duties and her award contains one clause and one clause only: total devotion and dedication to the family every hour of the day and every day of the week. It is as simple as that. She held the family together and made sure that we stayed on the right path. She also made sure that we wanted for nothing. She was, and still is, the backbone of the family. I thank them both for choosing Australia and making their contribution. I thank them for working so hard and making so many sacrifices for my brother and me. I thank them for providing us both with a good grounding and a chance in life. It is a debt that I will never be able to repay. This is not a burden, but it is a daily reminder of the fragility of life and that the only important day is today.

I am very proud to be a part of the new Iemma Labor Government. It is a government that has set about putting into effect many new, innovative and successful initiatives for the people of New South Wales. The basic and fundamental tenet and tradition of the Australian Labor Party—a party of which I have proudly been a member for many years—has always been to continually reform and to continually improve. Social reform guided by a social conscience has always been the continuing theme for Labor. The newly elected Labor Government continues this tradition of reform with record attention to the areas of mental health, disabilities, aged care and state infrastructure; incentives for business, including regulatory reform; unprecedented allocation of land for national parks; measures for drought proofing and water recycling; leadership in renewable energy initiatives; record police numbers; a world-class education system; proliferation of new trade schools; and due recognition to our volunteers and community workers. Above all, we have the continuing and overriding objective to look after and protect workers and their families through a balanced industrial relations system. We now have a new, fresh, reinvigorated team ready to take on these challenges I look forward to making my contribution as a member of this House for the benefit of the people of Maitland and New South Wales. I thank the House for its indulgence.

*[Business interrupted.]*

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Gorgees Shlaymoon Kaaee, the Vice Governor of the Iraq Duhok Governorate, who is a special guest of the member for Smithfield. He will now make his inaugural speech.

#### INAUGURAL SPEECHES

*[Business resumed.]*

**Mr NINOS KHOSHABA** (Smithfield) [12.22 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Mr Speaker, may I commence by congratulating you on your recent appointment as the Speaker of the House. I wish you every success, and I look forward to working with you in the future. I am truly honoured and privileged to be standing here before you today as a member of the New South Wales Parliament, representing the electorate of Smithfield and part of the Iemma Government. As you mentioned, Mr Speaker, the Vice Governor of the Iraq Duhok Governorate, Mr Gorgees Shlaymoon Kaaee, is present in the gallery as he is on official business in Australia. I thank him for his attendance today.

I wish to start by providing a brief family history and place on record how I came to achieve the office of the member for Smithfield. I would also like to detail my ambitions for the residents of Smithfield and to thank a number of people. In search of a better life, my parents, who are of Assyrian background, migrated from Iraq to Australia in 1970, when I was only four months old. Like most migrants, my parents did not know a word of English and had practically no money when they arrived. They were fortunate as my mother's sister, my



aunt, was already settled in Fairfield and we had a place to live until we could find our own accommodation. My father worked as a bulldozer driver for many years, and my mother had the important role of raising and looking after the family. In 1974 we proudly became Australian citizens, and in the same year my father met some wonderful people who encouraged him to join the Australian Labor Party, which he did.

I am the eldest of three children. My sister, Rhonda, and my brother, Frank, who are in the gallery, were both born in Australia at Fairfield Hospital. For many years both my parents worked very hard and learnt the Australian language very quickly to ensure that their children had the best possible start. I started my schooling at Our Lady of the Rosary Primary School in Fairfield. My parents have never been wealthy in the dollar sense, but we always managed. We did not have any expensive accessories and did not have the luxury of having family holidays, but my childhood memories were always cheerful ones. We could not afford any computer games and never had the opportunity to go to the movies; we spent most of our time riding our bikes and playing outside, which is something that is lacking in today's generation. Almost every weekend my family went on a picnic, whether it was to the Georges River at Picnic Point, at Wallacia, or at Warragamba Dam. Like many struggling and hardworking families, what we lacked in material wealth we enjoyed in love from our parents and relatives.

In 1981, after several years of struggle, my parents were fortunate enough to purchase a very modest home in Bossley Park, and they are still living there after all these years. Living in Bossley Park gave me the opportunity to start and complete my Higher School Certificate at St Johns Park High School, in Greenfield Park. St Johns Park High School has produced two members of Parliament: the local federal member Chris Bowen and myself—not a bad achievement for a Western Sydney public high school. My election pamphlet was entitled "An Australian Story". The reason for this is that I believe I have lived the typical Australian story in Smithfield: a migrant couple without any English skills that made the sacrifices necessary to raise a family.

The wonderful thing about my Australian story is that, despite the humble origins of my family, their son is experiencing the privilege of serving in the oldest Parliament in the country. In 1988 I joined the Australian Labor Party, and since then I have been involved in many local, State and Federal campaigns. In 1991 my father was elected as a councillor on Fairfield City Council. During his 13 years on council he was deputy mayor on two occasions and the Mayor of Fairfield on three occasions. His personal experiences on council taught me the meaning of public service, especially when it comes to serving those in our community who are in real need. The Fairfield local government area is Australia's most culturally diverse city. My father was the first mayor of Assyrian background in Australia. For his many years of service and dedication to the community, he was awarded the Order of Australia medal in 2000 and the Centennial Award in 2001. This is a man who entered the country with no money and no knowledge of the English language, and who had to leave his parents and siblings behind.

There are a number of stories like my family's, where people have migrated to Australia, worked hard, and made use of the opportunities that this wonderful country provides. From my family's point of view, it is a true honour to be Australian. I have been watching and learning from my father for many years. He has been an inspiration and is the main reason I am standing here before you today. I cannot thank you enough, dad. For the first 16 years after my schooling I worked for three different financial institutions where I held a number of senior positions. In November 1999 I celebrated one of the best days of my life by marrying my wife, Angela. In October 2003 we were blessed by the arrival of our first child, Alyssa, and we were again blessed in October 2005 when we had our second child, Briannah.

In March 2004 I was elected as a councillor on Fairfield City Council representing the Parks Ward. I have served on a number of committees and have especially enjoyed being the chairman of the services committee from 2005. As a councillor I have been provided with the opportunity to meet many members of my community, and in several cases I represented them regarding their problems and applications. This opportunity has provided me with an insight into local issues and how they affect the community. My service with Fairfield council has served as a valuable apprenticeship with the experience I have gained in serving the community and being in touch with the everyday needs of local residents. With the support of my family and colleagues I have decided I will continue in this role until the next council election in 2008 in order to prevent a costly and unnecessary by-election.

In October 2004 I started work with the newly elected federal member for Prospect, Mr Chris Bowen, as an electorate officer. Working for Chris was a great experience and the knowledge I obtained from watching him work was extremely valuable. Chris Bowen has also been a close friend for many years. I thank Chris, his wife, Rebecca, and their daughter, Grace, for their friendship over the many years and all the assistance they have provided me, especially in my time of need.

Taking the reins from such a well-known and popular member like Carl Scully is no easy task. One of Carl's favourite sayings is: Success has many fathers and failure is an orphan. Over many years I have witnessed people trying to take credit for the great projects Carl introduced into this State, and I want to mention one in particular. I have no doubt that Carl was the intellectual architect and driving force behind the M7 motorway. In May 2001 Carl met with the then Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. John Anderson, in his Sydney office and a put a proposal to him involving the Commonwealth contributing \$350 million and in return the State Government would accept and support, for the first time on our national highway system, a user toll.

This proposal was then approved by the Federal and State Cabinets and it paved the way for the construction of one of Australia's greatest roadways, the M7 motorway. During his time as a Minister and with the support of the Labor Government, he built five motorways and was responsible for many projects, such as the upgrade of The Horsley Drive and Cowpasture Road, the Liverpool to Parramatta bus-only transitway, the Epping to Chatswood rail link and the Western Sydney Regional Park, to name but a few.

The media gave Carl the nickname of Sparkles, and a sparkle he was. He is the bright spark that provided so much infrastructure and convenience to the residents of south-west Sydney and to the electorate of Smithfield. Carl was a very dynamic and energetic member of Parliament who will be missed. There are very few people in public life who can look back on the level of achievement that he can. I thank Carl for his service to the community and I wish him and his family all the very best in the future.

The traditional owners of the Western Cumberland Plain are the Aboriginal people known as the Darug tribe and they have been living in this area for more than 30,000 years. Smithfield was originally known as Chisholm's Bush but was later named Smithfield after the meat markets in London and Dublin. Once known as a rural township, Smithfield is now a mix of residential, commercial, rural and recreational areas and is also well known for its industrial areas. Today the electorate of Smithfield is very much a working class area, rich in multiculturalism and diversity. With over 130 different nationalities and 70 different languages the electorate of Smithfield is a unique and harmonious area and clearly shows multiculturalism can work. While being one of the most multicultural areas in the State, we have very little racial discord or disharmony. We are the model for racial harmony and tolerance.

I want to make it very clear that I represent every single resident of the Smithfield electorate, regardless of their religion, race or country of origin. In my case, I am an Australian of Assyrian background—the first Assyrian Australian elected to any Parliament in Australia. I am proud of my heritage, as are the millions of migrants who have come to Australia from throughout the world. In my case, I am also saddened and angered at the oppression of Assyrian people in Iraq and the plight of the hundreds of thousands of Assyrians who have fled Iraq in the past five years and lie abandoned in refugee camps. I celebrate the fact that my family chose a country where a humble migrant residing in Western Sydney can express his opinion in the freedom that our democracy promises. The residents of my electorate are very family orientated with strong family values. In many homes you will find the elderly parents living with their children's families, and you will find homes that accommodate more than one family to help them succeed.

The electorate of Smithfield has several schools, playing fields, shopping centres, clubs, restaurants and places of worship. It is a wonderful area with beautiful open spaces and cycleways meandering along our creeks and waterways. It is also the home of the Fairfield Showground, which attracts thousands of people every week to the markets. On the weekends the parks are full of children laughing and playing, and their parents watching and supporting them from the sidelines. As history shows, I have no doubt that some of these children will be representing Australia in the near future. It was no surprise to see that in the 2006 soccer World Cup, seven members of the Australian squad were either born in the electorate of Smithfield or at some stage played for one of our clubs. These players were Harry Kewell, Zeljko Kalac, Ante Covic, Archie Thompson, Tony Popovic, Joel Griffiths and Michael Thwaite. Even though I thought we were robbed, and even though we did not win the competition, they were part of an Australian team that made us all very proud. This is only one of numerous examples of sportsmen and sportswomen who have come from the electorate of Smithfield.

I believe there is nothing more satisfying than knowing that your actions have had a positive impact on someone's life. As members of Parliament our first priority should always be the residents of our electorate. During my campaign, I found that people did not care what you had to say two months out from an election, and they are right. They want us to hear them when they are in need and they want us to support them when they are in need of support. I will be listening, supporting and helping to the best of my ability. People who know me will confirm that I am very approachable, and regardless of how small the issue may be, I want to hear it. I believe in getting back to the grass roots. As mentioned earlier, my electorate is very family orientated and its most important concerns are the wellbeing and safety of children and family members.

One of my many goals during this term is my intention to visit every school, police station, local hospital and State Government service agency in my electorate and become familiar with their staff and the level of service my community can expect. It is my intention to see that every resident receives the highest level of support the Government can offer. I also want to attract as much investment as possible to maintain this Government's commitment to job creation. With the help of the Government I hope to further improve the safety of our school children at school crossings and further improve the services available at hospitals, police stations and schools in my electorate. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

It has always been a dream of mine to be standing in this House as a member of Parliament. This dream would not have come true if it was not for the support and hard work of many people. I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank a number of people for all their love and support for many years, and I would like to start with my family, my wife Angela and my daughters Alyssa and Briannah. Any elected person, whether it be local, State or Federal, will confirm how much time you spend away from the family in order to represent your constituents. My wife is a beautiful person who always puts the family first. My wife has always supported me and I love her very much. My two girls are the pride of my life. Every parent knows the love and joy children provide. Even though they do not understand what is happening today, I thank them in advance for all the joy they have already given me and the happiness they will provide me in the future.

I would also like to thank my immediate family, my father Anwar Khoshaba, my mother Athour Khoshaba, my brother Frank Khoshaba, my sister Rhonda Adam, my in-laws Celestino Caruso and Domenica (Mimma) Caruso, my brothers-in-law Darren Adam and Frank Rizzuti, my sister-in-law Cathy Rizzuti, my nephew Matthew Adam, and my nieces Sarah Adam and Isabella Rizzuti. A loving, healthy, happy and close family is the biggest asset anyone can have.

I would also like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Mayor of Fairfield, Councillor Nick Lalich, Fairfield's first popularly elected Mayor, who has assisted me greatly in my role as a councillor. I also want to thank my Labor colleagues who are here in the gallery today: councillors Albert Mooshi, Del Bennett, Sarah Trapla and former Mayor Lawrence White. I thank councillors Dennis Huynh, Louie Costa and former Mayor Bob Watkins for their friendship and assistance over the many years. As members of Parliament our reputation is not completely in our control. In most cases our constituents will judge us on the way our offices handle their inquiries, and their inquiries are often with our staff over the phone, in writing or face-to-face. The need for good, polite and trustworthy staff is very important. I am fortunate to have Tracie O'Keefe, Christine Kalivitis, and Irene Kontominas in my electorate office.

I would also like to thank all the Labor Party branch members from my electorate, and in particular the Smithfield branch, and the State electorate council delegates for their commitment and interest in the community and the Australian Labor Party. With the support of the branch members I was nominated and endorsed unopposed, and I cannot thank them enough for their trust in me. My appreciation goes to Mark Arbib, Karl Bitar and all the staff at the Australian Labor Party's New South Wales office for their assistance and support during this campaign. Campaigning is never easy but, fortunately, I was surrounded by people who were very committed and who unselfishly gave up hours of their time and probably spent some of their own money just to help me achieve my dream. So my deepest gratitude goes to James Cullen, Nathan Fenech, Nathan Alexander, Carole Field, Vijay Singh, the president of the Chaldaen National Congress, Mr Samir Yousif, and his wife Nisreen, and all the volunteers who helped out during my campaign and on election day. I would also like to make special mention of my close school friends for more than 20 years: Jason Naylor, Joe Navan, Tony Carrano, Sam Arban, Annunziato Leuzzi, Simon Soo, Melo Tripodi, and Don Muggli.

I very much appreciate all the support that I have received from my parliamentary colleagues and I especially thank those who are present today. I would also like to thank the Hon. David Campbell, the Hon. John Hatzistergos, the Hon. Eric Roozendaal, the Hon. Reba Meagher and the Hon. Joe Tripodi for their ministerial visits to my electorate and for their assistance during my campaign. I have purposely left the most important thank you until the end, and that is to the good people of the Smithfield electorate for supporting and placing their trust in the Iemma Government and me.

Working with my colleagues, I hope to repay them for the support they have expressed and to continue to deliver better services for the people of Smithfield for many years to come. I thank the many friends and family members who are here today. I would like to extend my appreciation to members on both sides of the House for their courtesy. I have been given the great honour of representing the electorate of Smithfield. I aim to justify the people's confidence and faith. I am determined to use every opportunity to improve my community and my State. My message to the people of Smithfield is simple. I will not let you down. Thank you.

**Mr DAVID BORGER** (Granville) [12.41 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is an honour to be here in this place for Granville and the Labor Party. Granville is notable for its working-class history and its independence of thought. One of its members was Jack Lang, whose independence, courage, compassion and strength of conviction was such that he took on the British Empire, to defend and relieve the Depression-smashed innocent poor of New South Wales, and to send a message to the world. I pay my respects to Jack, a flawed and contentious Labor hero whose intermingled righteousness and rancorousness still bring party workers into bitter argument after 70 years of hindsight and reflection. I pay tribute as well to Kim Yeadon, who used his intellect like few others to make differences in forestry, energy and information technology, differences that mattered.

Granville has the largest number of fibro houses of any suburb in Sydney. They were built in the fifties by the Housing Commission out of asbestos made across the road at the James Hardie factory in Camellia. I acknowledge one of the former employees, Mr Bernie Banton, and his wife, Karen, in the gallery today. Bernie is known to everyone as the public face of the campaign to achieve justice for workers who were victims of asbestos. In one of these fibro houses my grandparents, Laurie and Muriel, raised their young family and, in their twilight years, put their grandchildren first and helped raise my brother, sister and me. There are other grandparents in my electorate who are so occupied and likewise unselfish and sacrificing.

I went to 10 schools—five public and five Catholic in two States, New South Wales and Queensland, and lived at various times with mum, with dad, and two sets of grandparents. I was a difficult child and caused my various families no end of grief. I wagged school, smoked cigarettes and generally got into trouble. I ran away from home, if that was the right word for it. I got involved with the wrong crowd, graffiti artists and school dropouts. I became a ward of the state in Queensland. I ran away from that situation too, rejoined mum in Parramatta, left school pretty fast and got a job as a process worker in Newtown, when Newtown had factories. This was the most boring job I ever had, like Charlie Chaplin's in *Modern Times*. I picked up springs from a bucket and dropped them into a machine to shave the ends off—repeatedly, unendingly, eternally, depletingly. I was not happy doing it. I became convinced there must be more to life, and maybe the path to it was, once again, to study.

My experiences taught me that young boys join gangs to help them build an identity; that family and community are critical; that great teachers can save young lives; that public investment in children and housing are important in reducing disadvantage; and that urban design and planning and fair work practices can provide at least the preconditions for stronger communities. It took a while, back at St Patrick's Dundas, my tenth school, to get the hang of studying and finally at the University of Sydney I did economics, urban design and town planning.

I do not blame anyone for my early years because I know that they did their best. My family is a great family—a big one, an infinitely extended one—and I will not hear a word against it. My experiences have built my character and my feeling for people whose journey through life has been tough, who do what they can, and what they know of, with the cards they are dealt. Granville contains many such people. They are from the Middle East and Africa, lifelong battlers, narrow survivors, new entrepreneurs with loyal, tenacious families. They are migrants, who bring a dynamism that is critical to the economy of the West. They are not always thought successful, in the way Macquarie Bank officials measure success, but they are my people and I will look out for them.

I live in a very special street, where all the neighbours gather each year for an annual street party, a celebration. It started years ago when we wheeled our barbecues out into the cemetery across the road, the All Saints Cemetery, where Gregory Blaxland is buried. Since that day in the significant year 2000, the old, the middle aged, the young and the kids in the neighbourhood have become closer and made friends. The community spirit, always inherent, has declared itself and deepened. It is the cornerstone, I believe, the keystone, the matrix, of sisterhood and brotherhood, of neighbourhood, of comradeship in trouble and tenderness in times of peace that make a nation, a locality, a community great. I see this all the time in the Granville area. From the Lebanese village associations to the Granville Historical Society and the Kewpies—the oldest continuous amateur soccer team, I am confidently assured, in the whole wide world—to the Friends of Linwood House and the Guildford Girl Guides, I see this community spirit, this community magic working. I see multiculturalism working.

At the Granville Kewpies Awards last year I saw the paternal pride in the eyes of Brian Forbes for the African kids in his team, his loyal, undivided team. I see multiculturalism working despite the Howard Government's aberrant, contradictory policies on foreign labour and harried refugees.

A basic function of State Governments is to provide quality public schools so that children, no matter what their circumstances, can get a decent education and improve their lot in life. I believe strongly that the

design and physical environments of schools are fundamental in providing a decent quality of education. During the election I was fortunate to attend a number of local schools with the then Minister for Education and Training, Carmel Tebbutt, who announced funding initiatives to build new school halls, toilet facilities, science laboratories and so on. It was a real expression of this Labor Government's commitment to upgrading the physical environments of schools.

In towns and cities across New South Wales great public buildings often express the civic aspirations of local communities. You can see this in the grand old sandstone public schools in the inner city of Sydney and equally the newer, well-designed contemporary schools in outer suburbs. But schools built in the middle ring suburbs in the 1950s often failed to communicate these lofty aspirations for education and learning and excellence. Our challenge as a government is to improve the design and material quality of public education so that schools can send these messages.

I am reminded of the former Mayor of Bogota, Columbia, Mr Enrique Pensola. He won his first election when most people in that city believed their lot in life would get worse. These people had a very depressing future. They were stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty, of shantytowns and drug barons and hopelessness and helplessness. Pensola had one simple platform: To build new public schools in the middle of these shantytowns and to make those buildings the best buildings that existed in Columbia. They embodied the best architecture and design. In the centre of these slums they sent a strong message to the community: Education is something that we value above all else.

I recently attended Merrylands East Public School with a fantastic local principal, Mr John Go. He is transforming that school along with a committed group of teachers, students and parents. He is committed as a leader to change the culture of the school, and his team are doing a great job in improving basic standards. He also understands that the architecture of schools sends a strong message and that renewing and improving school environments can improve perceptions of public education and increase enrolments. I saw a simple example of this: He and the department had transformed, with the Minister's assistance, an asbestos-filled asphalt play area—of the type I played on as a kid—into a verdant green lawn with shady trees. He advises me that parents who were thinking about a private education, a different education, are now walking past and seeing that fantastic presentation and knocking on his door to enrol their children.

Two weeks ago I attended Public Education Week in Hilltop Road Primary School. As I looked at the faces of the happy young children singing their school song from the 1950s it made me think a little about Granville's values. Some politicians would tell you that mateship and a fair go are uniquely, exclusively, Australian values. For me and to Hilltop Road, and to Granville, and the varied colours of the world that Granville contains, they are universal values.

Today and in previous weeks I have heard great inaugural speeches, and I have heard how neighbourhoods and localities are important to other new members, and how those members are banding together in subregional groups and working for the common good. I see this in the Hunter, in the south-west, and so on. This should be applauded because New South Wales requires leadership that transcends local electoral boundaries and goes to the intermingling of local concerns that defines good government. It requires the sort of leadership that believes in the lemma Government's metropolitan strategy for Sydney, which will at last impose a needed urban structure on the metropolis. It requires cooperation, collaboration, compromise, and cunning. Let me be the first to put up my hand, between government and region, between Parramatta, Toongabbie and Auburn, for the betterment of Western Sydney. For this great cause I will stand up and be counted, and I respectfully ask that others go with me.

I have been Lord Mayor of Parramatta for a while, and it has become clear to me, in my period of near vice-regal glory in the west, that Granville and Merrylands are much more suburbs of the City of Parramatta than the city of Sydney. Parramatta is a separate, significant and near-equal success story with its glamorous harbourside high-rent rival, and has renewed itself, upgraded itself, glamorised itself, and advertised itself, with equivalent Olympic vigour. It is the most vivid example of successful decentralisation in Australia. Because of the lemma Labor Government, because of our local member for Parramatta, because of Bob Hawke and even Bob Carr, the people of Granville can go down the road to jobs in the head offices of Police, Heritage, Sydney Water, State Revenue and Attorney General, and all the private businesses that are moving out to the west. That makes a difference in the administration of New South Wales. They can ride on a \$100 million rail interchange and the bus-only transit ways that go to Liverpool and the north-west. They can go to the Riverside Theatre, the Artists' Studios and the University of Western Sydney. They can build new industries, new businesses and more houses out our way and prosper.

But to really make these policies work, to do this in the regional river cities of Penrith and Parramatta and Liverpool, we need to reverse the drain of creative young people who leave our area each year for the bright lights of the global city and sometimes do not come back. To do this we will need more access to the arts, and a strong, stirring, stimulating, creative education. We need to understand that the centres will be urban places that require urban responses to problems; that reviving and restoring main streets, and encouraging the growth of a night-time economy and a weekend economy are important in broadening the appeal of key centres which are trying to attract the necessary jobs and housing to make Sydney work. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Around the world cities are hunting for passion. I strongly believe that the growth of campus-style business parks that offer endless supplies of parking spaces like Norwest and North Ryde should not be at the expense of traditional town and neighbourhood centres. There are two million of us in Western Sydney, half the population of Ireland, and we need a lot more than we are getting now to succeed creatively and culturally, as such a population can.

If the metropolitan strategy is to work then we must acknowledge that cities work differently now—that we must build the amenity and urban soul to retain young talented people. I stood many mornings on Granville station concourse while campaigning for my seat, meeting briefly the students and workers on their way to the office or the factory. I am sure all members have had similar experiences. The elevated position on the concourse gave a good view of what I might call the Granville tendencies and the Granville difficulty. The greatest difficulty is that it is halfway to somewhere else, and the town centre is sliced and diced and dissected by the freeways and rivers and railway lines, deprived of its connections with itself, and the stronger local economy these connections could bring. I believe that the Granville town centre requires new public investment, stronger connections and an upgraded public domain, if it is to attract new private investment in retail and housing. The local community have had a gutful of buck-passing between governments. They want to see cooperation and commitment behind plans to improve our neighbourhood.

Much has happened since my dad, Bob, trekked out to Liverpool Boys' High from Sefton because that was what he was allocated by a wise educational bureaucracy. There are local schools now, both public and Catholic, embracing and invigorating the multicultural, the culture, and the decency of the area. It is my job as I look out at the grid of streets that follows the Duck River to work for change, and renewal and restoration of those values and that decency.

I would like to thank a few people who have helped me along the way and have given me the chance to do this job. Firstly I thank my mum and my dad for instilling in me a willingness to serve the public. My grandparents Laurie, Muriel, Arthur and Mary have all passed away, but they made a big difference in my life. My wife, Giselle, is a great partner and has always supported me in everything I do—and everything we do, it is a partnership—since our eyes first locked across a crowded Young Labor meeting in Parramatta all those years ago. She showed a great deal of courage a few years ago in fighting and beating cancer.

To the Granville campaign team, in particular Glen Elmore and Debbie May, for organising the campaign and keeping me organised, I thank you. We could not have done it without you. To Paul Barber and Anita Brown, Maurie Campbell, Melinda Kane and Gerry Manuel, Helen Sourlas, Greg Cummings and his big family; to Omar Jamal for introducing me to so many new friends; to Andrew Ferguson to Ben and Heidi Nursoo—never has the world seen a more committed person at stuffing letterboxes than Ben Nursoo; to Mathew Ferguson and Peter Monaghan; to Neil Kordomi, Ismail Sirdah, Hafez Kassem and Emad Ashour; to the older members of the branches Therese Woods, Faye Wilkinson, Oscar Calleja and Karl Appell for never leaving your post and always doing your duty—I thank you. To Sophie and Nick Englezos, George and Manuel Ionnou, Charlie Saba and Frady Raffoul, Doug Desjardines and Marcia Donovan and all of the members of the Harris Park branch, thanks for your support over the past 15 years. To my brothers and sisters Andrew and Brooke, Therese, Gavin and Angela, thanks for your support.

