

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 27 June 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.

## HUMAN CLONING AND OTHER PROHIBITED PRACTICES AMENDMENT BILL 2007

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

### COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

#### Membership

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

1. That under section 64 of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993, a joint committee known as the Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission be appointed.
2. That under section 67 (1) (a) of the Act, Ms Westwood, Mr Clarke and Revd Mr Nile be appointed to serve on the committee as members of the Legislative Council.

Legislative Council  
27 June 2007 (am)

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

### COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

#### Membership

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

1. That under section 31A of the Ombudsman Act 1974, a joint committee known as the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission be appointed.
2. That under section 31C (1) (a) of the Act, Ms Voltz, Mr Lynn and Ms Hale be appointed to serve on the committee as members of the Legislative Council.

Legislative Council  
27 June 2007 (am)

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

### COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

#### Membership

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

1. That under section 27 of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998, a joint committee known as the Committee on Children and Young People be appointed.

2. That under section 29 (1) (a) of the Act, Ms Griffin, Ms Cusack and Revd Mr Nile be appointed to serve on the committee as members of the Legislative Council.

Legislative Council  
27 June 2007 (am)

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

### Membership

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

1. That this House agrees to the resolution in the Legislative Assembly's Message of Thursday 21 June 2007 relating to the appointment of a Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.
2. That the representatives of the Legislative Council on the Joint Standing Committee be Ms Sharpe, Mr Harwin, Miss Gardiner and Ms Rhiannon.
3. That the time and place for the first meeting be Thursday 28 June 2007 at 10.30 am in Room 814.

Legislative Council  
27 June 2007 (am)

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

## AUDIT OFFICE

### Report

**The Speaker** tabled, pursuant to section 38E of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, the performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled "Dealing with Household Burglaries: NSW Police Force", dated June 2007.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## MOTOR DEALERS AMENDMENT BILL 2007

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Linda Burney.**

### Agreement in Principle

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Youth, and Minister for Volunteering) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Motor Dealers Amendment Bill 2007. The bill introduces a number of changes to the record-keeping requirements for motor dealers and will cut red tape across the sector. The Iemma Government is committed to reducing red tape for small business. An important priority of the State Plan is to help business by cutting the regulatory burden wherever possible. Strong, profitable businesses, particularly small businesses, are integral to job creation and in powering the New South Wales economy.

To assist in identifying areas where excessive regulation could be cut, the Government established a Small Business Regulation Review Taskforce in 2006. The task force looks at a sector of the New South Wales economy and makes recommendations on where paperwork can be minimised. I am pleased to inform the House that one of the very first areas looked at by the task force was the motor vehicle retailing and servicing sector. This sector was selected as it contains a very high proportion of small businesses. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, more than 96 per cent of the 20,000 businesses involved in motor vehicle retailing and servicing have fewer than 20 employees, and nearly half are what are often termed mum and dad operations.

The retailing side of the sector employs more than 2,500 people. Its significance to the New South Wales economy is shown by the more than 300,000 new motor vehicles sold across the State in the year

May 2006 to April 2007. For many people, the purchase of a motor vehicle is the second-largest expense they will incur after the purchase of their home. The cost of cars, together with the risks for consumers, requires that motor dealing be regulated. However, this does not mean that we should let the industry become crushed under the weight of unnecessarily complex paperwork and outdated regulation.

Under the Motor Dealers Act and Regulation, dealers are required to keep a number of prescribed forms. These forms include a variety of different registers of the vehicles they are buying, selling and transferring. These registers include information about the vehicle, its odometer reading, any defects where relevant, the vehicles identifiers and any other relevant information. The data stored in the registers is vital for investigating consumer fraud and to help stamp out the trade in stolen cars and spare parts. The legislation also requires dealers to attach certain prescribed forms to motor vehicles to provide important information to consumers about the vehicles, such as the vehicle details, whether they are subject to a statutory warranty and whether they have previously been written off.

