

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 31 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.

## GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS (INFRASTRUCTURE REGISTER) BILL 2007

**Business called on, and postponed by Mr Andrew Stoner.**

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

#### Order of Business

**Motion, by leave, by Mr Andrew Stoner agreed to:**

That the House proceed forthwith to the consideration of General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 2, which had been postponed.

## RURAL COMMUNITIES IMPACTS BILL 2007

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Andrew Stoner.**

### Agreement in Principle

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Rural Communities Impacts Bill 2007 is about giving country communities a fair go in terms of the decisions made by this Parliament. Most members of Parliament and most observers would acknowledge that, by the very nature of our system of representation, the Parliament is a city or metropolitan dominated place. As a result, often we see decisions of government made without due consideration of their impacts upon rural and regional communities. Some of these communities are quite vulnerable. Demographic trends have resulted in a population drift away from many of the smaller country communities throughout New South Wales.

The genesis of this bill stemmed from my visit some years ago to the town of Gwabegar, in the north-west of the State. As I sat there in the park at Gwabegar, which is near the Pilliga area, with some of the local people—Rod and Juleen Young to name a couple, who are good country people—we reflected on the way in which Gwabegar had been affected by decisions made by this Labor Government, which is now in its thirteenth year. Gwabegar had experienced the closure of its pub as a result of decisions made in relation to poker machines. It had experienced the closure of its rail line, again as a result of decisions made by this Government in relation to infrastructure investment, or lack thereof, in country areas. Gwabegar was also about to experience the closure of its sole significant employer, the timber mill, as a result of decisions made by this Government relating to the so-called Brigalow Belt South bioregion.

Gwabegar was fast becoming a ghost town. Rod and Juleen Young and I reflected on the fact that in this State we had legislation to protect threatened species but nothing whatsoever to protect threatened communities—and, I assure members, there are plenty of threatened communities throughout country New South Wales, particularly these days as a result of this record-breaking drought. Country families and communities need all the help they can get from government in New South Wales. I also reflected on the words of the then Premier, Bob Carr, in 1996. The then Premier promised that any major changes proposed by government departments in rural New South Wales would be subject to a rural communities impact statement. He said:

I want to make sure that the potential economic impact of any changes is fully understood before State Cabinet makes a decision.

I have not seen any such rural communities impact statement; indeed, I do not think anyone has. I do not think it has ever been undertaken. Certainly it has never been made public. The public has no confidence whatsoever, in the light of decisions taken by this Government, that a rural communities impact statement has ever been undertaken, let alone taken into account. If that had occurred, how could the Government close grain rail lines around the State? How could it close a viable timber industry in the north-west of the State, which is principally based on the resource that is there, that is, the cypress pine? Incidentally, the cypress pine has now been burnt out due to a massive bushfire and a lack of hazard reduction and fire prevention management, particularly in that area. So that resource has now been lost. Hundreds of jobs, extending from Gunnedah to Gilgandra, to Gwabegar, to Baradine, even to Dubbo, have also been affected.

If a rural communities impact statement had been undertaken, the Government could not possibly have made those and other decisions. I will reflect on some of the other decisions that have been made over the life of this Government that have hurt country New South Wales, that have driven people out of small country towns, and that have driven families to move to the cities in pursuit of work. Earlier I referred to the Brigalow Belt South bioregion. Similar decisions were made in relation to the creation of new national parks on the North Coast and the South Coast. This time it was all about hardwood. It was all about appeasing the Greens; it was all about getting Greens preferences at upcoming elections—to the detriment of the workers in the timber industry in those areas.

Massive areas of State forest, which had been harvested sustainably for generations, were locked up and basically let go. These areas were pristine—indeed, so pristine that the Greens claimed them as high-conservation value icon forests. Because State Forests had maintained them so well for, in some cases, more than 150 years, the Greens wanted them. Now they are locked up, they are full of lantana, they are full of other noxious weeds and feral animals, and they are a bushfire risk. Countless country families have been affected in terms of their jobs.

What is happening to the remaining State forests? The Government did not change the timber volumes, because it was bound by a legal contract under the Regional Forest Agreement. So the remaining State forests are getting belted. Around my home town of Wauchope, as I drive down Bago Road or up the Oxley Highway it is sad to see that significant-size compartments are being felled all the way back to the road. It really is affecting the amenity of the area. The size of the timber volumes coming out is much smaller. Most of the milling is being done by large companies instead of by family-owned mills, which can no longer survive. The mill at Bostobrick near Dorrigo in my electorate closed recently because timber milling is no longer viable. The Government did not consider the impact of its decision on rural communities. I believe it is a bad result for the environment but Bob Carr wanted the Greens preferences, and he got them.

A couple of years ago the Government purchased Yanga Station, one of the largest stations in the south-west of the State. The area had been managed sustainably for mixed primary industry, including the harvesting of red gum, raising livestock and some cropping. It provided hundreds of jobs in transport, shearing and the timber industry, with a downstream effect into communities such as Hay, Balranald and Hillston. All those jobs are now gone because the Government decided to spend \$40 million to buy Yanga Station and lock it up. But that is what the Greens wanted, and the Government gave no consideration whatsoever of the impact on rural communities. It is lovely to have another national park. We all love our Australian environment—it is beautiful. We all love our wildlife. But not too many tourists will visit that national park because the roads in country New South Wales are appalling. The Government should have spent that \$40 million fixing rural roads to enable people to visit existing national parks instead of purchasing the station and putting hundreds of country people out of work. Obviously no rural communities impact statement was produced in that instance.

There have been significant cutbacks to the Department of Primary Industries. It was once known as the agriculture department, but that has been rolled into Primary Industries. I give credit to the former Minister for Agriculture in this place, the member for Mount Druitt, who resisted calls by Treasury bureaucrats for cutbacks to agriculture. The agriculture department evolved under previous Coalition governments, which allocated resources to ensure that New South Wales was at the cutting edge of agriculture in the global marketplace. Our farmers are successful because we put resources into extending services and providing support on the ground. We allocated resources for researching new crop and livestock varieties that are better equipped to cope with drought conditions, for example, and that are more marketable in the global marketplace.

However, in the past few years the Government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars from agriculture. That is a very short-sighted decision. The Government has closed research facilities, including some on the Northern Tablelands, the Central Coast and in other parts of the State. The bureaucrats claim that

research facilities can be centralised. That is nonsense because the geography and climatic conditions are completely different throughout New South Wales. For example, soy beans cannot be grown in the colder areas of the State and new livestock varieties, particularly sheep, cannot be developed on the North Coast but will go well on the Northern Tablelands. We must have specialised facilities in different parts of the State. However, many such facilities have been closed and "rationalised". The long-term impact of this policy will be dire because the competition in primary production is cutthroat at present. Australia, particularly New South Wales, is in danger of losing its position as a producer of the best of the best—our traditional role. The Government must allocate the resources necessary to ensure that we maintain our position in a competitive environment.

There are 15 grain rail lines throughout the State, and the Government has closed four of them. What is the impact of that decision? Freight costs for the State's grain farmers will potentially increase, there will be more trucks on the road and greenhouse gas emissions will escalate. I do not line up with the Greens on many issues, but I do on this occasion because it is just plain bad policy that affects rural communities adversely. It even affects the safety of country children, who must travel on narrow regional roads that are in an appalling state, partly as a result of the drought but partly as a result of this Government's lack of maintenance funding. School buses must share country roads with huge trucks carrying large quantities of grain. The Government did not consider the impact of its decision to close those grain lines.

On the subject of rail, I see that the member for Tweed is in the Chamber. His constituency on the far North Coast appears to have disappeared off the map as far as the State Government is concerned. In fact, some communities in that area that have been hammered by a range of government decisions and a lack of priority and attention have sought to become part of Queensland. That is how bad the situation is. The big issue in that region is the Government's decision to close the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line, which is one of the reasons the Tweed is now represented by a member on this side of the House. That rail line serviced a number of communities from Casino, to Bangalow and Ballina, up to Murwillumbah and the Tweed.

The Queensland Government is forging ahead with rail infrastructure, extending the line to Coolangatta. But the New South Wales Government closed the Casino to Murwillumbah line. Why? It is because the bean counters—the economic rationalists—declared that the line was not generating enough money. It is okay for the Government to subsidise CityRail to the tune of \$1.5 billion yet the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line must pay its own way. That is a double standard; it is hypocrisy. It is an insult to country people to treat them as second-class citizens.

**Mr Steve Whan:** We want some money from the Feds for rail lines.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The Casino to Murwillumbah line is a branch line so it is clearly a State Government responsibility. The member for Monaro is trying to play politics. I will never know how he can call himself a Country Labor member. He is playing politics on an issue that is clearly a State Government responsibility. The State Government decided to close the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line and as a result local communities have been affected adversely. No rural communities impact statement was produced. The Premier decided recently to extend daylight saving.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Beauty!

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** "Beauty!" says the member for Monaro. But a lot of people in western New South Wales do not love daylight saving. Did the Government consult those people? No, it did not. What reason did the Government give for its decision? It said it is because Tasmania is doing it. Tasmania is the new leader of this nation! New South Wales, the once great premier State, now takes its lead from Tasmania. Do not worry about country people. Do not worry that children will have to get up in the dark to catch the school bus when daylight saving is extended. Tasmania wants daylight saving, so that is okay. The Government makes decision after decision, with no consideration of the impact. It does not produce rural communities impact statements. I would be grateful if the Premier would show me the rural communities impact statement for that decision. But I do not think he will because it does not exist.

The Government has committed \$2 billion for a desalination plant that people in Sydney do not want. But where is the money to invest in water infrastructure to help country communities through this drought and to help them prepare for the next drought? There is a project in far western New South Wales, the Menindee Lakes scheme, that the experts agree will save massive quantities of water, which could be made available for environmental flows and town water supplies. The water quality at Broken Hill could be improved. The scheme involves engineering works on the Menindee Lakes, which currently permit massive evaporation because they

are not regulated properly. We could do the necessary work for a fraction of the \$2 billion that this Government plans to spend on a hated desalination plant. The scheme could also solve some problems with the Murray-Darling Basin. But the project will not happen. Why? It is because the Government has decided to spend all the money in the city.

This Government has made a decision to continue the imposition of fixed water charges on the State irrigators. Nobody has been hit harder by this drought than the State irrigators because the irrigators have relatively high cost structures: they invest in irrigation systems and they invest in ways to try and conserve water but still make a decent income from farming. But they require water and the prolonged nature of this drought has meant that our water storages are very, very low—in some cases less than 10 per cent, but most of the State dams would be around the 20 per cent mark. Here in the city we get very excited if our water storage level gets down towards 30 per cent but things are far worse in country New South Wales: when storage levels get very low the first thing that happens is that water allocations to irrigators are cut.

Irrigators have costs; they have borrowed for infrastructure, but they have no incomes. We have seen this in the Lachlan Valley, where the irrigators have had little or no allocation of water for probably five years. During a drought summit convened by New South Wales farmers the Minister for Primary Industries agreed to waive those fixed water charges for a period of 12 months. That was much appreciated, but what about the other farmers throughout the State? The Namoi irrigators will receive little or no allocation this year. I spoke to a cotton farmer in the Namoi just last week and due to a downturn in the world price for cotton and the fact that this farmer has no water, he is taking a loss in the millions of dollars.

The rice farmers along the Murrumbidgee and Murray have had little or no water allocation. Those impacts affect entire communities due to a lack of money in the region. Yet this Government is issuing bills for fixed water charges to irrigators and driving them to the wall. We have heard tragic cases of the suicide of farmers brought about by the depressing nature of their financial situation. But this Government will not waive those fixed water charges. Where is the consideration of the impact of that decision?

Recently the Bells Line Expressway issue was raised in this place. The Federal Government committed \$10 million towards progressing studies to make this road a reality. The expressway will open up the central west and encourage investment and will have road safety and environmental benefits. The NRMA and everybody are for it. Given that this is a State road I think it was very generous of the Federal Government to contribute \$10 million. But when the Federal Government asked for \$10 million from the Iemma Labor Government, Eric the Red said no and knocked it back. He is happy to spend \$25 million to defer the tunnel funnel measures for the Lane Cove Tunnel until after the election but he is not happy to spend \$2 million to progress a project that will benefit the State, and particularly rural and regional New South Wales. Again, there has been no consideration of the impact of that decision on country New South Wales.

In relation to rural health, the shadow Minister for Health is in the Chamber and she has apprised me that this Government has closed more than half the State's small maternity wards, despite medical evidence that for the great majority of births it is safer for country women to give birth closer to their families and closer to their communities. We heard the tragic news last year of a young mother who was flown from Cobar to Dubbo because this Government had closed the Cobar maternity ward. There were problems with the birth: the birth was in mid air on an emergency flight, the baby was premature and it died because of the delays. I do not know but I would imagine had the maternity ward been open and had the medical staff been able to attend to the mother locally, the baby may well be alive today. That sort of tragedy can result from decisions that are made with no consideration of the impact on rural people.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** What about renal dialysis?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** An Aboriginal man in Kempsey needs dialysis and he has to go to Newcastle—a four-hour drive each way. He spends four hours in the dialysis chair and has to turn around and drive another four hours home. This man is quite unwell and he has a 12-hour day, twice a week, to attend Newcastle. It is a disgrace. The Nationals continue to call for an inquiry into rural health because people are dying. I am not trying to be sensationalist about this. People are falling through the cracks because the system is being centralised away from country communities and patients are being affected. Again, decisions are being made without consideration of the impact on rural communities. Where is the rural community impact statement?

The decision to stop funding for the Country Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme impacts on the ratepayers who are paying load-based licensing to the Environment Protection Authority. The quality of the

water affects the attractiveness of a country town for a family to move to because the water may be crook or there is not a proper sewerage system. The amount of water available also has an impact because we do not have recycling systems that could be used for irrigation, like the terrific one at Dubbo out at Greengrove—although the council had to pay for that because it got no help from this Government.

The Government stopped funding for the replacement of timber bridges and now in some communities schoolchildren have to hop off the bus before it goes across the timber bridge because the bridge would not cope with a loaded bus. The children have to walk across the bridge and then hop back on the bus. How disgraceful is that in the twenty-first century! Yet this Government made a decision to stop the funding with clearly no consideration of the impact on rural communities.

**Mr Steve Whan:** What do you think the timber bridges program is?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The timber bridges program was introduced by the former Coalition Government but was stopped by this Government for years. Only under pressure—and I still have not seen any money flowing—the Government belatedly adopted The Nationals' policies and reintroduced the program. It is no wonder the so-called Country Labor faction has been reduced to a rump of just two in this House—the member for Monaro and the member for Bathurst. Country Labor lost the seats of Tweed and Murray-Darling, and next election we are going after the seats of Monaro and Bathurst because those members failed to stand up for country people in this place.

**Mr Steve Whan:** That is what you said last time. You have dropped 22 per cent in three elections.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Mate, put your money where your mouth is and support this bill.

**Mr Steve Whan:** It is a replay of the last time. We debated this last time and you failed.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** You voted against this bill. The Independents voted for this bill because they knew it was a good idea. It was Bob Carr's idea to have a rural communities impact statement but he never followed through on it. Like a lot of things he said he would do, he did not do it. We are going to make this legislation so that the Government cannot weasel out of it. We are not going to allow the Government to pretend it is considering impacts on rural communities, then go ahead and make decisions based on Greens preferences and not country people. We are going to legislate this so that country people are assured that Government considers their interests—this holds true for a Coalition Government. We are happy to be open and transparent, and if somebody asks where a rural communities impact statement is on a certain issue we can say, "Here it is. We have considered it". But when we have a Government that is so Sydney-centric—

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Out of touch.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** And out of touch with country New South Wales, heed the warning: We saw what happened in the last election and if this continues, Labor—a once proud party of the bush, based on the shearers and the miners—will be obliterated from country New South Wales. But one of the two remaining Country Labor members could stand up and support this bill if he wanted to; it may stop some of the rot. There is a Cabinet in this State with just two members out of 22 who hail from outside the metropolitan block. I refer to Tony Kelly from Wellington and Ian Macdonald, who hails originally from Melbourne but has a property up near Carcoar, I think. They are both in the other place. Two Country Labor members out of 22—and there is some argument about that—represent country New South Wales. More than half the Coalition's shadow Cabinet hails from outside the metropolitan block, which is the sort of balance country people need but clearly are not getting.

This is a simple bill that requires the preparation of a rural community impact statement for decisions taken by Cabinet that affect areas outside the metropolitan block. The bill defines "rural" as areas outside the Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong block. If Cabinet makes a decision that has an impact on those areas, an impact statement must be produced and made available to the public. This simple bill puts into legislation the broken promise of Bob Carr. It will enable country people to have the confidence that their interests are being properly represented in government. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Order of Business

#### Motion by Mr Steve Whan agreed to:

That the business before the House be interrupted at 11.00 a.m. to permit the presentation of inaugural speeches by the members for Port Stephens and Pittwater.

### SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY FERRIES

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [10.32 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the current Special Commission of Inquiry into Sydney Ferries;
- (2) notes the terms of reference specifically exclude the fatal accidents involving Sydney Ferries on 5 January and 28 March 2007; and
- (3) condemns the Government for this exclusion and calls on the Minister for Transport to immediately allow these accidents to be considered as part of the inquiry.

When the Premier and the Minister for Transport announced the commission of inquiry into Sydney Ferries on 3 April 2007 there is no doubt that there was a clear public expectation that this inquiry and its deliberations would include the two accidents that occurred on 5 January and 28 March this year, resulting in the death of five individuals. The community expected no less. I place on the record part of an editorial written by the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 30 March, two days after the second fatal accident, which sums up the mood of the public and the public's expectations on how the issues would be dealt with. It stated:

The cause of Wednesday night's accident is not known. Police and the Office of Transport Safety have only begun their investigation. Pending the outcome of their inquiries the Premier, Morris Iemma, is right to keep open the option of a wider investigation into the performance of Sydney Ferries. It may well be needed to restore community confidence in a water transport system that should be one of the delights of living in Sydney.

From that statement and the public's expectation there was a clear view that those two incidents that occurred this year would form part of the terms of reference or at least part of the consideration of any such inquiry. There is clearly a contradiction in the Premier's approach. He was quoted in the media as saying he wanted a top to bottom inquiry, yet he chose to specifically exclude the terms of reference from the inquiry. I place on record comments from the Premier as reported in the *Daily Telegraph* on 4 April. In an article entitled "Ferries hit rock bottom", he was quoted as saying:

Recent incidents involving Sydney Ferries have made it clear to me that it is time to put the spotlight onto the entire operation of the Sydney Ferries Corporation from top to bottom ... this will be a thorough, rigorous and independent inquiry and I want no stone left unturned.

The Premier, in his own words, as quoted in the newspaper and elsewhere in the media that day, wanted a top to bottom inquiry only a few days after the tragic accident on Sydney Harbour. There was no doubt the public expected that those two incidents would be considered as part of the terms of reference. The Opposition accepts that there are ongoing separate investigations into the two incidents by the relevant investigations. However, on a number of occasions the State Government has chosen to ignore the recommendations put forward by the very body undertaking those investigations—that is, the Office of Transport Safety Investigations. There is no reason why the highly regarded Commissioner Bret Walker, SC, who is conducting the commission of inquiry, should not have been the one to determine the extent of relevance the two incidents may have had to the other issues raised during the inquiry. Why did the Government choose to specifically include that line in the terms of reference disallowing those two incidents from being considered as part of the inquiry? Surely that should have been a matter to be determined by the commissioner.

Had the Government not put that line in the terms of reference the commissioner could have decided whether it was within his jurisdiction or whether it was appropriate for him to consider those two fatal accidents as part of the other issues he was investigating in the inquiry. The important point to note is that the specific exclusion of these accidents from the terms of reference inappropriately makes the premature assumption that these incidents have no relevance to the other issues to be examined by the inquiry. It also undervalues the inextricable link that exists in any organisation, public or private, between sound management practices and key

performance indicators, such as safety. I draw the attention of the House to the terms of reference of the inquiry, which in its preamble states:

Inquire into and report on the present state of Sydney Ferries, provision of Sydney ferry services and any action which should be taken to improve the ability of Sydney Ferries to improve safety, efficient and customer focused ferry services. Such action may include but is not limited to—

And five issues are listed. The five points raised are generic; they cover a whole host of issues. The two incidents that occurred on Sydney Harbour earlier this year have been considered in those five subheadings. Then, after the Premier and the Minister for Transport had been on the public record saying they wanted a top to bottom inquiry and a thorough, independent, open investigation, the State Government chose to include a sentence that I argue should never have been put in the terms of reference. I call on the Minister for Transport to explain to the House why the sentence was included in the terms of reference and to remove the sentence from the terms of reference. The offending sentence states:

The inquiry is not investigating the incidents involving Ferry Services on 5 January and 28 March 2007.

As I have stated already, the Opposition accepts that relevant authorities and bodies are investigating those two incidents but, notwithstanding those ongoing investigations, it is for the commissioner to decide the extent to which those incidents are relevant to the many other management and cultural issues that exist at crisis point within Sydney Ferries. It is for the commissioner to decide the extent to which those matters are relevant to the other matters within Sydney Ferries.

Why has the Government chosen to put that sentence in the terms of reference? Why did the Government mislead the public when it said it would have a top to bottom inquiry into Sydney Ferries? Two days after the tragic accident on Sydney Harbour involving a Sydney ferry in which four people lost their lives there was a public expectation, as there is now, that the commission of inquiry would be all-encompassing. Yet the Minister and the Premier have chosen to include that sentence in the terms of the inquiry. I turn now to some issues that demonstrate the Government's failure to address the safety record of Sydney Ferries generally. The State Government all too often has ignored the findings of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations. This cannot continue in the wake of the ongoing problems facing Sydney Ferries. In its most recent report, in 2006, the Office of Transport Safety Investigations said this about the culture in Sydney Ferries:

Crew resource management on board Sydney Ferry vessels is below what might be considered best practice and has been affected over time by inadequate training, poor communication procedures, ill-defined roles and responsibilities ...

The Office of Transport Safety Investigations made recommendations on a number of issues that arose from the many inquiries it conducted, yet the State Government has chosen on repeated occasions to ignore those recommendations. The Government's refusal to adopt the recommendations previously made by that body makes the inclusion in the terms of reference of this inquiry of the incidents to which I referred even more important. Another example of the State Government's failure to accept recommendations by the Office of Transport Safety Investigations relates to the installation of black boxes on Sydney ferries—vital in ensuring appropriate investigation of safety incidents. In June 2005 the Office of Transport Safety Investigations recommended to the Government that there be black boxes on public passenger services. Transport Minister Watkins told this House in October 2005 he would give effect to the recommendation. Nearly two years later nothing has been done. How useful would those devices have been when looking at the issues impacting the two incidents on 5 January and 28 March this year? Yet the Minister failed to implement that recommendation.

Time will not allow me to go into the detail of the safety record of Sydney Ferries, but it is appalling. The number of incidents that have occurred in the past two years is testimony to that. Time and again the Government has chosen to cover up potential issues arising out of such incidents. The inclusion of the sentence in the terms of reference for the current inquiry is further evidence of that. There is no reason why the Government should not have left it to the commissioner, the credible Bret Walker, SC, to determine the extent to which those fatal accidents have relevance to the management issues, the cultural issues and the safety problems within Sydney Ferries. This State Government will not leave any stone unturned when it comes to covering up the issues that should be investigated. I call on the Minister for Transport and the Premier to reverse their decision, to stop the cover-up, to remove that sentence from the terms of reference and give the public what they deserve: an open, independent, public inquiry.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.42 a.m.]: First and foremost, on behalf of the Government, I would like to extend condolences to the families of the five people killed in the tragic accidents on Sydney Harbour on 5 January and 28 March 2007. As the Minister has said many times, the

safety of all users of Sydney Harbour is of the utmost importance to the Government. This curious motion carries an inference that those tragic accidents are not being, and will not be, properly investigated. Nothing could be further from the truth. As members would be aware, and as the shadow Minister is aware but pretends not to be, there are currently under way investigations by police and inquiries by the Office of Transport Safety Investigations and Maritime NSW in respect of those incidents.

Despite the erroneous claims made by the member for Willoughby about the Office of Transport Safety Investigations, there is no formal jurisdiction allowing that body to autonomously investigate every incident in New South Wales. Nor is it the foremost body that exists to investigate such incidents. When one examines the investigation capabilities of the relevant bodies in this matter, one sees that the Office of Transport Safety Investigations has as strong, if not stronger, capabilities and experience in accident investigations within a harbour than the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, whose maritime investigators specialise in investigating offshore merit time accidents. Further, there are also coronial inquests into each of those incidents. Significantly, as was announced on 30 March, in order to identify potential factors common to both accidents and to ensure greater efficiency, these two inquests will be conducted in tandem.