To my parents-in-law, Yvonne and Alex, thank you again for always being there for us. To Paul Lynch, Aaron Magner and Gabby Wynhausen, Phil Davies, Anthony O'Brien and Sean Macken, thank you for your support and guidance and occasionally applying the brakes. Thank you Professor Ed Blakely, Martin Butterworth, John Montgomery and Jan McCredie for inspiration and knowledge, and the team at Parramatta—Leigh Davis, Danielle Sherd, Martin Portus and Shehana Teixeira, Susan Gibbeson, Andrew Overton, Rod Cook, Marcello Occiuzzi and all the other great people at Parramatta who have taught me so much about public administration. Finally to our beautiful girls, Grace and Zoe, for forgiving my absences during the campaign and at branch meetings, council meetings and Parliament meetings. I thank you all.

[*Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity) left the chair at 1.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.*]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

**General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice), to be the subject of a motion to reorder, given.**

### QUESTION TIME

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#### ELECTRICITY PRICES

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier said in March that there is no reason for State taxes and charges to rise to pay for his promises, why will he now slug households with a \$200, or 24 per cent, increase for their electricity bills?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** In the days when the Leader of the Opposition was the Deputy Leader, at every press conference he could be seen over the shoulder of the member for Vacluse, and the look on his face said it all: "If only they would make me the leader, I could do so much better." What great loyalty he showed the member for Vacluse!

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. It is customary to give Ministers some leave when answering questions, but clearly comments about what happened in previous elections or in press conference have absolutely nothing to do with this question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will proceed. He has only just started his answer.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** We have had five tax cuts in 20 months. The commitments we took to the last election were fully funded and costed, unlike what the Coalition took to the people on 24 March. There was that infamous press conference 48 hours before voting day with the grab bag of \$29 billion and the botched attempt to present a list of fully costed promises. As we said before the election, our commitments were funded and fully costed, and will be delivered.

#### INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is addressed to the Premier. Is the \$200 increase in electricity prices, approved by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART], at risk because of the lack of public confidence in the so-called independence of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, the chair of which, Michael Keating, was recently appointed by Kevin Rudd to a Labor Party advisory committee? How can the public have confidence in the independence of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** One thing the Leader of the Opposition is consistent about is that he has learned nothing. He smears and slanders yet another public servant, which is consistent behaviour. The Leader of the Opposition has referred to the draft electricity report and draft determination for 2007 to 2010.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. In my question—and this is not the first question—I asked how the public could have confidence in the independence of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal when the head of the tribunal is now a member of an advisory committee for the Labor Party federal leader, Kevin Rudd. That is the question.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Leader of the Opposition has slurred this individual on that basis. He is the independent chair of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. The tribunal, which has been established for a very long time, makes determinations on water and electricity. The Leader of the Opposition has referred to a draft determination that applies for 2007 to 2010. The public can have full confidence in the independence of the tribunal, which was established to set prices out of the political realm. The Leader of the Opposition may not understand that. He may consider it a matter for condemnation that this individual also provides advice at another level of government. He may consider that as a cause for concern and a reason to slur and slander this individual. We do not. As I said earlier, he is being entirely consistent with his predecessor when it comes to slandering, smearing and slurring the reputation of public servants in this State.

**ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION 2007 BUSINESS SUMMIT**

**Mr PAUL PEARCE:** My question is directed to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the House on the status of preparation for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders Week?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2007 Business Summit will be the largest and most significant international meeting ever hosted in Australia. The NSW Police Force will oversee the security needs for the summit's events to be held in this State. In doing so, we will work closely with the Federal Police, our defence forces and other agencies on planning and responding to the needs of our international guests and our own citizens, particularly during Leaders Week, which will be held here in early September. The Government will ensure that police have the powers they need to manage this massive international event. The proposed Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation legislation and the powers created by it will be in force for a limited time only—14 days to be precise. The proposed powers, like the summit itself, may cause some inconvenience for those who live and work in Sydney's central business district [CBD]. However, they are necessary to ensure the safety and security of our city and our international guests and, most important, our residents and citizens.

The powers are not unprecedented. Police and others involved in the planning for the summit have drawn on the experience of other major events, including the Sydney Olympic Games, the World Trade Organisation meeting at Homebush in 2002 and the Rugby World Cup. During the summit police will have the ability to establish both declared and restricted zones to help manage security needs in the central business district. They will be given the power to establish checkpoints, to search bags and other items, to establish motorcade and clearway routes, and to confiscate prohibited items in those areas. As part of our commitment to provide as much certainty as possible about the areas that will be affected, the legislation will specify the extent of the declared areas and restricted zones.

The bill will include special provisions for the use of police animals, including horses, and create a presumption against bail for certain offences only during the period of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. Specifically, the offences will involve assaulting police, malicious damage and throwing missiles at police. The Government will also permanently amend the Weapons Prohibition Act to make caltrops a prohibited weapon. Caltrops are pronged devices that can be tossed onto roads and walkways to deflate tyres and to injure people or police animals. These devices will be permanently added to the prohibited weapons list, which means that anyone who possesses them can face 14 years in prison. The Government has already written to the Commonwealth requesting that it take responsibility for air space security during the period of the summit. Our Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation legislation will formalise that.

Giving the police the powers they need to deal with possible security threats is just one part of our preparations. To help ensure that the hardworking men and women in our Police Force are ready for the challenges of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, officers are being put through their paces with training exercises and desktop drills to test possible scenarios and response plans. This training, in conjunction with extra powers and a \$14 million investment in counter-terrorism equipment, is part of the Government's ongoing commitment to help reduce the threat of terrorism. The Government has also agreed with the Commonwealth Government that 7 September will be a public holiday in Sydney to coincide with the arrival of heads of state and heads of government. This will help to minimise security and logistical issues, as well as potential traffic gridlock in and around the city.

Earlier this month I met with the Prime Minister, who endorsed the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation task force decision to close three railway stations in the central business district. The Commonwealth Government has agreed to play its role in finalising arrangements as early as possible and negotiating with our international visitors to reduce the disruption to the people of Sydney. When it comes to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, Sydney will do Australia proud on the international stage, as it always does. However, we are also realistic about the disruption to business, traffic and the daily lives of the people of Sydney.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wakehurst will remain silent.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** We are working hard to keep this disruption to a minimum.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Tell them to visit the bush.



**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I hope that Sydneysiders will do that during the three days off, the public holiday and the weekend. I will continue to update the House on our arrangements for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

### RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Does the Minister consider the shunting between three different hospitals for well over an hour of a 10-year-old East Braxton girl suffering second-degree burns caused by boiling water sufficient proof of the conclusions of the 2006 population health survey, which found that people in rural New South Wales have great difficulty accessing health care, and of this Government's failure for 12 years to deliver on health services for country people?

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** The distress caused to the patient and family in this situation is acknowledged and regretted. I understand that representatives of the Ambulance Service and Maitland Hospital have contacted the family directly to apologise. The chief executive officer of the Ambulance Service has advised me that ambulance officers provided the appropriate treatment at the scene and requested the most suitable hospital based on their assessment of the child's condition. The chief executive of the area health service has advised me that initial advice was given to the Ambulance Service that the hospitals at either Singleton or Cessnock would be the most appropriate destination for the patient.

However, I am also advised that ambulance officers then decided to transport the patient directly to Maitland Hospital. A series of communications occurred between the Ambulance Service and the hospitals about the most appropriate hospital to receive the patient. Unfortunately, this resulted in a delay in the child receiving care. When the patient arrived at Maitland Hospital she was seen by emergency department staff and assessed as being suitable for transfer to Singleton. I am advised that upon arrival at Singleton District Hospital she was seen within three minutes, and assessed, treated and discharged within 45 minutes. Unfortunately, the agreed protocols for ambulance and health service communications were not followed on this occasion. I am advised that the Ambulance Service and the area health service are formally reviewing the circumstances of this matter to ensure that such communication problems are prevented in the future. I am assured that the family will be informed of the outcome of the review.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA:** My question is directed to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water. Will the Minister update the House on what the Iemma Government is doing to tackle climate change?

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG:** I had the pleasure of working with the member for Wollondilly prior to the last election and I congratulate him on his successful campaign. I have a keen sense of his abiding interest in the environment, coming as he does from such a beautiful area. Climate change is one of the greatest threats to prosperity and security facing not only New South Wales and Australia but also the entire planet. This is why this Government has been a leader in climate change policy. It introduced many of the schemes now operating. The Stern report described climate change as the greatest market failure the world has seen. The cost of runaway climate change could be so high that a failure to take precautionary measures now would be not only environmentally reckless but also economically disastrous. Early action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will cost far less than inaction because it enables a smooth transition to a less carbon-intensive economy. It also avoids the inevitable economic shocks that delayed action brings.

The recently released report of the intergovernmental panel on climate change confirmed that it is in fact good economic management to act early on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Iemma Government has a strong track record of early action on climate change. We are leaders in this area, not followers and sceptics. We led by example when we set up the New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme, one of the first such trading schemes in the world. That scheme has slashed greenhouse gas emissions by 40 million tonnes, which is the equivalent of taking some nine million cars off the road in any given year.

The State Plan commits us to cleaner air and progress on greenhouse reductions, as well as a secure and sustainable water supply for all users. In the lead-up to the election, the Premier pledged the creation of a \$310 million Climate Change Fund to help us to achieve these objectives. We have announced today that we are delivering on this commitment. We have signed off on the creation of the new Climate Change Fund to provide rebates to existing households and businesses that adopt more sustainable water and energy measures. From 1 July this year new increased water tank subsidies or rebates will apply, up to maximum of \$1,500. From

1 October subsidies of up to \$300 may be claimed to install energy-efficient insulation, and from 1 January 2008 subsidies of up to \$1,200 will be available for converting to solar hot water heating. These rebates will help New South Wales families and businesses to save water and energy and to reduce their carbon emissions by switching to more energy and water efficient technology.

Like my colleague the Minister for Planning, the Premier has good news on the sustainability front for builders of new homes in New South Wales. The Premier announced this morning that more than 90 per cent of all new homes built in New South Wales now have water tanks and two-thirds of them are attached to gas power. That is very good news. It shows that this Government's early action on climate change is already paying dividends. However, what is not good news is the Commonwealth Government's attitude. Members are aware that the States have led the way with regard to Australia's response to climate change. The Commonwealth Government's position has ranged from outright denial of climate change through to lukewarm acceptance of the need to be seen to be responding.

The contrast with the leadership that New South Wales and other state governments have shown on this issue could not be more stark. The Iemma Government will continue to be a torchbearer on the issue. It will continue lighting the path, hoping that the Commonwealth Government will see the light and follow. We call on the Prime Minister to provide a comprehensive response to the report of his task force when it is handed to him tomorrow. He needs to commit to establishing a national emissions trading scheme with meaningful reduction targets. If he does not, he will fail the climate change test. All around us the community is now moving towards a more sustainable future by reining in energy and water consumption and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Today I pay credit to the New South Wales Business Chamber and its chief executive officer, Mr Kevin MacDonald, for developing an important information booklet for small and medium-size business. The booklet explains to business how it can profit by adapting to climate change and reducing carbon emissions. Mr MacDonald believes, as do I, that "Businesses that reduce energy usage and become more sustainable not only reduce costs but can also make their products and services more attractive to consumers."

The new information booklet—which is funded by the New South Wales Greenhouse Office—gives small business advice on how to do just that. The climate change booklet, to be released throughout New South Wales, highlights changes to business cost structures, the competitive benefits of doing the right thing, opportunities from new and growing markets, and information on how to offset new costs and save money. I commend the booklet to business and congratulate the New South Wales Business Chamber on showing leadership on this issue. Let us hope that the Prime Minister takes a leaf from its book.

### MEMBER ASSAULT ALLEGATION

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** My question is directed to the Premier. The Premier talks tough on domestic violence, so will he be counselling his fellow Labor member of Parliament Lynda Voltz about her refusal to cooperate with the police investigation into allegations that the member for Blacktown assaulted the former member for Port Jackson, Sandra Nori? Or is it just rhetoric?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** A similar question was asked a number of weeks ago, and a further similar question was asked yesterday, although not in this Chamber. To further update the record, the starting point is that all citizens have a responsibility—indeed, a duty—to cooperate with police investigations. This matter is under investigation. I have made my position clear. As I said yesterday, and as I said in this Chamber two weeks ago, when police have concluded their investigation and a report is produced, if there are matters that I am required to take action on I will consider my position and take appropriate action.

### NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

**Mr ROBERT COOMBS:** My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the latest information on his commitment to stop the Liberals developing a nuclear plant in New South Wales?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** In one word, unshakable. That is what we took to the people at the election. Not surprisingly, we learn from Canberra—

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: My point of order relates to the content of the question. Standing Order 128 (c) provides that questions should not contain inference. Clearly, the question contained an inference about a proposal suggested by the Government about some sort of future action by the Liberal Party or a Liberal government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind Government members that I need to hear the point of order before I can rule on it.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** I again refer you to Standing Order 128 (c). These standing orders are brand new. In fact, they were written by the Minister for Local Government—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member for Murrumbidgee to state his point of order clearly or resume his seat.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** I ask that you rule the question out of order in accordance with Standing Order 128 (c).

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The question is in order. I ask the Premier to continue with his answer, but I will be listening carefully to make sure he observes the proper conventions of the House.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** In short, our commitment is unshakable. There are so many actions we could take on climate change and on securing our energy needs, rather than the Prime Minister shooting from the hip when it comes to nuclear power. The latest instalment comes from—

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind all members that they are free to issue media releases at any time they wish. The Premier may continue.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The latest instalment comes from Canberra, with the report that the Prime Minister has commissioned secret legal advice to provide him with a legal means of overriding the New South Wales ban on the development of a nuclear power industry. We know why it is secret: because the community opposes it and the Prime Minister does not want the people to know that he is no longer thinking out loud when it comes to nuclear power. The Prime Minister is not commissioning a team of experts to provide him with a "perhaps", but the Federal Government has firm plans to establish a nuclear power industry in Australia, and to do so starting in New South Wales.

It is clear from the reports of the estimates committee hearings in Canberra and this morning's media reports that the Prime Minister has commissioned this secret legal advice on strategies to override our right to protect the people of New South Wales. In response to the member for Swansea's question, in short our commitment to maintain that legislation is unshakable. If John Howard wants a fight on our legislation, in the High Court or any other court, bring it on. Members opposite could tell the House whether they are prepared to stand up for the people of New South Wales on this issue. We saw them cower to John Howard on industrial relations and the GST, and they will do the same when it comes to the nuclear power industry. The Prime Minister has plans in Port Stephens, on the Central Coast, in the Illawarra, on the Far South Coast—

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** And in Murrumbidgee.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** —and in Murrumbidgee, as the member for Wakehurst said. He might struggle with the water supply, given the member for Murrumbidgee's position on the Murray-Darling. Nevertheless, the Federal Government has firm plans for the establishment of a nuclear power industry in Australia, starting in New South Wales. One would have thought that, given that the Federal Government is awaiting the task force report on a national emissions trading scheme [NETS], it would be working on strategies for the implementation of such a scheme, rather than on strategies to override the right of the New South Wales Government to protect its citizens. Instead, the Federal Government is dusting it off in the lead-up to an election. All I can say is: If the Federal Government wants to fight us on nuclear power and keeping our ban in place, bring it on. The way it is going it will have only a short few months to think about the strategies.

#### **BORES AND IRRIGATION MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier clarify the confusion between Ministers' staff and my electoral staff as to who is the appropriate Minister to be invited to my electorate with regard to bores and irrigation issues?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water is Minister Koperberg. Minister Rees provides assistance, as well as being the Minister for Water Utilities. I advise the

House that all my Ministers are available to visit any of the electorates. As far as the member for Dubbo is concerned, there will be no shortage of Ministers visiting her electorate.

### PROBLEM GAMBLING

**Mr NINOS KHOSHABA:** My question is directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the latest information about problem gambling in New South Wales?

**Mr GRAHAM WEST:** The most recent survey of the prevalence of problem gambling in New South Wales is to be released today. This study, entitled "The Prevalence of Gambling and Problem Gambling in New South Wales", shows that 0.8 per cent of the population were identified as problem gamblers, with a further 1.6 per cent identified as at moderate risk, and that 120,000 people in this State are affected by problem gambling. This \$150,000 study, carried out by AC Nielsen, is the first time that the new Canadian Problem Gambling Index has been used to measure problem gambling in New South Wales.

While a Productivity Commission report on Australia's gambling in 1999 found that 2.55 per cent of the New South Wales adult population were problem gamblers, this study did not use the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. The Canadian Problem Gambling Index is now used by all Australian States and Territories and many other countries. More than 5,000 people were surveyed about their gambling habits and the study revealed that lottery products were the most popular form of gambling, although not directly associated with problem gambling. Lotto was followed in popularity by poker machines and then horse and greyhound racing. It also showed that the New South Wales problem gambling rate is comparable to other States, including Victoria at 1.1 per cent, Queensland at 0.5 per cent and the Australian Capital Territory at 0.5 per cent.

The research concluded that gambling does not negatively impact on the majority of the New South Wales adult population. Nearly two-thirds of the State's adult population, 64.5 per cent, are non-problem gamblers, while nearly one-third, 31 per cent, do not gamble at all. But the study did show that young men are overrepresented among problem gamblers. Those most at risk were found to be young, single men aged 18 to 24 who have not studied past year 10 at school. These findings about young males reinforce the importance of continued research and action to address problem gambling. That is why I have approved a further \$150,000 from the Responsible Gambling Fund to commission an expert consultant to use the findings from the study to develop options for a major gambling awareness campaign.

In addition, the New South Wales Government has approved funding towards research by Gambling Research Australia into gambling and young people aged between the ages of 10 and 24. Earlier this week I announced the inclusion of gambling questions in the New South Wales quarterly Population Health Survey. This is a major survey involving 12,000 people across the State, which provides an opportunity to gather data from a large group of people in every part of New South Wales. It also allows us to study the link between gambling and other health issues, including drug and alcohol use, smoking and mental health. It will also provide valuable gambling information about young people as the survey includes 16- and 17-year-olds. The Gambling Prevalence Study provides a snapshot of reliable information about the extent of problem gambling in New South Wales. The results will be used to help inform the review of the Gaming Machines Act, which will begin soon.

Solutions to problem gambling are still an emerging area of research worldwide. However, the Iemma Government is working to reach out to at-risk gamblers for the early prevention of problems. That is why successive Labor governments have introduced a range of initiatives to help the community and gamblers recognise their problems. These initiatives include a statewide cap on poker machine numbers, a ban on 24-hour gaming in pubs and clubs, the Responsible Conduct of Gambling training for gaming staff, and the Responsible Gambling Fund. Chairperson for the Responsible Gambling Fund, the Reverend Harry Herbert of the Uniting Church, said:

The Responsible Gambling Fund is devoting considerable resources to ensure there are a range of quality services to help problem gamblers and that counsellors are highly skilled and effective.

Those services include providing help for problem gamblers 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the G-line 1800 telephone service. A recent survey of G-line clients found that 83 per cent felt it was easier to manage their gambling habits one month after receiving help.

The Reverend Herbert has supported this new prevalence study because, as he said, it not only provides us with information about the extent of problem gambling but, more importantly, it provides us with a profile of

a problem gambler. All of this information is important because the more we know about the behaviour patterns of problem gamblers the better we can address the issue. This new prevalence study is a significant contribution to our understanding of gambling patterns in New South Wales. It will enable us to be more focused on how best to address the gambling problems that face us. The Iemma Government is committed to practical, responsible gambling policy and strategy. Snapshot studies such as the Gambling Prevalence Study and longitudinal data, which will become available over time from the quarterly Population Health Survey, will be valuable tools in our efforts to drive down problem gambling.

### **ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health). Will the Minister inform the House about the Government's efforts to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in New South Wales?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members of the Opposition will remain silent.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Wakehurst to order.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** I note the member's ongoing interest in these issues. It is entirely appropriate to receive this question and to provide an answer in Reconciliation Week. This is a time of great milestones for our first nations: next week, 3 June marks the anniversary of the High Court decision in the Mabo case. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Day of Observance Committee [NAIDOC] and the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum. It is also the tenth anniversary of "Bringing them home", the report of the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families—the stolen generation—a story of extraordinary atrocity and horrors that should not be forgotten. Many of these issues should, of course, be beyond partisan politics, and despite earlier interjections from the member for Wakehurst I am pleased to note that normally they are subject to bipartisan support in this place.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** You tell us about your service in your electorate. For 12 years you did not visit your local Aboriginal affairs department whose office was 50 metres away.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** I say in response to the interjection that the Leader of the Opposition is telling lies to this House. I also note that the people that the member of Wakehurst spoke to in Gandangarra Land Council no longer hold those positions, which means that the local Aboriginal community in Liverpool knows far more about its area than does the member for Wakehurst. Indeed, one can say that a visit by a Liberal Party member to Liverpool guarantees that the people they see lose their positions.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will stop enjoying himself!

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** It is perhaps only the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Wakehurst who can manage to turn what should be a bipartisan comment into a partisan one.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** I was outside!

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** And can I suggest you go back there; that is where you belong.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wakehurst will find himself outside the Chamber if he keeps interjecting. I call him to order for the second time.

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** As I was saying before the interjections, these matters normally have bipartisan agreement in this place. This Parliament was, of course, on a bipartisan basis, the first Parliament in this country to say sorry. On that issue then and now there is no eloquence in silence. The Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2006-2010 is a significant New South Wales Government initiative to improve the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal mental health care is part of the core work of our health services and is a priority under the New South Wales State Plan. This State has the largest Aboriginal population in Australia, with more than

141,000 Aboriginal people residing in New South Wales—not that Mal Brough has noticed that. On average, Aboriginal people live 17 years less than the rest of the Australian population. They suffer from significantly higher levels of psychosocial distress and the rate of suicide and self-harm in Aboriginal communities is at least twice the national average. Aboriginal people have elevated levels of incarceration and problematic substance use and a high prevalence of grief, loss and trauma.

The statistics show that proportionately up to twice as many Aboriginal people are hospitalised for mental and behavioural disorders compared with the non-Aboriginal population. The New South Wales Government is working to make all mental health services in New South Wales more culturally sensitive and appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal people and to enhance the mental health, social and emotional wellbeing services offered by Aboriginal medical services. The New South Wales Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy 2006-2010 sets out a detailed framework to address Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing problems in New South Wales.

The Government has established the foundation for an Aboriginal mental health workforce program in New South Wales across both the specialist mental health services and the Aboriginal community controlled health services, the Aboriginal medical services. As a result, New South Wales is leading the way in Australia in building an Aboriginal mental health workforce. The first policy saw the rollout of over 60 Aboriginal mental health worker positions into the area mental health services and over 10 into the Aboriginal medical services.

We are building on this workforce with the addition of 20 new positions in the area mental health services and 10 more in Aboriginal medical services. We are introducing a statewide training program that will enlist local Aboriginal people from their communities and train them to become qualified Aboriginal mental health workers. This is a case of Aboriginal people working with and for Aboriginal people. Under the Aboriginal mental health workforce program the trainees will be full-time employees of the area health service whilst also undertaking a bachelor of health science, mental health, from Charles Sturt University, taking part in placements and gaining valuable on-the-job training, mentoring and supervision.

This critical part of the policy will build community capacity by training local people. It will also increase the number of Aboriginal people working in mainstream mental health services. It will ensure a service that is supportive of Aboriginal culture and needs. Two weeks ago I was in Bourke where I had the wonderful opportunity to meet with several young Aboriginal mental health worker trainees. The trainees were based in Lightning Ridge, Bourke and Orange. Their passion for the work that they are doing in their communities was quite inspiring. The strategy has an extraordinary number of positive aspects. It is critically important to the Aboriginal community in giving employment paths and role models for the community and in providing Aboriginal people with those sorts of services. It is critical in providing specialists for those communities because the communities need to be able to grow their own employees to guard against the inevitable drift to the eastern seaboard.

Importantly, the structure of the traineeship program is such that it provides a strong career path for these workers within mental health or in other areas of health services. Indeed, one of the people I met is now a team leader. With further commitments in 2006-07, this program is already well underway. The program funded 10 trainees to commence in 2006-07. The Greater Southern Area Health Service converted eight existing vacant Aboriginal mental health worker positions into trainee positions, resulting in eight trainees undertaking their first residential courses at Charles Sturt University in April this year.

The first 10 trainees are mainly from rural and remote area health services such as the Greater Western Area Health Service, the Greater Southern Area Health Service, the Hunter New England Area Health Service and the North Coast Area Health Service. In addition, two have also been placed in metropolitan areas with the Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service and Justice Health. An additional 10 trainee positions will be funded from 2008-09. In addition to this, 10 Aboriginal mental health worker positions will be allocated to the Aboriginal community controlled sector in 2007-08. Aboriginal clinical leadership positions will be rolled out into key area health services to help coordinate and prioritise Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing services to New South Wales Aboriginal communities in 2007-08.

The workforce program is one of the first of its kind in Australia and, as a result, New South Wales is leading the way in the provision of a skilled and competent Aboriginal mental health workforce. Through A New Direction for Mental Health, the Iemma Government allocated more than \$12 million over five years to support the rollout of this workforce program. Prior to the 2006-07 enhancements announced by Premier Iemma last year, the New South Wales Government had allocated additional funding of \$1.55 million to support over

15 Aboriginal mental health worker positions into the Aboriginal medical services. Funding of \$55,000 per annum was allocated to hold an Aboriginal mental health workers forum each year and \$155,600 per annum to the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council to employ a statewide coordinator to work with Aboriginal mental health programs in the Aboriginal medical services. In addition, \$250,000 was allocated for the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council to develop a medical health assessment package relevant to the needs of the Aboriginal population in New South Wales. The \$12 million over five years allocated to the workforce program is a component of the total spending of \$21 million over five years on Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing programs and projects.

Further, many of the other programs established under the New Directions enhancement package have funded the expansion of the workforce in areas of need and emerging priorities such as older people's mental health and child and adolescent mental health, as well as building workforce capacity in the non-government agency sector. Since 2005 in New South Wales 84 nurses were employed into the mental health workforce through the Mental Health Connect-Reconnect Program, 119 mental health nursing scholarships were awarded in 2005-06, 250 mental health nursing scholarships were offered in 2007, and 14 doctors have elected to move into psychiatry in addition to the 204 already in training. I will not detain the House now with the significant list of other things, but I note that the total spending over a five-year period for Aboriginal mental health is \$21 million. This is a significant commitment to improve the mental health, social and emotional wellbeing of all Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

**Question time concluded.**

#### **VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2006-07**

**Mr Frank Sartor** tabled the variations of receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2006-07, under section 24 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, flowing from the transfer of functions between agencies.