Currently, there are 19 separate prescribed forms under the Act. The task force recommended that the Office of Fair Trading look at each of these to identify opportunities for simplification and reduction. I am pleased to advise that this process has indeed been fruitful. The Motor Dealers Amendment Bill 2007 includes a number of changes to the law that will significantly reduce the burden for dealers, result in the abolition of four of the 19 prescribed forms and reduce the usage of one other. Under the current arrangements, dealers are required to complete a form each and every time they transfer a vehicle to another dealer, whether they are a retailer or a wholesaler. These inter-trade dealing forms contain information that helps Fair Trading and the police to trace a vehicle's history and includes information about its odometer reading, identifiers, where it came from and who it has been on-sold to.

During the work of the task force it was discovered that the Roads and Traffic Authority is collecting the same information when the registration of the vehicle is transferred. This means that, generally speaking, when a dealer transfers a vehicle to another dealer, he or she must provide this same information twice and complete two separate lots of forms. The task force identified this unnecessary duplication as an area for change, and the Motor Dealers Amendment Bill 2007 will abolish the need for dealers to complete inter-trade disposal forms. The change will not impact on the law enforcement capabilities of Fair Trading, the Roads and Traffic Authority or the Police Force. Fair Trading has already been in contact with the authority about the information it collects to ensure that required data is collected and both the Police Force and Fair Trading will be able to access the authority's database when conducting investigations.

I am advised that each year dealers across the State undertake around 600,000 inter-trade vehicle transfers. A cut in the red tape associated with these types of transactions will have an immense impact on the industry. The Office of Fair Trading has indicated that the changes will bring about an estimated \$1.17 million saving for dealers in processing, printing, handling, storage and retrieval costs associated with this high number of transactions. This change is a win-win for industry and consumers alike. Dealers will be free of unnecessary red tape and will be able to spend more time doing what they do best—operating their small business and getting on with the job. Consumers can be assured that the strong audit trail for motor vehicles in inter-trade transactions will continue, and they may also benefit from any cost savings passed onto them by dealers.

I turn to the other area of significant change for dealers under the bill—the forms prescribed specifically for demonstrator vehicles. Demonstrator vehicles are very popular among consumers and dealers. They offer the benefits of buying a recent model car at a reduced price. They are, however, essentially used vehicles and the Government sees no reason that they should be treated any differently from other used vehicles. Currently, demonstrator vehicles require their own separate forms. By treating them in the same way as all other types of second-hand vehicles these demonstrator vehicle specific forms can be abolished, and the costs of maintaining the demonstrator registers for dealers as well. The information collected on demonstrator vehicle specific forms is the same as that collected on the generic forms used for other types of used vehicles. This includes the odometer reading of the vehicle, its identifiers and any defects that the consumer needs to know about.

All of the forms also contain information for consumers about their warranty rights and important advice on a vehicle's title and whether it has been previously written off. By treating demonstrator vehicles in the same way as all other used cars are treated for the purposes of the prescribed forms and warranty provisions under the Act the whole process will be simplified for consumers and dealers and it will ensure that separate arrangements exist only for used cars and new cars. Dealers will still be able to market demonstrator vehicles, which as I noted previously are often considered favourably by consumers. The definition of a demonstrator will

also be retained under the Act to prevent dealers from marketing any used car as a demonstrator and misleading consumers. Dealers will also still be able to access the stamp duty benefits associated with demonstrator vehicles through the Office of State Revenue.

The main change for consumers will relate to warranties. The arrangements for statutory warranties for demonstrator vehicles differ slightly from those in place for other used cars. However, in the main, used vehicles currently attract a statutory warranty of three months or 5,000 kilometres, as do those demonstrator vehicles that have travelled more than 15,000 kilometres at the time of sale. While there are differing statutory warranty provisions for those demonstrators that have travelled less than 15,000 kilometres at the time of sale, the manufacturer's warranty that is provided with demonstrator vehicles is far more generous than any statutory warranty that can be provided. In the case of three of Australia's largest vehicle retailers—namely, Holden, Toyota and Honda—the manufacturers warranty offered is three years or 100,000 kilometres. Others such as Mitsubishi offer even better terms.