The special commission of inquiry, headed by eminent Senior Counsel Bret Walker, who also headed the special commission of inquiry into Campbelltown and Camden hospitals, will be an efficient, independent, properly resourced inquiry with sufficiently wide terms of reference to enable Mr Walker to make appropriate findings. Most significantly, it will not lead to a duplication of existing investigations or unofficial proceedings by the Office of Transport Safety Investigations. The Government has been very clear about that from the beginning. The Premier and the Minister believe there is a need for closer scrutiny of all aspects of the operations of Sydney Ferries, and that is why the special commission of inquiry was established.

The member for Willoughby correctly quoted the Premier's remarks made on 3 April this year, when he said that a comprehensive review of Sydney Ferries is required. With expert investigators from the aforementioned bodies already inquiring into the causes of these accidents, any move to impose yet another layer of investigation and query would serve only to hinder progress and would not go any way to provide comfort to the families of the victims than will the current inquiries. If the member for Willoughby thinks Bret Walker, SC, Maritime NSW or the Office of Transport Safety Investigations are not doing enough and are not promising to do enough, she and other critics should keep very strongly in mind that it is the office of the Coroner that has been established to look into the causes of death in a comprehensive and independent way. It is the Coroner who holds particular expertise in such matters and is best placed to make conclusive and authoritative findings and, based on those findings, to make the appropriate recommendations.

One would hope that the motion moved by the member for Willoughby is not an attack on the professionalism and integrity of the New South Wales Coroner's office or of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations, but you never know with this Opposition. The way they keep attacking public servants is astounding. The member for Willoughby might like to note that the terms of reference for the special commission of inquiry require that its recommendations must be compatible with the findings of any inquest and the findings, whether interim or final, of investigations of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations, should any such findings be available before the report is delivered.

If the member for Willoughby chooses to quote the terms of reference, she ought not selectively quote them. She is right when she said that the terms of reference preclude Bret Walker from looking into the incidents of 5 January and 28 March 2007. But they do provide that the recommendations of his inquiry must be compatible with the findings of any inquest and the findings, whether interim or final, following the investigation by the Office of Transport Safety Investigations, should any such findings be available before the report is delivered. That is the key point. The member for Willoughby can continue to be misleading, alarmist and shrill. That is her job. Our job is to deliver better services to the people of New South Wales, and that includes the 14 million people who use Sydney ferries each year. It is hoped and anticipated that these investigations will assist the Government to do just that. The motion moved by the member for Willoughby seeks to hinder that aim, and we oppose it.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [10.48 a.m.]: I also want to extend the condolences of the Coalition to the families of those killed in the tragic incidents. The intent is to honour them, and I would certainly want that noted. I am very pleased to speak to this motion. This really is a case of doing things properly. The motion makes it clear that the Government is doing things in part. It is very difficult to review the operations of Sydney Ferries yet exclude the safety aspects of those incidents. It is time things were done properly. In that context, we acknowledge that Bret Walker is an ideal person to undertake this commission of inquiry. However, we seek to



ensure that he has full powers to investigate the incidents at hand. To exclude these incidents and their safety perspective from the terms of reference is to exclude the guts of the inquiry.

There is a clear interrelationship between the management performance of Sydney Ferries, the provision of ferry services and safety outcomes. The two incidents we are talking about are tragic. It makes no sense to exclude them when one is doing a complete review. There is an undoubted link between the management performance of Sydney Ferries and safety. In the past five years—between 2000 and 2006—revenue has gone up 14 per cent but costs have gone up 46 per cent. Why is that an issue? The issue is how those costs have been used. Most of them have gone to labour costs. If they had been directly linked to maintenance and safety measures—we have already heard that the black boxes are not there—one would think there was some sense in that. But that is not the case. These costs have increased while maintenance costs in the same period have gone down 27 per cent. If this is what management of Sydney Ferries is doing, is there not a link between maintenance costs falling and safety outcomes? If that is the case, the additional safety incidents have to be included. There needs to be a comprehensive inquiry, and in that context every single incident of safety needs to be included.

We say there is a direct link between what management of Sydney Ferries has been doing and the on-costs into performance management indicators. Looking at the key management performance indicators for Sydney Ferries—again, this is a way we measure management and its performance—one sees that 83 per cent of those key performance indicators last year were not met. That includes safety measures. There is no way one can undertake an investigation into Sydney Ferries without considering the safety incidents. If 83 per cent of the key performance indicators are not being achieved there is an issue with management. If there is an issue with management, it is not appropriately applying the costs and as the costs are going up spending on maintenance is going down. We believe there is a direct link between management performance and the provision of ferry services generally and safety outcomes. If that is the case and there is a link, all incidents need to be included in this inquiry.

It is time this Government started to do things properly. It has a clear approach towards doing things in isolation. Until we do it properly we will have an ongoing ad hoc approach to this State. We need to include all instances in this inquiry. The instances that have been clearly outlined potentially have a link to management performance. All we are saying is that this inquiry should be comprehensive; that Bret Walker is given the power to investigate the link between management performance and safety outcomes. It is time that was done as an absolute priority. We will support him in any way we can, but until that is done we will have an ad hoc approach, which is consistent with the way this Government is being run—ad hoc, not comprehensive and not solving all the problems we are facing.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.52 a.m.]: I join the Government in opposing this motion. The terms of the inquiry—perhaps the member for Manly and the member for Willoughby should look at them more closely—say the commission will inquire into and report on a whole series of things and it says the words, "but is not limited to". So, it can investigate many of the things the Opposition raised. What this mob opposite wants to do is politicise issues arising out of the fatalities that occurred on Sydney Harbour. I extend my deepest sympathy to the families—

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian**: Point of order: I take deep offence at the member's comments and ask him to withdraw those comments.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity)**: Does the member withdraw?

**Mr BARRY COLLIER**: No, I do not. I said, "politicise the events surrounding it".

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian**: Further to the point of order: I have asked the member to withdraw his offensive comments that cast aspersions on the motivation of the Opposition in relation to this matter. His comments are extremely offensive and disgraceful. We have purposely been very careful in the way we have discussed these issues, and we ask the member to withdraw his comments immediately.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity)**: Does the member for Miranda wish to rephrase his comments?

**Mr BARRY COLLIER**: I did phrase my comments fairly carefully. I was not saying the Opposition is politicising the deaths, I was saying the Opposition is politicising the circumstances surrounding those deaths. That is what I am saying.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty):** I have not heard sufficiently from the member for Willoughby as to how the comments have personally impacted upon her.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** I am personally offended because the member said that we are politicising the deaths of those five people who lost their lives this year on Sydney Harbour. The heart of the issue today is that the Coalition is extremely concerned that the Government has refused to include those issues as part of the commission of inquiry. The member's comments offend all of us because he is casting aspersions on our motivation in moving this motion this morning. He needs to withdraw the comment.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER:** They are politicising the circumstances surrounding—

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty):** Are you speaking further to the point of order?

**Mr BARRY COLLIER:** I want to continue my speech.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarritty):** Order! The convention of the House is that if one is asked to withdraw a remark considered offensive by a member of the opposite party, one is supposed to do that.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER:** I withdraw it. That was not my intent. One of the problems with this motion is that we have a Coroner in New South Wales who is charged with inquiring into the causes of deaths and suspicious fires in the State. The Coroner not only has the power to inquire into the causes, he has the power to recommend that charges be laid if necessary. He has the power to make recommendations as to what procedures should be followed and what changes could or should be made to the procedures that were followed by public or private authorities, firms and so on.

In my view the Opposition is seeking to usurp the functions of the Coroner. The Coroner is an independent person. He has authority under the Coroners Act. No doubt a report has been made to him, or her, by the police. It is up to him to do an investigation. What would happen if we follow the Opposition's motion? We would have one inquiry looking into the tragic deaths, usurping the Coroner's authority, while the Coroner was looking into those circumstances and making recommendations. The two cannot exist side by side.

The terms of reference say too that the commissioner will not be required to investigate those incidents involving Sydney Ferries on 5 January and 28 March and says, "Any recommendations must be compatible with the findings of any inquest." That is quite clear. The Coroner has to look at the circumstances surrounding the tragic events and has to make findings, and the special commission of inquiry must take those into account in examining Sydney Ferries. That is quite clear and the Opposition should not be trying to make political capital out of these issues.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.57 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Willoughby. I find the comments made by the member for Miranda and the member for Maroubra to be the most extraordinary misrepresentation of the truth. The terms of reference provided to Mr Bret Walker, SC, specifically preclude investigation of the incidents involving Sydney Ferries on Sydney Harbour on 5 January and 28 March this year. Yet, I believe the public, when they heard the Government was going to refer this matter to an inquiry, thought it was specifically to look at the safety issues around accidents such as that. In effect, it is a cover-up, misleading the public about the Government's intention. And it is no wonder. The Government has a hideous record in terms of safety on Sydney ferries. My electorate is served by Sydney Ferries; I have many wharves in my electorate and many of my constituents use this service.

I have compiled records of the number of Sydney ferry accidents over the years; they average more than four a year. I am not surprised that the Government wants to get off the hook by saying, "We'll have an inquiry but we won't allow Mr Walker to look at these two accidents." If the Government is serious about getting a real outcome from this inquiry it will widen the terms of reference to allow Mr Walker to look at these accidents. Government members said that the Office of Transport Safety Investigation [OTSI] will investigate these accidents. The reality is that in 2005 and 2006 the Office of Transport Safety Investigation made recommendations about black boxes, crew training, communications and operational management but the Government has ignored them. The Government is now saying that the Office of Transport Safety Investigation is investigating these crashes. The Government's record is to ignore recommendations made by the Office of Transport Safety Investigation.

The Government must be realistic. Does it expect people to fall for the idea that an inquiry into the safety of Sydney ferries does not include an investigation of the accidents at the beginning of this year which resulted in deaths? People expect the Government to be realistic by ensuring that Mr Walker has the power under the terms of reference to look at those accidents. We have a great deal of time for Mr Walker, and we believe that his inquiry is appropriate to investigate these deaths. We sympathise with the families of those who died. In particular, I sympathise with my constituents who regularly use Sydney ferries. They constantly complain to me about the operation of Sydney ferries and timetable disruptions, as well as safety issues. They want an assurance that the independent inquiry by Mr Walker will look into the deaths and that any recommendations will be binding on the Government, because the Government has ignored recommendations from the Office of Transport Safety Investigation, such as installing black boxes on Sydney ferries.

If the Government is of the opinion that the Office of Transport Safety Investigation is the preferred model, it should explain why it has ignored recommendations in the past. The shadow Minister for Transport is constant on this issue; she has her finger on the pulse. The Government should be ashamed of itself for not taking the member's advice. Where is the Minister for Transport? He should be in the Chamber listening to this debate on behalf of the families of those who were killed in these accidents and those who commute and travel on Sydney ferries? The Minister should explain why the terms of reference prohibit Mr Walker from investigating these accidents. Yet again Government members are casting aspersions about our motivation. One of their colleagues has been forced to withdraw such a comment. Our motivation is to improve the safety of Sydney ferries. Obviously, the Government is not doing that.

**Pursuant to resolution business interrupted.**

### **INAUGURAL SPEECHES**

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [11.03 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I stand here today, proudly, as the first Liberal member for the seat of Port Stephens. It has been a long journey, but I have shared it with loyal friends and with my family. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of my wife, Victoria, my sons, Angus, Stuart and James, and my supporters. Why am I here? Where do I come from? What skills and what views inform my work for the people of Port Stephens and the greater community of the state of New South Wales? These are valid questions that I hope to answer this morning on this, the occasion of my inaugural speech to the Fifty-fourth Parliament of New South Wales. I am the son of two wonderful parents. Dad was Norwegian. He topped his school leaving exams, setting a national record for the day; but as the eldest of three children, with a recently deceased father and in the midst of the Depression, Dad could not follow his ambition to become an organic chemist and went to sea as a stoker on a whaling factory ship instead. In the off season he worked as a carpenter with his uncle.

Dad taught me the value of a good education, and the value of hard work. When he was 18 he ran for the Norwegian Parliament, narrowly missing out on a seat when he resigned his place on the ticket to go back to sea and the candidate below him took his place in that Parliament. Dad met Mum when he was sent to Sydney during the Second World War, where he worked for the Norwegian Government in Exile, responsible for the welfare of Norwegian merchant seamen who were actively involved in carrying allied cargoes throughout the war. When peace came they were married in Oslo, and the Norwegian Government moved Mum and Dad to Rotterdam, where I was born. Concerned about the vagaries of diplomatic life, we came to Australia in 1955. Dad worked as a carpenter and Mum as a secretary; they scrimped and saved to put me through Trinity Grammar School. When I matriculated to the University of Sydney Dad, at the age of 60, and his workmate Lindsay Hardy decided it was time to start their own building company. I am proud to say that 36 years later it is still going well, and that Lindsay is now my business partner. Dad died shortly before I became the Mayor of Port Stephens in 1994, and Mum died this February.

They were great parents, great role models who made sacrifices for me, and they would have been tickled pink to be here today, especially Dad, who would finally have seen a Baumann make it into Parliament. I am advised that I am the first civil engineer from the University of Sydney to serve in this Parliament. I point out that civil engineering is the science of designing things that do not move—or they should not move. My transition from an all-boys church school to the campus of Australia's oldest university was dramatic. I found freedom to do what I wanted as long as I attended 36 hours of lectures, tutorials and practicals a week. It was an exhilarating time to be a university student in Sydney. The Vietnam War and the associated activism had encouraged a new generation of student politicians and, although there was a lot of animosity between this new breed of progressives and their more conservative counterparts, there were some great characters in the mix. Many of us have ended up here in this place during our careers, and I acknowledge some of the prominent Sydney university alumni who have gone on to make great State and Federal parliamentarians.

I acknowledge one such alumnus and former Liberal parliamentary leader, Kerry Chikarovski. Kerry's mother passed away on the weekend, and my thoughts are with her and her family as they attend Jill Bartels' funeral at this time. I am proud to acknowledge my former academic peers, as it was at university that I developed an interest in helping those around me by representing their interests. I met my wife, Victoria, in 1981, and she finally married me in 1983. We moved to Port Stephens in 1985, where our first son, Angus, was born; Stuart and James were born in 1988 and 1992. As a young man, what struck me about Port Stephens was the enormous potential this place had for growth, not just from the perspective of a local builder, but as someone soon to start a family. Without university politics to keep me occupied, I ran for the Port Stephens Shire Council in 1987 and have been a councillor for 16 of the past 20 years.

The parties might not be as good as they were at university, but we have achieved some great things on this council, of which I am very proud. I always ran for council as an Independent, because I believe that services, not politics, should be the primary focus of local government. But as the member for Port Stephens I stand before you today as a proud Liberal. I believe in those liberal values of freedom of enterprise and initiative. I believe that wealth in a community can only be created by individuals, that the role of responsible government is to provide an environment to foster these ideals through policy, and that government must be small and unobtrusive, and be prepared to take duties and responsibilities that individuals cannot effectively carry out alone.

The debate between the benches should be, I believe, for as long as the Liberals sit opposed to the Labor Party, about the collective good versus the individual will. We must celebrate our differences and through informed, intelligent debate come to consensus. I am encouraged by the Government's decision to nominate an Independent Speaker to this place. Amongst my colleagues, 24 of us are new members sitting here for the first time. To all of you, I say congratulations, and that it is our responsibility to change the tone of the House, to encourage new values and to put the standard of debate, the exchange of ideas, before petty politicking. We have seen in recent State elections a shift in the way State government is viewed. Effective provision of services is only one piece of the puzzle. We need big ideas. We need a vision for this State. As a councillor and mayor of a regional shire I often felt as though government was blinkered by its own administrative and legislative processes. We need to articulate big ideas and take the electorate on a journey toward achieving our goals.

During the campaign, I was struck by the fact that Port Stephens is made up of not one region, but many regions. The infrastructure requirements of Nelson Bay are different to those of Raymond Terrace; the social problems of Mayfield differ greatly to those in Karuah. From the southern-most tip of Mayfield, where local residents lined up at polling booths assuming they were a part of Newcastle, which they feel most connected to, to the north at Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens, where residents have lived for many years as part of the Myall Lakes electorate—admirably administered by my colleague John Turner—Port Stephens is, in parts, urban, suburban and rural, with lashings of agriculture, aquaculture, defence, tourism and heavy industry. But from the sky Port Stephens is a sea of blue and green, pristine forests and idyllic coastland. The people of Port Stephens are passionate about the environment in which they live. It is our responsibility to ensure it is kept safe from overdevelopment and pollution.

To be the representative of Port Stephens is not to be one man but many, and during the intense eight months I was on the campaign trail I tried to be that representative who will be able to aptly embody the interests of so many different communities. These communities are in trouble. Their neglect must be rectified. Our crime rate climbs steadily every year and it is only a creative interpretation of the statistics that makes the picture look anything but grim. Malicious damage to property in the shire of Port Stephens rose 5 per cent in the last quarter alone. Port Stephens is part of the Lower Hunter area police command. This means that outside normal operating hours a police response has to come from Maitland to provide assistance and two patrol cars cover an area of 8,000 square kilometres. For those in the Chamber and gallery who are not from my electorate—and you are in the minority this morning—that is the equivalent of an emergency call from Sydney's North Shore being answered by a patrol car in Penrith.

Nelson Bay swells to bursting over the summer holidays. It is no coincidence that this beautiful region was chosen to be the face of Australian tourism overseas. Yet a medical emergency in Nelson Bay must be diverted to Maitland or John Hunter hospitals, some 70 kilometres away over single lane roads. To bring it home to those of you from Sydney, that is the equivalent of an emergency patient in Campbelltown being transferred to Epping. Nelson Bay needs a hospital in name and function. In 2005 the Nelson Bay polyclinic got a name change and a facelift. Unfortunately, this was restricted to its letterhead. Now called Tomaree Community Hospital, it is a hospital in name only, run by seven local general practitioners working on a roster. Those seven local general practitioners have their own practices and patients to look after. We need to provide

better opportunities for our young people. Living in a regional community can be alienating. In Port Stephens there is no escape for our youth and limited local opportunities for employment due to inadequate public transport and amenities.

For all those things that are wrong with our State's administration, for everything we, as legislators, need to do better, there are always things that are right. I am proud of the way Port Stephens continues to grow. Medowie, my hometown, has experienced a 43 per cent population increase in the last decade and should double its population in the next decade. Our challenge now is to balance the influx of new residents with the needs of those who were born and raised there, to match Medowie's rural character with the requirements of an increasingly urban community and to provide amenities and infrastructure, which are desperately needed. As a councillor and former mayor, I am passionate about growing regional infrastructure. The Hunter is a growing regional area and, for too long, its needs have been ignored by government.

My electoral success is representative of a shifting mood in the community, as was the success of my colleague the mayor and Independent member for Lake Macquarie and the meaningful challenges put forth in other Hunter seats. For too long the Hunter electoral belt has been assumed to be cinched tightly around the waist of the Labor Party. We were thought to be the rusted-on barnacles that maintain the integrity and smooth sailing of the Labor Party's ship. But not any more. Local industry is changing, local families and their requirements are changing and, so too, their representatives are changing. It is no coincidence that four of the State's most marginal seats now are Hunter seats on both sides of the electoral pendulum.

The people of the Hunter are no longer pawns of BHP, the manufacturing industry or any one political philosophy. They are looking around them: they live in a great area, their rugby league team is the best in the game and their soccer team is about to break loose. They are starting to appreciate their region. In her inaugural speech the member for Newcastle mentioned the contribution that the NBN telethons make to great local causes, such as the Hunter Medical Research Institute, which she recently chaired. As a new business in the Hunter, my business partner and I received the full support of the people of the Hunter to such an extent that we were able to donate four NBN Telethon Art Union houses in four successive telethons. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Those telethons showed the generosity of Hunter people, with a huge per capita donation, no bad debts and great local support for four fantastic causes. The people of the Hunter need recognition for the great people they are, and I am proud to say that the business people of the Hunter are probably the most generous in Australia with individual donations to needy causes that would shame their city counterparts. I will continue to remind the Government of its commitment to Port Stephens. They have promised a new police station in Raymond Terrace and better health care facilities at Nelson Bay, and they have committed to the protection of more environmentally sensitive areas in our region. I look forward to making sure those things happen, and I look forward to working with the Government and my Liberal-Nationals Coalition colleagues to achieve positive outcomes for my electorate.

An election campaign is only the sum of its parts. I have many people to thank for my electoral success. Many of them are here this morning and I very much appreciate their attendance. But, first, I must thank former leader of the Liberal Party Peter Debnam. He showed me the support of a friend, and his commitment to Port Stephens did not waver once. I would like to thank my colleague in the other place the Hon. Robyn Parker, whose counsel during the campaign I truly valued. I owe a huge vote of thanks to all the former and present shadow Ministers who made the somewhat perilous journey to Port Stephens to support my campaign and even came back when the dust had cleared to help my volunteers and staff in the excruciating process of scrutineering for two weeks of ballot recounts. In particular, I thank the Hon. Mike Gallacher, whose passion for issues of policing is infectious and who once, with me, braved a meeting of over 500 very angry local residents demanding 24-hour policing. Unfortunately, a few were somewhat inebriated and their interjections were reminiscent of question time in this House. I suppose the best friends are the ones who go through a war zone with you.

I give a special thank you to the member for Myall Lakes and his colleagues in the National Party. John, I stole some of your staunchest supporters in the redistribution and had you not been such an effective local member I might not be standing here today. No candidate can hope to win without loyal and hardworking supporters and I thank them from the bottom of my heart. Many of those supporters are in the gallery today, but many more could not make it. It is always difficult to name some without naming all, but I assure all of you that we would not be here today without your unflinching support. A preselection is a necessary process—in the Liberal party at any rate—and I thank my opponents in the preselection for coming in behind me with their heartfelt support. Councillor Steve Tucker, Councillor Sally Dover and Sean Brennan pledged their support and

lived up to their pledges. I also had unstinting support from Mayor Ron Swan, Councillor Ken Jordan and Councillor Geoff Robinson and the member for Paterson, Bob Baldwin.

On the Monday after preselection, Councillor Josh Hodges came on the team full time, and his enthusiasm and innovative ideas kept the rest of us going. Julie Simmons left for Melbourne at Christmas and her place was taken by John Macgowan, wordsmith extraordinaire. The rest of the campaign committee did a fantastic job, and I thank Patricia Michelle, Diana Bennet, Paul Le Mottee and Matthew Ruwald. Modern campaigning involves lots of letter folding, envelope stuffing, correspondence, data entry and phone answering, and without Carol Rumble, Narelle Kindler, Robyn Brennan, Anna Fitzgerald and Ann Mason we could not have succeeded. We ended up with around 350 booth workers on election day and I thank them, particularly those who manned stalls in various centres throughout the electorate right through the campaign. Campaigns also need funding, and I thank all who contributed hard-earned funds to the campaign. A special thanks to Lindsay Hardy and my work colleagues, who all had to work that much harder while I spent long hours getting to know my electorate and its people. Of course, thank you Victoria, thank you boys. It is great to have someone who will always tell you exactly what you are doing wrong, but for the right reasons.

Finally, I would like to thank the former members for Port Stephens, the only two members for Port Stephens until 4 April 2007: the Hon. Bob Martin and John Bartlett. These are Labor men, without a doubt, but they are good men who care deeply about Port Stephens. There is a plaque bearing the names of the three members for Port Stephens on my office wall. John Bartlett was kind enough to donate this upon his retirement. I have had time now to see the way in which this Parliament operates; but looking at that plaque reminds me that we can still have respect for each other, no matter which party we belong to. At university some of us worked on the maxim that 51 per cent is 1 per cent wasted effort. My margin of 68 votes is as close as I dare to live up to that maxim. I promise that I will be aiming for a "credit" in the 2011 election.

These next four years will be a challenge. Port Stephens is now the most marginal seat in New South Wales. I am only too conscious of the fact that those 68 votes were not exactly a landslide, even though it took a 7.3 per cent swing to make them matter. In the next four years I want to see the Hunter attract the level of investment it deserves; I want to see my constituents serviced with police, health care and infrastructure resources that reflect the status of Port Stephens as a growing region. If we are to win the trust of the people of New South Wales, we need big ideas. This is what I want to see from this the Fifty-fourth Parliament of New South Wales, and I will walk from this place happy if I can look back and say we achieved this.

Rab Butler, a great British conservative, once said, "Politics is a matter of heart." I have noticed during these first few sitting days both sides of the House call on each other with great frequency to show some ticker. I followed my heart to get here, and I have brought with me a lifetime of skills and a commitment to serve the people of my electorate. I will do all I can to represent the people of Port Stephens in the manner that they so richly deserve.