#### **PETITIONS**

##### **South Coast Pensioner Concessions**

Petition requesting that pensioner concessions be provided for travel within the South Coast area, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

##### **South Coast Rail Line Facilities**

Petition requesting that train carriages be fitted with toilet and luggage facilities on the South Coast rail line, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

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

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

##### **Bus Service 311**

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

##### **Bus Service 501**

Petition requesting that the Government improve and expand the 501 bus service, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

##### **Community-based Preschools**

Petition requesting increased funding to community-based preschools to maintain parity with preschools administered by the Department of Education and Training, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **Grose View Public School**

Petition requesting the reinstatement of the support teacher role at Grose View Public School, received from **Mr Allan Shearan**.

### **Swansea Ambulance Station**

Petition requesting the provision of an ambulance station for Swansea, received from **Mr Robert Coombs**.

### **Breast Screening Funding**

Petitions requesting funding for breast screening to allow access for women aged 40 to 79 years, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**, **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson** and **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

### **Shoalhaven Mental Health Services**

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

### **Rescue Helicopter Services**

Petition praying that the Government halt the contract for helicopter medical retrieval services given to a Canadian company and reinstate NRMA CareFlight and Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service as the providers of those services, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

### **Mental Health Services**

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

### **Rural and Regional Police Resources**

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

### **Shoalhaven Local Area Command**

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

### **Boorowa Policing**

Petition requesting the reinstatement of the second police officer position at the Boorowa Police Station, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

### **Grafton Bridge**

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

### **Tomerong Traffic Arrangements**

Petition requesting an upgrade of the Island Point Road and Princes Highway intersection, Tomerong, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **Termeil Bridge Realignment**

Petition requesting that the Princes Highway and Termeil Bridge be realigned to the east of the existing road, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.



### **Lake Tabourie**

Petition requesting that the current height constraints of Lake Tabourie be re-evaluated to allow the lake to be opened to the sea, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

### **Shoalhaven River Water Extraction**

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

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

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

### **Crown Land Conversion Policy**

Petition calling on the Government to abandon its Crown land conversion policy in favour of that put forward by The Nationals, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

### **Cat and Dog Meat Sale**

Petition requesting legislation banning the sale of cat and dog meat for human or animal consumption, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

### **Drought Policy**

Petition requesting that provision for droughts be part of the New South Wales Government's policies, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

### **Lachlan Irrigation Policies**

Petition requesting greater scientific rigor in regard to allocation reductions and environmental demands for Lachlan irrigation farmers, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

### **Lachlan Irrigation Area Draft Management Plan**

Petition stating that Water Act 2000 regulations have not been complied with in the formulation of a draft management plan for the Lachlan irrigation area, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Reordering of General Business**

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [3.09 p.m.]: I move:

That the General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) given by me this day [Bells Line Expressway] have precedence on Thursday 31 May 2007.

Debate on my motion should clearly be given precedence tomorrow. The Nationals have long championed the modern safe route over the Blue Mountains as proposed by the Bells Line Expressway Group—a proposal that has very wide support except, it seems, with the State Labor Government. The members for Orange, Upper Hunter and Burrinjuck, and the former member for Lachlan, have been strong champions of this visionary proposal. Even the member for Bathurst, who has been strangely silent of late, has been represented on the Bells Line Expressway Group. We will give him a chance to speak about this matter because it should be given priority for debate tomorrow.

Numerous studies have shown that investment in infrastructure will be returned to the State via economic, social and environmental benefits. Sadly, for 12 years, this Labor Government has underinvested in infrastructure in New South Wales, particularly in country New South Wales. An investment in the Bells Line Expressway proposal would see numerous benefits to New South Wales, including many lives saved. It is a fact

that the Bells Line of Road and the Great Western Highway are among the most dangerous roads in the State on a per kilometre basis—too many accidents, too many people killed. It is time for a modern, safe route. The economic benefits that would flow from the more efficient movement of freight are too numerous to count. Currently there is no B-double route over the Blue Mountains, from the Central West food bowl—an area of mining and primary produce—to export markets via Port Botany and Sydney international airport. It is the missing link in the State's transport infrastructure. This road would connect with the proposed inland rail link via Parkes and make great improvements to transport logistics in this State.

Other benefits include tourism. More tourists would make the drive over the range if there were a fast and safe route. Currently it takes far too long, so tourists are discouraged from moving into country New South Wales because of this lack of investment in infrastructure. Other benefits are decentralisation and regional development. We would see a boom in industry and jobs in the Central West. We saw it on the Central Coast and in the Hunter when the F3 was constructed. The same would happen with the investment in this road.

Then there is the amenity for the many communities in the Blue Mountains that currently suffer from heavy transport, too much through traffic and unsafe roads. Finally, there are environmental benefits associated with a more efficient B-double freight route. There will be fewer trucks, so there will be less greenhouse gas. There are many benefits to the State. During the election campaign The Nationals were criticised, particularly by the member for Bathurst. He said the Federal Government would not fund it. The Federal Government has coughed up \$10 million, and what is he saying? Here is an opportunity for him to put his money where his mouth is. The State Government could match the Federal Government with \$10 million to progress this proposal.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Point of order: The member is misleading the House. We are talking about a \$3 million project. John Howard giving \$10 million, which is quarantined until 2009, goes nowhere.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** That was a typically puerile point of order from the member for Bathurst—Bundy Bear. Here we have the gross hypocrisy from this Government—\$25 million to defer the tunnel funnel measures associated with the Lane Cove Tunnel, but what about \$10 million to progress a vital freight route into the Central West? Government members are grossly hypocritical. Here is their chance to vote for something for the bush.

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Leader of the House) [3.14 p.m.]: Isn't it curious that in the lead-up to a Federal election the Leader of The Nationals has suddenly turned his attention to Federal matters. Suddenly he is John Howard's friend—he is praising John Howard—all for \$10 million. The Leader of The Nationals is cheaply bought. We already have several motions on the notice paper. Notices were given only last week. Several Opposition members have notices of motion on the paper, as do several Government members. For example, the member for Penrith has given notice of a motion in relation to a \$60 million office building in her electorate—hundreds of jobs for Western Sydney. The member for Parramatta has a motion about a record investment of \$617 million to expand essential services for children who cannot live at home. I would have thought that debate on these matters would have priority tomorrow. They are issues we need to debate.

The Leader of The Nationals wants to take them off the agenda because he wants to look good in the eyes of John Howard in the lead-up to the Federal election. If the Leader of The Nationals wants to put forward the proposition that there is some urgency about this matter because the Howard Government has come forward with \$10 million, the member for Bathurst put that into context when he took his point of order. The \$10 million announced by the Prime Minister for a study is not available until 2009. What is the great urgency to debate tomorrow an issue that does not become available until 2009? I would have thought that what the community of the Central West would want from the Prime Minister was a commitment to funds to build a road now, not a furphy about some study in 2009.

Were the Leader of The Nationals going to move a motion urging the Prime Minister to make funds available immediately for the construction of roads in the Central West we might have second thoughts about the order of priority, because we might see that as a matter of urgency. No doubt you too, Mr Speaker, might see that as a matter of urgency. However, we do not see the need to change the established priority of debate for a study that might be concluded finally by 2014, with the prospect of possibly building a road some time in 2020. We oppose the motion.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 39**

Mr Aplin	Ms Hodgkinson	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baird	Mrs Hopwood	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mr Humphries	Mr Souris
Ms Berejikian	Mr Kerr	Mr Stokes
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr Stoner
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Debnam	Mr Oakeshott	Mr R. W. Turner
Mr Draper	Mr O'Dea	Mr J. D. Williams
Mrs Fardell	Mr O'Farrell	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Page	
Ms Goward	Mr Piccoli	
Mrs Hancock	Mr Provest	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Hartcher	Mr Richardson	Mr George
Mr Hazzard	Mr Roberts	Mr Maguire

**Noes, 51**

Mr Amery	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Andrews	Mr Harris	Mr Pearce
Mr Aquilina	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Ms Beamer	Mr Hickey	Mr Rees
Mr Borger	Ms Hornery	Mr Sartor
Mr Brown	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Ms Burney	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Ms Burton	Mr Khoshaba	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Campbell	Mr Koperberg	Mr Terenzini
Mr Collier	Mr Lynch	Mr Tripodi
Mr Coombs	Mr McBride	Mr Watkins
Mr Corrigan	Dr McDonald	Mr West
Mr Costa	Ms McKay	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Mr McLeay	
Ms D'Amore	Ms McMahon	
Ms Firth	Ms Meagher	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Gadiel	Ms Megarrity	Mr Ashton
Mr Gibson	Mr Morris	Mr Martin

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

**Fuel Prices**

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [3.25 p.m.]: Fuel prices are a matter of priority and urgency for the hardworking families of Western Sydney that will be hit in the pocket by the inevitable petrol price hike in the lead-up to the June long weekend. The Government condemns the Federal Government for its inaction on this matter. The Federal Government must assist families and small businesses by giving the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission the power to crack down on this continually unfair price gouge at the bowser that is seen on every holiday and long weekend. My motion deserves to be accorded priority.

### Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.26 p.m.]: There should be no more important matter for members of this House than the independence and integrity of the public service. It is a question that the Premier should acknowledge because integrity in public life is important. Before the State election the Premier said publicly that there would be no need for taxes and charges to increase to pay for his election promises. Yet within weeks we saw a \$200, or 24 per cent, increase in electricity prices proposed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART]. For the benefit of the Minister, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal is the State equivalent of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC]. So my motion, which goes to the independence and integrity of bodies such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, is as relevant to the Minister as it should be to this side of politics, and indeed the whole of politics.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal sets the prices not only for electricity but for transport and other sectors in this State. The "I" in IPART stands for "independent". When the tribunal was established by the former Coalition Government, part of its *modus operandi* was to ensure that people could see that it was at arm's length from government, that it was doing independent assessments of proposals put to it—particularly in the case of monopoly providers—to ensure that there was public confidence that the recommendations that came out were not simply a further arm of the Executive Government but were genuinely based. It is completely inappropriate for the chairman of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, Michael Keating, now to be serving on a Federal Labor Party advisory committee. At best, it is unwise; at worst, it is unacceptable. The Premier should understand that. Yet today the Premier tried to pretend that a genuine question about this matter was slander and a smear.

It was a genuine question about a conflict of interest. It was a genuine question about trying to maintain integrity and independence in one of the most important institutions in New South Wales that is charged with fixing prices not only for electricity but across the board. At one level I am surprised that the Premier thinks that being associated with the Federal Australian Labor Party is slander and a smear. However, I am more surprised that the Premier would dare say that, given what went on in this Chamber yesterday and last year, when a member of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was subjected to exactly that sort of slander and smear, irrespective of what they had done or not done, irrespective of whether or not they were competent, and irrespective of whether they had integrity or independence—which the person did—but simply because they had the temerity to run for political office as a Liberal Party candidate.

Again referring to the member for Epping, in July last year the then Labor Attorney General praised the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for the way in which it handled the matter. In September the Government engaged in a slander and smear campaign. What had changed between the two dates? Simply, Mr Smith had put up his hand to run for the Liberal Party. The Premier's lack of determination to stand up for independence and integrity was demonstrated yesterday when the Government wasted the time of the House on this issue. The Premier was not even in the House to join in the debate or vote on the issue. Another issue that concerns independence and integrity in the public sector relates to the Department of Education and Training—one of the biggest departments in the State—and the appointment of Mr Coutts-Trotter.

I do not refer to Mr Coutts-Trotter's personal background, but to his professional background. For an appointment to a department that administers \$10 billion worth of funds, there was no independent selection process and no independent criteria. I noticed today that the Department of Health, which administers \$11 billion worth of funds, is undergoing a search for a director general. I noticed in last Saturday's papers that the job Mr Coutts-Trotter previously held in the Department of Commerce, which administers \$3 billion worth of funds, is subject to a recruitment process. The appointment of a new police commissioner has involved an Australia-wide search. The only qualification Mr Coutts-Trotter had for the Department of Education and Training job was that he is a former Labor staffer. According to the Minister for Education and Training, no-one should talk about his qualification of being a former staffer with little experience in Education. Yesterday the Minister criticised Kevin Donnelly, saying:

He is a person who has very little experience in the NSW education system and was a former Howard Government staffer ...

The Minister dismissed Dr Donnelly out of hand on that basis. Yet Dr Donnelly, a former teacher with a doctorate in education who has written numerous articles, has far more qualifications than Mr Coutts-Trotter. This motion should be accorded priority because of the Government's increasing politicisation of the public service and increasing attempts to bully the public sector—as we evidenced today in the comments of the

member for Liverpool on what happened to the land council spokesman who spoke out against him during the election campaign. This motion should be accorded priority because our State's Australian Competition and Consumer Commission will not be able to operate effectively without independence and integrity.

**Question—That the motion of the member for Auburn be accorded priority—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 50**

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Mr Morris
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mrs Paluzzano
Mr Aquilina	Mr Harris	Mr Pearce
Ms Beamer	Ms Hay	Mrs Perry
Mr Borger	Mr Hickey	Mr Rees
Mr Brown	Ms Hornery	Mr Sartor
Ms Burney	Ms Judge	Mr Shearan
Ms Burton	Ms Keneally	Mr Stewart
Mr Campbell	Mr Khoshaba	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Collier	Mr Koperberg	Mr Terenzini
Mr Coombs	Mr Lynch	Mr Tripodi
Mr Corrigan	Mr McBride	Mr Watkins
Mr Costa	Dr McDonald	Mr West
Mr Daley	Ms McKay	Mr Whan
Ms D'Amore	Ms McMahon	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Firth	Ms Meagher	Mr Ashton
Ms Gadiel	Ms Megarrity	Mr Martin

**Noes, 40**

Mr Aplin	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Roberts
Mr Baird	Mrs Hopwood	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mr Humphries	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Kerr	Mr Souris
Mr Cansdell	Mr Merton	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Ms Moore	Mr Stoner
Mr Debnam	Mr Oakeshott	Mr J. H. Turner
Mr Draper	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. W. Turner
Mrs Fardell	Mr O'Farrell	Mr J. D. Williams
Mr Fraser	Mr Page	Mr R. C. Williams
Ms Goward	Mr Piccoli	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mrs Hancock	Mr Piper	Mr George
Mr Hartcher	Mr Provest	Mr Maguire
Mr Hazzard	Mr Richardson	

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

## **FUEL PRICES**

### **Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [3.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that this June long weekend fuel prices could be pushed to around \$1.40 a litre putting additional strain on NSW families and small businesses;
- (2) commends the State Government's introduction of a minimum ethanol mandate of 2 per cent; and
- (3) calls on the Federal Government to strengthen the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's powers to police fuel prices.

This motion and the debate are of the utmost priority because hardworking families are feeling the pinch of higher fuel prices. Families in Western Sydney are already under pressure from successive interest rate rises and they simply cannot keep up with continually increasing fuel prices; they do not have that sort of money. Families have enough on their plate with mortgage repayments and the cost of raising a family. Petrol price increases are also contributing to hikes in the price of everyday household items as well as the cost of providing essential government services. Spiralling petrol prices and rising interest rates might be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

There is already talk that fuel prices may be hiked up to \$1.40 a litre over this June long weekend. The June long weekend is a time for meeting with family, relatives and friends. However, with spiralling petrol costs, rather than heading for a well-earned family break, families will be stuck at home. A holiday weekend break will be just too costly. Hardworking Western Sydney families do not have the spare cash to cope with the double whammy of interest rate rises and this expected unfair price gouge at the bowser.

Studies already reveal that it is costing Western Sydney families up to \$400 a week to run their cars. That is why this Government has urged Canberra to take action. The Prime Minister described petrol prices as the greatest worry of his political life. Yet all the Federal Government has offered is excuses. All it has talked about is what cannot be done and what power it does not have to act. While it has done nothing, the Iemma Government has stood up for families. The Federal Government needs to understand that high petrol prices are hurting Australian families. That is why the Iemma Government has done the Federal Government's homework for it.

The Federal Government must give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission powers to crack down on this continual unfair price gouge at the bowser. This Government has called on the Federal Government to beef up the Trade Practices Act and to give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission some teeth in investigating price spikes and regional variations in petrol prices. At the moment, all the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission can do is monitor petrol prices. It must be given the power to stop major companies from ripping off New South Wales motorists. The Iemma Government has called for increased penalties and powers targeting market abuse, anti-competitive behaviour and cartels. Enough is enough. Canberra must begin standing up for hardworking families. The Iemma Government has been working hard to reduce the burden on families, and that is why it has repeatedly called on the Federal Government to take action. This Government has also announced plans to mandate the use of ethanol-blend petrol by 2011, and the transition to ethanol may help to lower fuel prices for families in the future.

Small businesses in Western Sydney are also feeling the pinch of spiralling petrol prices. They are having a major impact on the New South Wales economy and small business cash flow. That is why the Iemma Government last year released a three-point plan to help small business survive the impact of high petrol prices. Under that plan, the New South Wales Government is providing free advice to small businesses across the State on how to restructure and minimise the impact of these price hikes.

This week is Western Sydney Manufacturing Week and today I addressed a group of women involved in manufacturing, including chief executive officers, leaders in manufacturing, and young women. I know that petrol prices are impacting on their business margins and their ability to provide further opportunities for young people—young women in particular—who want to get into the manufacturing industry. That is a real concern because, at the end of the day, it is minimising the opportunities for young people to develop the skills we desperately need in industry.

The New South Wales Government is carrying the load, raising concerns and issues, and doing its homework in this area. It is also raising the issues with the Federal Government, which can and must play a role. For example, it could increase small business deductibility for vehicle running costs: it has the power to do so. The Iemma Government will continue to call for changes to the Trade Practices Act. We are 100 per cent behind families and small businesses on this issue. The best thing members opposite can do is to join this Government in calling on their colleagues in Canberra to take some action. It is time members opposite joined members on this side of the House in standing up for families, including those in Western Sydney.

With the June long weekend fast approaching, two things will definitely happen: first, prices will be hiked at the bowser; and, second, John Howard will do nothing to stop it. That is absolutely shameful given the Federal Government's rhetoric about families being catered for, having some quality of life and being able to find employment. The Iemma Government condemns the Federal Government for its inaction on this matter. That is the reason for the urgency of this motion, the reason it had to be brought to the attention of the House

and the people of New South Wales today, the reason it should be considered and the reason it was considered a matter of priority. Families have been doing it tough for too long and the time for change has come.

**Mr PETER DEBNAM** (Vaucluse) [3.49 p.m.]: I am delighted to contribute to the debate on this topic. Obviously there are three parts to the motion. The first expresses concern about petrol prices. Everyone is concerned about petrol prices. The member for Burrinjuck said that during the last week the price of petrol was \$1.43 at Young, and the honourable member for Bega made the point that it is now up to about \$1.49. So right across the state people are concerned about petrol prices. But the situation has not changed in recent years: it is a concern we have all spoken about for some time.

With regard to the third paragraph of the motion, which calls on the Federal Government to strengthen the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's powers to police fuel prices, we would all like to see the commission's powers strengthened. There is no doubt about that at all; the point has been discussed at great length publicly for some time. If there is a way to do that, I am sure you can suggest it and it will be taken up. I believe this motion is really about the second paragraph, which calls on the House to commend the Iemma Government's introduction of a minimum ethanol mandate of 2 per cent. Anyone who is familiar with this topic would realise that that amounts to back-peddalling on Morris Iemma's commitment.

This motion is about Morris Iemma back-peddalling on a pre-election commitment to alternative fuels. It was a commitment made by Morris Iemma after we had pushed him for a year on the need for New South Wales to show some leadership in taking up the issue of alternative fuels, especially ethanol. But he did not do it. Finally, a month before the election, the Premier made a half-hearted commitment to embrace a plan for ethanol in the future. That plan extended to taking ethanol usage to 10 per cent by 2011. The motion makes no mention of 10 per cent ethanol usage in New South Wales by 2011; it simply refers to a minimum ethanol mandate of 2 per cent this year. This motion is about another back-peddalling by Morris Iemma on a key issue. Ethanol is a win-win situation for so many people. It is important that we hold the Government to its original commitment, which was for 10 per cent ethanol usage by 2011.

Members will remember that on 14 February, when the Labor Party finally committed to embracing ethanol, we congratulated the Government on doing that. Now it needs to embrace the rest of the policy I proposed over the last year. At that time I made a number of points, and I called on the Labor Party to follow them up. I called for \$5 million for grants to assist existing service stations convert their infrastructure to allow the sale of ethanol-blended fuel. The Government has not done that. I called for \$1 million for a marketing plan, in co-operation with the NRMA and environmental groups, to promote alternative fuels, especially ethanol. I called for the mandatory use of E10 fuel in all State Government vehicles where possible. We know that that is not happening and that it is an option that the Government could have pursued at any time over recent years because E10 has been widely available, especially in metropolitan areas—indeed, right across the state—for a number of years. I also called for mandating, if necessary, ethanol usage in New South Wales to 10 per cent by 2011.

I converted my car to 85 per cent ethanol last year. I have run it on a blend of 85 per cent ethanol and 15 per cent unleaded fuel since mid last year, and it runs perfectly well. The Government could show leadership on that as well, by converting the Premier's car to 85 per cent ethanol. Has the Government done that? No. It has spoken about government fleets using 10 per cent ethanol, or E10. But is that happening? No, not at all. The former Minister for the Environment played with the concept of hybrid cars, but this Government simply has not embraced alternative fuels in any serious way, and clearly it does not intend to. The motion tells us that the Government is back-peddalling on the 10 per cent, that it intends to wind it down to the minimum it can get away with, 2 per cent ethanol use.

I think I am correct in saying—and the Minister may like to correct me—that we have not yet seen a bill to introduce 2 per cent ethanol use. The Government is talking about it, but it is simply not doing it. That is what we have seen from the Government year after year, and obviously it simply will not change the way it operates. That is the real problem here. We see this extraordinary hypocrisy not only from State Labor but from Kevin Rudd every single day. We can achieve a lot on this issue.

The Minister spoke about this issue being of the utmost priority. It is. But what is of even greater priority is for the Minister to do something, rather than just whinge about it. Day after day in this place, every Government motion that is sought to be accorded priority has been about trying to blame something on the Federal Government. The New South Wales Government needs to have a look at its lack of action, on this issue and other issues, and do something about it. As we indicated in the lead-up to the election, if the Government

adopts our policies we will applaud it. We laid out a framework of policies that will address the problems in New South Wales. Our policies will fix the problems, and we have no difficulty about the Government adopting them.

As I said, the Government half-heartedly adopted our ethanol policy, and on 14 February we called on it to take on board the rest of it. The Government has another opportunity to do that today. The Premier is back-peddalling on the ethanol issue. I suggest that he not do that. It is an issue of concern not only for motorists but for anyone breathing the air, especially in metropolitan areas. The Premier should have a look at the pollution report tabled in the upper House in November last year. The report spoke about the quality of the air in New South Wales, especially in metropolitan Sydney. It is a major problem.

Ethanol use produces a 30 per cent reduction in harmful pollutants. It is worthwhile. Obviously, increasing ethanol usage to 10 per cent by 2011 would make a significant difference, and operating a car on 85 per cent ethanol, as I do, would make an even greater difference. It would result in a dramatic improvement in the quality of the air we breathe. Clearly, it would also have an impact on the health costs for our community. These are all things the New South Wales Government could do. It does not have to complain about the Federal Government; it does not have to, day after day, find another issue on which to use John Howard as a punching bag. The New South Wales Government can choose the issues and do something about them itself. As I have said, we laid out the framework for the Government.

I am very concerned that the Government is back-peddalling on its ethanol commitment. We need to see in this House a bill for a minimum ethanol mandate of 2 per cent as quickly as possible, and we need the Government to restate its commitment to 10 per cent ethanol usage as soon as possible, with a clear plan of how to achieve it. We laid out the framework, but the Government has not yet done that. We would also like the Government to convert the government fleet to using E10 fuel across the state. It is simply necessary for the Government fleet to fill up at service stations that have E10 fuel, which are everywhere. The Government is simply not making it happen. The Government also needs to look at a marketing plan for alternative fuels, especially ethanol, and it needs to do that in the short term. It also needs to look at providing funding for service stations to convert their infrastructure to allow the sale of ethanol-blended fuel.

We need to make sure that the Labor Party no longer attacks ethanol use. One of the problems we saw over recent years was that the Labor Party—probably acting in concert with the oil companies—decided to run an undermining campaign against alternative fuels. That was extremely regrettable, and there is now general agreement that ethanol is very good for our community. Let us see the Labor Party really embrace ethanol use, get behind it, and promote it in the way we have suggested, the way we have laid out in our ethanol policy. I again emphasise that we laid out the Coalition's plan for alternative fuels and ethanol after a series of meetings with the oil companies, the ethanol companies, environmental groups and motoring groups. There was absolute agreement on what needed to be done in New South Wales to take a leadership role on this issue. The issue now before the Minister and the Premier is simply: Are you up to it?

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.59 p.m.]: The Government is leading the way in the use of biofuels. While the Federal Government has dropped the ball on the use of ethanol, we are setting the standard with a minimum requirement that from September onwards 2 per cent of all petrol sold in New South Wales would have to be ethanol. It is the first step in fulfilling the Premier's commitment towards the broader use of ethanol and alternative fuels, which is currently being investigated by his E10 task force. Biofuels are better for jobs, motorists' hip pockets and the environment, which is why organisations such as the NRMA and the Australian Medical Association are supporting it. We are backing with action our commitment to help families better balance their budget, and the ethanol mandate is a great first step towards easing the pressure of petrol prices. The member for Burrinjuck agrees. She knows from firsthand experience in her own electorate that ethanol is good for the hip pockets of motorists.

Over the Easter long weekend, while petrol prices in Young were skyrocketing towards \$1.30—and I think the member mentioned \$1.43—ethanol-blend fuels were as low as \$1.22. The member for Burrinjuck knows, as we do, that ethanol helps keep petrol prices down, and she informed the Federal Treasurer of that. It is unfortunate that the Federal Treasurer, as usual, ignored her, as the Federal Government so often does when it comes to the New South Wales Coalition. The Coalition continually talks about biofuel, but it has not even managed to convince its Liberal colleagues to mandate nationally. I note the member for Vacluse had plenty to say about the New South Wales Labor Government but once again said nothing about the Feds.

Australia deserves a national system and a national market but this Government will not wait around and allow petrol to burn a hole in the pockets of hardworking families while the Prime Minister dithers about. We



are committed to cleaner air and stronger regional economies, and an ethanol mandate will help achieve both. Small businesses in New South Wales are struggling under the weight of skyrocketing petrol prices while the Federal Government continues to sit on its hands and do nothing to address the issue.