I am advised that the changes will also bring the records required to be kept for demonstrators more in line with other jurisdictions such as the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland, while still offering greater protections than those offered in other States such as Western Australia, where in certain cases consumers can rely only on the manufacturer's warranty for their ex-demonstrator vehicle, and South Australia, where there are no statutory protections for demonstrator vehicles. In consultation with the Office of Fair Trading about the bill the Motor Traders Association has indicated that it does not believe that dealers will move away from their current marketing practices involving demonstrator vehicles, including the use of manufacturer's warranties.

The changes set out in the Motor Dealers Amendment Bill will have a significant and immediate impact on reducing red tape for Motor Dealers. However, the Government is going further. Already changes to the Motor Dealers Regulation are being developed that will further reduce the forms that dealers are required to keep. These proposed changes include combining the separate registers that car market operators fill in when selling vehicles with or without title guaranteed. Under the current arrangements dealers must fill in separate forms when a Register of Encumbered Vehicles check has been carried out or when one has not. The simplified register will allow dealers to indicate on the form whether title is guaranteed and will cut printing, storage and retrieval costs in half as only one form will be used instead of two.

It is also proposed to merge two other forms into a single simplified document by way of regulation. Separate forms are used for motor vehicles that are sold without a statutory warranty depending on whether the vehicle does not attract a warranty or is exempted from the warranty provisions altogether. In either case, the information the dealer must fill in is virtually identical. As in the case of vehicles sold at a car market, the proposed merging of the two forms will create significant savings for dealers. An added advantage for consumers is that the proposed new simplified and merged form will include information about the title of the vehicle as well as advice on written-off vehicles and whether a pink slip is required. Not all of this information is currently contained in such detail across the two separate forms.

As I have mentioned, the proposed cuts to the recordkeeping requirements for licensed motor dealers has been discussed with the Motor Traders Association. The changes have also been discussed with the Road and Traffic Authority, the New South Wales Police Force, the Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers and the chairperson of the Motor Vehicle Industry Advisory Council. All have indicated support for the measures, which are designed to cut red tape without affecting the strong consumer protection mechanisms under the Act.

Ultimately it is proposed that the entire package of reforms will reduce the number of forms the dealers will be required to complete from the current 19 to 13. At the end of the process a number of forms will be streamlined and merged, while unnecessary duplication will be cut. I am pleased to note that this is the third announcement in recent months that the Iemma Government has made to reduce red tape in the Fair Trading portfolio, particularly for small business. The three-year licence renewal scheme for builders will commence in July. Changes to the continuing professional development arrangements for a number of licences, as well as these important cuts to red tape in the motor vehicle retailing sector, demonstrate the Iemma Government's commitment to slash over-regulation for traders. The changes let businesses get on with the job of providing services to their customers, creating jobs and helping to boost the New South Wales economy for the benefit of everyone. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION AMENDMENT (CANCELLATION OF INCORPORATION)  
BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Linda Burney.**

**Agreement in Principle**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Youth, and Minister for Volunteering) [10.18 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Associations Incorporation Amendment (Cancellation of Incorporation) Bill 2007. The bill seeks to amend the notification provisions for proposals to cancel associations under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984. The bill also introduces a provision that allows the incorporation of an association to be reinstated if it has been incorrectly cancelled. The Associations Incorporation Act 1984 was introduced to provide small non-profit community-based groups with a simple and inexpensive means of creating a legal entity separate from the individual members. Incorporation under the Act is voluntary and is significantly simpler and cheaper than incorporating as a company under the Corporations Act 2001.

Incorporating under the Act provides association members with a valuable legal safeguard in the form of limited liability, which members of unincorporated associations do not enjoy. The Act provides also a legislative framework to assist in the association's general administration. There are more than 39,000 registered incorporated associations in New South Wales. Associations typically fall into the categories of charities, sport, recreation, education, or community service clubs. They play a valuable role in bringing people together for a common cause, providing real benefits for their members and the larger community. Of those, approximately 60 per cent have a turnover of less than \$100,000 and 2 per cent have a turnover of more than \$500,000.

Some of those associations are no longer active but have not applied to the registry to have their incorporation cancelled. As a result of a review of the Act many recommendations have been made for reform of the legislation. The New South Wales Government is currently working on substantial amendments to the Act. However, one of the matters raised in the review was the number of associations that are no longer operating but that are still showing as registered. The current provisions for cancellation are overly complicated and are not in line with the requirements of other jurisdictions or the cancellation requirements for other forms of incorporation. Consequently the registry has not been able to carry out the requisite cancellation of the large number of associations that are no longer operating.