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [11.23 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is a joy and a privilege to represent the wonderful district of Pittwater in this place. It is the culmination of a political journey that had a somewhat inauspicious start when, as a 15-year-old student, my entire debating team was banned from debates. It seems the father of a boy on the opposing team had taken strong exception to a particular argument, and called our principal demanding that we all be removed. The principal felt obliged to comply—that father was, after all, Senator Graham Richardson.

We sacked orators sought new venues for our passion for reasoned debate. One became a New York attorney. One is a presenter on the ABC's acclaimed current affairs program *The Chaser*. I now find myself in the New South Wales Parliament as the Liberal member for Pittwater. I thank Senator Graham Richardson for helping us on our journeys and shaping my political consciousness. I will be sure to send Richo a copy of this speech.

In fact, I express my gratitude to the many people who have helped me on my journey here. To Ross Barlow OAM, who gave six months of dedicated service as my campaign director, albeit on the understanding that if elected I would fight for the reintroduction of imperial honours, so Ross could add a well-deserved knighthood to his moniker. Thank you, Sir Ross. To the campaign team—Ray and Sylvia Phelps, Jason Falinski, Brook and Karin Adcock, Ant Gleeson, Adam and Caroline Faulkner and Kai Roland—thank you for all your hard work.

I thank all the Pittwater Liberals, who have endured a very turbulent couple of years, and the hundreds of volunteers who worked so hard over so many months in support of my election campaign, many of whom are

here in the gallery today. I also thank John and Margaret Partridge. John was a wonderful, warm and spirited man who loved people and life, and who was called away from this world a little early. I miss him. I also thank the Manly campaign team, who shared many of our highs and lows, and Brad Hazzard, for shocking us into action, sometimes with good cause. One could say he was our political defibrillator.

To my current staff—Jill Dubois, Peter Heaton-Jones and Julie Heggarty—thank you for keeping everything on track. My parents, Mrs Toni and Professor Gordon Stokes, and my brothers and sisters have given me love in abundance, and a strong determination to reflect this love to my neighbour. I also thank my beloved wife, Sophie, who is my soul mate, my delight, and with whom I share two wonderful children, who have given our lives so much added colour and purpose—and who have also given me a dreadful sore throat.

It is Westminster tradition to acknowledge the contribution of former members, and I am pleased to do so. Pittwater has been represented by Independents Max Smith and Alex McTaggart, Liberal Premier Sir Robert Askin, Liberal Leader John Brogden, Fahey Government Minister Jim Longley, and Liberal Bruce Webster. My immediate predecessor, Alex McTaggart, ensured that Pittwater remained firmly in the political spotlight. I acknowledge his contribution and his deep commitment to Pittwater, its environment and people. Jim Longley and John Brogden are my friends, brothers and mentors. Jim first encouraged me to join the Liberal Party in the early 1990s, and has supported and guided my political journey ever since. Jim and his wife's quiet strength, wisdom, and concern for others continue to be a major source of inspiration.

I first met John Brogden immediately prior to his preselection for Pittwater in 1996. John was an astonishing person to meet, with his charisma, enthusiasm for politics, passion for Pittwater, and deep love for people. My other mentor, Graham Richardson, once said that anyone possessed of a real personality does not join the Liberal Party. Well, Richo has clearly never met Broggers. John and Lucy Brogden have made a great contribution to Pittwater and to New South Wales, and I know they will continue to do so. I acknowledge my deep affection for them both, and thank John for his support, concern and friendship. I acknowledge other candidates with whom I contested the 2007 general election in Pittwater. Pat Boydell, Patricia Giles, Mario Nicotra, Alex McTaggart and Craig McWhirter all conducted positive campaigns and fought hard as worthy opponents.

Pittwater is an ancient place. As you walk out on one of the tracks leading off West Head Road, in a few metres almost 220 years of European settlement seems very distant indeed. Just off that road, you are in the land of the Garigal and Cannalgal people. Their millennia of ownership makes modern constructs of real property and Torrens title seem hollow and faintly ridiculous. The same deep love of country of the Garigal and Cannalgal people is echoed in the way Pittwater people demonstrate an active and enduring commitment to our home; the way Mona Vale Hospital auxiliaries have worked solidly for decades, raising hundreds of thousands to support our community hospital; the way lifesavers at Pittwater's 12 surf clubs freely contribute countless hours of patrols to keep visitors safe on our beaches. It is also echoed in the work of the local Rural Fire Service, which protects our bushland and the families who live near it, and in the work of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, which provides safety to those who use our waterways. It is also seen in the unsung actions of many individuals every single day—like former Mayor Robert Dunn, whom I saw recently, a lone figure on Newport beach, quietly stooping to pick up rubbish as he walked.

The care that Pittwater people demonstrate for their land explains why we react strongly when external decisions are imposed upon us, without a proper or personal understanding of local realities. That is why we fought the health department's plans to close our excellent local hospital at Mona Vale. That is why we fight the apparatus of overdevelopment, such as the Seniors Living policy, which continues to allow residential unit blocks in sensitive areas, instantly destroying the local character established by residents over many years. And that is why the Avalon community is deeply unhappy with this Government's decision to close its police station.

The same sense of ownership is why the Pittwater community shares a deep affection for Currawong Beach. Currawong encapsulates all that is precious about Pittwater—public access, ancient bushland, and the memories of generations of visitors. And this is why my community feels so betrayed by a Government that speaks of environmental action but refuses to save the environmental jewel of Currawong from desecration. I have a challenge for the Government: if it is serious about our heritage it will act now to secure the future of Currawong in public ownership as part of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. We need to encourage the type of community "ownership" evident in the relationship between Pittwater's people and the environment. And we need to use that idea of ownership to create an environmental ethic replacing the frontierism and exploitation that have long characterised our relationship with our surroundings.

The ideas and words we use to describe approaches to the environment are inadequate. The current Government is enamoured of the word "sustainable", but, stripped out of its context within the phrase

"ecologically sustainable development", it is virtually devoid of meaning. And words like "eco-friendly" and "eco" are, in my experience, used by some developers as code for replacing ecology with concrete. The words and ideas we really need to create a comfortable and enduring relationship with our environment are "consciousness" and "justice". We need to be conscious of our condition, and how we got here. For example, I am very aware that my forebears were some of the people who dispossessed and decimated the traditional owners of Pittwater. They did not mean to, of course, but they did not much care either. It is just that the settlers chose to be unconscious to the fate of the locals. I am sorry for their limited vision, and I acknowledge that so much of the rich experience of life I have enjoyed has been built on a great historical injustice.

Indeed, consciousness is a precondition to justice. We cannot create a just environment without first recognising our culpability in creating the present ecological crisis. We cannot achieve environmental justice until we acknowledge the personal benefit we have derived from the damage we have caused. Without this consciousness we are phoneys, and all our words are just empty posturing, and spin. As John of Salisbury put it, "Who is more contemptible than he who scorns knowledge of himself?"

I was born in 1974, and I am part of the first generation born after the energy shock. My consciousness was formed in the knowledge that our growth, wealth and society depend on limited and dwindling resources. Yet, in my time on this earth humanity has failed to wake up to this reality. Our desires have increased. Our houses have bloated, our cars have bloated, our government has bloated, and our children have bloated. Our challenge now is to slim down. We use too much energy, too much water. And what are we doing? Building more coal-fired power stations so our kids can play computer games and building a desalination plant so we can wash our sport utility vehicles [SUVs]. As families are getting smaller, we are building bigger houses but on smaller blocks of land, so that kids are kept inside the "media room", where they can remain part of an unconscious civilisation.

A sober, conscious evaluation of New South Wales planning policies cannot but scream their failure. Twenty-five years of urban consolidation has not delivered an urban nirvana where people sip mugaccinos at sidewalk cafes and share home decor tips. Instead, its legacy has been the loss of built and natural heritage, diminishing neighbourhood character and identity, habitat loss, no slow down of outward growth, and the total overload of existing infrastructure. Urban consolidation policy has resulted in more power failures, more sewage overflows, and more concentrated air pollution.

Far from generating better public transport, urban consolidation has simply put more cars on the same roads. A student taking public transport from Avalon to get to the nearest university at Macquarie Park, where I used to work, would have to leave by 6.30 a.m. to get to a 9.00 a.m. lecture. The same trip by private motor vehicle would save that student 1½ hours of travelling time. Express buses do not stop at the park-and-ride at Warriewood, and commuters catching a bus from Narrabeen to the city generally have to stand all the way on the hour-long trip. More flats have simply made the problem worse. It is little wonder that more people use public transport to get to work from the Central Coast than from Pittwater. Yet, despite the known consequences of too much urban infill, the present Government wants up to 5,000 more homes on bushland at Ingleside, in Pittwater, an area with more biological diversity than the United Kingdom, without any guarantees about upgrading the existing infrastructure. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This is not justice. Before any substantial subdivision is undertaken, we must identify and protect significant bushland, we must rebuild the local police station at Mona Vale, we must secure the future of Mona Vale Hospital, and we must upgrade Mona Vale Road and provide public transport along it. I love Pittwater. It is where I learnt to sail and surf. It is where I first became intoxicated by the smell of the Australian bush. It is where I met, courted and married my beloved wife, Sophie. It was from Pittwater that my mates and I set out on our surfing trips along the beautiful New South Wales coast. We did not have to go far before finding a quiet, unspoiled beach. We would spend an afternoon on the waves, and then light a campfire as night fell—blissful!

But for the kids of tomorrow, that is going to be an increasingly rare experience. Ribbon development means you have to go further and further out of Sydney to find those unspoiled stretches of coastline that have burned such a clear picture in my memory. We used to be able to travel a relatively short distance and find ourselves in the middle of nowhere. There is not much "nowhere" left any more. As with a page of writing, where the margins and spaces are just as important as the words, so we need to preserve our coastal grasslands and littoral rainforests to give meaning to the places in between.

And it is not just those rites-of-passage experiences that I fear are being lost to today's young Aussies. The way we are going, my kids will not get the opportunities I enjoyed. I do not agree with the Premier that we



are heading in the right direction. No. We are contributing to a worldwide decline, where the systems we rely upon to give us life are being suffocated. Government is running out of time to address the consequences of environmental injustice. I am not just talking about the impact on the natural environment; there are huge social consequences too. People stuck in front of their plasma screens in the artificial comfort of air conditioning are more likely to suffer the health consequences of inactivity. Young people dislocated from their surrounds are bored and frustrated. In running kids camps I learned that children respond to their environment. In the bush they socialise better, learn more, and become more self-reliant. If we sacrifice our bush and the unique character of each area of the State, we remove the incentive for them to care about their community.

To create a new environmental ethic based on the justice to future generations and to the earth itself, we must encourage our community to be conscious of our consumption. Every home and business relying on non-renewable energy supplies should be smart metered so that people are always conscious of how much energy they are using. And we should plan for a future where every home has a water tank, reducing demand for State water supplied through expensive and energy intensive infrastructure. We should make it easy for people to be conscious participants in civil society. On a shelf in my office, I have 11 reasonably small, beautifully bound books. This is one of them. This book and its 10 brothers and sisters contain the entire body of New South Wales legislation as it existed in 1937—everything in a set of books smaller than some modern computer manuals. Yet today we have laws and regulations so dense that they are simply inaccessible to the ordinary citizen.

We have a land valuation system so archaic and complex that the taxpayer is left unable to understand the basis upon which land tax and property rates are calculated. And our planning system is so overloaded with regulation that councils simply cannot enforce the conditions placed on development to ensure the local environment is protected. It is so easy for government to transact business as usual. It requires more to transform our society into one that is conscious of its natural surroundings. We have long battled over our environment: we have sought to explore it, to subdue it, to conquer it and, all too recently, to save it. Now the battle is about our collective consciousness and sense of justice for our environment. Such a transformation is not simply change for the sake of it; we need to change direction. Parliament is a forum for leading this change, and I am proud to be part of it for the people of Pittwater.

### **SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO SYDNEY FERRIES**

#### **Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [11.43 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members who contributed to this important debate. Foremost in our minds, of course, are the friends and families of those who lost their lives in the tragic accidents earlier this year. The people of New South Wales need to have confidence in Sydney Ferries. They need to have confidence that the Government is doing everything it can to ensure that the issues surrounding those incidents are resolved and that the future management of Sydney Ferries is proper and worthy of the commuters of the State. Every person who catches a Sydney ferry or is on the harbour needs to be assured that the State Government has done everything within its powers to ensure the maximum safety of those who use those waters.

Government members who spoke in the debate raised some interesting points, but none of them was convincing, and none of them justify why the State Government has chosen to specifically exclude these incidents from the commission of inquiry. The Coalition totally accepts that there are ongoing investigations regarding the incidents and that relevant authorities are looking into the specific matters. What we do not accept is the specific inclusion by the State Government of a sentence in the terms of reference that precludes the commissioner, Bret Walker, who is above question and an admirable person well qualified to undertake this commission of inquiry, from making a judgement as to the relevance of those incidents, if they are relevant at all, to the commission of inquiry.

When the Premier and the Minister for Transport made the announcement about the commission of inquiry, the public undoubtedly expected that those two incidents would form a critical part of the commission of inquiry. Anyone with a remote interest in the commission of inquiry would have assumed that those two incidents would have been included in the matters the commission was looking into. The Coalition is extremely concerned that on at least seven occasions over a number of years the State Government has specifically ignored the recommendations put forward by the Office of Transport Safety Investigations. It has specifically ignored recommendations by the peak safety body carrying out investigations into the two incidents earlier this year. This morning I raised issues affecting resourcing for staff, communication, black boxes and other matters in relation to which promises have been made in this Chamber, promises that are yet to be delivered on.

Why should the public have confidence in the State Government's ability to run an open and transparent commission of inquiry when it specifically excludes two major incidents from the terms of reference? That decision should have been left up to the commissioner. Had that sentence not been included in the terms of reference, the commissioner could have determined, following his consideration of all the submissions and reports by various agencies, the extent to which management, cultural and operational issues within Sydney Ferries impacted on those incidents. On every occasion the State Government has chosen to cover up and preclude an open and public inquiry that incorporates all the issues surrounding the management and running of Sydney Ferries.

Of additional concern is the fact that the Minister for Transport chose not to participate in the debate. We accept that he has important responsibilities, but what is more important than discussing safety issues regarding Sydney Ferries? What is more important than explaining why he, the Premier and the Government chose to incorporate that sentence in the terms of reference? We deserve an explanation. We have called upon the Premier and the Minister to reverse the decision and to explain their absence from the debate. Clearly their absence from the debate demonstrates that they will not reverse the decision. They have failed to give an explanation. Including the sentence would ensure that other investigations would be able to continue and would give the public confidence that the inquiry was a transparent process. Any such confidence has now been dashed.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 32**

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

**Noes, 47**

Mr Amery	Mr Gibson	Ms Megarrity
Ms Andrews	Mr Greene	Mr Morris
Mr Aquilina	Mr Harris	Mrs Paluzzano
Ms Beamer	Ms Hay	Mr Pearce
Mr Borger	Mr Hickey	Mrs Perry
Mr Brown	Ms Hornery	Mr Rees
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 Watkins
Mr Corrigan	Mr McBride	Mr West
Mr Costa	Dr McDonald	Mr Whan
Mr Daley	Ms McKay	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms D'Amore	Ms McMahon	Mr Ashton
Ms Firth	Ms Meagher	Mr Martin

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

## WESTERN SYDNEY JOBS AND WORKCHOICES LEGISLATION

**Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO** (Penrith) [12.00 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on being appointed Speaker, this being the first time you have been in the chair when I have been speaking. I move:

That this House:

- (1) welcomes the Government's commitment to increasing jobs in Western Sydney;
- (2) congratulates the Government for its vision to build a \$60 million State Office Building in Penrith, which will create hundreds of jobs in construction.; and
- (3) calls on the Federal Government to acknowledge its WorkChoices laws are hurting families in regional centres like Penrith.

I commend the Iemma Government for its commitment to increasing jobs in Western Sydney for local families. The Iemma Government has recognised the crucial role that Penrith, as a key regional centre, and Western Sydney play in the State's economic strength. Therefore, is not surprising to see Penrith declared a key regional centre as part of the Iemma Government's State Plan. As part of the plan a city task force of stakeholders has been established, led by Chris Johnson. Late last year it displayed on public exhibition a number of documents by the Minister. Those documents look at a strategy, a vision, for the central business district of Penrith. It has at its heart jobs growth in the city centre. The plan is to create 10,000 jobs within one city centre over the next 25 years. I look forward to seeing this vision come to reality. The plan defined the central business district. The plan is on public exhibition and is keeping stakeholders and local users of the Penrith central business district well informed.

The Penrith central business district will change. Penrith is the centre of Western Sydney because of its natural beauty, having the Blue Mountains as a backdrop, the magnificent Nepean River running through it and the rail link that runs into and around the electorate. Last weekend the rail bridge across the Nepean River celebrated 100 years of rail. It is not 100 years since rail crossed the river. Before the rail bridge was constructed rail crossed over the Victoria Bridge, which had one lane of rail and one lane of road without any barriers. I was fortunate enough to travel with my family on a steam train from Penrith to Valley Heights. I commend the organisers of the event, which saw the steam train running all day to celebrate the anniversary of the rail bridge.

Last year Premier Iemma announced \$60 million for a new State office building to be located at the corner of Station and Belmore streets in Penrith. As I caught the train this morning I saw the continuing construction on that site. They are currently driving poles down three storeys for car parking. There will be seven storeys above street level. The project is in the Iemma Government's State infrastructure strategy. It is part of the \$41.3 billion capital works blueprint. The State Government building will become home to jobs, State jobs, vital jobs for the Sydney Catchment Authority and the Department of Community Services. Other government agencies are also considering their options.

Leading up to the recent State election, I fought a campaign to retain those jobs, not like those opposite in this House who said in the Penrith electorate that they would cut jobs and services to Western Sydney. Four hundred and fifty jobs will be housed in this building. It is a gateway site. It is at an iconic spot in the central business district. It is directly across the road from the railway station and directly across the road from a bus interchange. It will mean people will be able to come to work in Penrith. I hope many of those people who were on the train with me this morning—whether they got off at Blacktown, Parramatta, Town Hall or Wynyard—will be able to work in this building and stop using public transport.

In addition to the long-term jobs based at the State office building, this project will create more than 500 jobs in construction. I noted this morning, in the clear, crisp two degrees, people were working on construction. I commend the builder, Crooks, because it supports local contractors. I look forward to seeing how those local contractors are employed in construction on site. Hundreds of businesses will welcome the news. The building is also directly across the road from the shopping precinct in Penrith. The small and large businesses that operate in that precinct will benefit not only from the construction jobs but also from the 450 jobs to be housed in the new building. I am advised by the Department of Commerce that the building will be environmentally friendly, with particular emphasis placed on water and energy use. The building is designed by Kann Finch to achieve a 4½ star Australian greenhouse rating.

Families in Penrith want access to jobs locally and not have to travel to other points in the compass. Developments such as these will meet the city's needs and provide employment within the central business

district. It is also good news for the people who come to our city for shopping, dining and entertainment that the city's task force has looked at the revitalisation of the central business district. I am proud to be part of the Iemma Government, which has plans to create employment in Western Sydney. Let us compare the Government's record of creating employment in the Western Sydney and delivering jobs for local families with the Federal Government's WorkChoices legislation. We have looked at providing quality jobs and securing suitable places for them. We have not introduced legislation to strip local families of their work or entitlements.

Recently we saw a clear case of how WorkChoices will be bad for workers in Western Sydney. On Friday members opposite might have heard about a working mother of two in Western Sydney who was so worried about WorkChoices and scared about what would happen to her job that she decided to call it quits. She could see the writing on the wall. She saw how bad the changes are for working families. So, instead of facing them, instead of justifying how she voted in Federal Parliament, she resigned. Of course, we are speaking about the Federal member for Lindsay, Jackie Kelly.

Western Sydney has been hit hard by John Howard's draconian legislation, aimed squarely at pleasing big business while neglecting the workers of the region. So, it comes as no surprise that the Federal member decided to resign rather than face the backlash from workers in Western Sydney. During the recent State election campaign I met with individuals who had been sacked without reason, had their pay cut, had their entitlements removed or had their conditions slashed. This is not the first time I have spoken on the WorkChoices legislation in this place. There have been a number of debates. We have introduced legislation in this place to protect not only State employees but also young workers. All the people and families we have protected in New South Wales and in Western Sydney and Penrith in particular will be voting in the next Federal election.

I have met with workers in hospitals and teachers, visited building sites, and talked about entitlements and the impact of WorkChoices on industry. I spoke to a young worker in a food store who was told not to bother returning to her shift because of the conditions imposed by her boss under WorkChoices. The Iemma Government has done what it can to protect workers in Western Sydney; it has introduced legislation to protect New South Wales workers. Our hardworking police, firefighters and TAFE teachers are protected against John Howard's anti-worker legislation by New South Wales awards. The results for Western Sydney in the March 2007 election could not have been clearer. Every seat was returned to the Government—a government that opposed WorkChoices and ferociously rejected the New South Wales Opposition's plan to axe 20,000 workers. The contrast could not be clearer: The Iemma Government supports workers in Western Sydney, and the Liberal Party opposes workers rights.

**Mr WAYNE MERTON** (Baulkham Hills) [12.10 p.m.]: Penrith is a very nice place. As a resident of Western Sydney, I have been to Penrith on many occasions. Indeed, I have played cricket on Penrith Oval.

**Mr Barry Collier:** Did you get a few wickets?

**Mr WAYNE MERTON:** Absolutely! With the background of the mountains and the magnificent Nepean Hawkesbury River, Penrith is a great place for young families to live and to enjoy the delights of the city. The Opposition is pleased to see the construction of the \$60 million office block, which will principally house the Sydney Catchment Authority and the Department of Community Services. There will be about 450 workers. The member for Penrith has not satisfied me that those jobs will be new jobs. My impression is that people will merely move from one office to another. I understand that 500 people will be employed during the construction stage; once the construction is completed they will no longer have permanent jobs.

Penrith City Council is pleased about the announcement on 23 June 2006 of the \$60 million State Government office building. Construction was due to commence earlier this year; it is the end of May and construction commenced only very recently. I draw the attention of the member for Penrith to several other items contained in the council's press release, of which she should be aware. I am anxious to hear how she and her Government propose to handle these matters. The press release states:

Council has pushed for some time a number of essential projects that would enable us to fulfil our role under the Metropolitan Strategy. These included a number of infrastructure improvements such as a road link from the Erskine Park Employment Area to the M7, a UWS—

that is, the University of Western Sydney—

rail station, make improvements to arterial roads, public transport improvements and establishing a State Government office presence.

The member for Penrith has more challenges on her plate, notwithstanding the all-is-well approach adopted in Penrith. It is clear that the council is dissatisfied with the Government's efforts; it wants these additional infrastructure projects. However, the member for Penrith, who is a vigorous advocate for the Penrith area, has not explained how she and her Government propose to meet these items. The member talked about employment—or, indeed, unemployment. In 1996, when the Howard Government took office, the unemployment rate in Penrith was about 7.3 per cent; in June it was 2.3 per cent. Government members may well say that that is the result of a great State Government. The reality is that this "great State Government" was not in office and did not hold power in other parts of Australia in 1996 when the unemployment rate was about 8 per cent. In April this year the unemployment rate was just under 4.5 per cent. So there has been a similar decrease.

The common factor is the Howard Government, not the Carr-Iemma governments. That is the difference. This Government has ridden on the Howard Government's prosperity. Indeed, New South Wales has gone backwards. New South Wales has lost opportunities time and time again. Some \$5 billion worth of stamp duty has simply disappeared into a black hole of incompetence. The member for Penrith is not telling the truth when she says that this Government is responsible for creating jobs in Penrith. The member for Penrith has had considerable experience of talking about WorkChoices. I suggest—without being critical of the member—that this motion is a poorly disguised attack on the WorkChoices legislation. That is what this is about. The member is venting about WorkChoices, as she is entitled to do and as she has done so on many previous occasions. However, she has not told the whole story.

We should look at the records of both the Hawke-Keating regime and the Howard regime. Since March 1996 more than two million jobs have been created under the Howard Government; more than 1.1 million jobs created are full time and almost 900,000 are part time. Since the introduction of WorkChoices, 326,200 additional jobs have been created. What is the member for Penrith saying to those 326,200 Australians who have obtained jobs under WorkChoices? Is she telling them that they should not be employed, that they should go back on the unemployment list because WorkChoices is wrong? What is her message to those families, those hardworking people in Penrith who have been able to secure employment under WorkChoices? How does she face them? What does she say, or does she continue the union-based dogma that WorkChoices is bad?