I know that transport companies in my electorate of Wollongong are really feeling the pinch. Courier drivers, long-haul transporters and businesses that rely on daily deliveries tell me every day how escalating petrol prices are driving their costs up and their profits down. Families are struggling to meet the rising cost of fuel in their weekly budgets. That means they have less disposable income and less to spend on small businesses. The Prime Minister said he would get the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to take a look at the continued price hikes. We do not need another mirror's answer; we need action like that which this Government has taken. With prices hovering around \$1.40 a litre, how high does the Liberal Government need them to go before it takes action?

The Federal Government has failed the hardworking families of New South Wales, they have failed small businesses, and they do not seem to care that price gouging and unfair practices continue. It is time for some decisive action. Give the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission the powers it needs to stop major fuel companies ripping off consumers. Last year when petrol prices spiked, small businesses struggled to cope with this extra cost. An NRMA survey found that more than 70 per cent of small businesses in New South Wales had seen profits cut by rising petrol prices. It is not good enough, and it is time the Federal Government does something about it. I suggest my colleagues opposite take note of previous calls to the Opposition to implore their Federal colleagues in the Howard Government to stop sitting around doing nothing and take advice from the Iemma Government on what action to take.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [4.04 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak to this motion. I have learned in business that you need to take responsibility for what you can take responsibility for and manage what you can manage. Here is the Iemma Government again pointing the finger at someone else. It is about time the Government accepted responsibility for fixing this problem. The Government has rightly raised the issue of rising fuel prices and the impact that is having on families and small business. Indeed, it is having an impact across the State. As the member for Vaucluse pointed out, it is a start but the Government could do much more in relation to point two of this motion.

I believe it is time we stopped attacking the Federal Government and got on with managing what we are supposed to manage—the State. The Iemma Government has a great habit of pointing the finger and taking accountability for nothing. When one looks at the facts, the Federal Government has actually taken charge of this issue: it has acted and provided a financial incentive for liquefied petroleum gas [LPG] conversion—a significant dollar-in-the-pocket incentive to take the pressure off fuel prices. We applaud the defence of working families but the answer I heard from the Government sounded almost like the setting up of a bureaucracy to have a chat to talk through the problems.

I have a unique idea and I hope the Iemma Government uses it: Let us improve public transport to make it more attractive for people to use than their cars. If this Government could take hold of that unique idea it could radically transform our State, not only in relation to the pressure put on families but also in helping the environment. In many respects it will give families more time together. Along the Military Road to Spit Road corridor in my electorate, the average travel time has increased by 10 minutes in the past 10 years. If we are talking about defending families and helping them, that is 10 minutes each way, or 20 minutes a day less time that families are spending together because we do not have a viable public transport alternative in that corridor.

How can the Government be serious about taking pressure off families and improving traffic if last year it cut 270 bus services? The member for Willoughby issued a media release on 16 January stating that 3,500 weekly bus and train services across the city have been removed. How can the Government be serious about looking after families if it is providing less public transport and not addressing the traffic problems that are causing more time to be spent on the roads? In relation to Sydney Ferries, last June there were 432,000 fewer people using the Manly ferry service because there was a 38 per cent increase in delays and cancellations, there were price increases, and the ferries were becoming increasingly unreliable. People were given no options for public transport so they were using their cars. That is putting pressure right back on families.

If we were serious about addressing this issue we would be improving public transport. But we have had ferry services cut, bus services cut, the traffic has increased, and we are told the solution is the widening of The Spit Bridge. It is time this Government took seriously the concerns of families across this State and dealt with the issue—managing what it can manage. The first idea I have for the Government to address this issue is to improve public transport.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I suggest the member for Manly is nowhere near dealing with the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Diane Beamer):** Order! I ask the member to return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** My final point is that the Iemma Government needs to take responsibility for this issue in a substantive way: it should stop pointing the finger at the Federal Government and resolve the transport issues. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyang) [4.09 p.m.]: New South Wales families are already under pressure with four consecutive interest rate rises, and increasing petrol prices are putting an unprecedented squeeze on the family budget. After paying the mortgage and putting fuel in the car there is not a lot left over for life's small luxuries, like a long weekend away with the kids. The June long weekend is normally a busy time for local Central Coast businesses. Families from Sydney make their way up the F3 to God's country, and visit our beautiful lakes and beaches. They eat at our local restaurants, feed the pelicans at The Entrance, take the kids to the Australian Reptile Park, or just take the opportunity to relax and spend time together.

Our local hospitality and tourism industries rely on weekend trade to stay alive. According to a report by Tourism NSW, around 70 per cent of visitors to the Central Coast come from Sydney. According to the same report, the number of overnight domestic travellers to the Central Coast was 1.4 million. This means 1.4 million people visit the Central Coast each year, eat in our restaurants, and shop in our local gift shops. One matter of concern about the report is the fact that 89 per cent of visitors to the Central Coast travel by car. That means that around 1.25 million people drive to the Central Coast each year. If those people cannot afford to drive because of skyrocketing petrol prices, that would spell disaster for local businesses.

That is why I raise this issue in the House today. If people from Sydney cannot afford to drive to the Central Coast for a weekend away, that will have an obvious flow-on effect for businesses and families in my local community. Petrol prices are going through the roof, and while the Government is doing its best to combat this the Federal Government is sitting on its hands and hiding behind the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC]. Instead of giving the commission the power it needs to properly police petrol prices and put an end to reckless price gouging, the Federal Government chooses to ignore the issue. That is a slap in the face for all those battlers that the Prime Minister claims to represent. Not only has he let them down by allowing a situation where four consecutive interest rate hikes were possible, he has also let them down by not addressing petrol prices.

When each visit to the petrol bowser costs \$50 or \$60, the idea of a weekend driving to and from the Central Coast presents a grim prospect. Families just cannot afford the trip. Although I encourage anyone who can afford it to take advantage of what the beautiful Central Coast has to offer, I understand that for many it is just no longer possible to do that. That is bad news for Central Coast businesses. I am not talking merely about tourism operators, restaurant owners and their workers, and hotel owners and their workers who rely on tourism for an income. I am also talking about the effect on the suppliers—the people who provide the fruit and vegetables, bread and meat to restaurants, and the laundry company that washes the linen at local hotels. There are hundreds of other small businesses that rely on the local tourist trade for their livelihoods.

Families in my electorate and throughout the Central Coast are struggling with the same budget pressures as other families. If the number of visitors to the Central Coast drops because people can no longer afford to drive there, that will affect the bottom line of local businesses, which will mean job losses—and we cannot afford to lose jobs on the Central Coast. I note that the member for Burrinjuck shares my concerns. On 3 May this year following the Easter long weekend she put out a press release which stated:

The Nationals Member for Burrinjuck has expressed her concerns about the petrol price hike in Young over the Easter Weekend.

She went on to state that she raised her concerns with the Federal Treasurer. I urge the member for Burrinjuck to vote with the Government on this motion to ensure that the families of Young know that she is concerned about this issue and to let the Prime Minister and the Treasurer know that they need to take immediate action for the sake of families in her electorate, the families on the Central Coast, and families across New South Wales.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [4.14 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members who have participated in this important debate. This matter requires action, not only talk. Members opposite seem to have forgotten

that fundamental fact. The Federal Government is the only government that can empower the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC]. Under its current powers the commission can only monitor petrol prices. That independent body does excellent work but it must be given the power to stop major companies ripping off New South Wales motorists. The way to do that is to change the law. The New South Wales Government has suggested that the penalties and powers should be increased to target market abuse, anti-competitive behaviour and cartels. It is as simple as that.

I note that the member for Vacluse and the new member for Manly—and I congratulate him on his inaugural speech last night—raised a number of distractions such as ethanol and transport matters. The Government has mandated the use of ethanol, and in 2006-07 it will spend \$2 billion on infrastructure and transport to service businesses and communities in Western Sydney. All members have acknowledged that petrol prices are high. Indeed, the member for Burrinjuck has canvassed her Federal colleagues on behalf of her constituents. The member for Vacluse said that the powers of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission should be strengthened, but he did not go that step further and call on his counterparts in Canberra to strengthen those powers.

Families and small businesses are doing it tough as a result of spiralling petrol prices. The inevitable petrol price hike is set to happen again in the lead-up to the June long weekend. This matter deserves priority and requires action to be taken immediately. Hardworking families are facing skyrocketing petrol prices because the Federal Government refuses to act. The member for Wyong rightly pointed out what it will mean for the people of his electorate: extra pressure on families and strain on the local economy. From Wyong to Walgett families are feeling the pinch of spiralling petrol prices. I commend the member for Wyong for his stand.

**Mr Steve Whan:** He is an excellent representative.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY:** Yes, he is an excellent representative indeed. The Government is doing its best to combat the effects of spiralling petrol prices. We have indicated in the debate what we have done. Those measures include assisting small businesses in Western Sydney by providing free advice on how to cope with the hike in petrol prices. Unfortunately, the Federal Government, which has the power to change things, is sitting on its hands. One would have thought that the lead-up to the election would be the right time to take action. The Federal Government talks about what it cannot do, but it has the power to change the law.

The member for Wollongong correctly pointed out that New South Wales is leading the way by doing all it can. Biofuels are better for jobs, motorists' pockets and for the environment. We have called on the Federal Government to beef up the powers of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, and I am pleased that the members opposite, including the member for Vacluse and the member for Manly, have to some extent indicated their support for this important measure. This motion has been given priority because families have been doing it tough for too long. Enough is enough. The June long weekend is upon us and the Federal Government must take action now, prior to the long weekend. It has the ability to do so. The Iemma Government is right behind hardworking families. It is time the Federal Government joined us.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

## **SINGLE DESK WHEAT EXPORT**

### **Matter of Public Importance**

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.19 p.m.]: It is a privilege to raise the issue of single desk wheat export arrangements in the House today. It has been the subject of much debate since the scandal of the Australian wheat exports to Iraq emerged. In what has been called the post-Cole environment it is occupying many people's thoughts—people in the industry and people whose rural communities depend to a large extent on wheat. In recent weeks the Howard Government announced its new policy on the single desk. While New South Wales farmers have been very diplomatic in welcoming the policy, it leaves many questions unanswered. The policy announced by the Prime Minister effectively defers much of the decision on what is going to happen with wheat export marketing until after the next Federal election. When speaking to the House of Representatives the Prime Minister said:

I can inform the House that growers will be given by the government until 1 March 2008 as the time within which to establish a new entity to manage the single desk completely separate from AWB Ltd. This may be a completely new entity or a de-merged AWB International and it will take over management of the single desk.

The problem is that while it seems to the many New South Wales growers who are concerned to maintain a single desk in New South Wales to be a policy that supports having a single desk, it is a policy with a huge out clause. The concern that rural communities in New South Wales should have is that after the election that out clause might be taken up by the Government and it may move to complete deregulation of wheat export marketing. That should be a concern to most New South Wales wheat farmers. As convener of New South Wales Country Labor in this place and as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries it concerns me and the people Country Labor represents.

The rumour I am hearing from people in the bureaucracy in Canberra suggests very strongly that Mark Vaile fully intends to dismantle the single desk after March next year. The interesting rumour I have heard from good sources in the Federal bureaucracy is that he has said he is apparently no longer afraid of the Nats, and is keen to capitalise on the post-Cole environment. Given that he is a member of The Nationals himself, I wonder whether that says something about his future after the next election. Perhaps that is why we are hearing a lot of speculation in this place about who might replace him. The problem is that The Nationals are potentially going to be ignored by the Liberals. We have already seen signs of a major split in the Federal Coalition, which, on all previous form, will eventually see The Nationals' view pushed out the back door and ignored as it so often is by the Federal Government.

We have heard the comments of Wilson Tuckey, who supports the views pushed by Western Australian wheat farmers. On The Nationals' attitude to the future of our wheat marketing arrangements he told the media, "We can spell corruption, they don't seem to be able to." He went on to say, in relation to the Prime Minister's decision announced that day:

If that's not a front for the corrupt company AWB, I don't know what is ...

The problem we have is that the Prime Minister has left this so vague. The single desk export system is important to the economy of New South Wales and to farmers because it helps us to compete in an international market that is so often corrupted by many people who lecture us on free markets, such as those in the United States, the European Union, and various other countries around the world. We need to keep a single desk entity in Australia to make sure our farmers are able to compete properly in that international market. The big out the Prime Minister has left is this. In answer to a question in the House of Representatives he said:

If growers are not able to establish the new entity by 1 March next year, the government will propose other marketing arrangements for wheat exports. Let me make this clear to the House. The options available would include further deregulation of the wheat export market.

That makes it extremely clear to everybody interested in this issue that potentially, post-election, the Government will do what is so strongly rumoured in Canberra in the post-Cole environment, that is, completely deregulate the wheat market. That should be of concern to everyone here and has given rise to the concern of Country Labor that we have raised in this place so often: we hear so much from The Nationals in rural New South Wales—and they have a lot to say in their local papers—but they cannot carry their view through to the Federal Government. What we are seeing here is a hasty announcement to tide over the Federal Government until the Federal election. I am sure members opposite in this place will be very concerned if that turns out to be the case. I suspect members opposite are also concerned that that might be the view of many members of the Federal Coalition. I return to the position being put forward by our Federal Labor colleagues, who are waiting to see the legislation the Prime Minister says he will introduce in June. A press release issued on behalf of our Federal Labor colleagues states:

We have supported the concept of the single desk, given the particular challenges which the Australian wheat industry has faced ...

Labor supports a single desk format provided it continues to have majority grower support ...

They have been critical of the position the Federal Coalition has taken, which has really allowed, through its negligence, the possibility of the single desk being broken down. The Coalition was negligent in the way it failed to stop the Australian Wheat Board scandal, in the way it failed to intervene when growers were not informed about risks being undertaken by AWBI—and that again came out recently in Senate estimates—but, most important, in the way it failed to keep a handle on the Iraqi wheat scandal and allowed the situation to arise in which those who want to break down the single desk now have a way to do that after the next Federal election, should the Howard Government be returned.

Let us go to that scandal. One of the excellent exposes of the Federal Government's negligence has come from our newly recruited Labor candidate for Eden-Monaro, who was so disgusted by the Federal

Government's performance in Iraq that he joined the Labor Party and is standing as our candidate. Colonel Mike Kelly was a senior officer working in Iraq. He told the *7.30 Report* recently:

I was quite outraged when I did discover, because if you look at that \$300 million poured into the war chest of the regime we were about to send our soldiers into battle with, to me was just morally outrageous. And how that could have been allowed to happen was something that really shocked me. At another time something like that well might have been called treason.

Nick Grimm, the *7.30 Report* reporter, said:

In early 2004, long before the scandal broke, Mike Kelly was sending reports home warning Canberra "the jig's up for AWB". But he heard nothing in return.

In that interview Mike Kelly also said:

I was surprised that I never received any inquiries from Canberra about, you know, what was going on and what information was emerging from that.

We come to the crunch. The Federal Coalition's incompetence has resulted in our wheat export market being set up to be deregulated completely. It will be on the back of the Cole inquiry and the uncertainty about wheat exports and the criticism about wheat exports from the international community. I predict that after the election the Government will say that the growers efforts to set up their own body have not been successful so it will deregulate. It is rare for us to see a Prime Minister, certainly John Howard, leaving himself such a big out on something like this in the way he has done with this recent announcement of his policy.

Having regard to all international competition and principles, it is perfectly acceptable to keep a single desk. We have seen some small changes recently allowing smaller exports to be deregulated, and growers who want to implement their own measures are being allowed to export individual quantities of wheat. Those things sound quite reasonable, but for the Federal Government to allow our single desk to disappear through incompetence is unforgivable.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [4.29 p.m.]: Today the member for Monaro was acting like Chicken Little: the sky is falling! He admitted that Kevin Rudd—Krudd—will not be elected at the next Federal election. He said that he is afraid that after the next election the Prime Minister will not keep his word to growers and that he will not support to the hilt any new operation they set up to run a single desk for Australian wheat exports. All the farming organisations in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia have welcomed the Federal Government's decision; they have said publicly that it is the greatest thing that could happen after the debacle in Iraq. After the announcement the State farming organisations agreed that the decision is a great win for growers and provides the opportunity for growers to have more control over their future single desk.

The New South Wales Farmers Association grains committee chair, John Ridley, said that the decision will provide growers with the security they need for this year's harvest. That is what the grain growers in New South Wales and in Australia are saying about the Federal Government's decision. Yet today the member for Monaro said that if the Federal Government retains power after the next election it might go back to a demutualised process or take it away from a single desk. Six months out from a Federal election the Federal Government has made a decision: it has told the growers association to go away and form a single desk, which it will back to the hilt. The Federal Government will fully support the growers association. The member for Monaro wants to issue a media release tomorrow stating that the sky might fall. It is the Chicken Little approach. The member should support the wheat growers in his electorate. He said that the industry is worth between \$3 billion and \$5 billion.

**Mr Steve Whan:** How many wheat growers are there in your electorate?

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** Not many, but the wheat growers association representatives in Woolgoolga fully support me on this matter. The industry, which is worth between \$3 billion and \$5 billion, is happy with the Federal Government's decision, driven by the Federal Nationals. The member for Monaro professes to come from the mythical Country Labor Party. Every time the House has debated a country issue—be it the drought, water or anything to do with anything west of the Great Divide, west of the sandstone curtain—the member for Monaro has voted with his city cousins. Has he stood up for his electorate? No! He should find out whether the timber industry representatives in Bombala support him. They know what he is up to.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order: The member is straying from the leave of the motion. I point out that Labor won the booth at Bombala at the last election for the first time in about a decade.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** The President of AgForce Gains, Lyndon Pfeffer said:

Now the decision has been handed down, the industry needs to move quickly to ensure that a wholly grower owned and controlled single desk entity can be put in place.

That means that the industry is in charge of its own destiny. The member for Monaro wants to rave about Wilson Tuckey. If the member moved a motion knocking Wilson Tuckey down to size I would support it 100 per cent. Obviously Wilson Tuckey is looking after sectional interests in the industry. The New South Wales Nationals wholly and solely support the grower-supported position of a single desk for marketing wheat outside New South Wales and Australia. The member for Monaro said that Mark Vaile will dismantle a single desk arrangement, and that Mark Vaile said it is great to stand up to The Nationals. I think the member meant the Liberals.

**Mr Steve Whan:** No.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** *Hansard* will show that the member said "the National party". I think he meant the Liberals. The Nationals won the argument in shadow Cabinet. It spoke to growers. The Federal Government spoke to interested parties in New South Wales and elsewhere. With its decision, the Federal Government will ensure that a single desk is maintained so that Australia gets the best possible deal overseas for its wheat sales. The member for Burrinjuck, the New South Wales Leader of The Nationals, and the Federal Nationals, including John Cobb, have said publicly that they support the Federal Government's decision. Yet today the member for Monaro wandered into the House and played politics. He said that Mr Kelly was outraged. Guess who Mr Kelly is? He is the Labor Party candidate for the Federal seat of Eden-Monaro. Surprisingly, the member for Monaro said, "The ABC reporter said that Mr Kelly was sending reports." The member did not have Mr Kelly saying he was sending reports from Iraq; he said the ABC reporter said that in an interview. Mr Kelly can be as outrageous as he likes.

At the end of the day, a broad look at what happened with kickbacks—I do not agree with kickbacks in any way, shape or form to any country, especially Iraq—shows that more than 3,000 companies worldwide paid kickbacks. The only company that has been belted nationally and internationally is the Australian Wheat Board. The Australian Wheat Board should not have offered transport payments and subsidies worth some \$300 million to the Iraq Government. When the matter was put on the agenda the Federal Government acted in the interests of Australian growers. We want to maintain our wheat exports, which are worth \$3 billion to \$5 billion to our economy. There is one sure way to do that, and that is to ensure that the growers have control of their own destiny. What Howard has done—and the Federal Government, thanks to Mark Vaile—is to provide an opportunity by saying, "You have until March next year", when Mr Howard will still be in government, "to set that up." The member for Monaro cast a slur on grain growers and farmers associations across the State and Australia when he said they would not be able to establish within 12 months a body to provide a single desk arrangement.

**Mr Steve Whan:** I never said that at all. You don't listen.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** That was the inference. The member implied that growers are incapable of doing it within a 12-month time frame. I suggest that growers will move quickly to ensure that a single desk structure is put in place to look after the position of the majority of growers; a few growers do not like the single desk arrangement. They will move quickly as a collective to ensure that a single desk is in place to maintain Australia's record on the international market and to continue overseas sales worth \$3 billion to \$5 billion. As Mark Vaile said, single desk marketing is an equaliser in a distorted world market, and it will remain so. The Nationals have given their commitment, and they will stand by that commitment. New South Wales farmers and grower representatives across Australia support the decision. I commend them for their support. I condemn the member for Monaro for trying to rake muck and start a fear campaign on behalf of his Federal Labor colleagues. As the member rightly said, his Federal Labor colleagues have said publicly that they support the concept of a single desk. The member should support John Howard and the Federal Nationals, and the decision made to ensure that a single desk remains in Australia.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN** (Bathurst) [4.38 p.m.]: I support my colleague the member for Monaro, who has raised this important matter. Despite the comments by the member for Coffs Harbour, wheat export arrangements are still a cause for concern. The State Labor Government has been a longstanding supporter of retaining a single desk export arrangement for our cropping sector. While this issue has attracted considerable

debate in recent years, it is crucial for this Government to ensure that we have the best system for New South Wales growers.

The Government acknowledges that past reviews have shown that the single desk has achieved significant economies of scale in wheat handling and distribution, as well as countervailing power for Australian wheat growers against a handful of large multinational wheat traders. The world wheat trade is stacked against Australia—particularly by our supposed friend and trading partner, the United States of America. Recent surveys conducted by the New South Wales Farmers Association show that the majority of wheat growers support the ongoing use of the single desk system for bulk wheat exports. Western Australia is probably the only State where there is serious opposition, hence the recent comments by the rather erratic federal Liberal member Wilson Tuckey.

The Government urges the Opposition to lobby its federal colleagues to take action to retain the single desk and to protect the interests of farmers in New South Wales. It is on the record that some of the Coalition's colleagues in the Federal Parliament, particularly Liberal Party members, want to undermine the decision to retain the single desk. They are ideologically opposed to the single desk and are using this opportunity to push their own ideological barrows. It has been said that Wilson Tuckey is leading the push, but the most senior member of the Federal Government who is ideologically opposed to the retention of the single desk arrangement is Federal Treasurer Peter Costello. Whatever scenario plays out on the federal scene after the next federal election—it seems likely that Kevin Rudd will, fortunately, be the next Prime Minister of Australia—it is obvious that John Howard will not stick around for much longer, whether as Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition.

That opens the way for the forces of Peter Costello and his crew, who will have no greater pleasure than putting The Nationals to the sword on this issue. Peter Costello has been rampant on this issue for some time. He has made it clear he holds with contempt the attitude of the Prime Minister on this policy matter. In fact, the Prime Minister is sitting on the fence. He has cleverly come up with a concept to get the issue off the agenda until after the next federal election. The Coalition is falling apart. Certainly the New South Wales Liberal Party is not here to support The Nationals. As I said, the Prime Minister has attempted to divert attention by telling farmers they have until 1 March next year to form a new body for wheat exports. That is an obvious attempt to get the issue off the agenda because a federal election is looming. Will there be a change in policy after the federal election if, by some mishap, John Howard and the Coalition are still in power? Based on the Federal Government's form, there will be a change—particularly if Peter Costello has the authority he hopes to have after the coming federal election, whether in opposition or government. The policy announced by the Prime Minister is under serious attack.

I assure The Nationals both in this place and the Federal Parliament that the New South Wales Government supports the interests of wheat farmers and their overwhelming support for the continuation of the export single desk. We agree with the Coalition that the Australian Wheat Board should not be part of any arrangement because of its shameful conduct in the \$300 million Iraqi transport scams. That scandal is unparalleled in Australian corporate history. The member for Coffs Harbour made much of the fact that the Federal Government held an inquiry into the matter. The Cole inquiry was sterile and sanitised because its terms of reference ensured there could be no criticism or proper examination of the role of Federal Ministers. When Mark Vaile and Alexander Downer appeared before the inquiry they had amnesia—they could not remember anything. Their performance was shameful. I commend the matter of public importance to the House.

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.43 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour and the member for Bathurst for their participation in this discussion on single desk wheat export arrangements. From the comments there seems to be overwhelming support in this place for the retention of a single desk export for Australian wheat. Obviously there is. I am pleased that The Nationals still support the single desk arrangement, but there were not any Liberal Party members in the House in support of The Nationals. That goes to the heart of this matter of public importance. Although farming associations—such as New South Wales Farmers, Victorian Farmers Federation, Western Australian Farmers Federation and AgForce Queensland—have welcomed the announcement by the Prime Minister, they do so because they do not want to be seen as unnecessarily criticising a government, particularly in the lead-up to an election. They want to be able to work with whoever wins. But they must have a doubt in their minds. Certainly I do, and I am sure that many farmers around New South Wales do, because of the massive out clause that the Prime Minister included in his announcement.

The member for Coffs Harbour seems to have blinkered faith in the Prime Minister. We should all have well and truly lost faith in the Prime Minister by now. Most people in the community would remember that the

nickname Honest John was given to him sarcastically a long time ago. Over the years he has shown why he was given that nickname. As I said in my opening remarks, which the member for Coffs Harbour chose to ignore, the Prime Minister has said that the growers have eight months to set up a single desk entity to export wheat, but if they are unable to do so by 1 March next year the Government will propose other marketing arrangements for wheat exports. Let me be very clear: that is the out the Prime Minister can use to scrap a single desk if he is still Prime Minister after the next election—let us hope not. There is no doubt that people within the Liberal Party are pushing to scrap the single desk. The Prime Minister has not made a strong enough statement to rule that out. I have raised this matter today because that concern remains for many people who are involved in the industry.

The member for Coffs Harbour made a great deal about how my comments showed a fear that the Prime Minister may be re-elected. He was absolutely right. We do fear the re-election of a Liberal government because we know the negative outcome on rural communities. The Federal Government's record is on the board. It has a record of overriding the wishes of rural communities because of its ideological obsession with free markets, regardless of whether our rural communities are less able to compete in such markets. The Federal Government has ignored health issues in relation to imports of other primary products. We have debated that issue a number of times in this place over the last term of government. We see it again with this promise to get the Federal Government over the next election. It is a political promise to get past the next federal election, that is all. I have raised this matter in this place because of my concerns. Certainly the people who live in rural towns in New South Wales where grain growing is a large part of their economy should also be concerned.