The amendments in this bill address those concerns. They are technical and administrative amendments that have been brought forward, in advance of the bulk of the amendments, so that they can be dealt with in the short term. Work on the majority of the amendments, which will affect the day-to-day operation of associations, can then be dealt with separately and in the longer term and with significant consultation with affected stakeholders. The current Act provides that the Director General of the Office of Fair Trading may cancel the incorporation of an incorporated association if the director general is satisfied of certain matters. These include associations that are no longer in operation; are engaged in trading or securing pecuniary gain for its members; were incorporated by reason of fraud or mistake; or that have not during the preceding period of three years convened an annual general meeting.

The association then can respond and advise whether the grounds for sending the notice are correct or incorrect. The bill seeks to streamline the processes for cancelling associations under the circumstances I have just described. These amendments will streamline the notice of cancellation and the cancellation provisions of the Act in line with similar provisions in legislation of other jurisdictions. Under the proposed amendments the director general must consider an additional three grounds: first, that the association has failed to lodge financial statements for the last three years, secondly, that the association no longer has at least five members and, thirdly, that the association no longer has a public officer who is resident in New South Wales.

Under the proposed amendment, before any cancellation occurs the director general must notify associations of the proposal to cancel the association and set out the reasons why the notice has been sent. The association then has 28 days to respond to the notice and the director general must give due consideration to any submissions made within that time. Under the current provisions, if an association's incorporation is cancelled there is no requirement for how the notice of cancellation must be sent to the association. This amendment bill,

however, introduces an important requirement for the director general to send that notice by registered mail. This amendment bill also introduces a key safety net provision for associations whose incorporation has been incorrectly cancelled.

Currently the director general only has the power to reinstate the incorporation of an association if that incorporation has been cancelled as a result of an error on the part of the director general. This current provision is very limited, yet it is quite foreseeable that there could be many other reasons why an association was incorrectly cancelled. Accordingly, this amendment bill gives the director general the power to reinstate the incorporation of an association if satisfied that the incorporation should not have been cancelled. Under those circumstances the association is taken to have continued in existence as if its incorporation had not been cancelled, thus ensuring that there are no long-term effects on the association as a result of the incorrect cancellation.

There has been direct consultation on the final draft of the amendment bill with agencies that represent those members of our community who are most likely to be involved in associations. A number of organisations were directly consulted. They included: the Council of Social Service of New South Wales [NCOSS], New South Wales Sport and Recreation, the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales [ECC], the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural New South Wales [CRC], National Disability Services New South Wales, New South Wales Office for Women, New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet, New South Wales Department of Community Services, the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations [ORAC], the Aged and Community Services Association of New South Wales; and the Local Community Services Association.

The Office of Fair Trading received five submissions in response to the request for comments. Those submissions that made comment on the content of the amendment bill provided their support and recognised that this amendment was essentially a technical amendment and would not affect the day-to-day operation of associations. The Government is continuing to work with stakeholders on developing a comprehensive package of amendments that have resulted from the recommendations that were contained in the final report of the review of the Act. I thank all the agencies and consumer and advocacy groups for their contribution to the amendment bill. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AMENDMENT (OFFENCES) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Ms Linda Burney, on behalf of Mr Nathan Rees.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Youth, and Minister for Volunteering) [10.27 a.m.], on behalf of Mr Nathan Rees: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Electricity Supply Amendment (Offences) Bill 2007. The amendments in this bill strengthen the protection of vital electricity infrastructure in New South Wales. The Government is committed to securing a reliable supply of electricity to the people of New South Wales. This includes ensuring the protection and security of electricity infrastructure such as transmission towers, power poles and distribution lines. In recent years, on several occasions, young persons have been caught climbing on high-voltage transmission towers. That is an extremely dangerous activity. Currently there is no criminal offence in New South Wales that prohibits a person from climbing on, or just being on, electricity works. That gap needs to be addressed in order to protect the safety of individuals and the vital electricity works that deliver the reliable supply of electricity in New South Wales.