WorkChoices is good because it has created employment. Long-term unemployment is almost at the lowest level in 20 years; it has more than halved under the Howard Government, and it is 76.2 per cent lower than the peak of 329,000 in May 1993 under Labor. Long-term unemployment stood at 42,400 in April 2007; it has fallen by 129,000 since the peak of 171,700 in 1993. Those extra jobs have been created by the Howard Government. The member for Penrith did not talk about interest rates. Under the Hawke-Keating administration, interest rates averaged more than 13 per cent. Under the Howard Government, interest rates are about 7 per cent.

What does the member for Penrith say to the people of Penrith who were paying interest rates of 17 per cent, 18 per cent or 19 per cent on their home loans and who are now paying about 7 per cent? Does the member think she is the bearer of good news? Does she tell those people that Labor serves them well, that Labor has looked after their community? What does the member say to those people who went broke during the recession we had to have and who boarded up their shops in Penrith and Parramatta? What does she say to the families that never recovered from the great years of recession under the previous Federal Government? The simple reality is that the Labor Party's record is abysmal. Although the member for Penrith talked about the construction of a new building in Penrith—we have no problem with that; we think it is wonderful—she moved sideways to her main agenda, which is the WorkChoices legislation.

Under WorkChoices real wages have increased by 1.5 per cent, and under the Coalition there has been a 19.8 per cent increase in real wages compared with a 1.8 per cent decrease under Labor. I will say it again: a 19.8 per cent increase in real wages under the Coalition compared with a 1.8 per cent decrease under Labor. Many people living in the Penrith area are a lot better off today than they ever were under Hawke and Keating. Labor is about to introduce, through its Federal master, what it describes as industrial reforms. Industrial disaster is the reality. The people of Penrith would rue the day a Rudd government were elected to Federal Parliament. In 1991, under the Labor Government, the retrenchment rate was 6.5 per cent, falling to 4.6 per cent in February 1996. Since that time the retrenchment rate has continued to decline to 2.2 per cent in February 2006. Consequently, retrenchments are 59 per cent lower than they were in 1991 when Labor was in government. [*Time expired.*]

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn—Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship) [12.20 p.m.]: The Iemma Government is working hard to boost

jobs for the people of Western Sydney. I thank the member for Penrith for her motion. The member is a strong advocate for families in her electorate and well understands the importance of creating jobs for our region. The greater Western Sydney region is home to one in 10 Australians and is the third biggest economy in Australia. That is why the Iemma Government is working hard to boost jobs in Western Sydney. The Iemma Government's City of Cities 25 Year Strategy targets the creation of 230,000 new jobs in Western Sydney by establishing the Western Sydney employment hub at the M4 and M7 intersections, which will create 36,000 jobs, concentrating retail activities in strategic centres and planning for commercial and industrial space requirements.

The Government has also taken strong action to create jobs directly. Construction will commence on a 23,000 square metres building at Parramatta to house Sydney Water and accommodating 1,400 workers. We are building the \$340 million Parramatta Justice Precinct, bringing 1,500 regional jobs to the area and creating one of Australia's biggest legal centres. The Iemma Government will also finalise visions for Parramatta, Penrith and Liverpool regional cities and work with local councils to make Western Sydney a preferred location for business. As the member for Penrith proudly acknowledges, we are constructing a \$60 million government office building at Penrith to house the Sydney Catchment Authority and regional offices of the Department of Community Services and the Office of Fair Trading. This project will create 450 construction jobs and, being located in the heart of the Penrith central business district, will provide a boost for the local Penrith economy.

Four hundred and fifty jobs; a boost to the local economy; a win for Penrith families. One would think the project would win hands-down support. It certainly was supported by the community. But not everyone agreed. The Federal member for Lindsay and the Liberal candidate for Penrith were against it. The best the Federal member for Lindsay could offer was that it should be a car park. That is the extent of the Coalition's vision for Penrith: a concrete car park. It would be a loss for Penrith families and businesses, just as families are losing as a result of the Howard Government's WorkChoices. With spiralling fuel prices and successive interest rate rises, the Howard Government has decided to hurt families on a third front. Families have everything to lose with WorkChoices. It offers only one choice: give up your working rights and accept lower conditions.

Western Sydney families are particularly affected by WorkChoices, having a high percentage of young people, migrants and other vulnerable groups in the region. The Iemma Government is proudly standing behind families. That is why the Government will do everything in its power to stand up for hardworking families and preserve their hard-won working rights and protections. It is plain and simple: WorkChoices is bad for families. Once again, I thank the member for Penrith for moving this important motion. I commend it to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury) [12.25 p.m.]: I am glad that the Minister for Western Sydney has mentioned the Federal member for Lindsay, Jackie Kelly. Jackie Kelly has been a wonderful Federal member for Lindsay. The Minister would be extremely embarrassed by the fact that Jackie Kelly has, since 1996, stolen Labor heartland. She has put the Howard stamp on the seat of Lindsay and has increased the number of jobs for and prosperity of the people of Penrith. The Minister would be extremely embarrassed by the good work that Jackie Kelly and the Howard Government have done in the seat of Penrith. Now, Jackie Kelly, after a fine and distinguished career in Federal politics, having dedicated her time to the people of Penrith and increased their prosperity, is stepping down to look after her family.

The Minister for Western Sydney would also be embarrassed by the lack of commitment of this disgraceful Labor State Government to provide essential services and infrastructure, such as roads, public transport and hospitals in Western Sydney, particularly north-western Sydney. The Government has allowed the Rouse Hill development to continue unabated. The development has expanded and numbers have swelled on both sides of Windsor Road. In the seats of Riverstone, Hawkesbury and Baulkham Hills the Government has failed to address the simple matter of providing decent public transport. For the last four elections the Government has promised the north-west rail link. The people in the area have a name for the north-west rail link. They call it the ghost train: it appears as a vision just before an election, but it never materialises. The Government has no commitment whatsoever to that project.

Since 1996 the real provider of employment for the people in Penrith has been the Howard Government. In 1996, when the Howard Government came to power, the unemployment rate was above 10 per-cent. Today the people of Penrith enjoy the prosperity of the Howard Government, with unemployment down to 4 per-cent. The Federal member for Lindsay can be satisfied that she and the Howard Government have done a wonderful job in reducing unemployment in the area and throughout Australia from above 10 per-cent. We all remember the disastrous years of the Hawke-Keating governments when unemployment was well in

excess of 11 and 12 per-cent. As I said, it is now down to 4 per-cent—the lowest we have seen in 30 years. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

this House:

- (1) calls on the Federal Opposition to clarify its position and detail its union dominated workplace policy to the public; and
- (2) condemns the Federal Opposition for pretending to be tough on unions and bosses like Dean Mighell, whilst pocketing millions of dollars in union contributions.

**Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO** (Penrith) [12.30 p.m.] in reply: I note the contributions from the member for Baulkham Hills, the Minister for Western Sydney and the member for Hawkesbury. The member for Baulkham Hills made some interesting and enlightening statements in today's debate. However, he misled the House by saying that I said they were new jobs. They are his words; I said that they are jobs for Western Sydney. The member also mentioned a council press release. I welcome all comments and dialogue in the electorate of Penrith, but what he mentioned was outside the scope of the motion. In fact, that would have been a better amendment to move than the amendment moved by the member for Hawkesbury. I look forward to debating those issues and discussing them with the member. The member for Baulkham Hills spoke about jobs, jobs, jobs. We know that jobs exist and that the number may have increased or decreased, but members on this side of the House and I, as the member for Penrith, have been advocating— [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, debate resumed.*]

As I said, the member talked about jobs, jobs, jobs. It is not the quantum of jobs that is important; it is the quality, entitlements and conditions of employment. It is about having a dynamic workplace that has collective bargaining. The member also noted that under WorkChoices businesses have improved. Businesses will have burdens imposed on them under WorkChoices. The member also mentioned—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Diane Beamer):** Order! There is too much audible conversation.

**Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO:** I note that the Minister for Western Sydney mentioned the powerhouse that is Western Sydney and its population. She made the strong point that the Liberal candidate for the seat of Penrith and the Federal member for Lindsay have not supported the building—they want car parks rather than jobs. This Government is providing jobs. The member for Hawkesbury said that the Federal member for Lindsay has supported jobs. During her time in federal Parliament, jobs have gone! What about the University of Western Sydney?

**Question—That the words stand—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 49**

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

**Noes, 31**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 52**

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

**Noes, 29**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Ms Diane Beamer) left the chair at 12.51 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*



## ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor:

J. J. SPIGELMAN  
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Office of the Governor  
Sydney 2000

The Honourable James Jacob Spigelman, Chief Justice of New South Wales, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, being absent from the State, he has this day assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

30 May 2007

## NATIONAL EMISSIONS TRADING SCHEME

### Ministerial Statement

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA** (Lakemba—Premier, and Minister for Citizenship) [2.18 p.m.]: The New South Wales Government is a leader in the urgent need to tackle the challenges of climate change. We lead; we do not follow. We take action; we do not deny, we do not delay and we do not dither. The science on climate change is in—even for the member for Coffs Harbour—and it is real: it is a threat, not just to our environment but also to our economy and our way of life. That is why the Government has been a leader on climate change.

The Stern Report described climate change as "the greatest market failure the world has seen". Failure to take action now would be not only environmentally reckless but would be also economically disastrous. Like most things, early action is the key to mitigating the long-term risks, and early action to reduce carbon emissions will cost much less than avoiding the inevitable. Early action gives us the ability to make a smoother transition to a less carbon intensive economy and it positions us strongly to avoid the inevitable economic shocks that delayed action would bring.

In short, it is just plain good economic management to take strong, sensible and workable actions now to reduce our emissions. Today the Prime Minister is due to receive the final report from his Task Group on Emissions Trading. There has been much speculation that this report will recommend the introduction of an emissions trading scheme in Australia. Since April 2004 the States and Territories, led by New South Wales, have been undertaking detailed design work for a national emissions trading scheme.

We have repeatedly called on the Commonwealth Government to work with the States and Territories on this major reform proposal. There are many benefits from the Commonwealth leading a multi-jurisdictional approach rather than going it alone on emissions trading. These benefits include ensuring a collaborative relationship between the different levels of government and drawing on the States' and Territories' knowledge and experience from their day-to-day involvement with affected businesses.

On the basis of the detailed work undertaken over the past three years, the State and Territory governments believe that any future national emissions trading scheme designed should at the very least achieve the following: participation by all Australian governments, including Commonwealth, State and Territory; stimulation of research and investment in renewable technologies, innovative carbon capture technology and clean coal technologies; the protection of carbon sensitive, trade-exposed industries while competing nations are not subject to commensurate emissions reduction policies; the provision of greater long-term certainty for business and investors; equitable outcomes between and across jurisdictions, regions and sectors; the establishment of a credible pathway to substantially reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions; the capability to link with international schemes; and support for State and Territory-based energy efficiency and renewable energy targets.

The scheme design being developed by the State and Territory governments is well advanced and addresses each of these issues. Without these elements an emissions trading scheme risks being ineffective, with adverse impacts on our society, economy and environment. That is why the New South Wales Government calls upon the Prime Minister to get on with the job of implementing the national emissions trading scheme. We welcome Mr Rudd's intentions and commitment in this area. We say to the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister that on receiving the report today he should get on with the job of developing and implementing an effective, sensible national emissions trading scheme.

## RECONCILIATION WEEK

### Ministerial Statement

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool—Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health)) [2.23 p.m.]: This is Reconciliation Week. This is a year of significant anniversaries for Aboriginal people. It is the fortieth anniversary of the referendum, the fifteenth anniversary of the Mabo case, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of Link-Up, the tenth anniversary of the "Bringing Them Home" report, and the fiftieth anniversary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Day of Observance Committee [NAIDOC]. On Wednesday I had the pleasure of personally welcoming the newly elected members and councillors of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council.

These issues are often debated and approached on a bipartisan basis in this place. These anniversaries give us an opportunity to reflect on the impacts of past policies and they provide an opportunity to look at the challenges of overcoming the day-to-day consequences of those policies. I invite this House to celebrate the tenacity and endurance of Aboriginal men and women. Despite hardships beyond our understanding Aboriginal people have lobbied, agitated and demanded the right to survive, the right to thrive, and the right to come to terms with past injustices. The 1967 referendum was an important step but it was largely symbolic. It did nothing to stop the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families. They were placed in institutions or church missions, adopted or fostered. They worked for no money. The so-called protection of the State was a mirage.

The number of Aboriginal children who had experienced repeated and long-term emotional, physical and sexual abuse will probably never be known. The widespread failure to protect young indigenous wards of the State from abuse is a tragedy with far-reaching repercussions—repercussions that have seeped into and contaminated the lives of countless Aboriginal people across the generations. These issues have touched a chord in the Australian psyche and that is one of the reasons this is so often debated on a bipartisan basis. Part of the reason that it has had such an impact on Australia is a speech by then Prime Minister Keating at Redfern, who said in part:

We non-Aboriginal Australians should perhaps remind ourselves that Australia once reached out to us.

Did not Australia provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish, the poor of Britain, the refugees from war and famine and persecution in the countries of Europe and Asia? Is it not reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems that beset the first Australians, people to whom the most injustice has been done? The starting point might be to recognise the problem starts with non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins with that act of recognition; recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases, the alcohol. We committed the murders; we took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice, and our failure to imagine these things being done to us.

It should be a matter of pride to everyone in this place that the New South Wales Government was the first government in Australia to apologise to Aboriginal people, and it is also a matter of pride that this Parliament, on a bipartisan basis, was the first parliament in Australia to say sorry. It was simply one eloquent word. There is no eloquence in silence on this issue. Aboriginal people have spent 50 years drawing attention, focusing community awareness and lobbying for what many of us take for granted. Despite entrenched resistance 50 years on, National Reconciliation Week's theme for 2007, "Their spirit still shines", is one of enduring hope and optimism. Members of the Aboriginal community do not share many of the basic rights of a civilised society. However, the spirit of National Reconciliation Week is that their spirit still shines. In that spirit of optimism we should acknowledge and celebrate some of the milestones that I have mentioned and we should remember that there is still much unfinished business.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [2.27 p.m.]: I am pleased to say that one of my constituents is Faith Bandler, one of the people who fought long and hard for the 1967 referendum. I was fortunate on Sunday evening to see a documentary on SBS in which Faith took part. What I remember particularly about the documentary is that part of the achievement of the 1967 referendum was a 10-year campaign led by the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders [FCAATSI] to have petitions tabled in the Federal Parliament from all members seeking such a referendum. Faith Bandler recounted the story that when she finally met the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, he said,

"You're the woman who even got me to table one of those petitions." I think that is a great story about the way in which representative and participatory democracy can work.

It is also why I will continue to oppose and press for changes in the way in which petitions are presented in this place. That achievement in 1967 meant that every time Federal Parliament sat for 10 years, before question time, petitions about a certain subject tabled by certain members were read out in the House in the presence of all members. That changed a number of years ago in relation to changes made to standing orders in this House and it is the reason why those standing orders changes should be reversed.

I am happy to join again on a bipartisan basis with the Government on this issue. I regret that on behalf of the Aboriginal communities of this country the hope they had in 1967 and the reality that we still find today has an enormous gap between it. None of us should be happy about that, which is why this Parliament was the first to say sorry. It is the reason that in the three most recent inaugural speeches by members on my side the member for Barwon, the member for Murray-Darling and the member for Pittwater mentioned their practical involvement in their Aboriginal communities. It is why the member for Barwon was happy not only to say sorry but to apologise that the hopes and aspirations of many of those Aboriginal people are still yet to be met.

The real reason that will make me sympathetic on this issue and drive me to try to get change—change that will, hopefully, deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal people and not simply be words—is that Aboriginal people, on average, have a life expectancy of 17 years less than most of us who sit in this House. That is a matter of great regret and distress. As much as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at times might like to use "bipartisanship" in every second sentence and use every other sentence to put forward his usual partisan view, I express my hope for him, as opposed to the performance of his two predecessors, that we finally get some real achievement in this State.

#### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the public gallery Father Varton Navasartian, from the Armenian Apostolic Church, a guest of the member for Willoughby.

#### **USE OF MOBILE PHONES IN THE CHAMBER**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Over the past couple of days there have been a number of instances of phones ringing in the Chamber. I remind the House that it is disorderly to use a mobile phone in the Chamber as it causes disruption to members. I appreciate that members have access to a range of modern technology and utilise phones and blackberries in various ways, apart from making and receiving calls. Accordingly, I wish to set out some ground rules for the use of mobile phones by members and advisers who sit in the Chamber to ensure that mobile phones do not disrupt proceedings. Members are able to bring mobile phones into the Chamber, but they must ensure that they are set on silent mode. Members can use mobile phones to send messages and emails in the same way that laptops can be used in the Chamber. However, members are prohibited from using mobile phones in any way that will interrupt or disturb proceedings. In addition, members are reminded that it is inappropriate for mobile phones to be used to take photographs within the precincts of the Chamber.

#### **QUESTION TIME**

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#### **MEMBER ASSAULT ALLEGATION AND PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT BREACH INVESTIGATION**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is to the Minister for Police. Can he confirm the advice of Commissioner Moroney's office that the same detectives investigating allegations against the member for Blacktown are also investigating allegations concerning a breach of the Protected Disclosures Act involving the Premier and his office?

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** This matter has been addressed in the House previously. I understand that after the election there was a change in the structure of the Premier's office. That is acknowledged by the staff member himself in a letter that has since been made public. Once again the Opposition has chosen to push smear, gossip and innuendo rather than pursue the issues that matter to the people of New South Wales.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Minister must have misheard the question. My question was: Can he confirm Commissioner Moroney's advice that the same detectives investigating allegations concerning the member for Blacktown are also investigating allegations that the Protected Disclosures Act was breached by the Premier or his office?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has concluded his answer.

### PORT BOTANY RAIL FREIGHT STRATEGY

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** My question is to the Premier. What is the latest information on the Government's freight strategy?

**Mr George Souris:** He will answer questions like that.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Well, you ask it, George. I think the last question you asked was about David Beckham.

**Mr George Souris:** And I am still waiting for an answer.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Keep tuning in. The member for Upper Hunter will not have much longer to wait, it is all coming. He might be able to enjoy a Becks beer with Becks. This morning I joined the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Ports and Waterways to release the Government's response to the Freight Infrastructure Advisory Board report. The board was established to provide advice on the infrastructure required to increase the amount of freight transported by rail and, therefore, take more trucks off our city streets. Port Botany currently handles one-third of Australia's container traffic and generates \$1.5 billion a year in economic activity.

In 2005-06 almost 1.5 million containers were moved across the wharves at the port. International container volumes at Port Botany have been growing at close to 7 per cent per annum. In 2005-06 trade through Port Botany was worth more than \$40 billion. That trade is expected to double in the next 20 years, an increase that we are providing for with our expansion of Port Botany. That upgrade will deliver 9,000 jobs to New South Wales and boost the State's economy by \$16 billion. This business is growing and it is at the heart of the New South Wales economy. To keep the economy growing we need to keep freight moving, and moving efficiently. The bulk of goods leaving Port Botany are headed for Western Sydney. The toys, the gourmet food, the paint—it is all destined for families and businesses in the region. Eighty per cent of those port containers are now moved by truck, with rail moving the remainder. The Government has set a target to increase that to 40 per cent by rail.

While the Commonwealth has ultimate responsibility for the rail freight network in Australia, New South Wales is keen to ensure that this network is best suited for increasing that rail transport share. That can only occur if we have the right infrastructure, both freight lines and a network of intermodal terminals, in place. The response we outlined today confirms the Government's commitment and support for such a network. New terminals will supplement the existing Camellia, Leightonfield, Yennora and Minto facilities, which will reach capacity by 2012 or even sooner if the rail mode share starts to increase. They will also create new local employment opportunities.

We support, subject to planning approval, the development of a new intermodal terminal at Enfield, which is on the Port Botany goods line. This means that containers could be moved by rail without entering the passenger rail network. Sydney Ports estimates that the facility would result in an estimated 300 fewer track movements a day around the airport, Port Botany, Marrickville and other inner-west suburbs, and a 1,000 tonne a year reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. The Urban Transport Statement released in November of last year indicated the New South Wales Government's intention to work with the Commonwealth to secure land at Moorebank as the site for a major intermodal terminal. Moorebank is an ideal site, strategically located near the M5 and the M7 and the new southern Sydney freight line.

A joint working group is being formed to explore the planning issues and likely stages of development, if the necessary planning approvals are given. This group should report back to both governments later this year. We are determined to reduce the growth in freight-related traffic and to get these goods onto our rail lines. This work is part of our effort to reduce the impact of freight transport on the people of Sydney and to help relieve

road congestion. The Urban Transport Statement also flagged our intention to support and facilitate the Commonwealth's early construction of the southern Sydney freight line. The planning process for the line has been completed, with development approval granted by the Minister for Planning on 21 December last year.

The present expectation is that the southern Sydney freight line will go to tender in the middle of this year, with construction due for completion towards the end of 2009. This is part of our strategy not only to provide for the infrastructure but to work in cooperation with the Commonwealth to relieve traffic congestion and provide for an increased movement of freight on to rail and off road. This is all in stark contrast to the position put by the Opposition at the election.

**Mr David Campbell:** Which one?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Minister for Police asks which one. It can best be summed up in one word: confusion. We all recall the infamous performance of the member for Terrigal on the John Stanley program, the infamous performance of the former Leader of the Opposition over the Port Kembla strategy and the abysmal policy position to abandon the East Darling Harbour project. We recall the infamous performance by the member for Terrigal, the Swamp Fox, where in the space of three days he managed to articulate—if that is the right word—a dozen different positions on the East Darling Harbour port relocation and the Port Kembla expansion, the Port Kembla freeze, the Port Kembla go-ahead, the Port Kembla maybe, the Port Kembla possibly and the Port Kembla we never really mean to do that. Where is Port Kembla, after all?

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Since the election it is fair to ask about the Opposition's position on freight and ports, particularly Port Kembla. I am sure the Minister for Police is happy to provide the member for Terrigal with a road map to Port Kembla.

#### PREMIER'S STAFF RESTRUCTURE

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is addressed to the Premier. What role did the Premier play in his office restructure that led to the convenient departure of Mark Aarons?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** As the statements that have previously been provided in this place and outside in relation to Mr Aarons have articulated, the Leader of the Opposition, in his continual obsession with this matter, overlooks one fact. Three weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition was attempting to smear Mr Aarons.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** That is untrue.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The central allegation, which the letter addresses, is that Mr Aarons' departure was unrelated to the Gibson matter. Not content with that—because that knocked it out of the ring—the Leader of the Opposition has now embarked on a campaign to smear Mr Kaiser. It is entirely consistent with his approach because since he became the leader he has asked more questions about Mr Abib, Mr Gibson, Mr Kaiser and Mr Aarons—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was simple: What was the Premier's role in his office restructure that led to Mr Aarons' departure? There is no smear today, and there will be no smear later. I am asking questions about Aarons, Kaiser and Abib because they seem to be more in charge of the state than the Premier.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** As the letter made clear, a staff member acknowledged that the actions of the chief of staff were not related to his protected disclosure. Given the matters relating to the police in this morning's reports, I inform the House that the Leader of the Opposition is clearly attempting to smear Mr Kaiser. That is what the question is about.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** That is untrue.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** It is true. Given that the Leader of the Opposition has asked a question about this matter, I am advised that the only comment the commissioner has made is in his letter. That is the Leader of the Opposition's letter dated 22 May 2007 on this matter.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question. He should listen to the answer in silence.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The letter states:

I am further advised that he acknowledges receipt of the member for Ku-ring-gai's three letters on this matter. I am further advised that the commissioner advises that despite being quoted in this morning's report he never spoke to the newspaper.

The Leader of the Opposition can continue down this path. It is clear that he has learnt nothing from the election result. He learnt nothing from his predecessor. It just proves that the long period the Opposition has spent in the wilderness will only get longer the more he adheres to his little campaign of smear and innuendo.

### **POLICE DETECTIVE NUMBERS**

**Ms TANYA GADIEL:** Will the Minister update the House on the latest situation in relation to detectives and policing in New South Wales?

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** I thank the member for Parramatta for the many hours we spent recently talking about police issues and for her constructive interest in these matters. Many members on this side of the House have expressed interest in them. As members know, the Iemma Government is committed to boosting our Police Force. We will ensure that an extra 1,500 police are on the beat by 2011. That boost will include 200 new detectives to be stationed in local commands, 40 extra officers for the child protection and sex crimes squad and 10 extra officers for the establishment of a major events and incidents group. The 200 detectives will investigate crimes at the local level. These include most types of property and street crime, including assault and other serious offences.