The member for Coffs Harbour made a great deal about the fact that I quoted Colonel Mike Kelly. He said that he is a Labor candidate. He is a Labor candidate because as a senior officer in Iraq he was devastated about the way the Federal Government ignored the issues that were being raised with it. His concerns have driven him to run for the Labor Party at the next federal election. I am pleased he is the Labor candidate for Eden-Monaro. If he is elected at the next federal election, which I hope occurs, he will bring real talent into the electorate. He recently highlighted the incompetence of the Federal Government to allow a situation where the single desk arrangement can be abolished by the use of the out clause that John Howard has left for himself and a Federal Liberal government, if re-elected. That is also the concern of rural New South Wales and the reason I have raised this matter of public importance today.

**Discussion concluded.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

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

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Leader of the House) [4.50 p.m.]: I move:

That standing orders be suspended to provide that:

- (1) from 7.30 p.m. until the rising of the House, no divisions or quorums be called; and
- (2) at the conclusion of inaugural speeches, the House adjourn without motion moved.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI** (Murrumbidgee) [4.50 p.m.]: The Opposition will not oppose this motion to suspend standing orders out of respect for the new members making their inaugural speeches tonight. However, the Government had to suspend standing orders yesterday to rush through legislation. Suddenly the Government is in a big hurry now that we have plenty of time. The inaugural speeches will be completed prior to 9.00 p.m., and we usually sit until 10.30 p.m. The State is facing many problems—

**Mr Craig Baumann**: What about the law and order problems in Port Stephens?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI**: —including the law and order problems in Port Stephens. It is also facing transport problems. But this Government has nothing to do. Government members have just been re-elected for four years, and I congratulate them. They have a lot of work to do; they should be introducing reforms and legislation. I know they all like to go to bed early, but members on this side of the Chamber are here to work. The new member for Port Stephens and the other new members of the Coalition who are making their inaugural speeches tonight are also here to work. Give us something to do!

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**



**COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AMENDMENT (PARLIAMENTARY  
JOINT COMMITTEE) BILL 2007**

**SENATORS' ELECTIONS AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

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

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! It being before 5.15 p.m., with the concurrence of the House I propose to proceed to the taking of private members' statements.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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**MARDI DAM TO MANGROVE CREEK DAM MISSING LINK PIPELINE**

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER** (Terrigal) [4.51 p.m.]: I wish to relay to the House an interesting observation made by members of the public on the Central Coast specifically in relation to federal Labor Leader Kevin Rudd's announcement last week that a Rudd Labor government would provide half of the \$80 million needed to build the missing link between Mardi and Mangrove dams on the Central Coast. The announcement received a rather cold reception on the Central Coast, with the *Central Coast Express Advocate* calling it half-baked.

The concerning part about Mr Rudd's plan, on which he received no proper advice from either Gosford or Wyong councils or, for that matter, any water authority, is that the promise will provide only \$40 million—half the amount required to complete the project. The total cost of the project is \$80 million and Mr Rudd is promising only half. Of course, the other half will have to come from the local councils. Mr Rudd stated that local councils will have to fund the other half through the local joint water authority if the project is ever to get off the ground. The only way the councils will be able to fund a \$40 million shortfall—\$20 million each—is to increase revenue. They do not have the money to pay for the increased costs in the current budget, so they will have to find the money, and the only place to get it is from ratepayers.

As members opposite have repeatedly claimed, Mr Rudd acknowledges that the State Government has run out of money and cannot afford to contribute funds to construct the missing water pipe link. As I said, that means Gosford and Wyong councils will have to foot the bill. The only way for a council to foot such a bill is to reduce costs or to increase rates. Reducing costs means reducing services to the badly funded and much in need of infrastructure improvement Central Coast; it also means a reduction in staffing. The United Services Union might well get riled up about the prospect of a Federal Labor government sanctioned proposal to cut services to the Central Coast. That would mean the only path left for councils to follow would be to increase rates.

The ratepayers of the Central Coast are already heavily burdened with rates. For them to have a massive rate increase to foot a bill of which Mr Rudd is prepared to pay only half is simply unrealistic. Indeed, one local Labor member has stood out steadfastly against council rate increases. The new member for Gosford now has a tough decision to make: Does she support Kevin Rudd, his half-baked water pipe plan and council rate increases, which that plan will necessitate, or will she stand against him and continue to call on the councils to peg rates?

The Premier is also facing a dilemma. Mr Dilemma sent Premier's Department staff to help the member for Gosford campaign in the recent election. Because her opponent was a local councillor she attacked him about possible rate increases in an attempt to win votes. There she stood at choreographed press stunts with her Premier's Department support staff deriding any possible rate increase. But now Federal Labor leader Kevin Rudd has released a plan that will guarantee rate increases because the councils will have to pay for the other half of the pipeline project. We are entitled to ask why Mr Rudd wants the people of the Central Coast to pay more in rates. Is he making a meaningful promise or commitment, or does he know that his proposal will simply go nowhere?

Does Mr Rudd know that it is simply unrealistic because the State Government and State Labor members voted at the last parliamentary sitting not to endorse the water pipe plan? He is well aware of that. He is also well aware of the financial straits in which Gosford and Wyong councils find themselves and of the State Labor member's opposition to rate increases. Despite that, he has asked the ratepayers to find \$40 million because he is prepared to contribute only \$40 million to the pipeline project. If Mr Rudd is genuine in wishing to

help the people of the Central Coast he will of course contribute the full \$80 million if a Labor government is elected in 2007. Kevin Rudd's announcement was half-baked; he was involved in a half thought out political stunt. Kevin Rudd has been caught out because this stunt will backfire. He is either asking the people of the Central Coast to take him at his word or asking them to pay increased rates. The choice for the ratepayers of Wyong and Gosford is clear: a vote for Labor is a vote for increased rates.

### ST MARYS RSL WOMEN'S AUXILIARY

**Ms DIANE BEAMER** (Mulgoa) [4.56 p.m.]: First, I thank my constituents for re-electing me to a fourth term representing them in this place. I also congratulate the returning members and all the new members. I pay tribute to St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary. The auxiliary was formed in March 1947, and this year marks 50 years of its working for the St Marys community. While early records are scant, the members have recollections of the work the auxiliary has done over the years. I had the pleasure of attending the auxiliary's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, which were held four days after the State election. I was invited several months before, so obviously they were confident that I would be re-elected.

The members of the St Marys auxiliary were joined by members of auxiliaries from across the State and members of the St Marys sub-branch and the New South Wales branch of the RSL. Many recall the early meetings held before the local RSL hall was built. They met in a little brick building behind the old Commonwealth Bank building in Queen Street, St Marys. The women worked very hard on street stalls, competitions and raffles to support Legacy and, of course, the sub-branch diggers. The auxiliary also held picnic days for elderly diggers, taking them out and supplying them with sweets and cigarettes—something they probably would not do today. To this day, the auxiliary still helps with picnics organised by the Far West Children's Health Scheme.

Until this year the auxiliary supplied iceblocks and refreshments for children attending the Anzac Day march. Members recall local bottle shop owner Jack Swales, who passed away in 2001 and who was a deputy mayor of Penrith, supplying ale to the women's auxiliary for distribution at the march. The auxiliary also cooked for the dawn service a hearty breakfast on Primus and metho stoves and supplied it to the participants. The auxiliary held many stalls, meat raffles, chook raffles and fashion parades. As Dorothy Radford, one of the present members, put it, "You name it, we did it." She went on to say, "Our ladies worked very hard and our friendship grew. We loved sharing and caring." I think those sentiments are still echoed by the auxiliary.

The auxiliary is still very busy donating to cancer research, RSL Legacy, Cumberland home, and of course the aged in our community, and it looks forward to continuing to help the local community in the future. I commend all the members of the St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary on their 50 years contributing to the St Marys area. They certainly had quite a large celebration held in the newly constructed auditorium of St Marys RSL. In particular, I acknowledge the president, Hilda Smart; the treasurer, Jean Glover; the assistant secretary, Noelene Foyle; the purchasing officer, Molly Backhouse; the welfare officer, Dorothy Radford, OAM; and the honorary secretary, Jan Bergan.

Throughout their years of membership on the St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary all these women have worked tirelessly on behalf of their community, as well as doing other voluntary work. Community organisations such as this, whose members volunteer their time for others, are the core and essence of the communities we represent. Members of the St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary have spent the last 40 years helping diggers within their community, first helping veterans of the First World War and later helping veterans of the Second World War and the Vietnam War. Their tireless effort to help those people within our community was commended in the fiftieth year celebrations. The auxiliary had three life members, who have now passed away, and they represent the highest honour the auxiliary can give its members. They make up a network of women throughout our communities who help those in need. I congratulate them on their 50 years. Long may they be able to help people in our community.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [5.01 p.m.]: I join the member for Mulgoa in her spirited congratulations and her tribute to the St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary and its 50 years of ongoing service to the local community. It is unbelievable that organisations can last 50 years, and it is not often that one finds such commitment, soul and dedication. Clearly, the current executive committee members, many of whom have been serving the community for a number of years—Hilda Smart, Jean Glover, Noelene Foyle, Molly Backhouse, Dorothy Radford and Jan Bergan—have been the backbone of the auxiliary in not only organising to remember those who have fought in wars to support this country but also looking after the wider community. It is

wonderful that their tireless efforts, as well as their fundraising efforts, are being directed to important things in our community such as research into the causes of cancer, that debilitating disease.

It is vitally important that research be done in that area, so the funds the auxiliary raises for that research and the efforts of each and every auxiliary member in our community are very much appreciated. Over the years the auxiliary has supported and raised funds for RSL Legacy, Cumberland home, and many other organisations. I cannot say enough about the importance of community organisations such as this as well as volunteers in our community. Our volunteer spirit is something that we Australians are known for. That spirit is evident in the St Marys RSL Women's Auxiliary. I congratulate the auxiliary and its members, and I wish them every success in their efforts for many more years to come.

### **MURRUMBIDGEE ELECTORATE ROADS FUNDING**

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI** (Murrumbidgee) [5.03 p.m.]: I raise a very important issue in my electorate of Murrumbidgee relating to roads funding. Following the redistribution that occurred a couple of years ago the Temora shire is now part of the Murrumbidgee electorate, and I am very proud to represent the residents of Temora. A couple of weeks ago my electorate secretary and I attended a half-day meeting with Temora Shire Council at which we discussed various issues of concern to the residents of Temora. We also addressed various projects that the residents want to be approved and developed in their town. One of the most significant issues raised at the meeting was the need for a roundabout in Hoskins Street, the main street in Temora, at its intersection with Loftus Street.

Temora is a go-ahead town. Indeed, *Sydney Morning Herald* Column Eight readers voted it as the friendliest town in New South Wales. From my numerous visits to the town, particularly given that my sister-in-law's family lives there, I certainly agree with them. The town is becoming busier all the time. Temora shire hosts the air museum, a great asset to the town that attracts more and more tourists every year. These days with the Hume Highway bypassing Albury, trucks travelling from Melbourne to Brisbane tend to travel along the Hume Highway past Albury, take the turn-off through Cootamundra, and then travel through the main street of Temora before joining the Newell Highway.

The main street of Temora is currently undergoing a significant council upgrade, which includes sidewalk repaving, road surface resealing and parking space improvements. So the main street of Temora is becoming increasingly busy and the community believes it needs a roundabout. It is not that the residents particularly love roundabouts or that they are interested in roadworks; it is about road safety. The council and the local community have expressed concern about this dangerous intersection. Plenty of minor accidents have occurred there, but they are concerned that one day a major accident will occur and someone will be seriously injured, if not killed.

The intersection needs a significant upgrade. It is a State road that requires Roads and Traffic Authority funding. The council has made numerous applications to the Roads and Traffic Authority and has held numerous meetings with authority officials to address the matter, but without success. I raise the matter in the Parliament today in the hope that it may be drawn to the attention of the Minister for Roads. I ask him to reconsider the council's application for funding for a roundabout. The council was told unofficially by a Roads and Traffic Authority officer that a roundabout at the intersection will not be funded unless a fatality occurs.

Obviously, no member of this House would want a fatality to occur or would believe that a piece of roadwork should only be done if a fatality occurs. I call upon the Minister for Roads to reconsider the council's application for funding. I have visited the intersection. As the local member I can certainly vouch for the importance of a roundabout. It would not require a huge amount of money in the scheme of the budget of the Roads and Traffic Authority, but it would make a significant difference to the town of Temora and would vastly improve its road safety, particularly in the main street.

### **AUSTRALIAN FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL**

**Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE** (Strathfield—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.08 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House to the achievements of students from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School [AFTRS]. On 16 April I had the pleasure of attending the school's Screen and Broadcast Gala Evening. Some of Australia's most well-known names in the entertainment industry came to support Australian talent, including Oscar winner Dr George Miller, Sam Neill, Susie Porter, Michael Caton and Dion Beebe. Dr George Miller was presented with an Australian Film, Television and Radio School honorary doctorate for his valuable contribution to the film industry.

As many members would be aware, the Australian Film, Television and Radio School is one of the nation's leading training institutes for the screen and broadcast industries. The school has been very successful in developing the skills and knowledge of individuals and strengthening the industry's skills base. Australian Film, Television and Radio School graduates and students have been presented with more than 400 awards and the school boasts a long and impressive list of former graduates who have excelled in their chosen fields. Among these are: Jane Campion—what a wonderful woman she is—who directed *The Piano* and a host of other films; Phillip Noyce, who directed *Rabbit Proof Fence*, a very moving film, and *The Bone Collector*, amongst other successful movies; and Dion Beebe, cinematographer for *Chicago*.

The gala evening, however, was about celebrating upcoming talent and it is my pleasure to congratulate the following 2007 Australian Film, Television and Radio School award winners: Courtney Wise, who received the Foxtel Scholarship For Exceptional New Talent; Tani Rosenthal Crotty, who received the Southern Star Internship; Mathew Mackereth, who was awarded the European Union Travelling Scholarship; Pamela Cook and Peta Waller-Bryant, who were both awarded the Selwyn Speight Scholarship for Radio Reporting; Jeffery Dunn, who was awarded the Macquarie Bank Foundation's Indigenous Scholarship; and Sethy Willie, who received the Myer One Year Indigenous Scholarship. I congratulate all of the school's graduates and wish them every success in their chosen careers. It is wonderful we have these talented young people who are doing so well, with the support of their families and the great teaching staff at that institution.

The Australian Film, Television and Radio School and its counterparts have a vital role to play in the burgeoning knowledge economy. The creative industries, of which the screen and broadcast industries are an important part, are of critical importance to building and maintaining a healthy knowledge economy. Creative production and cultural consumption are key components of the new economy, as are the disciplines that educate, train and deliver these activities. Indeed, 60 per cent of our nation's gross domestic product is consumption driven and the technologies that manage consumption are derived from the social and creative disciplines. The creative industries are, therefore, a vital source of economic wellbeing for New South Wales in a competitive global economy.

New South Wales has built a successful, world-class screen production industry. While the industry was initially based upon domestic production, since the 1980s we have attracted overseas work through the quality of cast, crews, locations and infrastructure. This has led to feature films such as the *Matrix* trilogy, *Superman Returns* and many other productions being produced not only in Australia but also, specifically, in New South Wales. Such productions allow for the promotion of Sydney—this great city of ours in this great State of New South Wales—as a tourism destination, whilst also providing direct financial benefits to our community. Since 2001-02 more than \$A1 billion has been spent on international feature films in Australia. Given that the production of overseas feature films is only one part of the screen industries, it is not surprising that the creative industries have been valued for this nation at around \$25 billion and in this State they generate between \$8 and \$9 billion per annum.

Creative industries globally are worth about \$2.2 trillion, and it is one of the world's fastest growing industries. To quote Richard Florida, a leading academic in the creative industries:

Creativity has become the principal driving force in the growth and development of regions, and nations.

Human capital is the primary source of creativity and therefore an invaluable asset to a successful economy. New South Wales is well placed to take advantage of the wealth of talent in our State. A recent study found that if Sydney were to be ranked with cities in the United States of America on a creative index it would be placed seventh. Educational institutions such as the Australian Film, Television and Radio School should be both applauded and supported for the great role they play in fostering creativity amongst our people, particularly our young people. Again, I congratulate all at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School on the hard work and effort that went into this very important inaugural night, and I congratulate the school's graduates on their contribution to the creative industries—a very, very important part of this nation's future.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [5.13 p.m.]: I commend the member for Strathfield for raising in the House today the importance of the work of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School. That institution is supporting our young people who want to become actors and radio announcers. It is not only helping them to think laterally and become creative but it is also helping to build our future in relation to our economy through economic output and tourism.

It is no surprise to me that the member for Strathfield speaks about her evening at the inaugural gala night for the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, as I am sure it is no surprise to other members who

know that the member for Strathfield has had a long-held interest in creativity, arts and particularly film and television. I know personally about her support for that industry. It was good also to hear about the support offered to the institution by leading actors and leading directors who were present on the evening. It is great to see that people who have made it in the industry, even though they are extremely busy, attend gala evenings and support other young people in the industry. Our actors and personalities in this country are very generous with their time and efforts in mentoring these young people. Congratulations and keep up the good work in support of this industry.

*[Business interrupted.]*

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

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

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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*[Business resumed.]*

### **GOULBURN RAIL SERVICE**

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn) [5.21 p.m.]: Today I bring transport services in my electorate to the attention of the House. Nothing I am about to say will come as a surprise to my colleagues on this side of the House. They have heard it all before from my predecessor Peta Seaton and the member for Burrinjuck, Katrina Hodgkinson. They were listening. Clearly, members on the other side of the House were not. I received a letter recently from a Marulan resident who wanted me to know about her friend's experience with public transport. Her friend is in her late 70s and does not drive so she has to rely on public transport. Thanks to the State Government's purge of local train services in Goulburn and the Southern Highlands there are now only four trains a day from Marulan to Goulburn. These are the 6.42 a.m., 10.23 a.m., 6.37 p.m. and 8.23 p.m.

But there is a catch—the 10.23 train—the one most useful for shoppers or those attending appointments—has been replaced by a bus and when this elderly Marulan resident waited expectantly at the bus stop recently with two other adults and a young child, the bus pulled up and the driver announced that as the bus was nearly full he would only be able to take one more passenger. A quick discussion followed and the elderly passenger, who had an appointment in Goulburn, boarded the bus. The other passengers, I imagine, went home, probably to try their luck on another day. This is not the end of the story. The driver then asked the passenger if she wanted to return home by bus because he had a waiting list. I have heard several compliments about the driver on this route and I understand he is extremely helpful and polite. I have no doubt it would have upset him to have to leave passengers by the side of the road in Goulburn.

Buses in Sydney are often full, but it is usually the case that another will come along possibly within minutes, certainly within an hour. Not so in Marulan. People who miss or cannot get onto the 10.23 must wait eight hours until the 6.37 p.m. train happens along. To define local public transport as a service is a complete misnomer. Most locals will tell you it is a hit and miss affair, often late, usually crowded and never reliable. In addition, there is so long between trains or buses it is impossible to travel to and from anywhere in my electorate without allowing a whole day to do it in. Founding member of the Southern Highlands Rail Users Group, Dell Dempster, is concerned about the growth in the local area with no apparent concern given to improving transport and roads infrastructure as the population expands. Dell used to travel to Sydney every day but has since changed jobs and only ever joins the commuter hustle to the city when absolutely necessary. When she does she says she cannot believe she used to do it every day.

I would be happy to join the Minister for Transport on the so aptly named sardine express—the 3.36 p.m. from Central to Goulburn—or perhaps on the bus ride from Moss Vale to Goulburn so he gets a firsthand look at local transport. It is time the Minister stepped down from his ivory tower and at least tried to understand that thousands of people live outside the metropolitan area who also have public transport needs. I invite him to take me up on this offer and I look forward to hearing from him.

**MS LORETTA HARDCASTLE**

**Ms MARIE ANDREWS** (Gosford) [5.24 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of a very remarkable person, Loretta Hardcastle, who was nominated as 2007 Woman of the Year for the then Peats now Gosford electorate. Loretta is the community development officer of the Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation located on the Woy Woy peninsula. In this position Loretta has been involved in developing early childhood programs and Mingaletta has participated in the State Government's Family First Program. Recently Loretta, on behalf of Mingaletta, was successful in acquiring a community bus through the Department of Community Services. Loretta was the primary driver behind the first surf awareness program held recently for indigenous people at Umina Beach and other similar surfing events have occurred since then.

Despite having family responsibilities—Loretta has five children—Loretta is currently undertaking a degree in community development and adult education at the University of Technology, Sydney. Loretta is a foundation member of Mingaletta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation, established in 2001 by well-known and highly respected local Woy Woy peninsula Aboriginal identity Ray McMinn. This organisation is doing tremendous work among the Aboriginal community and is responsible for many innovative programs.

Prior to accepting her position within Mingaletta, Loretta worked for the Central Coast Area Health Service for a number of years assisting Aboriginal communities. Loretta has a proud and long history in assisting her people locally. In the early 1990s Loretta established the first Aboriginal education consultative group on the Woy Woy peninsula. She was a founding member of the Ngampie Aboriginal Housing Corporation.

Indeed, 2007 is a year of significant anniversaries for Aboriginal people. It is the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum, the fifteenth anniversary of the Mabo land rights decision, the twenty-fifth anniversary of Link-Up, the tenth anniversary of the tabling of the "Bringing them home" report in the Federal Parliament, and in July we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee [NAIDOC]. The 1967 referendum is a great landmark in Australian history when 40 years ago Australia and other newly emerging countries were casting off the burden of colonialism. The 1960s was a time when Aboriginal leaders were urging their fellow Australians to amend the Constitution so that Aboriginal people could receive the same rights and recognition as every other citizen of Australia. The 1967 referendum was the outcome of years of lobbying by fair-minded Australians, who could not abide the prevailing attitude toward the nation's first peoples.

Each one of these people and many more joined the 90.7 per cent of Australians who, on 27 May 1967, irrevocably turned the spotlight on to Aboriginal issues. This was by far the highest "yes" vote ever recorded for an Australian referendum. The 1967 referendum gave Aboriginal people the same rights and recognition under the Constitution as every other Australian. I therefore believe it is quite appropriate in such a memorable year for Aboriginal people that Loretta Hardcastle be honoured for dedicating so much of her time and energy to her culture and the Aboriginal community. I convey my heartiest congratulations to Loretta and thank her for being such a caring person among her community and the broader community. I wish her and Mingaletta well for the future.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Gosford on being elected the new member for Gosford. I thank her for drawing to the attention of the House the work of Loretta Hardcastle in this important year of 2007, which celebrates the anniversary of the National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee, the constitutional referendum and the Mabo decision. It is wonderful to hear stories of Loretta as Woman of the Year in Gosford and her commitment to the Aboriginal community. It must be a hard task given that she has five children, has acquired a community bus, been involved in surf awareness courses and is working very hard for the Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation. I commend Loretta Hardcastle and thank her for her work within the Aboriginal community, the Gosford electorate and beyond. I thank the member for Gosford for drawing the work of Loretta Hardcastle to the attention of the House.

**BELLS LINE EXPRESSWAY**

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER** (Orange) [5.29 p.m.]: Once again I wish to refer to the Bells Line Expressway over the Blue Mountains. I have raised this issue on a number of occasions in this House but this week it is appropriate given the announcement by the Federal Government that it would put \$10 million into design and engineering. I note the disappointment of everyone living to the west of the Blue Mountains at the

refusal of the Iemma State Government to match the funding. It has been noted that this funding is not coming from the Federal budget until 2009 but at least the Federal Government has put that money upfront, as opposed to the State Government which has consistently refused to acknowledge that this new four-lane highway will open up the Central West of New South Wales and do wonders for the whole of New South Wales.

Some years ago the State Government carried out a \$40,000 feasibility study. One always had the impression that the consultants who carried out the study were given the task of coming up with a negative result—that this highway was not needed and was not viable. It may not be viable from day one, but we know it will be viable. While sections of the Great Western Highway have the highest number of deaths per kilometre of any main road in New South Wales, it still may not reach the necessary criteria of deaths and accidents, but vision is needed to allow the Central West to grow. As I have said before, one only has to look at the growth that has occurred between Gosford and Newcastle since the F3 was constructed; that growth could not have occurred until the highway was built. Over time the Central West and areas further to the west would achieve similar growth.

The Electrolux white goods factory in Orange produces something like 2,000 fridges a day. That company loads B-doubles each day and they are in Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane the next morning, but it cannot send B-doubles to its main market, Sydney, because B-doubles are not allowed over either Bells Line of Road or the Great Western Highway. That is a sad indictment of the State Government, which has no initiative and no vision, and which continues to prevent companies like Electrolux from sending their goods by modern road transport over the Blue Mountains.

It is interesting to note that while the member for Bathurst is a member of the Bells Line of Road Expressway Group and supports it in his own electorate, whenever the subject is brought up in this House he joins with other Labor members and ridicules the concept. He displays a double standard. He ridicules it in this House and tries to support it in his own electorate.

I was proud during the election campaign to go with my leader, the member for Oxley, to Lithgow, just near the Mudgee turn off, where it is roughly envisaged the western end of the new highway would start, to turn a ceremonial first sod. That is a positive initiative compared to the negativity of this Government, which tries to make out that the current road is suitable and that is all we are going to get. I call on the Premier to overturn the Minister for Roads' refusal to jointly fund this vital infrastructure, and make a positive statement on this initiative that will benefit the Central West and the overall economy of New South Wales.

#### **SPORTSMAN'S BREAKFAST DROUGHT RELIEF FUNDRAISING**

**Mr KEVIN GREENE** (Oatley—Minister for Community Services) [5.34 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to comment on a function that I was privileged to assist Lugarno Lions to organise in April this year to assist in drought relief around the Tamworth area. Lugarno Lions asked me to chair a committee, which I was pleased to do. On 4 April we conducted a sportsman's breakfast at Hurstville Oval. We were privileged to be joined on that occasion by a number of St George sporting legends to support this good cause to raise funds to assist Lions clubs and also Tamworth City Council to work with drought-affected communities in that area. We were privileged that the Mayor of Tamworth, Councillor James Treloar, came to the function at Hurstville Oval, and we were also pleased to have the support of Hurstville City Council.

Hurstville City Council has a long involvement with areas around Tamworth. It had a sister-city arrangement with Barraba, which is now part of the Tamworth council area. Councillor Vince Badalati, the Mayor of Hurstville council, was very supportive of this function. Hurstville City Council made a donation of \$20,000 at the breakfast towards this extremely good cause. As I said, we were supported by many famous names from the St George sporting community—Graeme Langlands, Mark Gasnier, Albie Thomas, Kevin Nicholls, Gary Sutton, Wayne Riley and Murray Bennett. Each of these gentlemen has represented our nation at their chosen sport. As sporting ambassadors they have carried the St George name far and wide. At the function on 4 April they continued in that ambassadorial role by hosting tables of local businessmen who were more than happy to support this function.