The Iemma Government's commitment to reduce the incidence of violent crime against individuals is one of the key targets of the Premier's State Plan. The other major areas that police will target include property crime, which impacts on hardworking families and is another one of our commitments under the plan. Boosting detective numbers is one major strategy to help achieve those targets. New South Wales Police Force detectives play a critical role in uncovering and fighting crime in our State. Their investigative skills are at the forefront of efforts to drive down and stabilise all categories of crime. Members opposite are laughing about this serious matter. That indicates how serious they take the issue of crime fighting, which is in contrast to this Government's effort.

The work of detectives is not easy. It requires specialist skills, education, ongoing training and a high level of commitment and dedication. The Iemma Government is committed to continually boosting the State's criminal investigation capacity. That is why I am pleased to inform the House that another 205 detectives will complete their training at the Goulburn Police College tomorrow. I look forward to congratulating the officers who will graduate from the 12-months nationally accredited Advanced Diploma of Public Safety (Police Investigation) Course. The course covers managing crime incident scenes, conducting interviews, investigations and briefings, the judicial process and criminal law. This course equips detectives with the real-world skills they need.

As we know, officers do not learn to be detectives in the classroom alone. They need to combine theory with practical experience. It is no use having highly educated police officers with specialist training in criminal investigation if they do not know their way around a brief of evidence or an interview room and have not managed a crime scene. Officers take the information from the Police College back to their commands and apply it practically in their daily role as plainclothes officers. In between the face-to-face teaching periods, officers must also complete a series of assignments. They need to show that they have practically applied the theoretical knowledge they gained during the course. In a further boost to our detective ranks, another 56 graduates from the senior detectives course will also be awarded their certificates tomorrow. The senior detectives course is a six-months program aimed at developing senior detectives to lead teams and strike forces to investigate serious crime. It is another example of the Government's investment in ongoing training for the very strong New South Wales Police Force.

Last Friday night I was privileged to be present at the inaugural New South Wales criminal investigation dinner. The evening was attended by 1,000 serving and former detectives. I was tremendously impressed by not only their camaraderie and strong sense of duty and service, but also by the satisfaction and enjoyment that those present seemed to derive from their work as detectives. To recognise the outstanding work of New South Wales detectives, the inaugural Criminal Investigation Awards will be presented at tomorrow's

graduation ceremony. The Criminal Investigation and Detectives Advisory Panel established the awards to acknowledge the importance of criminal investigation and to recognise the contribution of criminal investigators. The Iemma Government welcomes the creation of these awards and thanks detectives across the State for their commitment and hard work to keep our community safe.

In my first eight weeks as Minister for Police I have endeavoured to see for myself the work of detectives and police on the beat. Last Friday night I saw firsthand the great work police are doing to crack down on antisocial behaviour on the George Street cinema strip and at other popular nightspots in the city. The police who walk the beat are attached to a Vikings operation codenamed Swordfish. Operation Swordfish is made up of teams of police who conduct high-visibility operations on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. They are out there to drive down alcohol-related crime and stop bag snatching and other street robberies. More recently, under Operation Ranmore, they have been focusing on the activities of motorcycle gangs. Our police do a tough job. I wanted to see what it was like for an officer walking the beat on a busy night in Sydney. I saw men and women dedicated to their work, wanting to make a difference by stopping crime.

I am pleased to inform the House that in the first month of Operation Swordfish police have made over 80 arrests and laid more than 100 charges. I am not surprised at all by the results, having seen the police in action last Friday night. They do amazing work disrupting crime. They deal with everything from controlling drunk teenagers to stopping suspected drug deals and catching armed thieves, as they did in Hyde Park last Friday night. The Government supports NSW Police. That is why we have provided record numbers of police and are boosting the strength of our detectives ranks. While the members opposite at every opportunity will run down the work of the NSW Police, as they are doing now, the Iemma Government will continue to support the hardworking men and women on the beat.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Last year the Government announced that an additional 750 police would be trained for duty by January. We have delivered on that promise. Under Labor not only has our Police Force continued to grow but also it has received more resources, more powers, tougher laws and the unyielding support it needs to drive down crime in our communities. New South Wales has the best and biggest police force in the country. While we will never hear the Opposition recognise these facts or thank the police for their efforts, the Government will continue to support our hardworking police. I look forward to keeping the House up to date on our ever-expanding Police Force and to report on the ongoing successes of New South Wales policemen and policewomen in their continuing fight against crime.

### MARK AARONS RESIGNATION

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** My question is directed to the Premier. Did the Premier discuss with or instruct Mark Aarons to include a disclaimer about protected disclosure in his resignation letter, or are we meant to believe that he included it of his own volition?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Members of the Opposition can continue to believe what they allege, but what they can rely on is the circulated document in which Mr Aarons puts that his resignation was unrelated to protected disclosure. That is the truth.

### EMERGENCY DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Water Utilities. What is the latest information on the Government's emergency drought assistance for our country towns?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I thank the member for Monaro for his ongoing interest in this most important matter. Climate change and the worst drought in 100 years have put water supplies in many remote areas across Australia under severe threat. The supply of safe and secure drinking water to our country towns and remote communities is one of the ongoing challenges presented by the drought. The Premier has previously made a commitment that no town need be without drinking water. We are getting on with that job. That is why since 1992 the Government has approved more than \$40 million for emergency drought works for country towns and communities across New South Wales.

The drought assistance includes the commitment of \$20 million for the emergency pipeline to Goulburn, with construction due to commence later this year. Funding has also been committed to another

76 projects for emergency drought relief. I congratulate our Country Labor members on their keen advocacy and support for all these projects. Today I advise members that I have approved a further five drought relief projects with funding of more than \$220,000 towards securing water supplies in our country towns: local solutions informed by local knowledge. Following representations from the member for Monaro—whose margin, as the Opposition would know, increased by about 50 per cent at the recent election—funding of up to \$125,000 will go to Snowy River Shire Council to ensure continued water supplies for Jindabyne, east Jindabyne and Berridale. About 4,000 residents rely on Lake Jindabyne for their daily town water supply. Water levels in the dam are historically low and this funding will be used for emergency submersible pumps to guarantee water delivery if the levels drop even further.

In dealing with the worst drought in 100 years, the best politics are no politics. That is why we have also been in discussion with some of our National Party colleagues on these matters. I can inform the House and the member for Burrinjuck that the Government is providing a further \$75,000 to the Upper Lachlan shire to investigate groundwater supplies for the villages of Grabben Gullen, Dalton, Jerrawa and Narrawa. It will not stop there. Further funding is available for the construction of production bores once the testing is complete. This is an ongoing partnership with the Upper Lachlan Council, the Iemma Government having previously provided \$120,000 to the villages of Binda, Taralga, Collector and Gunning. There is also \$10,500 in top-up funding for emergency drought works at Finley in the Riverina to provide aeration equipment to prevent algal bloom in the town's new water storage. I inform the new member for Murray-Darling that that amount is on top of the \$210,000 provided earlier in the year to secure the water supply.

Yesterday, I met with the member for Barwon; we are looking closely at the matters he raised. I am pleased to advise that we are working with Cobar Shire Council looking for alternative sources of emergency water supplies for Nymagee in the far west, which has a population of 150 and which has been carting water for 12 months. The Government has provided ongoing funding to ensure water supply security. I also advise the member for Upper Hunter that the Government is providing financial assistance to Liverpool Plains Shire Council for the cartage of water to the village of Wallabadah. This is the latest package of drought relief measures.

When I visited the Young and Cowra regions at the weekend—hosted by my good friend Country Labor member of the Legislative Council Mick Veitch—the feedback about the Government's drought relief schemes was very positive. People have a clear understanding of the scheme and how it works, and everyone appreciates the security and peace of mind it delivers. As the drought continues to affect the State—83 per cent is still in the grip of the drought—this Government will continue to support remote communities and country towns. The stoicism and quiet resolve in these rural communities are a lesson for us all.

The Iemma Government is committed to supporting our regional communities during this drought and those to come. More drought emergency applications are being assessed and I look forward to informing members of the outcome of those assessments. The Iemma Government is working with our country communities, our regional shire councils and our rural members of Parliament to deliver on its commitments to our country towns, big and small, including Goulburn, Barraba, Bombala, Bourke, Deniliquin, Molong, Ivanhoe, Tamworth, Walgett, Yeoval and Young. The Iemma Government is getting on with the job of supporting these communities and it will not let them down.

#### **PREMIER'S STAFF RESTRUCTURE**

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** My question is directed to the Premier. If the Premier is so committed to the truth, will he now advise how many of his staff were made redundant in the restructure he claims resulted in Mark Aarons' convenient redundancy and how many new staff have joined his office since then, or will he again refuse to answer?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Leader of The Nationals asked me the exact question the last time we sat. He should refer to that answer.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I have a supplementary question.

**The SPEAKER:** Arising from that answer?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Yes.



**The SPEAKER:** I will hear the Leader of The Nationals.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** In view of the answer, will the Premier at some stage advise the House how many staff were made redundant and how many new staff he has?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a supplementary question. It is restating the original question and does not arise from the Premier's answer.

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

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism. With the Government having declared a public holiday on Friday 7 September for Sydneysiders to coincide with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit leaders meeting, what is the Government doing to encourage Sydneysiders to take advantage of this holiday?

**Mr MATT BROWN:** I thank the member for Cessnock for his ongoing interest in tourism. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit will be the most significant gathering of international leaders ever hosted in Australia. The eyes of the world will be on Sydney. We have the expertise, the know-how and the logistical capability to host the best Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit ever.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation. This is a very important answer and the Minister should be heard in silence.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** Meticulous planning for this massive security and logistical exercise is well underway and I thank all the agencies involved for their hard work to date. As usual, we will do Australia proud on the world stage. While the Australian Government is the host of the summit in 2007, Sydney will be the focus of leaders week, which is being held from 2 to 9 September. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders Week is an opportunity for Sydney to shine as an efficient, safe and friendly city with an outstanding record of hosting international events such as the 2000 Olympics and the 2003 Rugby World Cup.

With leaders from 21 member countries descending upon Sydney, along with their security and support staff, there will be congestion in Sydney's CBD, especially during leaders week. There will be disruption to businesses, to traffic and to the lives of the people of Sydney. That is why the New South Wales Government has declared 7 September a public holiday for Sydneysiders. The people of Ku-ring-gai in the north, Sutherland in the south and Penrith in the west—I see the member for Penrith nodding—will receive a bonus long weekend to help ease congestion in the city. It is a fantastic opportunity to take the family out of town for a break in regional New South Wales. That was a "Hear! Hear!" from Country Labor, but I heard nothing from The Nationals and their partners in the Opposition.

I was pleased to announce this morning that the New South Wales Government, through my agency Tourism New South Wales, has developed the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit Bonus Long Weekend Getaway campaign.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Lismore will come to order. If he does not, he will be on the getaway campaign early.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** The campaign covers the period from 2 to 9 September. The New South Wales tourism industry is right behind it, as is Country Labor. Offers from operators, small and large, are being placed on the Tourism New South Wales website. Members should not forget the address: [www.visitnsw.com](http://www.visitnsw.com). Offers already on the website include: Four days car hire for the price of three from Avis—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Monaro will come to order.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** I understand that if the member for South Coast takes up the offer, Avis will give her six months of car hire. Bilpin Springs Lodge in the Blue Mountains is offering three nights accommodation for the price of two, which makes the package only \$240 per night per room. The Coffs Harbour Butterfly House is offering a 20 per cent discount on the normal entry fee. That is if the member for Coffs Harbour does not burn it down in the meantime. The Australian Reptile Park is offering a 20 per cent discount, and the member for Baulkham Hills might be interested in that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. I am sure the Minister will conclude his answer.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** The *www.visitnsw.com* website features a unique campaign logo and special pages for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit bonus long weekend. The campaign went live this morning and it includes ideas for families, couples and groups who want to spend the long weekend in regional New South Wales. More offers will be loaded onto the website as they become available. Of course, everyone now has the opportunity to log on to *www.visitnsw.com* and register an interest. When the new offers come online, they will be sent directly to each registered email account. A specially made 60-second film will also be streamed on the website as further enticement to take a holiday and enjoy the wonderful attractions and experiences available in New South Wales. This advertising campaign will be supported by both radio and press, and it will commence in August. My agency is also working with industry to give people the opportunity to win their bonus long weekend getaway. Stay tuned, George, because prize giveaways will commence in July.

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

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: The Minister's answer has been going for six minutes. I do not know where it is going, but it has been going for six minutes—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough of the point of order. I ask the Minister to conclude his answer.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** I would have thought the member for Murrumbidgee would want to promote regional tourism, but obviously not.

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

**Mr MATT BROWN:** There are more than 42,000 hotel rooms available in New South Wales. But things could have been much different, and different in a bad way. If the Coalition had had its way, it would have abolished all advertising. It would have threatened the livelihoods of regional operators and their workers right cross New South Wales with its anti-promotion stance. Luckily, we do not have to dwell on that scary scenario. In conclusion, I encourage everyone—

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, you have asked the Minister for Tourism to wind up his answer. He is clearly wasting the time of the House, and he is canvassing your ruling.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have asked the Minister to conclude his answer. At this stage he is not repeating his comments. I ask the Minister to conclude his answer within a reasonable time frame.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** I encourage all members to check out *www.visitnsw.com*—not just for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders Week long weekend but also for ideas for their next break in our great State.

### RAINWATER TANK REBATE

**Mr PETER DRAPER:** My question is directed to the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water. Yesterday the Minister announced rebates of up to \$1,500 for country people to install rainwater tanks, starting from 1 July. As Tamworth is now on level 5 water restrictions, will the Minister advise the House how and where local residents can apply for these rebates?

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Just ring uncle Phil. Send Phil the bill!

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

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG:** It is a pity the member for Coffs Harbour does not express as much interest in fire restrictions as he does in water.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** I remind the member for Murrumbidgee that we have not yet heard the Minister say anything in response to the question. What is your point of order?

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** There are allegations that his own department, when he was the chief buyer, breached privacy rules—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat.

*[Interruption.]*

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

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** I only burnt my backyard. You burnt the State!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Coffs Harbour's admission is noted. I call him to order for the third time.

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG:** I note the genuine concern of the member for Tamworth about water sustainability issues and his tireless efforts to represent the interests of the people of Tamworth. In my former role I was privy to the member's hard work on behalf of his constituents in protecting them from natural disasters and so on.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Bathurst to order. I call the member for Upper Hunter to order.

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG:** The New South Wales Government is establishing the new Climate Change Fund, which was alluded to in this House yesterday, incorporating the expanded Water and Energy Savings Fund, the Climate Action Grants Program, along with funding from the Environmental Trust. Availability regarding the rebates will be communicated through a range of channels, including public advertising, local council channels and electronic newsletters.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** How do we apply?

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG:** If the Leader of The Nationals will be a little patient, I will get to that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will allow the Minister to answer the question.

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG:** Applicants will be able to ring or write to get application forms and guidance material. This will all be available from 1 July. The new Climate Change Fund will total \$310 million over five years. It includes \$100 million for energy and water-efficient appliance rebates for items such as hot water systems and insulation, increasing the rainwater tank rebate up to a maximum of \$1,500 and making it available across New South Wales; \$100 million for the Recycling and Stormwater Harvesting Program to assist in implementing the Sydney recycled water grid; \$40 million for the Renewable Energy Development Fund for pilot and demonstration projects like solar and geothermal power stations; \$20 million for the School Energy Efficiency Program, to upgrade lighting and implement student-based energy efficiency projects; \$30 million for the Public Facilities Program, a competitive grants fund for state and local government, and educational and other community facilities to seek support for energy and water savings projects; and \$20 million for the Rainwater Tanks in Schools Program.

The fund will be formally created through legislation while an administrative mechanism is developed to deliver the rebates and other programs. Members of the community, including those in the electorate of the member for Tamworth, who want to be kept informed of the Climate Change Fund can register to be kept up to date. They can do this by sending their contact details to [sustainability@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sustainability@environment.nsw.gov.au). The Iemma Government is strongly committed to tackling the challenges that climate change presents. That is why we have been leaders on this issue, rather than deniers or followers. We are creating the \$310 million Climate Change Fund to assist our progress in combating climate change and to help people in need. The fund will help families and businesses enjoy the benefits of being more sustainable with their water and energy consumption, and help them to reduce their carbon gas emissions.

#### WESTERN SYDNEY INDUSTRY AWARDS

**Mr ALLAN SHEARAN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Western Sydney. What is the latest information on the Iemma Government's efforts to support businesses in Western Sydney?

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY:** The Iemma Government is working tirelessly to provide businesses in the Western Sydney with the infrastructure and support they need to thrive in highly competitive markets. Western Sydney is one of the most important economic regions in New South Wales and is home to 150 of Australia's leading 500 companies. That is why we will deliver \$2 billion for infrastructure in the region this year alone, an increase of \$320 million on the previous year. We will continue to play a crucial role in attracting business investment and jobs to the area.

As a Western Sydney girl born and bred, it is with immense pride that I say Western Sydney is now the third-largest regional economy in Australia, generating more than \$80 billion in economic output last year. More than 700 business and community leaders joined with the Premier in paying tribute to the strong performance of business right across the region at the Western Sydney Industry Awards held recently. It was a proud night for many Western Sydney businesses; indeed, it was a proud night for me as it was the first Western Sydney Industry Awards at which I have officiated. Previous Western Sydney Industry Award winners have built on their successes by securing new multi-million dollar contracts, translating into hundreds of new jobs for the region.

The Western Sydney Industry Awards are significant in that they are a New South Wales Government-led partnership. The awards tell the story of how the Iemma Government is building the region alongside business, building partnerships with business, and building partnerships with business and the community. The awards tell the story of how business is returning its success to the community through many projects and charitable endeavours.

I would like to acknowledge some of those businesses, two of which are in my electorate of Auburn. TNA Australia, which is in the Carter Street precinct of Sydney Olympic Park, is a great business. It helps charities with projects such as the Make a Difference project. The business supports so many charities around the world, it is unbelievable. The other business I would like to acknowledge is Cumberland Industries. Cumberland Industries employs disabled people and it has recently bought some land at Dural and is building on that land so 500 of its employees can go out there, spend some quality time with their families and have a break. It is fantastic to see a Western Sydney industry having such compassion for its employees. On behalf of the Iemma Government I congratulate them all.

**Question time concluded.**

## **SYDNEY WRITERS FESTIVAL**

### **Ministerial Statement**

**Mr FRANK SARTOR** (Rockdale—Minister for Planning, Minister for Redfern Waterloo, and Minister for the Arts) [3.20 p.m.]: Ten years ago this week a small group of people gathered in the State Library of New South Wales to share their love of writing and creative expression. That inaugural Sydney Writers Festival was the start of something exceptional, something that would capture the imagination of our city and grow exponentially into the most successful literary festival in Australia.

Last night it was my great pleasure to open the tenth Sydney Writers Festival at the spectacular Sydney Theatre. Scottish author Andrew O'Hagan delivered a poignant lecture urging the audience to harness the power of imagination and literature to create a better world. This year an estimated record 75,000 Sydneysiders and visitors will embrace this challenge and attend more than 300 festival events. The program offers a rich selection of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, screenwriting, philosophy and more. Writers will engage with the community through interviews, panel discussions, workshops, performances, and the list goes on.

The festival continues to build on its suburban and regional touring program, which now takes in Western Sydney, Wollongong, the Blue Mountains and Dubbo. Panel discussions will tackle weighty issues such as China's booming economy and the imprisonment of David Hicks. Of course, the notable speaker delivering the festival's closing address is Somalian-born political figure and author Ayaan Hirsi Ali, author of *The Caged Virgin* and *Infidel*.

The Sydney Writers Festival is now the indisputable king of literary events across Australia. Our festival is the most popular of its kind with international visitors, surpassing Adelaide's biannual Writers Week. Our festival is the most stimulating and provocative in the country, more so than festivals held in Melbourne, Brisbane or Byron Bay. In fact, based on the sheer scale of its program, the Sydney Writers Festival is the third

largest literary event in the world. The only literary festivals larger than ours are the Guardian Hay-on-Wye Festival in Wales—labelled the "Woodstock of the Mind" by former president of the United States Bill Clinton—and the Edinburgh Writers Festival.

This is a glowing reflection on festival organisers, including new artistic director Dr Wendy Were and the wonderful Chair of the festival Sandra Yates and the board members. Over seven years Sandra Yates has been the driving force behind the growth of the festival, which has been an outstanding success. The Government has supported the festival from its humble beginnings and we are proud of what it has achieved. I am particularly proud of the fact that when I was Lord Mayor of Sydney I negotiated with the State Ministry of the Arts to create the Sydney Writers Festival and it has been another one of my grand successes.

We will continue to support culture and critical thought in New South Wales as an essential ingredient for a productive community. Through the State Plan we have set a target of increasing participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10 per cent by 2016. This is equivalent to more than 4.6 million adults visiting cultural venues and participating in the arts at least once a year. Events such as the Sydney Writers Festival will be fundamental to our achieving that goal. As Andrew O'Hagan told an inspired full house last night:

Literature may be entertaining and it may be diverting but its role in a civilised world is neither for distraction nor diversion but for engagement.

Every day is Sorry Day in the world of literature and every day is Humanity Day and Contemplation Day.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** We all read that in the *Sydney Morning Herald* before question time.

**Mr FRANK SARTOR:** Did I hear a funny sound? Congratulations to the Sydney Writers Festival for 10 years of humanity, contemplation and engagement.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.23 p.m.]: On behalf of the Coalition I also congratulate Sandra Yates and all those involved in the Sydney Writers Festival. It is great to see these workshops and the various events, and I urge people to participate in them. I also urge the Government to provide greater resources for the arts. If the Minister is very keen to have a 10 per cent increase in participation he might consider increasing funding, particularly for things like public libraries, which are very important to people who write. The lack of funding from this Government is scandalous. The Minister knows that local government is now bearing the brunt of funding for libraries because this Government has failed to live up to its expectations and obligations. Sandra Yates has done a wonderful job. Unlike the Minister, I have actually written two books—writing is my first profession. I urge the Minister to do more than speak and to act by providing the resources that are needed to boost arts in New South Wales.

## PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY SUPERANNUATION FUND

### Appointment of Trustees

#### Motion, by leave, by Mr John Aquilina agreed to:

That in accordance with section 14 (1) (B) of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1971, the following members be and are hereby appointed as trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund: Mr Ashton, Mr Campbell, Mr McLeay, Mr Merton and Mr J. H. Turner

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Routine of Business

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA:** With the concurrence of the House, business of the House for Friday 1 June 2007, commencing at 10.00 a.m., will be the taking of a maximum of 25 private members' statements.

## PETITIONS

### 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**.

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

Petition requesting the removal of the \$10 booking fee on pensioner travel vouchers, 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**.

### **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**.

### **Jervis Bay Land Rezonings**

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

### **Breast Screening Funding**

Petitions requesting funding for breast screening to allow access for women aged 40 to 79 years, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell** and **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**.

### **Unborn Child Protection**

Petition requesting mandatory statistical reporting of abortions, legislative protection of foetuses of 20 weeks gestation, and availability of resources for post-abortion follow-up, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

### **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**.

### **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**.

### **Grafton Bridge**

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

### **Inner City Bicycle Lanes**

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

### **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**.

### **Manyana Residential Land Rezoning**

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

### **Rural Land Valuations**

Petition requesting a review of the process for land valuations on rural residential properties and a reassessment of those valuations, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

### **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**.

### **Department of Housing Graffiti Removal**

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

## **CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

### **Apple and Pear Industry Fire Blight Risk**

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA** (Wollondilly) [3.27 p.m.]: I raise this matter as a priority because we cannot wait until the time the apples are exported to our shores. As a united government we need to send a very loud message to the Federal Government that this would be a catastrophic move for the orchardists in my region and other regions of New South Wales because it will have a significant impact on thousands of workers in the industry if it is allowed to go ahead.

### **Sydney Ferries**

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [3.27 p.m.]: The motion I seek to be accorded priority today is:

That this House condemns the State Government and the Minister for Transport for failing to deal with ongoing safety concerns regarding Sydney Ferries.

I have sought priority for this motion because for far too long the State Government has ignored the safety record of Sydney Ferries. For too long the Government has ignored inherent concerns regarding management, safety, organisation and culture to the extent that in the past two years the Office of Transport and Safety Investigations has handed down no less than seven reports on Sydney Ferries, making a number of major recommendations. The State Government has chosen to ignore the majority of those recommendations.

Many of those recommendations have remained ignored on the shelf and consequently we have a Sydney Ferries Corporation that is unreliable, that has an extremely questionable safety record and that has outdated procedures. The State Government chooses time and again to ignore those major issues. I will place on the record some examples: The Minister for Transport first announced black box data recorders for ferries in this

Chamber on 11 October 2005. These were meant to be in place. Two years on, this commitment is yet to be fulfilled. There is little doubt that current accident investigations would have been greatly aided by having those black boxes installed in all of Sydney ferries.

It is also of enormous concern that many issues regarding communication between staff on ferries, resourcing of staff, crew management and procedures have remained unaddressed. As a result, the most recent Sydney Ferries annual report demonstrates that 18 passengers in that year were injured on Sydney ferries, with 69 reportable vessel incidents in that year alone—more than one a week—and a 50 per cent increase in the number of reportable incidents of environmental damage. One area of most concern with respect to the Government's failure to address the serious safety concerns in Sydney Ferries relates to the lack of coordination between relevant agencies. A prime example was on 16 February this year when a high-level navigators meeting took place following the accident involving Sydney Ferries on 5 January when tragically a man lost his life.

Revelations that that committee discussed potential safety restrictions for craft around the Sydney Harbour Bridge demonstrates that the committee believed the incident in January at the very least raised certain questions as to the operation and practices involving Sydney Ferries. It is of extreme concern that this meeting was unable to determine an appropriate jurisdiction and failed to make coordinated recommendations and concrete solutions on the way forward. The Minister for Transport should explain when he was advised of this high-level navigators meeting, what the deliberations were and why they failed to provide a coordinated response to the serious safety issues raised at the meeting.

These are some of the issues facing Sydney Ferries. Earlier today the House debated the terms of reference of the commission of inquiry into Sydney Ferries. The Minister for Transport did not bother to participate in that debate. The terms of reference of the inquiry specifically exclude from the terms of the reference the two incidents that occurred this year, 5 January and 28 March. When the Premier and the Minister announced the inquiry on 3 April this year they gave the public the impression that it would be a top to bottom inquiry into the safety record of Sydney Ferries, which caused the public to have the expectation that those two tragic incidents would form part of the commission of inquiry. Not only has the Minister excluded those incidents from the terms of reference, he has failed to explain why that exclusion forms part of the terms of reference. I now wish to refer to some cultural and management issues that impact on the delivery of safe practices.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** You are supposed to be establishing priority.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** If the member listens to the debate he will realise why these issues are important.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** In its most recent report of October 2006 the Office of Transport Safety Investigations raised numerous issues that have been flatly ignored by the State Government. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 50**

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



**Noes, 37**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**APPLE AND PEAR INDUSTRY FIRE BLIGHT RISK****Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA** (Wollondilly) [3.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that there are 320 apple farmers in New South Wales supporting 5,700 jobs;
- (2) notes that fire blight diseases could potentially decimate the local apple and pear industry; and
- (3) condemns the Federal Government for allowing New Zealand apples and pears to be imported into Australia despite the potential for fire blight to destroy the industry and the livelihoods of New South Wales producers.

I am pleased that the first motion I am moving in this place concerns agriculture. I have been asked to move it because I have a personal interest in orcharding. I have an orchard of my own. I live in an important agricultural base in the south-west of Sydney. We have quite a few orchardists left in the region, at a place called Lakesland. As an orchardist I am very much aware of the challenges we face.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Are you pushing your own barrow?

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA:** No, I have to admit my orchard is of plums. I thought I would clear that up so there are no pecuniary interest statements made in this House. However, my good neighbours are orchardists and many of them are in the apple industry. Please keep note of the words fire blight. It could become a very serious endemic disease that we will have in our community and one that we should not have. Fire blight can only be described as endemic in New Zealand, and that is why it is incomprehensible to me that apple and pear growers have to endure the Federal Government's decision to allow the import of apples from New Zealand. The growers are under enough pressure without the Federal Government throwing some other impediment at them and putting their enterprises at risk.

The potential to expose our 320 apple growers and 90 pear growers to this crop-destroying disease is great. Apples alone support more than 5,000 jobs in New South Wales. We export 142 tonnes of pears and grow 1,445 tonnes for the domestic market. Apple and pear growers are rightly up in arms, particularly those in Orange and Batlow, whose local members of Parliament should be helping to stop fire blight from entering our country. I certainly hope they join us on this issue. The least those growers could expect is that their local members will represent their interests and try to prevent any risk to their livelihoods. Farmers have suffered enough during the worst drought in living memory. The importation of apples from New Zealand represents a major threat to our quarantine requirements and also the livelihoods of the rural families who rely on the clean, green image of our horticultural industry. I have endured for many years maintaining a quality pick, and bringing in another pest could decimate the orchard, with all the costs that incurs, and could put the industry at risk.

Before the Federal Government made this ludicrous decision it commissioned the import risk assessment. What a farce! The industry still has serious concerns over several technical points within the import risk assessment—concerns around the anomalies in calculating Australia's appropriate level of protection from

fire blight, determined from the anticipated volumes of imports. I believe every apple counts! No risk is acceptable. The report recommended that we open the floodgates to imported, potentially diseased, apples from New Zealand and the Federal Government has agreed—despite the well-established fact that the fire blight outbreak could cost the Australian apple and pear industry \$1 billion. That is disgraceful.

In the lead-up to the 2004 election the Howard Government was forced to ditch the previous import risk assessment. A total of 46 errors and double counting were discovered in the draft. The risk is far too great. We should not risk our people. We still rely on desktop assessments and are not relying on our own farmers who know the industry. We have again shown how out of touch the Federal Government is with the plight of the State's primary producers. If it cared about our farmers or even took the time to listen to their concerns it would realise that exotic diseases can devastate the local industry.

Our farmers have worked long and hard to be innovative. People in my area have taken many steps to improve their operations. They use technology within their operations and have spent many thousands of dollars to be competitive and now another challenge is coming at them. They are disease-free at the moment but if another one comes in at the moment it will not only devastate the crops but also cost them many, many dollars. The final report claims to take into account issues raised by the industry stakeholders but it is obvious that the risk faced by New South Wales growers has been overlooked or ignored completely. Any risk is too big when it comes to keeping diseases out of the agricultural industry, particularly in a drought period when all things are under stress.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** In any period.

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA:** In any period. We should not put our orchardists at risk. During the dry period now, I have noticed in my own operations that the management of the crops under stress through lack of water is even more devastating, particularly if you do not get on top of the diseases very quickly. The last thing the producers needed was for the Federal Government to make a decision that jeopardised their livelihoods. Our reputation of clean agricultural produce is second to none. Apple and pear producers rely on that reputation to attract interest from their new export markets. They also need that reputation to keep a foot in the door of the export markets they already supply.

This decision from the Federal Government puts all that at risk. It risks the solid gold reputation of our primary producers, and for what: A few New Zealand apples that are nowhere near the quality of our home grown produce. That reputation generates jobs and prosperity for our rural communities. People in my community are constantly chasing export markets. If they have another disease to deal with, heaven help them. Who is more important, apple and pear producers in Batlow, Bilpin, Orange and Lakesland, or apple farmers in New Zealand? This decision by the Federal Government makes its choice very clear. Apple and pear producers are rightly outraged that their own Federal Government would choose New Zealand apples over their livelihoods.

Fire blight was first detected in New Zealand in 1919 and spread rapidly into all pip-fruit growing areas. Now growers in New Zealand spend a lot of time and effort combating the disease. Of course, linked to that are significant costs. Farmers in New South Wales can ill afford the time or the money it takes to combat this disease, but that is the choice they potentially face—spending the extra money they do not have or being wiped out completely. Anyone who knows anything about fruit growing knows that this disease could wipe out \$71 million worth of the apple industry. For once our farmers should come first.

It is unfortunate that they met with the same response from The Nationals, the very people they are supposed to be able to rely upon. We need everybody's support. This will cost apple growers millions. Once fire blight is introduced we will not be able to turn back the clock. Just like the goods and services tax [GST], just like the Federal Government's extreme industrial relations laws, The Nationals in Canberra backed down. The New South Wales Nationals should stand up and be counted, they should stand up against Howard and Costello and support their local industry. They have denied apple and pear producers their right to a clean industry, and that needs to be rectified immediately. I cannot emphasise how important it is not to import apples from New Zealand. Our industry would be at risk and our farmers at greater risk.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [3.49 p.m.]: At the outset I express my absolute disappointment that the member for Wollondilly, who admits to being a fruit grower in his electorate, has politicised this debate. It is a shot at the Federal Government. The member wants to belt up The Nationals on this issue. Either he is playing politics on the issue or he does not understand. The content of

his speech leads me to believe that he does understand, but someone has fed this to him and told him to play politics and belt up The Nationals and the Federal Government. The fact is that the independent body, Biosecurity Australia, has laid down the regulations relating to the importation of fruit.

If the member for Wollondilly is not playing politics he would have included in his motion the banana industry and the whole apple and pear industry in Australia, including growers in Tasmania and Victoria, and he would have condemned Biosecurity Australia for not standing up for Australian growers. I have appealed to my Federal colleagues to bypass Biosecurity Australia somehow and to ensure that no apples and bananas are imported. The banana industry, especially in Queensland, has suffered from devastating cyclones. At the same time outbreaks of moko, black sigatoka and other diseases have meant that areas have been quarantined. How did those diseases get into Australia? They come in via imports.

Unless Biosecurity Australia can give me a 100 per cent guarantee that these diseases will not come into Australia, there should be an absolute ban on imported fruit, be it apples or bananas. As the member for Wollondilly said, the apple industry is worth \$70 million. The banana industry is worth between \$300 million and \$350 million and employs hundreds of people. Hundreds of growers will be affected. Biosecurity Australia stands condemned for what I believe is a fairly poor process in order to get a balance of trade argument across the board. Biosecurity Australia said that it received 200 submissions initially and a further 40 submissions when it released the draft regulations. Biosecurity Australia should have written to all Australian fruit growers to ask whether they support the importation of fruit from affected areas, be it New Zealand or elsewhere, or whether they saw any danger of fire blight, bunchy top or black sigatoka in bananas getting into Australia.

If there is any potential risk, as far as I am concerned that is too much to be put onto the apple industry, which is worth \$70 million, or the banana industry, which is worth between \$300 million and \$350 million. Biosecurity Australia is acting well and truly outside its responsibility. Biosecurity Australia has not provided sufficient information to growers or stakeholders to allow them to respond fully to the import risk analysis. While Biosecurity Australia has said that it is highly unlikely that apples will be imported before 2008, that is not good enough for me.

**Mr Steve Whan:** It's only next year.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** As the member for Monaro says, it is only next year. I do not believe that should be allowed. Members opposite should accept the amendment that I foreshadow will be moved by the member for Wagga Wagga to remove the politics from the motion and to condemn Biosecurity Australia, which is an independent body with responsibility for providing advice to the Federal Government under a legislative framework. Labor members of this House should stop playing politics. Almost every day they play politics during debates. Rather than play politics, they should support growers in New South Wales, and indeed Australia, on this issue. They say they are supporting growers. The member for Monaro, who moved a motion yesterday, should talk to the Premier and ask him where he stands on the drought.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Right in the middle of it.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** He is standing in the middle of a political drought. He has not been past the sandstone curtain. Where was he last week?

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Point of order: I ask you to direct the member for Coffs Harbour to return to the motion before the House.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Matthew Morris):** Order! I have been fairly tolerant. I will allow the member for Coffs Harbour to continue but I ask him to bear that in mind.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** As I said, this debate is much more important than a simple political debate. This is about agriculture in New South Wales and water issues. Apple growers depend on water. They are not getting any water under their irrigation licences, yet they are still being charged for water access. If members opposite want to belt a Federal Government that has an independent body, they should belt Biosecurity Australia. We would support that. Stop playing politics on the issue! We will join the Government in condemning Biosecurity Australia because it has not done its job and we do not believe the appeals panel is independent on this issue. Our growers need to be protected not only from imports but from this Government, which is still charging growers for water access.

What is the Government's position on that? If members opposite want to play politics they should move a motion condemning the Premier and Ministers for still charging growers for access to water that they do not

receive. If they want a bipartisan position on this issue they should delete paragraph (3) of the motion and ensure that they are seen to support not only apple growers but also banana growers and farmers in New South Wales. They should support growers who are being ripped off by the Government in regard to water charges. They should support farmers on drought transport assistance for cattle back to agistment on the coast—we have had a bit of heat on the North Coast—rather than simply supporting them for slaughtering animals. They should support fodder transport to stock although no fodder is available. And if fodder is available it is as dear as poison. Farmers have been through hard times in the drought and cannot afford to buy fodder.

Members opposite should not be hypocritical. The member for Wollondilly should not move his first motion in the House and play politics on this issue. He should move a motion that the House can fully support. I challenge the member to support the Opposition's amendment condemning Biosecurity Australia to show that he has a bipartisan approach to this issue and is not simply trying to get a cheap headline or a media release condemning the Federal Government. I challenge the Government to support our amendment. By supporting the amendment, the Government will be supporting not only apple and pear growers in New South Wales but also banana growers and growers across Australia.

**Mr Thomas George:** And plum growers.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** The member for Wollondilly should support plum growers; he declared his pecuniary interest in the House today. We want the member to support the foreshadowed amendment. By supporting the foreshadowed amendment, he will be supporting the apple and pear industry, as well as the banana industry, and he will be condemning Biosecurity Australia, which is the independent arm that decides what will happen, not the Federal Government.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Why don't you move the amendment, instead of looking at city issues all the time?

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** The amendment condemns Biosecurity Australia, not the Federal Government. The mouth from the south, the member for Monaro, wants to play games.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** You put your money on him not coming back here.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** I apologise.

**Mr Steve Whan:** You said, "He's a oncer".

**Mr ANDREW FRASER:** I apologise to the member for Monaro for calling him a oncer. I have to agree with him. He is just like his father: he is a twicer. He will not be here a third time. When he supports motions like this one, it is a clear indication he is playing politics and not supporting agriculture in New South Wales.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN (Bathurst) [3.59 p.m.]:** I support the motion moved by the member for Wollondilly. The member for Coffs Harbour just gave an extraordinary performance. When The Nationals had a chance to stand up for a country issue, which they say they are passionate about, they voted for a motion moved by the Sydney Liberals. They did not support the motion moved by the member for Wollondilly. They did not want to discuss the issue today. They spend more time on wafting around Darling Point and Sydney Harbour cocktail parties than on taking an interest in issues that affect regional New South Wales. The member for Coffs Harbour condemned the member for Wollondilly for bringing this motion to the House. He said this issue is sacred to The Nationals. They have been woefully silent on this issue.

The Government is taking this action because Biosecurity Australia, which is an organisation set up by the Federal Government, made a decision based on an impact risk analysis it undertook that was riddled with errors. What did Federal Minister Mark Vaile, The Nationals leader, do? He accepted the decision of Biosecurity Australia. When this matter came up earlier this year I put out a press statement. Where was the member for Orange then? He may make some pious platitudes today, but where was he and the rest of the Nationals then? They did not say one word. They were embarrassed. They were told to back off and not embarrass their colleagues in Canberra. The Nationals in New South Wales went to water, as they always do on substantive issues.

**Mr Thomas George:** Point of order: In relation to the remark by the member for Bathurst, he might like to tell us where he was when we discussed the Bells Line yesterday.

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** I was right here, stupid. Have a look at *Hansard*.

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

**Mr GERARD MARTIN:** Once again we see the hypocrisy of The Nationals. In the eight years I have been a member, the Government has raised this matter a number of times. It has been raised by the member for Monaro, by the former member for Murray Darling and by me. We have often raised this issue in response to the industry's concerns about fire blight. It is a most insidious and devastating disease. Michigan in the United States has fire blight and there was a case in south-east Queensland. The disease does not just affect crops for one year or two. It is total devastation. When it gets established trees have to be removed and there is total loss.

The member for Coffs Harbour said if there were one skerrick of evidence that the disease may enter Australia there should be no imports. That is exactly what the Government is saying. Through our motion we say to the Federal Government that the organisation it set up to protect the interests of apple growers in New South Wales and Australia has failed. Biosecurity Australia went through the due processes and undertook an impact risk analysis. The analysis has been shown to be flawed with 46 major errors in it. Yet Biosecurity Australia still made a decision that apples should be allowed to be imported from New Zealand. They have let down the apple growers of Australia.

This privatised organisation, which was set up by the Federal Government to protect agricultural industries, has been shown by other industry bodies to be hopelessly inadequate and inefficient. The result is that Biosecurity Australia submitted its report to the Federal Minister and the Federal Government accepted it. We have no alternative. It is no use condemning Biosecurity Australia by way of substantive motion. It has to be taken to its masters, the people who created it, the Minister who can crack the whip. That is where the responsibility lies. The Federal Government cannot farm out Biosecurity Australia and then say, "If they stuff up it is their fault, not ours". It has to be sheeted home to The Nationals at the Federal level. The Nationals in this House should stand up, have a bit of guts and support the apple growers of this State.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.04 p.m.]:** I acknowledge that this is an important motion that has been brought before the House by the new member for Wollondilly. I am disappointed, however, that he has seized the opportunity to be political rather than constructive. For those who do not understand fire blight, it is caused by the bacterium *erwinia amylovora*, which infects and kills blossoms, flowers, stems, fruit, leaves, branches and even entire trees. It is the foot and mouth disease of the horticultural industry and is well-established in a number of countries, including New Zealand and parts of the United States. Symptoms are brown or black blight and sunken cankers. It causes a long-term reduction in the bearing capacity of trees by killing fruit spurs and destroying the wood that bears fruit the following season. It can be found in any trash and invariably accompanies packaged fruit. It can be spread by a number of mechanisms including many insects and wind. Treatment involves frequent spraying using expensive antibiotics that are not registered in Australia. It also affects berries and ornamentals.

The apple and pear growers association has criticised the way that the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service [AQIS] has handled New Zealand's latest apple import application. The industry is dissatisfied with the lack of communication from the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service about the import risk analysis [IRA]. I refer to a submission by Apple and Pear Australia Limited about the inquiry. This industry body is concerned that a lot of myths are being circulated in relation to the import risk analysis. In its submission Apple and Pear Australia Limited states:

BA [Biosecurity Australia] continues to reiterate that this IRA has been undertaken using sound science. This leads the uninitiated to conclude that:

- There is sufficient knowledge to make an informed judgement.
- Scientists always get it right.

Apple and Pear Australia Limited continues:

An examination of available research shows that, in relation to fire blight, there is a significant shortfall in knowledge and/or consensus in a raft of key areas.

For example, the following knowledge is not available:

- Why can the bacteria be found in orchards when the symptoms are not visible on the trees?

- How long can the bacteria remain in an orchard without showing symptoms?
- Can the bacteria be present, but not detectable (viable but not culturable)?
- Can the bacteria move through the sap of the tree and enter fruit?
- How has fire blight established in 39 of the 48 countries that have the disease?

There are many more examples of critical information that is not known about fire blight, but what is definitely known is that there are no fruit growing areas in NZ which are free of the disease. Fire blight has the ability to reproduce from one bacterium to one billion bacteria in less than 48 hours. Once established it cannot be eradicated. Australia has perfect conditions for its establishment and spread.

The member for Coffs Harbour foreshadowed an amendment to the motion; I will move the amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (3) with a view to inserting instead:

- (3) Calls on Biosecurity Australia to respond to and address the four major issues raised by Apple and Pear Australia Limited regarding fire blight:
- (a) the failure of Biosecurity Australia to provide sufficient information to allow stakeholders to respond fully to the draft import risk analysis;
  - (b) the lack of independence of the appeals panel and its failure to consider adequately the appeals of Apple and Pear Australia Limited and others;
  - (c) the compromise of the impartiality of the Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine in making her final determination; and
  - (d) the activities undertaken by Biosecurity Australia with the New Zealand authorities, the inspection procedures to be implemented prior to the appeals process being completed and the exclusion of the Australian apple and pear industry from all such discussions.

I ask the member for Wollondilly to support this constructive amendment. It is what the industry wants. In the limited time I have left, I point out that a Senate committee is currently drafting a report and the association had the opportunity to put its submission before that committee. The Senate committee plans to meet next week to discuss the final draft, which will then go to the Federal Government. I put on record that no decision has been made. The member for Coffs Harbour asked members opposite to take the politics out of this and to support our amendment. They should be constructive; this is a constructive amendment. As members know, Batlow is in the electorate of Wagga Wagga and it depends very heavily on the industry. Darral Aston and the group that made those submissions have work tirelessly. Members should support this amendment and not play politics. It is too important for that.

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI** (Maitland) [4.09 p.m.]: I expected The Nationals to support this motion 100 per cent. I represent a rural electorate that has many constituents who make their living out of farm produce. I would have thought members opposite would support the 320 growers and 5,000 jobs that will be affected. The Federal Government's decision clearly shows that it has turned its back on these growers. The decision by members opposite not to support this motion shows that they have also turned their back on these growers.

The growers have spent a great deal of time and money building up the confidence of their export markets. They now face the prospect of pears and apples being imported from a country that has fire blight. What will that do for confidence in this industry? It will not do much at all. I am disappointed that we do not have the support of members opposite and I urge them to reconsider. This Government has made a \$20-million investment in our State's farming future. It has implemented packages, including extending the funding of drought support subsidies until 31 August, continuing the drought Support Worker Program and the Farm Family Gathering Program until 31 September 2007, and waiving western lands lease annual rents for 2007-08. That \$20-million allocation demonstrates this Government's commitment to our farming future.

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA** (Wollondilly) [4.12 p.m.] in reply: I thank members for their contributions, and in the interests of time I will not respond.

**Question—That the words stand—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 49**

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

**Noes, 36**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment negatived.**

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

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

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

### **BELLS LINE EXPRESSWAY**

**Mr GERARD MARTIN** (Bathurst) [4.23 p.m.]: I wish to raise a matter of great importance concerning the proposal for the construction of an expressway over the Bells Line of Road. Yesterday in this House the member for Orange wrongly attributed to me a certain position on the matter, saying that I expressed one point of view in my electorate and another in this place. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have been, and still am, a member of the Bells Line of Road Executive, under the chairmanship of Ian Armstrong. As

such I am rock-solid behind the communities west of the Blue Mountains, and indeed the Blue Mountains council, to have this important road infrastructure built. So, contrary to what the member for Orange said, my position on the issue, both in this House and outside it, is exactly the same.

What we have always said is that for this project to go ahead—and given that the likely cost of it is about \$3 billion—it needs to be included in the AusLink Program developed by the Federal Government. As we know, AusLink is a five-year funding mechanism for transport infrastructure in Australia. I commend the Federal Government for this initiative, even though it is starting to suffer a little from pork-barrelling in the lead-up to the federal election. We are now looking at a strategic review of the AusLink Program for the period 2009 to 2014. As I said, it is our wish that the Bells Line of Road be included in the program.

Last Friday the Prime Minister visited my electorate of Bathurst and offered \$10 million for studies to be carried out on the project, on the proviso that the State Government matched the funding. There was no consultation with the State Government on this matter. There is no mistaking that the Prime Minister's announcement in Bathurst last week, which was repeated in Lithgow, was simply to prop up the Liberal member for the Federal seat of Macquarie, which will be a marginal seat. With the recent boundary adjustments, that seat now includes Bathurst and Lithgow. Kerry Bartlett, who is the sitting Liberal member for the old seat, has been a trenchant opponent of the project but he has had a conversion on the road to Damascus as he sees his political aspirations hanging on it.

The unfortunate thing about the Prime Minister's announcement last Friday—when one looks at the fine print, this is typical John Howard—is that the funding for the study will not be available until 2009. So the project will be stalled for two years. The funding is needed for an environmental impact statement and further engineering studies to be carried out. No-one knows why it will cost a total of \$20 million to do that. Putting that aside, the Prime Minister has blown out the project until at least 2011 before the Federal Government would be able to commit to it. Of course, by 2011 the AusLink funding for 2009 to 2014, which is something like \$20 billion, will already have been allocated. Therefore, under the Prime Minister's proposal funding for the Bells Line of Road will have to wait until the 2014 to 2019 allocation. So much for The Nationals, in particular, trumpeting that the Prime Minister's announcement in Bathurst and Lithgow last Friday would advance the project.

During the last State election campaign The Nationals—as is its wont right around the State—promised everything to everyone. Andrew Stoner came to Orange and announced that the Coalition would fund the Bells Line of Road, and said that the funding would start in its first term. When asked by a journalist, "How are you going to fund it?" he used the old Joh defence: "Don't worry about that; we'll find the money somewhere," the inference being that John Howard would stump up under AusLink and was about to do it. Of course, we know that that is not the case, as evidenced by the Prime Minister's statement in Lithgow last Friday. So The Nationals ran that campaign with a big lie.