Lugarno Lions, as honourable members will realise from previous speeches I have made, have been enormous workers in my local community. With this function they were supporting people in the Tamworth area. The Lugarno Lions subcommittee consisted of Ivan Mackay, Kevin Reid, Bob Walker, Bert Rynall and John Slack. We all agreed that one of the best additions to the committee was Mr Phil Bates, who is also well known in this House for his ongoing work for charitable and good causes. We provided the catering for the

breakfast. We would not have been able to do that without, firstly, the donation of meat from Stapleton's Meats in the Sutherland shire, and most particularly the efforts of Leo and Merren Rautishauser, who provided their catering skills. Leo runs the restaurant above Stapleton's Meats. Leo and Merren did a fantastic job with the catering. We were also assisted by donations of foodstuffs from the Sydney Markets Lions Club. There was so much left over we were able to send some to Bill Crewes' Exodus group at Ashfield.

The function raised close to \$32,000 thanks to the contribution from the Hurstville City Council. We were also pleased that the St George District Cricket Club, whose home is Hurstville Oval, through its President, Murray Bennett, presented a framed photograph of the day Don Bradman performed in front of 10,000 people at Hurstville Oval back in the 1930s. Of course, Don Bradman played for the St George District Cricket Club for seven years. The seven international sportsmen at the function autographed a number of shirts, which were framed. One was presented to Tamworth council through Councillor Treloar. Another was auctioned to raise funds on the day.

The function was extremely successful. The support of the business community of the Hurstville district is appreciated. The generosity of the seven international sportsmen who gave their time to host the breakfast is most definitely appreciated. I congratulate Lugarno Lions, whose members organised the function. They set out the tables, constructed a special stage area, assisted with catering, provided all the waiting services, cleaned and tidied up and, most importantly, raised \$32,000 for the drought-affected communities in and around Tamworth. I thank Lugarno Lions and Hurstville City Council.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.39 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Oatley on his election to the new seat and particularly on his election to the ministry. All Labor members congratulate him on his appointment as the Minister for Community Services. Many of us who have spent some time in the House well know the member's great passion for everything St George, whether it is rugby league, athletics, cycling or cricket. He is also well known for his support of the local Lions and businesses in his local community. I thank him for drawing attention to the wonderful work of Lugarno Lions in raising money for drought-affected persons in Tamworth.

The member referred to a person in my electorate, Mr Phil Bates, AM, who played an important part in getting an international cycling event to the shire last December. I congratulate the member on his work in his local community. I am sure that will continue despite the onerous duties of his ministerial office. I ask him to pass on the thanks of this House for the work of Lugarno Lions, which raised about \$32,000, and the work of the Hurstville mayor, Mr Vince Badalati. I thank the member for Oatley for drawing attention to this important issue and to this success story.

### **MOBILE FIELD BINS WIDE LOAD PERMITS**

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [5.41 p.m.]: On behalf of a business in the Albury electorate I draw to the attention of the House the delays in the issue by the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] of permits for the movement of oversize or overmass vehicles in New South Wales and to understand the impact these delays are having on business in regional areas. Modern Engineering and Construction Company Pty Limited currently employs approximately 45 people in Walla Walla, which is a town of some 700 people. The company is the largest employer in town. In addition to the directly employed staff, the company also has a number of subcontracted site construction teams, bringing the number of people directly employed to more than 70. The company's business is the manufacture and supply of grain silos, mobile field bins, et cetera, for the grains industry. This involves the transport of large oversize loads which are commonplace in farming and grazing areas. The company is also involved in the construction of grain storage facilities. To enable the company to carry out these activities, it has two cranes—an 80 tonne crane and a 200 tonne crane—which it must mobilise between construction sites.

In November 2005, in response to an application for a wide load permit, the company was advised that the Roads and Traffic Authority would no longer issue permits for mobile field bins. At the time this alarmed both the company, which had been supplying field bins for 41 years, and the New South Wales Farmers Association, whose members have thousands of these bins which form an important part of the harvest operation. The sudden imposition of a new approach to mobile field bins was made without any industry consultation or prior warning. After some urgent representations, the company received permits to deliver field bins to clients who were awaiting deliveries. This happened in the middle of the 2005 grain harvest.

The company was further visited by representatives of the Roads and Traffic Authority to inspect the field bins to determine their suitability for road transport. These inspections resulted in the field bins being



allowed to be towed on New South Wales roads. I made representations to the Minister for Roads. A reply was received from the Parliamentary Secretary for Roads on 9 February 2007. It took 15 months to receive a response from the Minister. His advice was that vehicles such as field bins that exceed legal dimensions and mass limits can be operated on New South Wales roads with specific permits. So at the time the company was confident that the issue of mobile field bins had been resolved.

Several years ago the Roads and Traffic Authority changed its permit issuing system. The issuing office was moved to Gunnedah, with new people installed in that office. As a result of the changes, the company noted a significant reduction in the level of service and responsiveness of the new special permits unit. Permit applications that were typically being approved within the day were now taking many days. This began to adversely affect the business. The issue for the company was that its activities rely on being able to deliver silos. Coordination of deliveries cannot run smoothly when there is no certainty in how long it will take to get permits. Events requiring a permit to be changed or reissued, such as a truck breakdown or a weather event that prevents access to a particular client's property, can take days to reschedule. The result was a significant increase in the administration required in the company's office, and customer dissatisfaction and staff stress grew.

In mid-2005 the company wrote again to highlight the issues. Again I raised this matter on the company's behalf and received a response from the then Parliamentary Secretary for Roads. We also raised the matter with the Deputy Premier, and received a letter in response. The key points answered were that permits are issued to ensure the safety of road users and to protect the road network; each permit must be reviewed by a Roads and Traffic Authority officer; permits are issued in order of receipt, unless there is an urgent or emergency situation; and 82 per cent of applications processed in April 2005 were processed in 24 hours. At the time the company accepted that response at face value in the hope that things might improve. However, its experience is that since 2005 that hope was misguided and the Government has clearly been misinformed about the real situation.

I give this example on mobile field bins. In March this year the company sold three field bins to a client. On 28 March the client applied for a wide load permit to take delivery of his field bins; the permit application was lodged and the fee paid. Several days later there had been no response, so the applicant phoned to inquire about the progress of the application. He was advised that the application was going to be rejected. Four working days later the client received a letter outlining the reasons for the refusal. The company then spoke to the Roads and Traffic Authority permits unit to advise of the history of the issuing of permits, the inspection of the bins, et cetera, and the Roads and Traffic Authority agreed that a permit could be issued. The client was then advised of this decision. However, the permit did not arrive for several days. There were more phone calls, and the client was told that the permit was on the manager's desk under review. On 26 April, after again calling and insisting on speaking with the manager, the client finally received the permit. It took 29 days and seven phone calls for a permit to be issued. Such delays are impacting on business. The Minister for Roads needs to address this issue for people in country areas.

### **TRISTAR STEERING AND SUSPENSION AUSTRALIA**

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [5.46 p.m.]: Today I speak in support of a group of workers in my electorate who are employed by the car parts manufacturer Tristar Steering and Suspension Australia. Over the past 10 months or so workers at the Tristar factory in Marrickville have had almost no real work to do. Ninety per cent of the staff at the plant were given redundancies last year under the terms of their collective agreement. The 10 per cent who would stand to receive the most in redundancy payments have only been offered voluntary redundancy, a fraction of what they would be paid if they received their full redundancy entitlements. Despite having no work for these employees since June of last year, the company has been refusing to pay the redundancy payments required by their agreement of four weeks pay for each year of service, uncapped.

According to the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, which represents many of the workers, the company is keeping the employees sitting around at the Marrickville factory with nothing to do, waiting for the redundancy provisions to expire next year so that it can sack the workers with only the bare minimum payout of 12 weeks pay. These are long-serving employees—many of them are residents in my electorate as well as working in my electorate—with an average of 30 years service each with the company. Many migrated to Australia after World War II and have not worked anywhere else and do not have other qualifications. These workers do not have big retirement accounts and are reliant on receiving their due redundancy entitlements in order to be able to live with dignity.

Members might remember Tristar as the company that originally came to fame for ignoring the redundancy application of Mr John Beavan, who was dying of cancer. John Beavan had worked for Tristar for 43 years and applied for voluntary redundancy in December last year after the company began moving most of its manufacturing operations overseas. He was the only worker denied redundancy at that time. When Mr Beavan applied for redundancy he was on sick leave with advanced cancer. Mr Beavan's income was the sole support for his three children since the death of his wife and their mother in 2005. It was only under extreme pressure from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the community and the media that Tristar agreed to pay Mr Beavan the voluntary redundancy payment just days before he died earlier this year. This was the least they could do, considering voluntary redundancy was only a quarter of the amount to which Mr Beavan was entitled.

Tristar has recently sacked Mr Marty Peek, an employee of 34 years, for talking to the media about conditions at the factory. Mr Peek has spoken strongly in support of his fellow workers receiving their due entitlements. For doing so, he lost his job. According to reports, Mr Peek wept as he left the factory floor. His union is pursuing the matter through the courts. I have visited the workers at Tristar. The effect this issue is having on them is enormous. They turn up every day to work with nothing to do. It is demoralising and dehumanising and an appalling way for people to be treated who have given long, loyal service to an organisation. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Workers who no longer have a job because of changes implemented by their employer are entitled to redundancy payments. Those payments enable them to continue to be supported as they seek other employment. The workers at Tristar are entitled to those payments. Even the Federal Government has called the actions of Tristar heartless and immoral. Yet it has not made any changes to its industrial relations laws to assist the Tristar employees.

The New South Wales Government intervened and asked the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission to investigate allegations that Tristar sought to artificially reduce redundancy payments by keeping staff on with no work to do. The commission's inquiry had the ability to compel witnesses to give evidence, including Tristar management. However, this attempt to get a solution for the Tristar employees and managers has come to no avail as the Federal Court has ruled that the WorkChoices legislation overrides state laws. This ruling has prevented the inquiry from continuing. The situation of the Tristar employees is the result of an industrial relations environment created by the Federal Government in which the balance has been tipped too far in favour of employers. It allows unscrupulous employers to exploit their employees and reduce their wages and conditions. It is an unworkable system that has no independent umpire with appropriate powers to resolve disputes. Tristar employees are just one of many groups of employees who are suffering under this harsh industrial relations environment.

Although the Federal workplace relations Minister has become directly involved in the dispute and the Office of Workplace Services is prosecuting Tristar in the Federal Court, the first hearing is not until mid-July. In the meantime, the Tristar employees continue to wait. The circumstances of the Tristar employees once again highlights the importance of the New South Wales industrial relations system, in which the Industrial Relations Commission can act as an independent umpire in resolving industrial disputes. I want to see justice for the Tristar employees at the Marrickville factory. I applaud the work of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union in representing and fighting for these workers.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.51 p.m.]: I thank the member for Marrickville for her contribution and congratulate her on her re-election in the seat of Marrickville. The member has brought to the attention of the House the abominable behaviour of the Tristar mob, who do not understand that loyalty is a two-way street. The member has drawn attention to the demoralising and disgraceful behaviour of Tristar in the cases of Mr Peek and Mr Bevan and in having workers sit around doing nothing just to deny them what is rightfully theirs. Sadly, as the member for Marrickville pointed out, this is just one example of the exploitation that can and does occur under the dreadful WorkChoices legislation of the Howard Government. It is another reason why it should be kicked out at the end of this year.

#### **PORT MACQUARIE BASE HOSPITAL RENAL DIALYSIS UNIT**

**Mr ROBERT OAKESHOTT** (Port Macquarie) [5.53 p.m.]: At the outset I want to say that it is almost offensive that the words "Temporary" and "Merton" are together in this place.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Wayne Merton)**: They are certainly not synonymous.

**Mr ROBERT OAKESHOTT**: I say that to congratulate you on your appointment as Temporary Speaker. Tonight I both support an announcement that was made about the provision of renal services at Port

Macquarie Base Hospital but seriously question the administrative failure to deliver a good clinical outcome for renal services in our local area. When Port Macquarie Base Hospital was brought back into public hands, the then Premier, Bob Carr, and the then Minister for Health, the Hon. Morris Iemma, stood on the front doorstep of Port Macquarie Base Hospital and claimed that it was a new era for health services on the mid North Coast. There was a buoyant mood in Port Macquarie and the surrounding region because of the hope for improved health services in our area. Nine months later, on 16 November 2005, a welcome newspaper article appeared in the local paper under the heading "Renal dialysis unit's new home ... at last". The first sentence said it all:

The renal dialysis unit will be relocated to Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

North Coast area health service chief executive Chris Crawford gave a commitment that the renal dialysis unit would be moved from the health campus in Morton Street to the hospital.

Mr Crawford is quoted as saying:

It is a recognition that patients are getting sicker and we need a higher acuity unit at the base hospital.

On clinical grounds alone I wholeheartedly endorse those comments today, as I did almost two years ago. Unfortunately, two years later, the renal dialysis unit is still located at the Morton Street campus, which is an off-hospital site. To this day patients are getting sicker, and we need the higher acuity unit based at the hospital. Earlier this year a very sick patient at Port Macquarie Base Hospital who was taken by ambulance to the Morton Street facility for regular dialysis treatment died while dialysing at that site. This is a problem for anyone who is a regular user of the dialysis service and is admitted to the base hospital as a patient. The death of that patient supports the clinical reason why the community needs the renal dialysis unit relocated to Port Macquarie Base Hospital. The dialysis unit has been promised for two years.

The clinical arguments that the renal dialysis unit should be located at the hospital site have a strong basis. The administrators have given commitments that the unit will be moved, yet we find ourselves in a void with no action being taken to back up the statements. I am also concerned that the master plan process has been completed and the chief executive of the area health service has said that any expansion of the hospital site will not happen for some time. The community has relied on the commitments that were given two years ago by many people, including the Premier and the Minister for Health, to deliver better health outcomes in our region. That was the reason for spending \$80 million to buy back Port Macquarie Base Hospital. Unfortunately, two years later, one of those commitments, amongst others, has still not been met. I ask both the Minister for Health and the Premier, who was the Minister for Health at the time the commitment was made, to seriously consider this matter and to take action on the commitment that was given two years ago to move the renal dialysis unit to the hospital.

### LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE POLICING

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [5.58 p.m.]: I wish to raise the issue of police numbers and resources in the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command, which comprises the demographic area of the local government area of Lake Macquarie, the fourth most populous local government area in New South Wales with a population approaching 200,000 people. The local area command faces the difficulties of servicing this population, which is spread across some 92 separate villages spread across a large geographic area. The lake itself creates further logistical problems because of the increased distances required to travel from eastern to western or south-western Lake Macquarie. The current authorised strength of the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command is 186 officers. It is my understanding that on that basis we have less than half the number of police for our community compared with the State average. Lake Macquarie has less than one officer per 1,000 residents, while the State average is approximately two officers for the same number of residents.

Our community holds the local police in very high esteem, but concern is frequently expressed regarding incident response times and the inability of police to deal with minor crime and antisocial behaviour due to their obvious need to prioritise their workload. While Lake Macquarie is a wonderful place to live, it is not some utopia without significant crime. As a matter of record, statistics place Lake Macquarie in the top six local area commands for all crimes other than robbery. It is my understanding that we also have the lowest ratio of officers to population in New South Wales. This is a grave situation and I ask members of this House to consider why this disparity has occurred.

The problem of limited resources available to Lake Macquarie detectives has recently been reported in the local media. It is my understanding that the local area command has 15 detectives. Comparisons with similar

and nearby commands indicate that there is a shortfall of at least eight detective positions. This shortfall has stalled the investigation of serious crime, causing concern to the local community and to the police. Policing can be an extremely difficult occupation and I acknowledge the wonderful job done by the police. While there are never enough resources to accommodate everything we would like, there can be no justification for the gross discrepancy in allocation of police resources in the large and growing area of Lake Macquarie.

Our police have to work under strength and with poor facilities in the way of police stations and office space. While the police look after us, there is a reciprocal obligation on the State, as an employer, to look after our police. We must provide the best and safest work place that we can and to care for their personal wellbeing and that of their families. Long-term sick leave records indicate that we are not doing that. Officers of the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command met with representatives of the Police Association of New South Wales on the morning of Tuesday 29 May to consider what more they can do to have their genuine need addressed. A number of submissions have been prepared, and I believe that the officers are professional and credible in their review of the situation and in their requests.

The Lake Macquarie Local Area Command officers who are members of the Police Association are asking for an additional 30 officers to be added to their authorised strength. While this may sound a lot, I suggest that it is a very modest request to address what has been a longstanding historical under-resourcing of police. I note that Police Association representatives met with the Minister for Police during the Cabinet visit to Newcastle on 24 March. The members were pleased that they were given that opportunity and have subsequently, through their membership, agreed to the Minister's request for 28 days to allow him to respond to the issues they have raised prior to taking any industrial action. I do not believe that our police should be placed in the position of even having to contemplate industrial action to address what is a glaring anomaly in resourcing our local area command. I urge the Minister and the Government to make a substantial commitment to addressing the problems in the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command, including officer numbers and the upgrading of station and office facilities.

**Private members' statements noted.**

**TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (PORTFOLIO MINISTER) BILL**

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

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Wayne Merton) left the chair at 6.03 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]*

**INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [7.30 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech: Building on Traditions—Foundations for Tomorrow): Tradition is seeping through the walls of this green Chamber, filling the air. With a great sense of occasion and tradition, I welcome those in the public gallery as they, in a sense, welcome me to their New South Wales Parliament. In accordance with a tradition as old as this green Chamber, I am delighted to deliver my inaugural speech as the member for Davidson. I follow periods of admirable service from previous members Healy, Metherell and Humpherson. I also formally acknowledge that this Parliament sits on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. We are all but custodians.

By following tradition we enfranchise and respect our ancestors. New South Wales Parliament House has traditions and rules dating back to parliamentary democracy in Britain. This Legislative Assembly was established in 1856, and I have been advised to learn its rules early—so that I know how to break them properly. But seriously, I look forward to an independent Speaker enforcing those rules with fairness and balance. As parliamentarians, we must build a better tradition of rule adherence and integrity to ensure greater public confidence in the political process and in our common vocation.

One fine parliamentary tradition of which I propose to take advantage in this Fifty-fourth Parliament is for opposition backbenchers to have the opportunity to speak freely across a range of portfolio areas. In doing so, I hope to listen, observe, inquire and challenge the status quo with strong enough wings to fly above the plain of ordinary routine and prejudice. Mr Speaker, as I look around these green walls at the names of previous Speakers—which your name will join—I am reminded of one of my first functions as a new member of Parliament. It was a Rotary awards night at which I sat next to the grandchild of a previous Speaker in the House from early last century. I now stand before the current Speaker, contemplating what legacy I might leave my own grandchildren.

Talking about traditions draws on one's personal experiences and relationships. I grew up in a close family, with my father, Michael, my mother, Marianne, and eight brothers and sisters. All of them are here tonight. I thank them and my extended family for being such wonderful people and positive influences on my life. Growing up in a large family certainly teaches you how to relate to people and how to make your voice heard. My upbringing also provided me with a solid set of personal values, an excellent education, and a community service ethic. Whilst I believe that the traditional family model I enjoyed is certainly the ideal in society, it is appropriate that we accept all types of families in modern society. Similarly, we must embrace people irrespective of their age, race or religious background. Whilst my own faith is very important to me, I certainly support the traditional separation between church and state that ultimately makes both of them stronger.

The significance and place of tradition is clearly important. However, it should be instructive rather than prescriptive. As T. S. Eliot said, "A tradition without intelligence is not worth having." To do as has always been done without thinking is folly. Imagination, ideas and innovation must be allowed to challenge traditional approaches if we are to create new foundations for the future. Throughout my life I have espoused the traditional wisdom that "actions speak louder than words", and this applies particularly to politics. One area that our mainstream parties must better address through action is our environment. Unless words in this House are backed with action on the environment, they are only hot gas. Rather than more green House gas, we need more committed action on environmental issues if we are to build strong foundations for tomorrow.

The thin film of atmosphere that sustains our human existence is only about 10 kilometres deep—less than the distance from this Parliament to the Davidson electorate and its magnificent Blue Gum High Forest, which was recently nominated by the National Trust as an endangered heritage item. As some sections of society move more quickly than others to a realisation that action is needed, our governments have to provide stronger leadership, education and inspiration in protecting our environment and achieving a more sustainable society. A crucial step towards a more sustainable society is increasing the availability and reliability of public transport systems so that commuters gravitate away from private car use. As part of my personal commitment, I am catching the train to Parliament. So, Mr Speaker, you will no doubt understand if I am occasionally late.

Whilst our New South Wales population has grown considerably in recent decades, can the same be said of our vision, forward planning and infrastructure investment in the area of public transport? I think not. This concern is equally applicable to the area of water management.

In order to pay for those initiatives crucial to our future we need to free up public resources by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of government. Surely we cannot afford to continue to deliver infrastructure projects with major cost overruns and delays. We also need to curtail the growth in senior public service ranks and administrative expenses in order to redirect resources towards long-term investments in our future.

In my professional life I have experienced the commercial world continually striving to do more with less. At the same time, I have observed the New South Wales government sector's record of delivering less with more. Despite record revenues, public service delivery in New South Wales has deteriorated relative to other States, to our economic and social detriment. We must do better. In doing so we must of course respect basic human dignity and be especially mindful of the most vulnerable in our society.

I worked as a volunteer in the refugee sector for a year after completing my undergraduate studies. Most people I met who were in difficult situations did not want to rely on handouts. They wanted a fair chance to better themselves and to contribute in a free and democratic society. Liberalism respects that and encourages people to strive towards their potential rather than become dependent on government. Individual spirit, hope, and a drive to succeed must continue to be fostered if our society of tomorrow is to thrive. This thinking is consistent with our most popular national tradition: a "fair go" for all, without undue government interference.

In building new foundations for the future, the traditional model of federalism in this country, dating back over 100 years, needs to be fundamentally questioned. Change must be welcomed as our world paradoxically expands but grows smaller. Our increasingly globalised society, with its rapid advances in communications and technology, shifting demographics and strong competitive pressures, makes New South Wales a very different place from that in the time of Henry Parkes. We need to make a more concerted effort to reform intergovernmental relations, rather than play politics between parties and levels of government. The traditional mantra of State rights should not be used as a defence for inaction in legislative reform. We must establish improved lines of responsibility and accountability between Federal and State levels of government in order to reduce duplication, inefficiency and blame shifting.

Certain left-wing groups with socialist prejudices have recently been critical of Federal Government funding for non-government schools. What the need for Federal funding of schools really highlights is the inadequacy of State Government support for schools generally and the malfunctioning of our system of federalism.

My wife and I currently send our sons to our local public school, and we certainly support a well-funded, strong, public education system. However, parents with children in non-government schools are not being treated fairly by the State Government. Without Federal funding, parents who exercise choice in regard to their children's education would bear an even heavier financial burden. The overall approach of governments to educational resource allocation should be about providing more equal opportunity, rather than artificially supporting the public system by denying parents fair choice in schooling.

State Government funding for children with disabilities should also be improved, as it should for preschool education, which is sadly neglected in New South Wales compared with other States. Early education and investment in our children is a key foundation for the future of our society. I will fight for all schools and educational institutions in Davidson, whether they be public or non-government.

In relation to health care, with our population ageing and an insatiable demand for health services, we must constantly strive to do better. State Governments and Oppositions need to focus on more than just public hospitals. They must more clearly define the goals of the public health system and the Government's role in it. Preventative health strategies should be afforded greater attention, as should the retention of quality nursing staff and making the whole system safer. Rather than promoting total dependence on the State, we should encourage people to be more self-reliant in a fair and balanced health system. The fact that many people choose to privately insure relieves pressure on the public system, which is good for all. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

Dental health care, which is currently a State responsibility, has been a disgrace and requires urgent attention, as reflected in the Federal Government's need to announce special measures in its budget earlier this month. If New South Wales is to abrogate its responsibility for dental health care, this should be clearly acknowledged and negotiations should be entered into with the Federal Government to properly transfer responsibility, potentially along with other health services as part of a new federalism model. While some recent cooperative health initiatives are encouraging, such as those on diabetes through the Council of Australian Governments, I believe that a more fundamental realignment of health responsibilities is appropriate.

I personally support a clearer and better allocation of resources and responsibility on the part of State and Federal governments in both health and education. This might require States to fund all preschool and school education, with the Federal Government funding all health related areas. However, the actual delivery of these services should still be driven at a community level, albeit without the currently enormous State health bureaucracy.

It is understandable that the Business Council of Australia is scathing in its assessment of the lack of progress in intergovernmental cooperation and reform, through the Council of Australian Governments or otherwise. This is particularly so in business regulation, where many of the different approaches between States are difficult to justify. There are many potential reform areas in which the States can work together towards national harmonisation of business regulation without Federal involvement. While this process has begun, it is too slow, and much more remains to be done. One obvious example is our occupational health and safety laws. According to the New South Wales Business Chamber, our State has the most unworkable set of occupational health and safety laws in Australia.

Another example is lottery legislation. As a child I used to enjoy entering competitions promoted on the back of cereal boxes. I remember reading competition details while sitting at our crowded kitchen bench over breakfast and wondering why different States in Australia insisted on different rules for a national competition. When I became a practising lawyer I provided client advice on the different sets of rules and application permits needed to run the same competition in various State jurisdictions. More recently, as a general manager in business I experienced frustration with the overly bureaucratic approach to regulating business promotions for customer giveaways. Today, as a parliamentarian, whether it impacts on lotteries, insurance, property, or other areas, I am determined to do something about inadequate cooperation between States. To those of similar mind on both sides of the House I say, "Let's work together."

While recognising that politics is primarily about people, more disciplined business practices must be utilised to better manage services in New South Wales. In this respect I commend the Government on the 2006 State Plan as a step in the right direction and look forward to monitoring progress against the plan. I want to use

my skills, qualifications and experience, including those gained as a lawyer, a senior executive, and a member of various boards and community organisations, to deliver better outcomes for the New South Wales public we serve. I am also pleased to be part of a new intake of New South Wales Liberal politicians with significant real life experience, including two Liberal colleagues also representing parts of Sydney's northern peninsula.

Sydney and its magnificent harbour can truly be compared to the international cities of London, Paris and New York, its status as Australia's leading city confirmed by its hosting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum to be held later this year. London is divided by the River Thames, Paris by the River Seine, and New York by the River Hudson. In Sydney, the electorate of Davidson is divided by Middle Harbour Creek and Middle Harbour. Governor Arthur Phillip explored this area in April 1788 as he travelled through what is now Garigal National Park, in Davidson. A member of his expedition wrote, "We came to a steep valley, where the flowing of the tide ceased, and a fresh-water stream commenced."