Around 99 per cent of the people in my electorate and in western New South Wales want this project, but they did not fall for what was said by the member for Orange or Susan Wilson, the candidate who ran against me, and whoever The Nationals candidate was in Dubbo. I should know the name, because The Nationals had it up on a big billboard in my electorate. But people ignored it. They did not fall for The Nationals' con in the State election campaign, and they have not fallen for John Howard's con in my electorate last Friday. As I said, I am fully behind the project.

### KYOGLE COMMUNITY

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore) [4.28 p.m.]: This afternoon I wish to pay tribute to the Kyogle community. For members who may not be aware, Kyogle has a population of about 3,500. Not long ago the major employer in the town, which employed more than 130 people, lost its processing plant overnight and the community was gutted. However, knowing the resilience of the Kyogle community I am sure they will pull together. I wish to place on record my appreciation not only to the Kyogle community but also to the community surrounding Kyogle. The residents of Kyogle support each other continually. They provided a great deal of support for the workers when that tragedy happened, and they did a very good job of it. Some four weeks ago Kyogle held its inaugural Relay for Life.

I had the pleasure of being there for the opening, and more than 500 people turned up to take part in the Relay for Life. The most heartening part of that afternoon was when I saw more than 50 cancer survivors take part in the opening lap. Anna Fitzalan, a survivor of breast cancer and chair of the Relay for Life committee, and



members of the committee put together this wonderful event. In doing so they raised in excess of \$40,000. I remember a young lady at the event, Breanna Whitney, suffering from leukaemia at two years of age. She was blessed with a second chance and she was able to lead everyone in a wonderful prayer on that day. I pay tribute to the organisers and everyone who participated in such a wonderful event.

A young boy at Kyogle, Tyson Alcorn, had a motorbike accident at Christmas and became a quadriplegic. Last Saturday at Kyogle the community banded together to provide Tyson with some things he needed following his tragic accident. Tyson now spends his time in the spinal unit of the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane, which is three hours away from his family and friends from back home. The Kyogle community was inspired by Tyson's story and last weekend put together a wonderful day which was organised by the Kyogle Rugby League Club, for which Tyson had been an outstanding junior footballer. John Spackman brought together an excellent team of organisers to arrange the day.

This community of 3,500 people, which was devastated only three years ago and had raised \$40,000 just weeks before for Relay for Life, last Saturday raised \$80,000. That shows the dedication and support of those in this small community and its surrounding areas. Tyson's father, Russell, and mother, Maree, have been overcome by what has happened in their lives, but they were certainly honoured to have the day for Tyson last Saturday. A family friend, the mother of a classmate of Tyson's, has now provided a house in Brisbane so the family can be accommodated there with Tyson. Once again I place on record my appreciation—and I am sure I speak for members of the community at large—to the Kyogle community for the wonderful job it has done.

### **KOGARAH FIRE STATION CENTENARY CELEBRATION**

**Ms CHERIE BURTON** (Kogarah) [4.33 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the recent centenary celebrations of the Kogarah fire station. I had the honour of unveiling a commemorative plaque to celebrate 100 years of community service in Kogarah by an outstanding organisation, New South Wales Fire Brigades. The day's events included a sausage sizzle for the citizens of Kogarah, static equipment displays, marching girls, and a full program from the New South Wales Fire Brigades band. Present at the proceedings were Commissioner Greg Mullins, AFSM, Councillor Michael Kitmiridis, Mayor of Kogarah, Councillor Anne Field, Superintendent Alan Love from the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, and Chris Windsor from the New South Wales Fire Brigades Employees Union. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I pass on my congratulations to the firefighters who have served there and the local community for this fantastic achievement.

Members should note that the Kogarah Fire Brigade started in 1894 in a small weatherboard building built by volunteers from the Kogarah community. A series of concerts and social functions raised enough funds for uniforms, and a grant from the Fire Brigades Board allowed for the purchase of a reel and 800 feet of hose. This volunteer community effort lasted until 1902. The Fire Brigade Board then introduced a partially paid system of appointing a permanent paid captain and a supply of uniforms for the volunteers. When this building opened in 1907 there was still only one permanent staff member. Volunteers were required to attend fires with a horsedrawn manually operated pump. It was not until 1912 that the station was manned by a permanent staff of professional fire officers. Finally, in 1919, a motorised fire engine was delivered to the station.

Today Kogarah has 48 full-time firefighters, and there can be no doubt it is one of southern Sydney's most significant fire stations. That is particularly so in my mind. It is sometimes easy to take our firefighters—and, indeed, all our emergency service workers—for granted, but the day's events gave me the opportunity to pay them the special debt of gratitude they are owed. The crews protect thousands of properties as well as St George Hospital, St George TAFE, the head office of St George Bank, the Rockdale wetlands and numerous schools and nursing homes. Responding to more than 1,200 emergency calls each year, Kogarah's firefighters attend car accidents, chemical spills and fires in residential areas, factories and businesses.

Clearly, 100 years on their work involves far more than just putting out fires, but as Commissioner Mullins rightly pointed out in his speech on the day, there are many aspects of the job that remain constant. While the first firefighters at this station pulled the hose reel and fought fires with horsedrawn equipment, they were filled with the same community spirit and courage as those who today run into buildings and carry people to safety, who rescue people from car wrecks, or who stand ready to deal with the consequences of terrorist attacks. The day allowed us to honour and celebrate the efforts of all the firefighters who have served this community during the past 100 years. As a result of their efforts, which have often gone beyond the call of duty, the residents of Kogarah feel safe in the knowledge that they are in very capable hands. We thank them for their commitment and service.

Also present for the occasion were Deputy Commissioner John Benson, Assistant Commissioner Bob Dobson, Chief Superintendent Paul Rugg, Superintendent Doug Williams, Senior Brigade Chaplain Major Lyndsay Smith and Kogarah Fire Station Commander, and Duty Crew B. I had the honour of being there with my husband and my son, who was thrilled to pieces to see the marching band and all the displays. It is great to deliver this private member's statement while the Minister responsible for emergency services is present and I thank him for all the support he gives to the Kogarah fire station. I have had the privilege of being able to give the fire station a new truck and many more things it needs to fight fires and save lives in Kogarah. It has been a great honour for me to be able to do that and to work with them.

I reiterate how much the community gathers around its local fire station. I was very privileged to be at the bravery awards, where both our magnificent firefighters and local citizens received awards for the great bravery they have shown in recent times in Kogarah. Since I have been the member for Kogarah the community spirit and how people will put their community first and other people's lives before their own has always amazed me. The centenary celebration was a great day and a wonderful opportunity for me as the local member to reiterate, on behalf of the Government, our gratitude and thanks to the Kogarah firefighters. It is a great pleasure to stand here today and commend them for all their efforts and I wish them all the best for the next 100 years of firefighting.

### **RURAL ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY EXTRAORDINARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [4.38 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House and the Minister for Agriculture a number of issues of concern regarding the New South Wales Rural Assistance Authority's extraordinary assistance program for irrigators in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys. I have received a number of inquiries from constituents about what assistance I may be able to provide to them in appealing decisions made against them. One such inquiry was made by a couple from Deniliquin, Peter and Dawn Caruso, whose application for compensation was denied because the majority of their income was deemed to be obtained from non-farming activity, a farm machinery repair business they operate to supplement any minimal income they receive from their farming business.

The farming machinery repair business has been their main source of income for a number of years, as they have been unable to derive a sufficient income from their farming activities on which to live. Conversely, the business is owed more than \$80,000 from others engaged in farming activities throughout the Deniliquin area, many having received compensation for the water taken from them. This is about compensation for water that was removed from these farmers and about a commercial transaction that the Government has not completed. I ask the Minister to provide the House with an explanation as to why someone who operates a farming activity, and a non-farming activity that has been providing others with a vital service to maintain farming activities, should be disadvantaged and not receive compensation for water taken by the New South Wales Government.

I also inform the House and the Minister for Primary Industries that I have received correspondence from other constituents, including Ian Shippen, who have been denied compensation under the same scheme because it was deemed that their applications were lodged too late for processing. Those constituents attended an information centre conducted by the Rural Assistance Authority in Wakool on 8 February 2007. A representative from the Rural Assistance Authority informed those in attendance that their applications would be considered if they were lodged—and this is the key word—before the close of applications, not if they were received by the Rural Assistance Authority before the close of applications. I ask the Minister to provide the House with an explanation as to why the applicants, who took this advice in good faith, have subsequently been informed that their applications have been declined as they were received after the lodgement date?

### **CAPO NOLI SAFETY DISPUTE**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.42 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of members a disturbing incident which is occurring as I speak at Port Kembla in my electorate of Wollongong. It involves a Canadian company with, I am advised, shipping operations in Australia. I refer to Canadian Shipping Limited, or CSL, which has chartered a vessel on behalf of an iconic Australian company, Boral Limited, and has attempted to use foreign seafarers to undertake stevedoring functions. I believe this is the first time in Australia's proud maritime history that any shipping operator has sought to use untrained, unqualified foreign seafarers to unload a vessel at an Australian port and, even worse, a port in my electorate.

I am also advised that such a practice is in contravention of the labour agreement applicable to the vessel, the *Capo Noli*, signed between the Italian shipowner and the International Transport Workers Federation.

That agreement prohibits ships crews undertaking cargo-handling work. The practice was also recently rejected by a decision of the European Parliament, effectively outlawing it in the European Union. It is of great concern that the seafarers in question are not trained or qualified to operate the cargo-handling equipment on this vessel.

Another aspect of this unfortunate development is that the seafarers who would be required to undertake the unloading operation have already completed a full shift involving their usual seafaring duties. No seafarers should be placed in a situation where they are required to perform a full seafaring shift and then, on arrival in port, commence an unloading operation. Seafarer fatigue is well recognised internationally as one of the key factors leading to shipping accidents. An attempt by the vessel master, under instructions from the ship charterer, to require seafarers to perform the unloading work under these conditions is a breach of all standards of decency in work practices and endangers the seafarers in question.

The key issue here is safety. The operation of ships cranes for unloading and the preparatory work undertaken within the holds of ships as part of the unloading process requires, under international conventions and Australian law, specified skills and qualifications. There have already been two Australian dockworkers killed in 2007 while working in ship holds, and there have been four deaths over the last three years. Those workers were all Australian trained and qualified. The attempt by the ship charterer, CSL Limited, to put in a foreign crew that is not trained in ship unloading, does not hold the requisite qualifications for operating cranes for bobcats, and is not trained in unloading techniques in a position that jeopardises their safety and endangers other crew members and shore-based workers, is unacceptable.

There have been comments in the media suggesting that the vessel is a self-unloading vessel that does not require trained and qualified stevedores to participate in the unloading operation. I am advised that this is simply not true. The Maritime Union of Australia has given advice on this issue. I might add that within the fleet of CSL there are some vessels, such as the *Iron Chieftain*, which have self-unloading equipment, but the *Capo Noli* does not have such equipment. One can understand, though not agree with, the actions of CSL. This is the company that bought into the Australian shipping industry, took Australian vessels out from under the Australian flag, flagged them in a flag of convenience registry with foreign seafarers and then re-entered the Australian coasting trade. It is the company that fought the maritime unions when it sought to ensure that the foreign crews were paid Australian wages. That matter went all the way to the High Court, which found in favour of the maritime unions.

The High Court decision was overturned by the shameful WorkChoices legislation. I cannot understand why an iconic Australian company such as Boral, a successful building products supplier, believes that it needs to downgrade its longstanding commitment to Australian shipping by retiring its Australian vessel from the trade and introducing this foreign-flagged, foreign-crewed charter vessel onto the Australian coast, taking advantage of the Howard Government's abuse of the coasting trade permit system. I understand that the Maritime Union of Australia has taken a number of steps to resolve this problem. I commend the union for that; I believe it is seeking the assistance of the Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU]. I hope that commonsense will prevail, that seafarers lives and safety will not be put at risk and that the cargo of gypsum can be unloaded using acceptable international practices.

## MANLY ELECTORATE HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [4.46 p.m.]: I am delighted today to pay tribute to the midwives of Manly Hospital and to bring to the attention of the Minister for Health the ongoing concern about health services in Manly. A constituent who works in the health system has written to the Minister as follows:

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you because I am so overwhelmed by the continuing degradation of the NSW health system. In particular the public hospitals are of great concern to me as a consumer and as a health professional the services at Manly Hospital.

I am a strong believer in the ultimate good and need for a public health system and have continued to work in this system, but this is becoming increasingly difficult to do when you feel that the hospital management and government is working so hard against you.

The women in the Manly area ... are subjected to third world conditions ... and do not receive the same quality food, accommodation, facilities or equipment as other patients in other maternity units in Northern Sydney Area Health.

So now ... the women of Manly ... are subject to a ward that is 50 plus years old, staffing levels that have been cut and bed turn over increased, highly qualified midwives with masters degrees have to spend time washing floors making beds and restocking as administration refuse to give full coverage of a ward assistant.

Other hospitals in Northern Sydney Area Health have received new units. Manly has been waiting patiently for a new hospital ... and the Maternity unit has suffered from lack of funding and refurbishment as we are constantly told that we need to wait for a new hospital. Where is the hospital?

Will you please make a stand to show that the women, children and families are not subjected to continued buck passing ... The families on the Northern beaches have as much right to modern hospital facilities and equipment as any area.

The question for the Minister for Health is twofold. First, will she listen to this letter, address the concerns about Manly Hospital and acknowledge the great work that Manly MidWives do? Second, is the long-term solution to which the Government is committed—that is, the provision of a new hospital—to be realised? An article from the *Manly Daily*—and I praise the *Manly Daily* for the fine community work it does—states:

The clock is ticking from today for the State Government as residents demand action on the purchase of their Frenchs Forest homes needed to build the new northern beaches hospital.

In a letter of demand mailed yesterday, five residents on Bantry Bay Rd and two on Frenchs Forest Rd have vowed to take the Government to the Land and Environment Court if their properties are not purchased in 90 days, or by August 29.

Under the plan unveiled by Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service in March last year, the Government was to have bought 11 properties by July 2006. But to date they have negotiated to acquire only four.

The question for the Minister for Health is: where is the new hospital? Four properties bought, not eleven, and at the same time existing facilities have run down. That has been happening for more than 15 years. I see some members on the other side of the House who were kind enough to be present during my maiden speech two nights ago. They will remember that I said quite clearly that health services should be above politics. In that respect, Manly MidWives provide a compass for why we stand in this place. If the Minister for Health can assure the people of Manly of the continuation of the maternity unit, she should do so. The ward is more than 50 years old. That is unacceptable. I ask the Minister<sup>1</sup> for Health to take that into account. She needs to commit, first and foremost, to ensuring that the maternity ward is not run down while we are waiting for the new hospital and, second, she needs to make a strong commitment to the construction of the new hospital.

We on the northern beaches remember many promises. We had the wonder of The Spit Bridge widening. I do not want to dwell on that because that is a debate for another time. That widening was promised for five years and was expected to cost \$59 million. Where has that money gone? Spending some of it on public transport would be a good start, but Manly Hospital needs money to maintain services that are a testament to those workers who continue to provide health services, particularly the maternity workers. I call on the Minister for Health to acknowledge that, to commit to the maintenance of Manly Hospital until the new hospital is built, and to get on with building it.

#### **SHELLHARBOUR ROTARY CLUB EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSON OF THE YEAR AWARD**

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON** (Shellharbour) [4.51 p.m.]: Each year the Rotary Club of Shellharbour holds an event to recognise the emergency service person of the year from the Ambulance Service, the Rural Fire Service, the Police Force and the State Emergency Service for the Shellharbour catchment area. The Emergency Service Person of the Year Award was held on Friday 25 May 2007 at the Warilla Bowling Club. When fires, floods, storms, hazardous chemical spills, motor vehicle accidents and other disasters strike, our communities know they can depend on our emergency services to help and protect them. In New South Wales there are more than 90,000 emergency services personnel, both paid and volunteer, from organisations such as those recognised at the awards service. They are rightly recognised as among the best in the world. For this I commend New South Wales Ambulance Service Illawarra District Officer Terry Morrow; Rural Fire Service Illawarra Superintendent Richard Cotterill; State Emergency Service Illawarra Regional Controller Neal Pfister and Lake Illawarra Local Area Commander Superintendent Wayne Dedden.

Whatever the disaster, the emergency services personnel are there to answer the call for help, often placing their own lives at risk to ensure the safety of others. My family personally benefited from the hard work of these services during the 1998 floods. While I was in Sydney at a work function my two children, then aged three and five, were with family in Wollongong and became trapped in rising floodwaters that were two metres high. They were rescued by State Emergency Service volunteers. As a mother, separated from her children and unable to contact them, I was enormously relieved when I received a phone call telling me everything was okay. Like so many families, I thank the emergency services for the assistance my family received that night.

On a professional level the lemma Government proudly acknowledges the emergency services and their contribution to our society. As a Government we are committed to providing the support needed to assist them

to carry out their activities. Since 1995 the Labor Government has allocated more than \$6 billion to our emergency services to upgrade equipment and resources and supporting infrastructure. Locally this means \$25 million has been spent on: more firefighting equipment, including the cost of helping to run volunteer rural fire brigades; 34 bush fire fighting tankers, as well as funding for a joint fire control centre for Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama electorates, which is to be located at the Illawarra Regional Airport in Shellharbour; and 25 per cent more police at Lake Illawarra Local Area Command, with a commitment to a new Lake Illawarra area command headquarters. This is in addition to the already completed \$2.5 million Shellharbour fire station, which is fully equipped with 20 additional full-time firefighters and received a new fire engine in 2004.

This record level of funding demonstrates the lemma Government's commitment to our emergency services, a commitment that I am sure will continue. This commitment is met by the provision of resources. Whilst it is significant, and I do not wish to downplay its significance, I appreciate that it is only an echo of the personal commitment that emergency service workers and their families make—the personal sacrifice that they make, the dangers they face—so that others can be safe. The emergency service personnel who work or live within the Shellharbour electorate should know this: Ordinary folk in our community admire you, respect you, and value the contribution that you make to our lives.

It is through organisation and coordination of awards like the Emergency Service Person of the Year Award that we in the community have the opportunity to let the hardworking emergency service personnel know just how important they are. Finally, I thank the Shellharbour Rotary Club and its members for organising and coordinating this public recognition event. I take this opportunity to recognise the award winners and the services they represent. They are David Majkowycz, State Emergency Service Member of the Year; Sergeant Gary Keevers, Police Officer of the Year; Brian Heapy, Ambulance Officer of the Year; and Fred Brown, Rural Fire Service Member of the Year. Whilst only one person received an award from each service represented, all the members of the services are heroes. When asked "What do you want to be when you grow up?" far more five-year-olds say they want to be a police officer or firey than ever say they want to be a politician.

#### KURNELL DESALINATION PLANT

**Mr MALCOLM KERR** (Cronulla) [4.56 p.m.]: I am pleased the Minister for Water Utilities is at the table, because despite widespread community opposition to the Kurnell desalination plant and despite the Premier's promise that a desalination plant would only proceed when Sydney dam levels fell below 30 per-cent, the Government is pushing ahead with construction. Environmental assessment for the pipeline delivery was put on display for public comment until 28 May. Before reactions to that assessment can be evaluated, helicopters and dump trucks will have moved in and geotechnical drilling works will have commenced in residential streets. This makes a sham of the public consultation process and the Government has demonstrated that it is determined to ride roughshod over the residents. Local residents such as John Scott and Dorothy Exon have been vocal in their opposition to the plant and have been supported by Sutherland Shire Council, the combined community groups of Sutherland shire and highly esteemed environmentalist Bernie Clerk.

Bernie Clerk has painted a picture of the Lane Cove Tunnel excavated into Botany Bay's seabed, cutting it in two for eight kilometres. Over one million cubic metres of seabed will be dredged, causing massive disruption and disturbance to Botany Bay, with long-term erosion dangers. Disruption to the seabed will expose toxic chemicals that have been accumulating for more than 70 years from the Georges River and industrial run-off and waste. Bob Walshe from the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre has led a tireless campaign against the plant and has raised alarm bells as to why the Government is proceeding with such haste when dam levels are currently over 37 per-cent. The Government has repeatedly promised that desalination would not go ahead unless dam levels fell below 30 per-cent. The environment centre has also warned about the impact on migrating whales and said that the New South Wales Government could be the first known government in the world to build a desalination plant alongside an international species migration zone. It should be recorded that the Minister for Water Utilities has left the Chamber. I hope he will come back to respond to my statement.

Kurnell residents will be denied vehicle access to their homes for up to a month while an 1800 millimetre pipeline is constructed. While Sydney Water states that those with disabilities will retain access, the term "disabilities" is not defined. For example, is a pregnant mother with a toddler and grocery bags in tow expected to walk to her home from a parking compound? The lives of Kurnell residents will be put on hold, with restrictions on home deliveries, tradespeople and visitors during the pipeline construction period. Shift workers, many of whom work at the refinery, will be unable to sleep during the day because of noise levels. What guarantee will Sydney Water give residents that their cars will be safe away from their properties? Will Sydney Water provide compensation to car owners if their cars are vandalised or stolen while their cars are parked far

from home? Sydney Water should be providing all residents with 24-hour vehicle access ramps to their properties and a daily inconvenience compensation payment. A portion of beautiful Silver Beach the size of a soccer field will become a construction zone.

What measures will be put in place to prevent contamination of the beach and Botany Bay from leakage of petrol, grease and chemicals from construction equipment? Sydney Water should ensure that independent daily environmental inspections are undertaken to protect the beach and Botany Bay from pollutants. Sydney Water staff have admitted that 11.9 per cent of Sydney's water is lost through broken and leaking pipes, and that this is acceptable. Yet this Government is spending \$2 billion on a desalination plant to provide a 7 per cent increase in the water supply while it continues to let 11.9 per cent leak out of the system. Hidden deep in the environmental assessment is the hypocritical irony that potable or drinking water will be used for construction purposes.

While Sydney residents turn off the tap to brush their teeth, this Government supports the use of millions of litres of drinking water to construct a desalination plant. I hope that the Minister for Water Utilities has briefed the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services to answer these concerns and questions about whether work is being carried out to determine whether there are contaminants around the site, what protective clothing the people carrying out this work are using, the cost of the work, and when the results will be made public.

### HUNTER IMAGING

**Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI** (Maitland) [5.01 p.m.]: I raise in the House today a problem in my electorate of Maitland that has existed for far too long, and one that I would like rectified. It involves access, or lack of access, to a vital piece of equipment, that is, an MRI scanning machine. Located in and around the Hunter is an organisation called Hunter Imaging. Offices of this organisation are located at various places in Maitland and East Maitland, as well as the suburb of Cardiff in Newcastle. As many people may know, this organisation provides a service to the community by way of scans and X-rays to patients who are referred by medical practitioners. At East Maitland is an operational MRI scanner, which obviously cost millions of dollars. It has been housed at this location for some time. The machine is used to detect or diagnose bone disease, soft tissue injury, brain tumours, cancers, et cetera. This machine has the capacity to detect life-threatening illnesses and disorders, and we have one in Maitland. Not surprisingly, many patients are referred to this service.

Effectively, most people in Maitland are unable to access this machine because the Federal Government refuses to provide a licence for the machine, allowing people to get their Medicare rebate. However, the machine housed at Cardiff does have a licence, so when one uses that machine, the rebate applies. The scanner at the Cardiff office is the closest one available to the people of Maitland and surrounding areas. This means that someone in my electorate must make a round trip of anywhere from four hours to an entire day to travel to the Cardiff office, wait in the queue, use the machine and then return to Maitland. This is a great inconvenience to people in my electorate. The cost of one scan is \$600. I am aware that there are procedures in place to allocate licences. The Federal Government's inaction is causing the process to fail the people of Maitland.

As members are aware, Maitland is a rapidly growing area. More relevantly, it has an aging population. Further, aged developments and facilities are on the increase. The aged, the frail and the sick have a legitimate expectation of being able to access good health services in their area— something they cannot do in this case because of the Federal Government's inaction. Proper access to this health care service is of paramount importance. When I say "access" I am talking about financial access as well as physical access to this machine. The location of this machine at the East Maitland office is on the main road of the New England Highway. If people in my electorate want to access this machine but are unable to afford \$600 for a scan, they must drive past the machine on the New England Highway on their way into Cardiff. By any standard, this situation is unsatisfactory. Indeed, it is absurd. I first found out about the situation when I became a candidate for the State election. I quickly organised a petition; that petition is still circulating and gathering signatures by the day.