Earlier this month I stood on the rock bar across the creek at the same spot where Governor Phillip would have stood almost 220 years ago, watching the sea water meet the fresh water. On that beautiful sunny day by the water I reflected that this juncture was a wonderful metaphor for the vast sea of tradition mixing with a fresh pool of ideas that might generate new life. Today the Roseville Bridge links the council area of Ku-ring-gai on one side of Middle Harbour and the council area of Warringah on the other side. As a former local councillor, I look forward to working with representatives of both local councils and relevant Federal members of Parliament in vigorously representing all suburbs and people in the Davidson electorate. This includes helping to protect the unique character and heritage of the area from overdevelopment, a matter on which I will have more to say at a future time.

It is traditional and appropriate in an inaugural speech to acknowledge and thank all those family, friends, political colleagues and community supporters who have contributed to my having this opportunity to serve the people of New South Wales. To all of you, whether present in person or spirit, I extend my sincere and heartfelt appreciation. I particularly acknowledge my whole campaign team, including campaign manager Ian Leijer. Only one other person will I mention by name—my beautiful wife, Jacqueline, who more than anyone has allowed me to pursue this dream, whose ongoing support I value most and who is a wonderful mother to our four young boys.

A sense of tradition involves recognising the passing of time, of which I am but a small part. A long line of members have gone before me, and I am another one. I hope that this one will make a real difference, drawing on the best traditions of the past while developing new ways that might become worthy traditions for future generations—foundations for tomorrow.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury) [7.56 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Today I speak as the newly elected Liberal member for Hawkesbury. The Hawkesbury has been fortunate to have some outstanding representatives in its history. To Kevin Rozzoli, one of the most respected Speakers of this House, a member who worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Hawkesbury, thank you. Your friendship and advice has been invaluable to me over the past six months, and I will work hard to emulate your record of service, your integrity and your loyalty to the Liberal Party.

The electorate of Hawkesbury is adorned with hardworking traditional rural families combined with an abundance of younger aspirational families, many of whom moved to the electorate through the rapid growth of the Rouse Hill development. It is one of the rare places where one can walk through quiet, leafy, tree-lined rural streets and yet be a mere 35 minutes to the thriving metropolis of Sydney. I have lived and worked in the Hawkesbury electorate my entire life and my family have a very long association with this area dating back almost 200 years. Indeed, my ancestor and one of my original family descendents to this country, Robert Allen, arrived in Australia in 1796 and was given a land grant on Castle Hill Road, Castle Hill, in 1814. Robert Allen was sentenced to transportation as a political prisoner from Ireland and disembarked from the *Marquis Cornwallis* in Sydney Cove in 1796.

Since that time the family has flourished and made a considerable contribution to this State and its people and today are spread widely across the electorate of Hawkesbury and indeed Australia. In 1791 another family descendent, Charles Whalan, arrived on these shores from England. Both these men were sentenced to transportation for menial crimes but laid the foundations for our family today. I pay tribute to those early descendents, who arrived in this country as convicts, who endured unbelievable hardship barely imaginable to people of today. These brave early pioneers of Australia worked and toiled, sometimes bloodied from the discipline of a cat o' nine tails and leg irons, but nonetheless continued to carve out a niche in their newly adopted country. Through hard work and perseverance both these men were rewarded with land grants.

Charles Whalan would in time become a close personal friend and adviser to Governor Macquarie. Copies of original letters between the Governor and my ancestors are held in possession of my family to this day. In 1967 the suburb of Whalan in the north-west of Sydney was named in honour of this family. Robert Allen's land was passed on through his sons to his grandsons. One of those children, Ambrose Allen, moved the family to the Dural area, where many of the family still reside today. Their original stone house, built by the family from stone quarried on the property in 1853, was moved by horse and cart by Reg Allen in 1921 to the very spot where it proudly sits today on Old Northern Road at Round Corner. The very thought that someone would commit to such a feat of moving a house stone by stone is testament not only to the physical but indeed to the enduring strength of this remarkable family.

Tonight there are many proud sons and daughters of these two great men present in the gallery who commenced our families' early existence in Australia. I pay tribute to their support and love over many years, none the least being Barry and Maria Allen, family members and prominent residents in the Hawkesbury area. I was fortunate to grow up in a loving family environment with strong Christian values. My wonderful parents, Allen and Margaret, instilled in me the importance of never judging anyone because of their race or colour but instead treating everyone as an equal and acknowledging and helping those less fortunate. My father, Allen Williams, was the former heavyweight boxing champion of Australia and the South Pacific during the fifties. He grew up in the Depression, breaking in horses and working farmland in the Dural area from the tender age of 12.

My father met my mother, Margaret, who was the daughter of English parents from Cornwall, in Merrylands in the forties. Together they were a formidable team, travelling both this country and abroad and achieving much success through my father's career in the boxing ring. In a career spanning 14 years, his record of only six losses was exemplary. When dad finished fighting he returned to his early love of horses and moved down the road from Dural to the Rouse Hill area, where the family lives today. My parents always encouraged me to work hard and pursue my dreams but to also keep my feet firmly on the ground. As a family we were a great team and both worked and played together; whether that was pursuing our great love of thoroughbred race horses or just working hard on the farm, we were always together. Even when my sister, Janine, and I grew up and left home we never moved far from our parents, whom we both loved and adored and now sadly miss. It would be remiss of me not to mention the role my sister, Janine, played in nursing both my parents in their greatest hour of need. For this I will always owe her a great debt of gratitude. Thanks, Janine.

Our family were involved in every aspect of the thoroughbred racing industry—from owning, breeding, breaking in and training thoroughbred racehorses. My father and I, who both held Australian Jockey Club training licences, trained horses together for more than 30 years, wining races from Rosehill Gardens to Gulgong. It was a wonderful time with many highs and lows and it gave me a great insight into the struggle of people within the industry right across New South Wales. It has been my misfortune over this period of time to see a once great racing industry lose thousands of participants. Trainers, jockeys, strappers and especially owners have walked away from this industry in droves because of poor administration, due in no small part to a total ignorance of the racing industry by the ministry for Racing and Gaming in this State.

Country racing, once the heart and soul of the racing industry, has continued to decline. Participation in country areas is at an all-time low, with local employment and businesses in country towns being the biggest losers. Many politicians and bureaucrats think Tommy Smith, Malcolm Johnston and Kingston Town were all born under the winning post at Royal Randwick. Of course, the opposite is true: they all came from the bush. To ignore country racing is to ignore the one essential ingredient that the racing industry depends on most of all: the horses. When compared with other States in Australia, the New South Wales racing industry is well below par.

Growing up in the Hawkesbury area I covered much of the countryside on horseback, witnessing little change to the area until the early nineties. When change came it came suddenly through massive development. Sadly, some of it was neither pleasing nor sustainable. The long drawn-out battle to have Windsor Road upgraded is just one example of how residents were being denied adequate infrastructure to service such a huge development. That and the continued battle for better public transport in some ways laid the foundations for my entry into politics. One overwhelming theme that can be heard in every suburb of Sydney is that residents are fed up to the back teeth with overdevelopment.

The Sydney metropolitan area has moved a mere 45 kilometres inland in 200 years, but some minority and unelected green decision makers would have us believe that to develop one more inch of land or cut down one more tree would increase the temperature of the world and we will all burn in a fiery hell. Urban consolidation is socially and fundamentally flawed. Its insistence that we must build higher densities to sustain future housing requirements around existing transport nodes, while these services are already unable to cope



with current population levels, is absurd, to say the least. While it is fair to say there will always be a market for this type of development, families with children should always be given the opportunity to purchase homes with a backyard, not forced into apartment blocks.

Ironically, in the rural areas of Hawkesbury, families live on 20, 30, 50 and 100-acre blocks of land but are unable to even subdivide a small portion to give their children a home. Instead, they watch as their children leave the area they grew up in and move long distances away from their loved ones. Rural populations thereby dwindle, with the combined effect felt throughout the entire community, impacting heavily on local schools and businesses. In these rural areas of the Hawkesbury there is an opportunity for further five-acre development. This type of small acreage development is nothing new but has proven extremely popular on the outskirts of Sydney. In areas such as Annangrove and Kenthurst, natural vegetation has increased enormously over the past 20 years as people now choose to live in rural bushland settings, unlike years gone by when these areas were significantly market gardens.

Five-acre development is not only sought after but is also sustainable, given most residents provide their own on-site sewerage management systems, water supplies and solar power. These people are arguably the true environmentalists in respect of sustainable living. I have long argued for changes to current urban design. Our choice of housing mix should aim to include larger blocks of land as an option, especially around the periphery of urban zones, which complement sensitive areas and encourage vegetation. This will hopefully become reality within the next stage of development in the north Kellyville release area. However, the imposition of huge infrastructure levies on development is already having a detrimental effect on the availability of future blocks of land, further impacting on an already struggling New South Wales economy.

I have always believed leaders must lead by example. As someone who has shunned the use of petrol for the past 25 years, preferring alternatives such as liquefied petroleum gas, I have now taken the next step and purchased an electric hybrid vehicle. In the near future I hope to draw on the technology available to us in this country and obtain a totally electric-powered car. If our State Government were serious about reducing pollution it could start by insisting that all government cars are at the very least electric hybrids, which would save needless amounts of carbon emissions being pumped into our environment daily.

It is also sad that we have leaders in this State who cannot make a simple decision on ways to save water. As someone who has lived on tank water my entire life, I am bemused as to why there has not been a greater emphasis placed on implementing water tanks in schools, businesses and government buildings or, indeed, anywhere with a roof for catchment. As someone who has a small dam on my property providing all my necessary water, it is comforting that my own council of Baulkham Hills shire has followed suit in this regard. Our council has minimized its dependence on Sydney water by 50 per cent in the last year in terms of irrigation for parks, simply by utilising water tanks and implementing dams into our reserves and playing fields. The question, therefore, is why cannot our State Government do the same, instead of wasting billions of dollars on an unpopular, unnecessary and unwanted desalination plant? [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

In 1985 I was fortunate to begin employment with Glenorie Bus Company at Dural. That company was owned and operated by the Todd family, who were, in my opinion, leaders in providing public transport in this country. In 1987 the company implemented two-way radios to all buses, along with electronic ticket machines. The two-way radios enabled bus-to-bus communication for the first time and provided valuable information back to the company about traffic congestion, overcrowding or lost children. The company far exceeded any public transport operation in this country by continually embracing the latest technology improvements, such as global positioning systems and electronic destination. In 2000, operating up to 70 buses a day for the provision of services to the Olympic Games, the company showcased to the world just how efficient the private bus industry was.

In 22 years of employment with this company, Glenorie Bus Company never cancelled a single service. Compare this, if you will, with statistics in last Sunday's newspapers of 155 trips being cancelled by government-operated buses in one week alone, which is just deplorable. The three basic requirements to the success of any form of public transport is providing safe, clean and, above all else, reliable services. New South Wales taxpayers deserve nothing less. I would like to extend my thanks tonight to the Todd family, who continue to be great friends and supporters. To Laurie, Keith and Keith Jnr, I will always be grateful for the wonderful opportunity you provided me with. You encouraged me, never questioned my judgment or commitment, and always supported innovative ideas. I am honoured to have been a part of this company's overwhelming success.

There are many people I need to acknowledge tonight who have been mentors, advisers and supporters to me over a long period of time. I would like to start by thanking the former Mayor of Baulkham Hills Shire,

John Griffiths, and his wife, Elaine, for everything they have done for me. I would like to thank people such as John Trlin, Greg and Diane Burnett, Simon Hillel and John Higman, my council colleagues Mike Thomas and Larry Bolitho, good people such as David, Marissa and the entire Clarke family, and people such as Nic Campbell and Alex Hawke. They have given me wonderful support. I would also like to thank Rick Forbes, Joe Saliba and Eric Cooper for everything they have done.

In particular, I would like to thank the Hawkesbury State Electorate Conference, especially Sam Russo, Grahame Utley, Paul Osborne, Andrew Wind and Justin Taunton. People such as Buddy and Noeleen Ziedan, Phil and Frank Barba and Dennis Merchant also provided incredible support, along with David and Joanne Baynie, Tony Dagher and Guy and Julie McHugh. Matt Connor and Mark Lewis worked tirelessly throughout the last campaign, along with an abundance of enthusiastic Young Liberals that the Liberal Party and I could certainly not do without. I would also like to say a very special thanks to all the Liberal branches and their Hawkesbury members, who have provided such great support over a long period of time, without whom we never could have managed such a great local result at the last State election.

Most importantly, I need to thank my own family. My wife of 25 years, Wendy, who has been by my side since we were 15 years of age, has been, and always will be, the love of my life and by far my greatest asset. To my children Ryan and Kylie, you continue to make me prouder by the day. Special mention must be made of my son Ryan's achievement last week of being awarded Apprentice of the Year. Well done, mate. I could never have hoped to have a more loving and supportive family and wonderful children. But please, kids, will you tidy up your rooms! Your mother's going nuts! I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the love and support of mother-in-law and father-in-law, Doreen and Norm Mitchell, who are always there when you need them most.

A former President of the United States of America was once asked about the friends he had gathered after a long career in politics. His reply was that if you want a friend in politics, get a dog! Fortunately, there are many people here tonight whom I can honestly call friends—people who stick by you in good times and bad, people who ask nothing but always have much to offer. To those people, I thank you greatly. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the Liberal Party of Australia, to which I owe a great deal, and I appreciate its continued support and confidence. To the ultra-extreme Christian fanatical religious right—whoever you are, wherever you are—you have achieved an enormous amount of profile at my expense over the past year, and I certainly hope you take the opportunity of introducing yourself to me sometime in the future!

The people of New South Wales are sick and tired of being over-regulated and overtaxed, and are particularly sick of excessive waste by government. We, their leaders, must work harder on behalf of the people we represent and reward the hard work and self-reliance of our people, which will in turn be reinvested in our own State of New South Wales. At the same time we should always show support and compassion to those who need it most.

New South Wales is the greatest State in this wonderful country. It is the gateway to Australia, but it is sadly being bypassed on the road to prosperity because leaders and decision-makers in this State are comfortable settling for second best. In a country that has people with the highest intelligence, the greatest sportsmen and sportswomen on the globe, the most innovative entrepreneurs, and resources other countries can only dream of, we have State governments that are squandering opportunities and taking our current prosperity for granted. We must embrace the challenges ahead of us in this State, learn from the mistakes of the past, never being fearful, but relentless in pursuing and achieving our goals, whilst always looking to the future as we build a better New South Wales for the many generations to come. Thank you.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It is my pleasure to call the member for Barwon.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon) [8.18 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have already been threatened with a couple of cattle prods from behind, so keep an eye on the people behind me! It is an honour and a privilege to address this House in my inaugural speech as the member for Barwon in the presence of my wife, Linda, our sons, Nicholas and Alexander, and daughter, Georgina. There is a great deal of joy, pride and humility in the opportunity to share milestones with family, friends and colleagues.

It is without doubt that our three children are our greatest pride and joy. Their adventure today was to get themselves from Brisbane to Sydney for this occasion under the watchful eye and careful coordination of their mother. Nick is the eldest of twin boys and currently attends Queensland University as a first-year student studying for a Bachelor of Business. He hopes to one day be a valuer. Alexander is also a first-year student

studying at Queensland University of Technology. He hopes to be a landscape architect after completing a Bachelor of Urban Design. Both boys are keen sportsmen, good mates, work reasonably hard, enjoy life, are considerate of others and have been relatively kind to their parents during their teenage years.

It was at their birth in Tamworth, after a rather hasty trip from Boggabri some 19 years ago when they decided to arrive early, that I was confronted with two stark realities: firstly, that most men are basically useless when it comes to assisting their wives at the birth of their first children; and, secondly, the admiration, respect and commitment that builds in a relationship with your life partner once the reality hits that you are now responsible for the love, care and upbringing of another human being.

Georgie attends year 11 at Stuartholme College in Brisbane, a school run under the auspices of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. She has a great flair for the arts, enjoys her sport and the company of friends. It is great that she follows in the organisational ability of her mother and was able to get her brothers rounded up, tidy and here on time. It was at Georgie's birth 17 years ago in Hobart Royal Hospital that I came to experience a new benchmark in health care. The Royal is located in the centre of Hobart. At that time women after childbirth were not permitted to go home until they were able to complete at least a half day's shopping. We were living in the Huon Valley at the time, an hour south of Hobart. It did take a while for Linda to get home. In the meantime there must have been some extra genetic-type transfer, as both Georgie and her mother possess an extraordinary talent for shopping. Nothing gives Linda and I greater pleasure than to spend time with our children.

There is no one particular reason, opportunity or experience that led me down a political path. My life's journey was probably not that different from many of the members here this evening—perhaps different scenery, a different script, but generally I have found in life that people's needs and wants do not differ too greatly. My parents, Eileen and Frank Humphries, were married in Tamworth in 1958. My mother was a city girl, the only daughter of Doris and Jack McHugh. They had moved around New South Wales in pop's position with Postal and Telecommunications and a stint in Canberra during the war. My grandfather's career ended in Sydney as he and a number of his fellow directors paved the way for the separation of what we know today as Australia Post and Telstra.

To have my mother here today is a great honour and privilege and for us to have our city cousins here this evening gives mum and me great pleasure. My father passed away some years ago. He left school at 14 after the parish priest organised a mechanics apprenticeship for him at the local garage. Dad was the second youngest of nine children. His family relocated to Tamworth from Wee Waa during the Great Depression looking for work. I spent many hours tinkering and playing at the garage in my younger years. My younger sisters, Shanny and Margaret, and brother, John, belonged to a happy, close-knit family that enjoyed many a family picnic, barbecue, outings with family and friends, and the many sporting carnivals that we attended for football and netball with our parents as coaches. I am happy that my sister Shanny and brother, John, are here this evening, and that our sister, Margaret, is also here in spirit.

My parents were able to instil in me the value of hard work, commitment, responsibility to self and others. I am grateful for the opportunities my parents provided for me, for their hard work and the sacrifices they made in providing a safe and happy home. Our family grew up in Tamworth, where I attended St Edward's Primary School, run by the Sisters of St Joseph. Following a secondary education at the Christian Brothers College I gained a scholarship through the Armidale Diocese to train at the Catholic Teachers College operated by the Christian Brothers in Strathfield. I completed my bachelor of education externally through Armidale University and later post-graduate studies in education administration through the Australian Catholic University in Brisbane. In 1981, I began what was to become a 20-year career in teaching and administration, with my first teaching position at St Patricks Primary School in Walcha.

**The SPEAKER:** Hear! Hear!

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** They say I got best prize out of Walcha, and I will tell you what that was in a minute. It was at the end of my time in Walcha that I met my wife, Linda, whilst playing tennis. I remember the occasion vividly, with my attention span having dwindled at the sight of this attractive young girl who had returned home to fill in for tennis. This introduction sparked a romance and we were eventually married in Walcha in 1985. Linda's parents, Jenny and Reeve McCormack, were an extremely generous couple, and I would regard them as friends as well as parents-in-law. As our family grew there was nothing better than to spend time at the family property "Oak Hill" in Walcha.

Following my time in Walcha Linda and I moved to Tamworth, where I taught secondary school at Rosary College for four years. I went on to take up positions as Principal at Sacred Heart Boggabri, Sacred Heart Geeveston in Tasmania and my final contract at St Philomena's Moree, which commenced in 1995. This period of 15 years as school principal, all in country areas, presented me with a number of privileges, not the least being able to go to work with my children and being a part of their growing up at close range. That has changed now, I can tell you. Sharpening my skills and experience as to what works best within an educational context in terms of teaching and learning, allowing me to learn from experienced educators, and working with excited yet nervous young teachers was an excellent recipe for someone who wanted to make a difference in the community.

Creating, building and on occasions restoring a safe, secure and vibrant learning environment was my focus in the communities in which I worked. Underpinning Catholic education was very much the faith and traditions of the church that I had grown up in, and I believe it still provides a framework that is very much relevant today. I would hope to work with the government of the day in improving our standard of education, encouraging both Federal and State resources to be allocated to ongoing teacher training, particularly in the area of literacy, and acknowledging that the best instruction method that supports a total language approach is a methodology that integrates direct instruction in speaking, spelling, writing, listening and reading comprehension. Taught not caught is the required approach.

It is my belief that no-one needs to be or should be left behind in this country. Education is the cornerstone and common thread by which we can move our communities forward. Education underpins productivity, participation and equal opportunity. The delivery of educational services across Barwon will be a major focus of my time in Parliament. The majority of our schools are small, rural and remote. There are few options for choice in education across Barwon, which is why I will be working for innovative and effective delivery of services that reflect community standards and expectations.

Skills are transferable. After 20 years in education I had a career change, setting up a management consultancy company in 2001. I put myself out in the area as a gun for hire. Companies or businesses that were in need of short-term or part-time management were my target. Moree has a relatively high flow of management throughput in the area. As a large agricultural economy second to none in the country there is a very strong presence in the finance, marketing, input and logistic sector. It is a great place for young people to experience an exciting industry that operates on a local to a global scale. What started as a 12-months experiment grew, and over the last five years I have been engaged within the cotton industry, the aged care and retirement sector, training companies, Aboriginal employment and private project management.

I would like to digress and say on a more serious note that at the same time there commenced a recurring natural phenomenon in this country that has grown to take a firm grip on not only the Barwon electorate but also much of inland Australia—drought. Make no mistake about it, most of this State is experiencing a very difficult period of time. I have travelled constantly across our region over the last five years and the current situation is in the realm of a national disaster. Recent rains inland have given some respite to farming communities in providing winter crop opportunity but it is very thin. Water storages are at rock bottom and without large inflows into our storage capacities both country and city areas will face difficulty in meeting our needs that this generation has never faced in its lifetime.

There is a very high probability that our situation will get worse before it gets better. I hope I am wrong. In the meantime with regard to the many farming families and their communities who have been without income over the last six years, I continue to be amazed by their dignity and resilience. It is time for all governments, both State and Federal, to turn their eyes inwards on this country and focus clearly on the domestic hardship that drought has brought. It is time as a nation that we help ourselves with the savings we have made within our economy and raise the level of support for struggling businesses, many of them in Barwon. We are in new times and we need new and timely strategies to see this drought through.

How did I become involved in politics? My first real engagement in politics was through water and the Aboriginal community—an unusual combination. In 2002 I was invited to chair the New England and North West Area Consultative Committee, the Federal Regional Partnerships Program. Part of this responsibility was to chair a community adjustment package. The State Government undertook a process whereby groundwater within the Namoi Valley that historically had been overallocated was to be cut back. Despite enormous impacts on both disadvantaged farmers and the communities to be affected there was no real commitment by the State to offer or engage in real or meaningful compensation. Estimated loss of annual production as a result of water cutbacks was in excess of \$40 million net, close to 200 jobs and potentially 70 farmers out of business. This

raised the issue of property rights and the push by our local Federal member and then Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, to have water rights recognised as a property right.

In short, if something you owned was to be taken away or historical and legal opportunity denied, then someone has to pay. This is still the case and something all governments must recognise and honour as per their moral and Constitutional obligations. Groundwater recovery within the Namoi and Gwydir valleys, where I live, has been a mess and poorly managed. It amounts to nothing short of theft by an executive-style government. People's lives and their livelihoods have been seriously jeopardised by this convoluted process that is still going on today. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Natural resource policy has to be driven by science and fact, not emotion and ideology. Farmers and agricultural communities in the Barwon electorate have a traditional history combined with a depth of expanded knowledge when it comes to managing available resources whilst ensuring that environmental values are maintained, economic benefits are realised and social cohesion is maintained. Rural communities are at the pointy end of impact when it comes to a fundamental change in practice or, in more recent times, extreme weather conditions. It is my belief that the process undertaken in the Namoi was a disaster not only for those affected but also for environmental outcomes in general.

A mistrust is now pervading the relationship between resource management authorities and farming communities. The lack of consistent policy direction, due process and management of water is also reflected in land management. New South Wales has had a period of government that reflects an anti-farming mentality, driven by an extreme point of view, a poor understanding of modern farming practice, a populist belief of what constitutes a green credit and a general disconnect from the fact we live largely in a wide brown land. At a recent forum held in Dubbo on invasive native scrub, the Chair of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Don Burke, said,

It is the extreme environmentalists who are the greatest danger to the environment. The best people to look after our land and environment are the people who live there, our farmers.

I hope to work with all governments—I acknowledge the Minister is in the Chamber—to help them develop a closer relationship with our farming community, one based on cooperation and not convictions. It was during this time that I joined the National Party. I had seen what good and bad policy was delivering and how important it was to have a political voice. I could see who had been traded off in the natural resource debate to preserve our community not just at a local level but also at a regional level. I believed I had to become more politically active. It was clear that if our communities were to have their voice heard then a grassroots party whose priority was committed to taking on board local and country issues was for me.

In 1995 when we first moved to Moree, no Aborigines were employed in the main street of Moree, let alone owned business houses. This was not acceptable for a town of 10,000 people with a third of its population indigenous. It was clear to me and many others that things had to change. Some of the answers have come from within our community, not the external policymakers, departments or well-meaning social engineers that have pervaded Aboriginal issues for too long. A combination of community engagement, a recognition and acknowledgement of the Kamilaroi nation as the first Australians in the area—the original inhabitants of our land—and a series of capacity-building projects have led me to believe we are heading in the right direction.

Employment and business opportunities are growing through proactive locally driven programs such as the Aboriginal Employment Strategy [AES], which has a philosophy of "W" for work not welfare. The strategy forms part of the business and corporate community in socially and economically engaging the community. I became a director of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy six years ago, and I continue to support the business. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy is as much a successful psychological program engaging mentors to partner the new work entrant as it is for the employer ensuring greater outcomes for Aboriginal people and potential employers. The initial office was in Moree, and it now has offices in Tamworth, Dubbo, Glebe and Blacktown. The operation is now an all Aboriginal-based board and staff are committed to getting indigenous people into the workforce and supporting them.

Driven and mentored by Dick Estens out of Moree, the program will continue to expand across the country and be a focal point for practical reconciliation. There will be no social change in our communities without legitimate structured access to economic advantage, work and enterprise. Cultural awareness activities, business sponsorship and mentoring, the arts, school-based traineeships and more effective community development employment programs that are challenging the deep resistance to change are slowly turning the tide for some of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters in the Barwon electorate. A joint effort by the Moree

community to do up our main street to encourage engagement, ownership, cultural pride and social interaction has been very successful. All the community are proud of our town. There is a long way to go, but we are heading in the right direction.

Not only is Barwon the largest electorate in terms of agricultural production and associated employment, we also have the largest indigenous population. The future of many of our towns will depend on how successful we are as a community in involving young Aborigines in education, training and employment. An approach that encourages enterprise, connectedness and building relationships within the wider community works. There is not room for two classes of Australians within our communities. There is not room for two standards of education or access to health services. There is not room for two classes of Australians meeting community law and order standards. We are diverse by nature, but we are also one community. Given the resources, together at the local level we can work our way through the many challenges facing Aboriginal communities.

I would say, and am saying, sorry—sorry for what we have not achieved for Aboriginal people in this country. It is 40 years since the recognition of Aboriginal citizenship and I can honestly say we have a very long way to go in closing the gaps that exist between the lives of indigenous and non-indigenous people. I am committed to growing and supporting leadership within our Aboriginal communities, growing community capacity and encouraging all people to take advantage of what mainstream Australia has to offer. There is no better place to be driving these issues than out of Moree and the Barwon electorate, a recognised place that can, and does, bring about change.

With an electorate of 225,000 square kilometres—approximately 30 per cent of the State—taking in most of north-west and central west inland New South Wales, access to health services and provision of infrastructure are always on the agenda. Distances and time delays in accessing specialist and semi-specialist services from country areas is not acceptable. It is not acceptable that half the maternity units across inland New South Wales have been closed in the last 10 years—10 of them in Barwon. It is not acceptable that young families have to travel more than three or, in some cases, five hours to have their babies delivered. It is stressful and costly, and it seriously compromises young families who want to make their home in a country area.

To keep young people in, and attract them to, our rural communities, access to appropriately trained medical staff and facilities is a necessity. In this day and age no-one should be disadvantaged by living in a country area. There is much to do in this area, and I will work on focusing all governments on gaining better outcomes for rural and remote health. An enormous proportion of Barwon's income is generated from primary industry. Agriculture across the region and the emerging mining industry in the Cobarr-Nyngan area are producing copper, gold and silver, and coal in the Narrabri region. At this stage I will give a plug to Lightning Ridge, home of the Black Opal, and the many tourist operators around the region who promote the diversity of our region—home of the Outback. *[Further extension of time agreed to.]*

The challenge both now and in the future reflects the changing global economy. Each of these industries produces billions of dollars in income, which underpins our local, State and national economies. With the global resources boom and an ability to responsibly grow our regional mining industry, it is vital that infrastructure keeps pace with demand. New South Wales has fallen behind our competitors and we need to fast track road and particularly rail infrastructure that will enable reliable and timely delivery to ports and world markets. I look forward to an announcement by the Federal Government committing to the Brisbane to Melbourne inland rail link, which will run through the electorate of Barwon. Barwon's future economic and growth corridors are aligned north-south, giving us the ability to move large quantities of primary produce and commodities to port, which is essential for the next level of productivity gains for this country.

The electorate has the minerals, the rich soils to produce grains, and pastures for meat and fibre production. The economic reality of growing value-adding businesses such as renewable fuel and energy in rural areas will result in improved infrastructure and reduce the cost of doing business. This will require political will from all levels of government and a level of intergovernmental cooperation that currently is challenged at best.

With the advent of faxes, the Internet and modem communications it has been all too easy to centralise government at all levels and the decision-making process. Too many of our communities are managed from outside with local decision-making compromised. Local government has been forced to compete in a handout, do as you're told mentality with various State and Federal government departments. This, in effect, is killing off many of our smaller communities. There needs to be a fairer, more consistent way of supporting local government through recurrent funding and providing a framework whereby communities can and will take more

responsibility for their wellbeing and future. Both my Nationals colleagues and I believe in less government, not more; decentralisation of decision-making as opposed to centralised; and the local community being responsible for setting their own standards.

There is much discussion about water management not only across the State but nationally. The Barwon-Upper Darling Basin takes up the Barwon electorate and includes all the major inland rivers and the cross-border rivers as well. How water is allocated and for what purpose is very complicated. It is necessary for the Federal Government to take on water management within the Murray-Darling Basin. It is necessary for all governments, catchment management groups, local stakeholders, industry and conservationists to cooperate in delivering fair and reasonable outcomes. If whisky is for drinking and water for fighting over, we should not be afraid of having the fight if it means we can arrive at a point whereby our communities are able to maintain their viability without compromising environmental outcomes.

There are a large number of people that I would like to mention, none the least my local branch member and former local member, Ian Slack-Smith, who is here tonight. I thank him for his generosity and time spent introducing me to the electorate. To Robyn Barrett, who was my campaign director, Alan Hunter, Peter Taylor, branch chairman, who is here tonight, Hugh Livingston, and all those who helped me along the way, and the 300-plus electorate volunteers who manned the 70 booths, Linda and I are very grateful. I am an ordinary person with the privilege of representing an extraordinary part of the world. Barwon is a big electorate with a big heart. It will rain and hopefully plenty of it. In the meantime I will represent and serve my electorate without fear or favour. I thank the members and friends in the gallery who have given their time to share a little of the to-be-continued Barwon story.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [8.45 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Thank you, members of the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to tell my story of how the west was won. Most people have told me the transition from automotive dealer to politician should be easy. Unfortunately a few tarnish it for the majority in both pursuits. I am both honoured and privileged to become the member for Murray-Darling and I thank all those citizens of the electorate who have put their faith in me. I came with a history of not letting anyone down and I do not intend to start now. I take this opportunity to recognise my parents, Doug and Olga, both of whom are well into their eighties and married for over 60 years. I have always felt a certain guilt that I did not achieve the sporting and scholastic achievements my father would have liked. But there is no doubt the love and support shown to me over the years has made my life most satisfying. I know both mum and dad have been proud of the achievements I have made in my life.

I was raised in a family of four with an elder sister, Robyn, and younger siblings, sister Judith and brother Michael. We enjoyed a great family life together. My elder sister, Robyn, a dedicated and highly qualified nursing sister, unfortunately suffered a nervous breakdown in 1979, which resulted in a breakdown of her marriage and an irretrievable slide into a worsening condition. I have had firsthand experience of the devastating effects of mental illness and today my sister is in a home suffering the early onset of Alzheimer's. To my wife, Helen, who unfortunately could not get here today due to illness, and who has stuck by my side through thick and thin, has kept my feet on the ground and has been my greatest supporter and critic, I say thank you. Helen has always trusted my decisions and will support me in success and failure.

Helen and I were blessed with two sons who were a pleasure to raise and have continued to please us with the standards they live by. To my son, Jason, and his wife, Louise, who are in the gallery tonight, thank you for your support and for two lovely granddaughters, Maddie and Avalon. They have created so much love and enjoyment for Helen and me. To my son, Craig, who is here tonight, and his fiancée, Sam, many thanks for your interest and support in my new endeavour. To my mother-in-law, Neni, and my father-in-law, Blago, deceased, thank you for your support. I am sure if Blago were alive on polling day he would have changed his vote from Labor for the first time.

I was born in Perth and spent four years there before moving to Melbourne for three brief years. In 1955 I moved to Broken Hill to begin my schooling. Broken Hill has often been described as a tough town but in 1955, as a newcomer to Broken Hill, getting home from school was a tough task. Every day you had to run the gauntlet to dodge the school bullies. One day I was coming home and I thought I was on the home run when I was confronted by one of the bully's sisters. The bully was busy at the time so his sister gave me a beating instead. When I got home to mum crying she stated that if I came home crying after being bullied, she would give me a belting also. She had done it tough in her life. After that day I learned I could stand up for myself.

My school years had very few highlights except for a teacher I had in fourth and sixth class, Joe Bosnich, who left a lasting message. I think he addressed it thus, "Williams, you're heading for a rude

awakening one day." I have always tried to avoid the rude awakening—and I have, to date. After leaving school I was employed as a fitter and machinist at the Broken Hill South mine. I did my trade and afterwards was called up for national service. I spent the bulk of my time in the Royal Australian Regiment with the 10 Independent Rifle Company. During my service I was promoted to corporal and I was offered the opportunity to go to the Officer Cadet School, Portsea. At that stage the salary paid by the Army was not what I had in mind, so in 1972, after my period of national service, I returned to Broken Hill.

I was determined to achieve a tertiary education so I attended night school and completed the Higher School Certificate. I then commenced studying economics, accounting and financial management externally through the University of New England. Soon after I started back at the south mine it closed—nothing to do with me! I spent the next three years working for a newspaper and then a Toyota dealership. By 1975 I was self-employed. In 1977 I bought the Ford dealership in Broken Hill. This was the first time I had experienced the need to be a leader. I had borrowed enough money to buy 20 houses in Sydney and was now responsible for the welfare of 29 employees, some of whom were senior to me. There I was, 28 years of age, about to get a practical lesson in financial management, using my own money.

I remember being told, "If you have a cash-poor business you will always work harder", but they never mentioned how badly I would sleep. I always had the view that to get support from my employees I should always lead by example: no-one wants to work for a loser. I also took the view that the customer was the most important resource for a business. I had the choice of running a slaughterhouse or a shearing shed. I chose the latter and built enduring relationships with employees and customers. I had only one belief—underpromise and overdeliver. While in business I trained over 80 apprentices and always provided employees with a safe and secure workplace. I had a belief that employers should go grocery shopping to see if their employees were financially provided for and, as a consequence, every one of my employees earned well above award wages.

During the years I have spent in business I have always been involved in regional development. I was chairman of the Far West Industry Development Board for eight years, I spent two years on the Task Force of Broken Hill, 15 years as the Chairman of the Outback Area Consultative Committee and in that time three years on the Chair's Reference Group and 12 months on the board of the Darling Matilda Way Sustainable Region. I also served on a number of other community committees that achieved great things for the community, including the grassing of the Broken Hill golf course, which is a huge achievement. In July 2005, after 28 years in business, I sold the dealership to pursue a career in politics—and they all said I was too old!

A lot has been said by previous speakers about their commitment to their brand of politics. I was raised in a Labor town and, over 50 years, witnessed the values that a Labor upbringing creates—the years of working in the mines and underground conditions that forged the values I agree with. Fortunately, those values do not require people to be rusted onto any political persuasion. I heard earlier speakers suggest that the sacking of Gough Whitlam was a turning point in their political choice. I agree that the sacking was against the principles of democracy but, as time has shown, politics has always had a dark side in both camps. All I know is that I have developed a set of values, learned and earned, over 58 years that will not be compromised by any act of politics.

Becoming a member of The Nationals was never an easy decision. I had spent a lifetime being apolitical and felt that committing to a side of politics could compromise my beliefs. Since I made the move I have met a group of people who believe in the values I regard as important. My membership allows me the opportunity to challenge the decisions I may not support. To win this seat, I enjoyed help and support from many—from my campaign committee and those who handed out information on polling day to those who were there from the start—and I would just like to name a few. To Adrian Piccoli and his wife, Sonia, thank you for your support and direction during my campaign. To Rick Colless, whom I dragged out of his comfort zone to help me doorknock over 20,000 houses in the hottest part of the year, thank you. To Rosie and Brian Reid—thank you, Rosie, for putting your life on hold for eight months, and thank you, Brian, for your patience during Rosie's 100 per cent commitment to my campaign.

To Ron Walker, my campaign treasurer, thank you. To Derek and Edwina McFarlane for their journalistic support and help with doorknocking, thank you. Derek gave me a great incentive when he said that I was always welcome on his property as a candidate and a member, but I should not bother if I lost. How could I ever lose after that? To Leanne James and Alexandra Wilson, who manned my campaign offices, thank you for your great support. To Carrissa Buckland, who gave up two weeks holiday to give 100 per cent, thank you. To Sue Sulicich, who burned the midnight oil to help from day one, many thanks. To the State Director of The Nationals, Alison Penfold, who left nothing to chance and went above and beyond, thank you. To Jim and Viv Muirhead, thank you for your hospitality.



To the Hawkins gang at Finley, Jane, Jenny, Win and families, your support was invaluable. I also thank Neil and Shirley Bleinkein, Jim and Judy Small—Jim was a previous member for Murray—Jason Clancy, John Pocklington, Ron and Jill Watson, Peter Crisp, Barry Bambrick, Neal Eagle, Michael Keenan, Phillip Nand, Andrew Marwood, Ian Roberts and Curly Roberts. Mia Davies, who is the director of the State Secretariat for the Western Australian Nationals, got off the plane in nice canvas shoes thinking that she was going to do some office work. When I took her doorknocking she walked through every prickly in Broken Hill. I also thank Bob and Joy Anderson, Craig Sobey and Paul Weller, who is now the member for Rodney in Victoria, Noel Hicks, a former member for Riverina, Noel Maughan, a former member for Rodney, and Christine Ferguson, who is State vice-chairman for the New South Wales Nationals. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Murray-Darling electorate represents 250,000 square kilometres of this State, contains 13 shires and councils and a large section of unincorporated land. The drought is the greatest challenge to this electorate, whose commercial activities are mining, pastoral grazing, broadacre farming, irrigated farming, dairying, lot feeding, red gum forestry and associated services. Apart from the mining services industry in and around Broken Hill, which is experiencing boom times, there is no sector of the electorate that has not been caught up in the consequences of the drought. For the past 10 years pastoralists in the Western Division have known nothing but drought. They have endured the driest period in 100 years. Experienced graziers have become adept at survival, but are most deserving of a change.

The townships of Tilpa, White Cliffs, Wilcannia and Ivanhoe have had to adapt to Third World solutions to obtain some water—undrinkable, in all circumstances. The Darling River stopped flowing to Wilcannia in December. The restoration of environmental flows in the Darling is my greatest priority for the people of the upper and lower Darling. Primary production in the Sunraysia district of New South Wales has faced falling revenues with imports and oversupply of wine grapes, table grapes and citrus. Now the region faces a new challenge of having no water available after the end of June. The availability of water to all irrigators, dairy farmers and lot feeders on the Murray-Darling could possibly cause permanent damage to the social and economic wellbeing of every part of my electorate. I acknowledge the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water, Phil Koperberg, and thank him for his support. I am sure we will work together to resolve these issues.

Changes in allocation of groundwater present a range of issues, but none will be felt more than in the township of Hillston, which has built its whole economy on the availability of groundwater at a certain level. Fortunately, the Labor Government had the foresight to postpone the changes to groundwater licences in the Hillston region. A continual postponement is what Hillston needs because 130 jobs in Hillston play a big part in its economy. Red gum forestry plays an important role in the economies of Balranald, Barham, Mathoura and Deniliquin. There is a great need to recognise how hard it is to create jobs in the country versus the city. One job, one family and its contribution to the local community, provides another link in the small economics in the Murray-Darling. It has been the desire of a minority whose lives are not, and never will be, affected by the severe impact of their misguided influence on policy makers, to take away the future of others. Today the red gum forestry industry faces another threat to survival, with the introduction of a severe and unworkable private native forest code of practice. The electorate of Murray-Darling cannot afford to lose one more job.

Health will always be a challenge for any government, but in rural and remote rural the problem of getting a doctor or a dentist becomes our greatest challenge. If you live in Wentworth the nearest public dentist is 200 kilometres away, in Balranald. If you live in Hay you give up a whole day to go to Deniliquin. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS] is another issue and presents a great deal of angst to patients, not only filling out the form but getting the doctors and specialists to complete their sections. One lady I doorknocked in Euston told me about her situation: She had a choice of five buses that travel to and from Melbourne daily, allowing her to leave home, see her specialist, and return in one day. Yet the scheme will not support her. Under the New South Wales regulations, she is only entitled to assistance if she travels to Albury, which is a two-day exercise and a greater expense than the Melbourne option. My question is: Do the residents of country New South Wales deserve this shortfall in health services and support?

The Percy Allen report, which dealt with the sustainability of shires and councils, highlights the problems for shires and councils in country New South Wales with cost shifting and underfunding. Councils have the impost of unreasonable compliance issues such as local environmental plans and a need to find a fair and equitable way of collecting rates after the separation of land and water. For all councils the upkeep of roads and the sealing of new roads provide an ever-increasing challenge created by spiralling costs and a stationary revenue. For shires such as Wakool, which currently has 32 wooden bridges that need immediate replacement, the challenge becomes impossible. Orphan assets such as the Maude Bridge in the Hay shire create another

unnecessary liability for that shire. The Arumpo Road that leads to the world heritage Mungo National Park is not sealed and is travelled by tourists who have never driven on an unsealed road before and who, in most cases, take huge risks.

School maintenance is an issue facing all of the electorate. The high school in Balranald needs \$800,000 spent on maintenance. The negligence cannot continue. The issue surrounding preschools is prevalent in every community. The Labor Government's one-year commitment to subsidise fees needs to be continued indefinitely. But, just as important, we need to provide funds for capital works and maintenance. Most money raised in the community for preschools is not enough to keep up with compliance and maintenance. One of my greatest concerns is the lack of progress we are achieving with the indigenous community. I recognise the great group of committed Aboriginal men and women who are determined to improve the health and lifestyle of their people, who are now prepared to tackle the problem head on and who are focused only on outcomes. Last year the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs touched on the core problem affecting progress: improving the welfare of indigenous youth. Every day young, innocent indigenous Australians are having their lives destroyed by acts of sexual assault and violence. There are very few who escape the net. How can children adapt to schooling, law and order, and normality after they have experienced that level of violence?

We need to create safe houses in indigenous communities that provide a 24-hour refuge for the young and innocent. We need a greater commitment from our courts to recognise that people charged with sexual violence must have their charges taken seriously. The victim should not be treated as the guilty party. We have to ensure that there is adequate mentoring and counselling support for the perpetrators of violence to allow them to change their ways. We need to break the cycle of violence and let children enjoy their precious years. We need to make parents responsible for the actions of their young, for their children's attendance at school and for their children's acts of criminality. Sometimes we have to break a few eggs to make an omelette. Now is the time to act. I would like all members of this House to become advocates for change and give indigenous children the chance of an enjoyable childhood and a great future. Thank you.

*[Business interrupted.]*

#### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the former member for Illawarra, Marianne Saliba. She is a guest of the member for Shellharbour, who is about to make her inaugural speech.

#### **INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

*[Business resumed.]*

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON** (Shellharbour) [9.08 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I am sure members appreciate and can remember the swirl of emotions they felt when they stood in this Chamber to make the first parliamentary speech of their political career. I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the overwhelming support I received that allows me to stand here today as the first member for Shellharbour. In particular I appreciate the tremendous honour that our Shellharbour electorate bestowed on me when I was elected as its representative and recognise the great responsibility that honour entails.

As the first member for Shellharbour I would like to share briefly with members my love for the natural beauty of our Shellharbour electorate and the broader Illawarra region. This is a love affair I will happily admit to and one I have been having for going on two decades. It is a love affair of passion that began the first day I came over the mountain at Macquarie Pass on my way to university searching for a better life. From Macquarie Pass I was able to take in, all at once, the black coal cliffs of the escarpment, the green rolling hills—a reminder of its agricultural heritage—the aquamarine of the lake, the golden sand of the beaches and the crystal blue of the ocean.

That grand vista assaulted my senses in the most euphoric way, leaving me at its mercy, breathless. That grand vista was and continues to be the most beautiful view in the world. I will happily argue this point with anyone brave enough to take me to task. Since that day I have known in my heart that this was my home, a home I cannot leave. It is not only the natural beauty of that landscape that anchors me there, it is also the unique beauty of the people—it is their warmth, their generosity, their honesty and their diversity. The electorate of Shellharbour has a great multicultural heritage, born initially from the traditional owners of the land, the Woddi Woddi people, to whom I pay my respects today. I acknowledge their elders, past and present.

They were followed by waves of migrant labour that came to support the steel industry. Those waves of immigrants came to this country with hopes and dreams to create a better life—a better life for them and their families. Since then more recent arrivals have come, in part due to our growing reputation as a region for innovation. This reputation for innovation has been assisted by the rising profile of the University of Wollongong as one of the world's best. I am proud to say that I am a graduate of that university. In the Shellharbour electorate the diversity of its people is more than just tolerated; it is embraced and celebrated by the whole community and the unique contributions of each ethnic group are valued and welcomed for the richness they bring. When the natural beauty of the area is combined with the friendliness and sense of community that is found in the local people, I could not think of a better place to raise my family. My passion for the region is so contagious that my entire family—my mother, father, brothers and sisters—moved there in the years that followed, also seeking the better life on offer in the Illawarra.

I come from a large and close family and I was fortunate enough to marry into a large and close family. I cannot emphasise enough from my own experience the importance of family in raising and supporting children today. My family provides me with support and encouragement, advice and counsel, often not sought, and feedback and concern, again not always sought, but often welcome. They can always be relied upon to barrack and cheer, to mop up the tears when the ice cream hits the pavement and to happily shell out their spare change for me to get another. They share with me my dreams, my values and my yearnings to create a better life, not unlike another family I joined: the great Australian Labor Party. As anyone from a big family can tell you, in large families coalitions fold, shift, form and reform on an almost bi-daily basis, setting me in good stead for my current career. Unfortunately, and for many reasons, not everyone can rely on an extended family for support. That is why I strongly believe in government support and assistance for families so that they may have a better life.

The equality of opportunity, the right for children to hope, to dream, to become whom they are capable of becoming, to aspire to a better life regardless of personal circumstance, is integral to public education. If this opportunity does not occur within our public education environment, if the opportunities are not provided for children to reach their full potential, to create for themselves a better life—regardless of race, religion or creed; regardless of fame or fortune—they will not reach their full potential. The provision of a strong, vibrant, quality-focused public education system is a cornerstone of any government support for the child's right to a better life. I see championing the public education system in the years ahead as one of my main challenges on behalf of our Shellharbour electorate.

As I have already stated I am from a large extended family. With one in five Australians suffering from a mental illness it stands to reason that dealing with mental illness has touched my life, and the life of my family members—and it has. In my lifetime our attitude to mental health and the stigma associated with it has changed immensely, and for the better. As a child I remember asking what was wrong with my grandpa. I remember going to grandpa's house and sometimes he was great; he was the life of the party. He would say, "Come here, kids, I have something new for you." He always had the most up-to-date technology, either a new tape, record, or movie. Other times he was like a bear with a sore head. I could never be sure. But our parents were always shushing us outside, out of grandpa's way. At the time I was given the explanation that he was a Rat of Tobruk. As a child that made no sense to me at all. Looking back, with what I know now about mental health, I understand completely.

My grandfather was a Rat of Tobruk. He came back from the war with shell shock. He suffered throughout his life with what is now termed post-traumatic stress. When I was a small child this was never discussed, let alone effectively treated. When I was a young adult there was a growing community awareness of depression, suicide and mental illness in general. With this growing awareness, mental illness has moved out of the darkness and into the light. However, shining a light on this issue, removing the stigma and creating public awareness also uncovered a huge gaping need for mental health care. Now as a mother I am proud to be part of a Government that places mental health as a key priority. The Government is investing significantly in mental health programs, where the focus is on community-based care, early intervention and workforce development, enabling sufferers to have a better life. A common perception is that mental illness is incurable and that it represents a lifelong affliction for those who suffer from it. That is not the case. Many people make a full recovery when diagnosed early and treated effectively, going on to live a better life.

In cases where this is not achieved, the illness can be effectively managed, with the sufferer going on to live a full and productive life, a better life—not unlike people who need to manage their diabetes. Mental illness is no longer an unassailable barrier. As the newly elected member for Shellharbour I will continue to work towards removing the long-held prejudices and myths surrounding mental illness, better educating people and

fostering a culture of understanding and inclusion within society, and enabling sufferers to devote their energies to their personal recovery and rehabilitation and to go on to live a better life.

On another front, a great responsibility lies with this generation of politicians and community and business leaders. The politicians who are here today as part of the Fifty-fourth Parliament have the responsibility of addressing climate change. We carry the responsibility of creating a sustainable future, a better life. Environmental sustainability is not just an environmental necessity, it is an economic necessity. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Industries that continue to rely on old technologies that are well past their use-by date will find themselves left behind. There are many innovative and green technologies that are coming on line. Many of these new technologies are being developed and trialled in the Illawarra. History has shown that innovation is the cornerstone of economic growth. Nations, states and businesses have not grown without it. We are currently on the verge of a new and exciting economic revolution. It is green, it is happening here, and it is being led by the Iemma Labor Government. As the first member for Shellharbour and as a member of the Fifty-fourth Parliament, I will work to attract investment to the electorate of Shellharbour that promotes sustainable development. I am excited to be part of this revolution so that our children and grandchildren can have a better life, a sustainable life.

I would like to take a moment to show my appreciation for those who have loved me, supported me and worked hard for me to make my dreams, the Labor Party's and the community's dreams and aspirations of creating a better life for others a reality. I would not be here without the help, guidance and hard work of many people. I want to thank my loyal and dedicated husband, Andrew, for all his efforts, understanding and patience. I have only experienced a small taste of life as a member of Parliament, but I can already see myself relying more and more on Andrew and his love and support in the years ahead. To my three boys—Lachlan, Angus and Oliver—who remind me every day of the grave responsibility that I and my generation have to make this world a better place for future generations; to our large and extended family, whom I will name in clan groups—the McMahon clan, the Thomas-Gillis clan, the Gogarty clan and the Watt-Arrowsmith clan—I wish to thank you all for your love, support and dedication.

I also thank Noreen Hay and her clan for making me an honorary member of their family 17 years ago. I have been the beneficiary of all that entails. I would like to thank my friend Christine D'Souza, who has been my life coach and friend and has shared with me many of her "gems of wisdom", which I have gone on to unashamedly share with others. I thank the previous member for the Illawarra, Marianne Saliba, for the sound legacy she left me. I thank my friends and their families, my campaign team and campaign manager, Lee Lawler, branch members, colleagues and the community that have supported me and placed their trust and faith in me as their representative. If I were to individually name every person who contributed to my election campaign, I would still be speaking long after my speaking time has expired. I thank you all. You all know who you are and you have all received my thanks in person. Thanks for all the support I have received.

I now have both the honour and responsibility of representing the men and women and children who, along with my family, live in the Shellharbour electorate. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly and I sincerely hope that as I work hard over the next four years to ensure our community gets its fair share I will show that their trust has not been misplaced. During my time in Parliament I hope to infect many more with the love and affection I have for the Shellharbour electorate and the Illawarra region. It is not only a great place to live; it is also a great place to visit. Whether you are having a flutter at the Dapto dogs, enjoying a cold beer at the Shellharbour pub, going fishing and boating on Lake Illawarra or even having a browse in the shops of the village, there is something for everyone. Whether you come for a visit next weekend or in a few months when the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit hits Sydney, you will always be welcome. Mostly I am looking forward to the challenges that lie ahead as I work hard to create a better life for the hardworking families and businesses of Shellharbour and the greater State of New South Wales. There is one truth that binds us all together: we are the members of the Fifty-fourth Parliament and we all come to this place to create a better life.

**The House adjourned at 9.28 p.m. until Thursday 31 May 2007 at 10.00 a.m.**

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