Maitland should not play second best to anyone or anywhere. We should be able to get proper and effective use of this high-technology equipment, especially when we have that equipment in our area. At present it is mainly private health patients who have access to this machine. The scanner is being used at one-third capacity. That is not good enough. People have visited my office and told me stories about not being able to access the scanner because of the lack of funds or because they are unable to get into the Cardiff office due to their condition. In other cases some just do not bother. Many of those who have travelled into Cardiff have

reported lengthy delays. I find it difficult to believe that this situation exists. As I did in November last year, I am calling on the Federal Government to take action and grant a licence to the operators of this machine at East Maitland.

The Federal Government should stop ignoring the situation and give the people of Maitland and surrounding areas the proper standard of and access to health care by using this machine. It is simply not good enough to say that there is a machine in Cardiff; it is not good enough for Maitland. Again, as I did in November, I am calling on the Federal Member for Paterson to take action on behalf of his constituents in Maitland for this to occur so that the people of Maitland do not have to put up with second best, especially when the facility is in their area. I can assure the people of Maitland that I will pursue this issue. It is too important to just let it go. What I say is: Let us get the machine licensed. Let us get on with it. The situation has existed for far too long.

### CLARENCE FISHING INDUSTRY

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL** (Clarence) [5.06 p.m.]: I wish to speak about the welfare of the fishing industry in the Clarence area and the dire need for a buyback scheme focussed solely on reducing effort, thus ensuring the viability of the fishing industry in the future. There are seven fishing regions in New South Wales and the Clarence region is the biggest commercial fishing area. Clarence River Fishermens Co-operative Limited processes approximately two million kilograms of product per annum. That equates to \$20 million landing on the fish market floor. That brings close to \$40 million with the multiplier effect value for the Clarence Valley. There are five different fisheries within the Clarence region: ocean prawn trawl; ocean trap and line, which processes tuna, mackerel, snapper and cod; ocean hauling, which is mullet; river estuary prawn trawl; and river estuary general fishing, which covers mesh netting, hauling, crab and eel traps, et cetera.

Approximately 150 fishers rely on product from the Clarence River, while approximately 50 are ocean deep-sea fishers. Also, about 600 family members are involved in the fishing industry, together with support staff. With 10 years of drought, the fishers have struggled to make ends meet. It has been said that a drought on the land equals a drought in the river. This is on top of excessive fees, such as fish management charges, maritime licences, food safety regulations and fees, escalating fuel prices, and loss of market share due to cheap imported seafoods, mainly from Asia. Many fishers and their families are finding it difficult to make a living. There are too many fishers, and this equals too much effort. There needs to be a genuine buyback scheme to ensure a sustainable industry and, just as important, a sustainable outcome for the ecology of the mighty Clarence River. A commitment of between \$3 million and \$5 million would substantially reduce effort in the Clarence region.

In South Australia, the trawl fleet in the Spencer Gulf got its numbers down to the point where the fishers could take more responsibility in managing the fishery and reducing the impact on the area. Because they had more control over a more manageable product, they were able to improve fish stock management, coordinate harvesting and introduce value adding. To give some examples of the tough times that many people in the industry are facing, I refer to correspondence I have received over the past 12 months. A lady wrote to me that her husband has been in the fishing industry for almost 40 years and is now almost 70 years of age. He has been diagnosed with prostate cancer and has trouble running his business. He finds it difficult to get deckhands because he has to pay a fee of \$400 for them to attend a course and then, more than likely, they will leave. This lady writes:

We have no income to pay Licences for Fishing, Waterways, SafeFood, Enviro Levy, etc, several thousand dollars a year. We are trying to pay these fees out of our age pension to keep the Licences intact.

She further writes:

We have been getting further behind each week and now have a sizeable debt.

A letter from another fisher states:

We have not had a solid income in months. How long before the Government of the day starts to take notice and offers us some help? Do they intend to wait until Fishermen start to take their own lives before they offer us any assistance? Steve we are getting very close to that point.

The line at the bottom of a long letter is:

BUY us out NOT just send us BROKE.

In another letter the fisher states:

I am unable to pay this invoice that I recently received from DPI. With all of the other charges and the current HIGH cost of fuel (about 500 litres per night), my fishing business is now losing money. Fishers need relief and assistance at this time, not more bills.

These people are desperate. Both the sustainability of the fishing industry and the ecology of the rivers are important issues. Many of these fishers are struggling, but as they get older they may not put in as great an effort as they did when they were young. If they happen to sell their boat to a poor, misguided young person who borrows money from a bank, rather than fishing a couple of days and three nights a week, the young fisher will put in a huge effort to pay off the bank loan. The Government needs to buy out these fishers with a "no return to the industry" clause so as to ensure the sustainability and viability of the ecology and the communities that the fishing industry supports.

### NEWCASTLE SHIP BUILDING

**Ms JODI McKAY** (Newcastle) [5.11 p.m.]: Today I want to show my support for ship building in Newcastle and urge the Federal Government to support the bid by Thales Australia to build two Canberra class amphibious ships. Thales Australia is one of two companies bidding for the \$2 billion project and, if successful, will bring \$500 million in investment and more than 600 jobs to the east coast of New South Wales. About 300 of those jobs will be in Newcastle and the Hunter region. The two proposed vessels will be the largest naval vessels built in Australia in the last 20 years. Thales Australia proposes to carry out 40 per cent of the work in Australia. This level of Australian content is a critical issue that the Federal Government should consider when making its decision on the successful proponent. It will be disappointing if the Federal Government chooses not to consider the importance of local content in its decision-making. It will be disappointing if the Federal Government chooses not to consider the ship-building skills of Newcastle in its decision-making. I understand that the other company tendering for the project, Tenix, will build the hulls offshore and complete the fit-out at Williamstown in Victoria.

Newcastle has a proud ship-building history and has the skills to deliver this project, which involves the design and construction of two ships that will carry troops, tanks and helicopters. The new vessels will replace HMAS *Manoora* and HMAS *Kanimbla* in 2012. If Thales Australia wins the tender, the work will be shared between Newcastle, Brisbane and Sydney. Last week, during the regional Cabinet meeting in Newcastle, the Minister for State Development met with representatives from Thales Australia and its project partner, Newcastle-based Forgacs, to convey the Iemma Government's full support of Thales Australia to build the two 22,000 tonne amphibious ships for the Royal Australian Navy. I thank the Minister and the Premier for their support of Newcastle. I urge the Federal Government to support the Thales Australia bid. In doing so, I support Newcastle and the shipbuilding industry. The Minister said last week:

Construction of these ships in Australia is critical to allow intergenerational skill development in the Hunter and will ensure that Australian industry has the ability to support the Navy in the future.

He went on to say:

Newcastle has the skills and know-how to do this vital project. The Hunter is the obvious choice.

A decision on this project is expected within the next two months. I reiterate that Newcastle has the skills and the will to play its part in this project. I urge the Federal Government to grant the project to Thales Australia and, in turn, support Newcastle and the Hunter region.

### BEROWRA ROTARY

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [5.16 p.m.]: I inform the House about a great honour that was bestowed upon me last evening. I was invited to, and attended, the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of Berowra Rotary club. During the course of the evening I was presented with a Paul Harris Fellow recognition, which was a great honour and a complete surprise. I have had a long association with Berowra Rotary. I am the honorary member of three Rotary clubs in my electorate. My husband has been a longstanding member of the club, and we have worked on the many projects undertaken by the club. This year President Graham Moyle, who is extremely ill with terminal cancer, was honoured by being presented with a Sapphire Paul Harris Fellow recognition. It was a double celebration. The Rotary International President, Bill Boyd, is currently in Australia. He was not at last night's meeting of Berowra Rotary; he and Pam Pritchard, our Rotary District 9680 Governor,



have been busy visiting many of the Rotary clubs in Sydney. The Rotary International theme this year is "Lead the Way". The president, board and members of Berowra Rotary and the members of the other Rotary clubs of which I am an honorary member are definitely leading the way.

Lawyer Paul Harris was the founder of Rotary, which was the world's first and is the most international service club. Paul Harris was born in Wisconsin in the United States in 1868. In 1896 he went to Chicago to practise law. One evening he visited the suburban home of a professional friend. After dinner they strolled through the neighbourhood and Paul's friend introduced him to various tradesmen in their stores. There and then Paul conceived the idea of a club that could recapture the friendly spirit among businessmen in small communities. On 23 February 1905 Paul Harris formed the first club and named it Rotary because members met in rotation at their various places of business. Rotary club membership grew rapidly. Paul became convinced that Rotary could be developed into a service movement and strove to expand Rotary to other cities. Obviously, it has now extended all around the world.

Rotary continually challenges the potential of an association that is made up of like-minded professional businesspeople who meet and share common interests on a regular basis. The Paul Harris Fellow award is presented to people who are held in high esteem. I am very humble to be one of those people. In 1957 the Rotary Foundation launched the Paul Harris Fellowship in memory of the founder as an expression of its appreciation of those who have contributed to the foundation's humanitarian and educational programmes. The foundation's goals of world peace and understanding are taken into account. After 50 years, recognition as a Paul Harris Fellow remains a respected and prestigious honour for Rotarians and non-Rotarians alike.

Berowra Rotary Club is involved in many and varied activities. It holds regular plant sales and a huge annual exhibition of pottery and many other arts and crafts in October/November. It also supports the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund, the Rotary Foundation and many other projects that change from year to year. Those projects include Shelter Box and Rotarians Against Malaria, and it assists non-Rotary organised causes such as Cure Cancer Australia and Camp Breakaway. The club also supports Crosslands Rotaract Club and is actively involved in the Rotary Youth Driver Awareness program held at the Honda Awareness Roadcraft Training Complex at St Ives and the Rotary Youth Leadership Award. It is also a strong supporter of the Rotary Exchange. Congratulations and thank you, Berowra Rotary.

## **BRAIDWOOD FAMILY FARM GATHERING**

### **BRUCE BASHFORD, RURAL COUNSELLOR, RETIREMENT**

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.21 p.m.]: I wish to congratulate a number of people in the Braidwood community who were part of the very successful family farm gathering held at Braidwood last weekend. Family farm gatherings are all about communities getting together to celebrate or commiserate. People share their experiences of the drought that has been affecting New South Wales for so long and take the opportunity to have a light-hearted day with their families and friends. They can talk to people, enjoy the company and make contact with some of the organisations in the community that offer help to farmers who might be having difficulties as a result of the drought. About 440 people gathered at Braidwood for the family farm gathering at which they enjoyed a free lunch, which was terrific, and great entertainment provided by a number of people. That entertainment included poetry reading by Richard Stone, music provided by Annie and the Armadillos from Canberra, and a number of other performances by singers and songwriters.

The State Government has supported these family farm gatherings around the State to help people suffering as a result of the drought. They are a terrific initiative and have been welcomed in the Braidwood area. I give credit to the Department of Primary Industries' Dick Kearins, who was heavily involved in organising the event. I also acknowledge the efforts of the organising committee members: Reverend Ken Foster, Father Mark Croaker, Martin Pitt, Jeff Walford, Roger D'arcy from the Braidwood Rural Lands Protection Board, and Jo Wilson. John Weeks was the master of ceremonies and contributed a great deal. Those people put together an extremely successful day. I noticed a number of community groups helping, including representatives of the Rural Lands Protection Board. State Emergency Service staff were, as usual, prominent and doing a lot of work.

The Lions Club, St Vincent de Paul and Anglicare were also there, along with people they helped through the drought. The organisers noted that assembling the group to organise the function enabled them to understand the work that each does in the community and how much more cooperation they could achieve in addressing issues such as the impact of drought. In all respects the event was extremely successful and

worthwhile. Everyone who attended seemed to enjoy themselves and it was a good opportunity to gather on a beautiful sunny day in Braidwood—albeit with a slightly chilly wind.

I also wish to acknowledge Bruce Bashford on his retirement. Bruce was the rural counsellor based in Cooma for many years. Over the past decade he has helped many families in the Cooma-Monaro and far South Coast areas to deal with the problems they have faced as a result of the drought. The farming families in our region have trusted him and have been able to communicate with him. He can be very proud of the fact that during his career as a rural counsellor he has made a real difference to many families in our community. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend his farewell in Cooma, and I was disappointed not to be there.

However, I know that the event would have been well attended because Bruce is an extremely respected figure in our community. So much so that when I first started campaigning in the region a decade ago my father told me that I should talk to Bruce Bashford because of his great knowledge of the rural community in the area. Of course, Bruce will still be seen frequently in the area, not only because he lives there but also because he is heavily involved in sheepdog trials and breeds dogs. He is at most of the shows at which sheepdog trials are held and I know he will continue to enjoy that pastime for many years. As State member I put on record my and the community's gratitude for Bruce's efforts as rural counsellor for Cooma-Monaro and the far South Coast for many years.

### SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL CAR PARKING

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast) [5.26 p.m.]: I wish to raise an issue affecting constituents in the electorates of South Coast and Kiama. I state at the outset that the member for Kiama has been made aware of the problems and he needs to explain to his and my constituents what actions he has taken since the issue was raised again last week. The problem concerns the totally inadequate car parking facilities at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital and the fact that since the completion of the redevelopment of the hospital more than two years ago the lack of car parking has become so serious that nurses have met to discuss their frustrations regarding the issue and the action they might take.

On any given day at Shoalhaven hospital the car park is full to overflowing and the surrounding streets also parked out with the cars of either visitors or hospital staff. Nurses, doctors and medical staff are forced to circle the car park in the hope of parking somewhere, and often are forced to park on earth mounds adjacent to the car park or to mount the kerb. These unfortunate actions have been necessary in some cases to allow nurses and doctors to start their shifts on time or to attend emergency surgery. However, last week hospital executive staff apparently requested that the Shoalhaven city rangers be asked to book and fine anyone parking on verges or earth mounds near the hospital. Around 30 staff and visitors were fined \$77 each on one day alone, and local rangers returned the following day to issue more fines.

When a very distressed nurse approached a senior hospital executive member she was told to park in one of the adjoining streets and "walk like everyone else". The problem with this inappropriate response is that the adjoining streets are always full at any time of the day or night due to the activities of various businesses in the area. Parking further away, sometimes a kilometre away, will lead to the dangerous situation of nurses walking long distances alone at night to reach their cars. Cars in the adjoining streets have been vandalised and it is totally unacceptable for a female nurse to walk alone at night. I place on the record the comments of one of the nurses who contacted me and also of an attending doctor who is enraged that he has been unable to park adjacent to the hospital for two years despite the fact that he is a surgeon and regularly attends the hospital. The local nurse states in a letter to me:

I wish to add my comments to the issue of parking fines around the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital. I am a registered nurse and one of the many astonished and furious recipients of a parking fine issued on the 22nd May. I have worked at the hospital now for over three years in the casual pool, working three, four and sometimes five days a week. During this time the parking situation has always been totally inadequate unless one's shift commences at 6.30 or 7.00am. After that we circle like sharks hoping for a space to become available. Most staff arrive twenty minutes early to crawl the area but mostly to no avail...

I understand parking is an on-going headache for patients and their families and friends, as well as the staff who work there. I'm sure the hospital administrators receive many complaints from the public who suffer the extra burden of parking during stressful times. Surely it is impossible to discriminate between staff and visitor's vehicles and why should either category of parkers be punished for circumstances beyond their control, ie lack of parking space. Many of the hospital visitors are experiencing extreme anxiety about the wellbeing of their loved ones, we acknowledge that sad and distressing things happen in hospitals. Imagine receiving a parking ticket at the end of a day fraught with uncertainty, fear and sometimes grief. I believe the hospital administrators have taken an extraordinary and callous approach to the problem of inadequate parking. If this initiative has its origins within the hospital administration then it is inappropriate and reprehensible.

Despite being fined and "ticked off" I still cannot imagine how I am going to legally park my car when my shifts commence at 8.30am, 9.30am, 10.00am, 11.00am or 1.00pm. As a conscientious, hard working, loyal employee of the hospital I am surprised by the lack of support and the disregard for my circumstance.

Enough about me, the Shoalhaven community surely deserves better treatment and support, the idea that daily blitzes could occur and punish indiscriminately people accessing hospital services appears mean and short sighted. Nobody is parking in this area for recreation. Presumably people are seeking medical services or are in the business of providing them. Is either group deserving of this callous treatment? I would welcome any comment or support you could offer in staving off this draconian practice, and bring some sense of fairness and workability to this situation.

It is an extremely serious and grave situation. I know that many members of this place speak about the services in the hospitals in their electorates, but this issue is causing great dismay and concern to our hardworking hospital staff. I call on the member for Kiama to distract himself just for a little while from his new website as the Minister for Tourism, come back to the issues concerning his own electorate and seriously do something about addressing the long-term parking needs of Shoalhaven hospital.

## WASTE

**Ms CLOVER MOORE** (Sydney) [5.31 p.m.]: Tonight I wish to speak about the serious environmental problem of waste. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that between 1993 and 2003 waste generation in Sydney increased by 161 per cent. The Total Environment Centre predicts that Sydney will produce more than eight million tonnes of waste per year by 2020 if current trends continue. Transferring large amounts of rubbish to landfill is unsustainable. Much of what we throw away is made from non-renewable resources. Disposed waste includes toxic chemicals and heavy metals, such as lead, mercury, arsenic and beryllium, which leach into soil and water. Even safe organic matter such as food scraps when concentrated in landfills can add to leachate, posing serious threats to water and food supply.

The National Greenhouse Gas Inventory estimated that landfill was responsible for 3 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2004, and as landfills move further away from metropolitan areas transporting the waste adds to the cost and greenhouse gases. In 2004-05 City of Sydney Council residents generated a massive 247 kilograms of domestic waste, which is on par with the New South Wales average of 249 kilograms per person per year. We are meeting current State targets for the diversion of waste from landfill, but we plan to do much better. We recently exhibited a draft environmental management plan for public comment and are developing a specific waste management strategy.

We have expanded our resource recovery programs through green waste and white goods collection, and have undertaken effective recycling education programs, particularly focussed on multi-unit dwellings. Our work with the Department of Housing is creating 15 new recycling facilities on public housing high-rise estates. Recently City of Sydney Council staff identified a 363-unit residential building which had no recycling facilities. Staff advised building management about recycling improvements, and delivered new bins and educational material. Within a week 45 per cent of the building's waste was being diverted from landfill and the resource recovery rate is now as high as 55 per cent. While City of Sydney Council recycling levels are increasing, we face significant challenges due in part to significant commercial areas, and many old multi-story developments with limited space for recycling facilities.

To help local councils across New South Wales meet ambitious and essential targets, I urge the State Government to implement existing powers under the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001 and implement mandatory extended producer responsibility [EPR]. Extended producer responsibility requires producers to take responsibility for the entire lifecycle of products, from the impact of extracting raw materials to the recycling or disposal of the final product. With the current voluntary scheme, incentives remain for manufacturers to design for profitable "built-in obsolescence", rather than durable and recyclable goods.

Electrical equipment is a specific concern. Consumers have few recycling options and councils must collect items separately. Each year in New South Wales 15,000 tonnes of old televisions, over 50,000 tonnes of white goods, and between 2,000 and 5,000 tonnes of computers are deposited in landfills. Australia lags behind many countries that require the take-back and recycling of electronic equipment and white goods. Sweden, Japan and South Korea introduced legislation to reduce electronic waste, legally requiring companies to accept and recycle old products when new ones are sold. The European Commission is developing a similar directive.

The most recent New South Wales expert reference group report on the computer sector found that voluntary schemes had been unsuccessful and recycling had been unsatisfactory. A container deposit levy [CDL], which adds a small refundable fee to the price of drinks, has been shown to increase container recovery

rates. South Australia has had a container deposit levy for more than 30 years, and 50 per cent more containers are recycled in that State than in New South Wales. Despite the success of a container deposit levy elsewhere, the New South Wales Government has refused to introduce it. The excuse that mutual recognition agreements with other jurisdictions prevent the introduction of the levy fails to acknowledge exclusions that allow states to restrict traded goods on environmental protection or pollution grounds. I agree with the Total Environment Centre that New South Wales could easily request an exemption for a container deposit levy on this basis.

As a community we must rethink our use of resources and energy. While material goods improve our lives, there are costs to their manufacture and use, and programs should educate people about the impacts of consumption. Waste reduction programs should be funded through Sydney's waste levy, which is increasing by \$6 per tonne each year and is set to reach \$56 per tonne by 2011. Of the \$730 million the State Government will collect in the next five years, only \$300 million, or less than half, will go back into the environment. I support the Local Government and Shires Associations' call that at least \$100 million of the levy per year should go into waste reduction programs. New South Wales has the power to mandate extended producer responsibility. Given the failure of voluntary schemes and the absence of a national scheme, I call on the Government to legislate for producer responsibility, including take-back programs, a container deposit levy, and plastic bag bans and levies.

### **BERKELEY VALE PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST**

**Mr GRANT MCBRIDE** (The Entrance) [5.36 p.m.]: On 16 May 2007 I attended a leadership breakfast at Berkeley Vale Public School. The breakfast, which is designed to be a practical lesson in leadership for students, is an innovation introduced by the current principal, Paul Britton. The breakfast has proved to be very successful in terms of not only attendance but also the experience gained by the students. Student leaders within the school meet and have breakfast with leaders from our community. The leadership breakfast is an opportunity for school captains, prefects, student representative councillors and house captains to meet in an informal way with adults who are leaders or who are outstanding role models in their chosen profession. Very often these are high-profile people with a strong media presence. The school captains, Brayden Mead and Ellie Pich, and the vice school captains, Jason Cozens and Robyn Cante, are to be congratulated on the way they represented the school on the day and welcomed the guests to the breakfast. They are a credit to their school.

During the breakfast students and school leaders participate in exercises that are designed to help the children understand that these high-profile community members were once young children at school, just like them. The exercises include questions about growing up and being part of a community. In this way students identify commonality between themselves and the guests. The students see also that they share common experiences with the adults, and this also helps to break down stereotypes in that the students can see that these are real people—no matter what the media hype may say—who have worthwhile hopes and dreams of making a positive contribution to society.

Some of the questions the students ask the guests are: What was your favourite subject, and why? What did you like most at primary school? What did you want to do after school? The questions seem very simple, but they draw out meaningful discussions between the students and the guests. The interchange is conducted at tables comprising eight guests, and each guest is associated with a school leader. Through this process, the young people are able to interact directly with people they may have seen on television or heard about through the media, or people they may have seen in their local community through their professional roles, such as police officers. The students engage in one-to-one discussions with the guests and are able to talk with them about issues that were current when they were school students.

Berkeley Vale Public School has approximately 790 students and an extremely dedicated and caring group of teachers and volunteer parent helpers. In 2000 the then Minister for Education and Training recognised the school by presenting it with an award for outstanding programs in schools, in particular for its performing arts program. The school has again demonstrated its commitment to its students with this outstanding program. The then principal, Peter Newman, was a driving force behind the performing arts program, which has carried through in other public schools in the area as well.

The leadership breakfast has now been held for three years, and I commend the principal, Paul Britton, and his fellow teachers for their continued support for it. I would like to congratulate the students who participated in the breakfast: Madison Coxon, Grant Brooks, Taylah Hudson, Brady Slough, Michayla Simpson, Jake Allen, Emma O'Hagan, Matthew Holland, Brooke Shawl, Ashleigh Wells, Pauline Eldridge, Ethan Dowling, Zac Turner, Joshua Ryan, Annika Pex, Anna Bailey, Travis Smedley, Chloe Morrison, Jack McConnell, Nathan Moore, Mollie Alexander, Aimee Moore, Chris Webb, Alycia Fowler, Rachael Cassidy,

Shar-Tia Little, Leah Ewings, Sam Rochester, Dane Booth, Connor Isaac, Holly Clarke, Shenaye Thorpe, Dean Neary, Courtney Gibbons, Calah Desborough and Olivia Simpson, the future leaders of our community.

The program is viewed as a critical part of the learning process that not only do students learn about leadership but they also meet and interact with real-life leaders from all walks of life. Teachers can instruct students on the "how" at school, but meeting with inspirational people gives students the reason to want to do something. Guests at the breakfast included Wyong Shire Mayor Bob Graham, Mingara Recreation Club Chief Executive Officer Paul Barnett, Ian Robbiard from the Central Coast Academy of Sport, David Harris, the new member for Wyong, local police, and other local professional people, including a local hospital pharmacist, volunteers, local business people, and a church minister. Indeed, last year police Commissioner Ken Moroney was a guest at the breakfast.

I congratulate and thank everyone involved in the program, including the canteen staff and helpers for preparing a healthy and delicious breakfast. I wish Berkeley Vale Public School continued success with its innovative programs. Berkeley Vale Public School is typical of the primary schools in my electorate of The Entrance continuing the quest to provide quality public education whilst serving the special needs of the local community.

**Private members' statements noted.**

**The House adjourned at 5.41 p.m. until Friday 1 June 2007 at 10.00 a.m.**

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