The bill amends the Electricity Supply Act to create a new offence of entering, climbing, or being on electricity works. The maximum penalty is a \$1,100 fine and imprisonment for up to three months. The new offence is designed to deter illegal and dangerous conduct involving electricity works. The new offence will apply to electricity works as defined in the Electricity Supply Act to mean any electricity power lines or associated equipment or electricity structures that form part of a transmission or distribution system. This means

the prohibition extends from transmission towers to the distribution lines and poles that deliver electricity to residential and commercial buildings.

The maximum penalty for the new offence is consistent with the maximum penalty for climbing on, or jumping from, other structures contained in section 8A of the Summary Offences Act.

The new offence does not apply to persons authorised to be on electricity works, such as employees or contractors acting on behalf of the electricity businesses. The proposed offence explicitly states that a person must not enter, climb, or be on electricity works unless authorised to do so by the network operator or retail supplier concerned. This ensures that the offence will only apply to people committing illegal acts without any authority from the owner of the electricity works concerned.

I turn now to the other object of the bill, which concerns the theft of electricity. The bill amends section 64 of the Electricity Supply Act to increase the maximum term of imprisonment for the offence of theft of electricity from two years to five years imprisonment. It also provides for the offence to be an indictable offence if committed by an individual. The maximum fine for theft of electricity aligns with the maximum fine for larceny. However, the current maximum term of imprisonment of two years for theft of electricity is significantly below the maximum term of five years imprisonment for larceny. Theft of electricity is no less serious than theft of tangible goods. For this reason, the bill increases the maximum term of imprisonment for theft of electricity to align it with the penalty for larceny contained in the Crimes Act. The increase in the maximum term of imprisonment provided for in the bill will send a clear message to offenders that theft of electricity will be taken no less seriously than theft of tangible goods.

Lastly, the bill makes the offence of theft of electricity an indictable offence. Chapter 5 of the Criminal Procedure Act will apply to the offence. Chapter 5 of the Criminal Procedure Act provides for the summary disposal of proceedings for indictable offences unless an election to proceed on indictment is made. This approach is consistent with the approach taken for the disposal of larceny offences. I trust that members will support the protection of vital electricity infrastructure that is provided by the bill, which I commend to the House.

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

## PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER

### Reappointment

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

That this House directs the Speaker to join with the President to make arrangements for the reappointment of Mr Ian Dickson as Parliamentary Ethics Adviser, on a part-time basis, on such terms and conditions as may be agreed, from the period beginning 1 July 2007, and as follows.

The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser shall have the following functions.

#### **Advice to Members of Parliament**

- (1) (a) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser is to advise any member of Parliament, when asked to do so by that member, on ethical issues concerning the exercise of his or her role as a member of Parliament (including the use of entitlements and potential conflicts of interest).
- (b) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser is to be guided in giving this advice by any Code of Conduct or other guidelines adopted by the House (whether pursuant to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act or otherwise).
- (c) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser's role does not include the giving of legal advice.

#### **Advice to Ministers on post-separation employment**

- (2) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser must on request by a Minister provide written advice to the Minister as to whether or not the Adviser is of the opinion that the Minister's:
  - (a) acceptance of an offer of post-separation employment or engagement which relates to the Minister's portfolio responsibilities (including portfolio responsibilities held during the previous two years of ministerial office); or

- (b) decision to proceed, after the Minister leaves office, with a proposal to provide services to third parties (including a proposal to establish a business to provide such services) which relates to the Minister's portfolio responsibilities (including portfolio responsibilities held during the previous two years of ministerial office),

would give rise to a reasonable concern that:

- (c) the Minister's conduct while in office was influenced by the prospect of the employment or engagement or the proposal to provide services; or
  - (d) the Minister might make improper use of confidential information to which he or she has access while in office.
- (3) The Adviser must on request by a person who has ceased to hold ministerial office within the previous 12 months ("the former Minister") provide written advice to the former Minister as to whether or not the Adviser is of the opinion that the former Minister's:
- (a) acceptance of an offer of employment or engagement which relates to the former Minister's former portfolio responsibilities during the last two years in which the Minister held ministerial office; or
  - (b) decision to proceed with a proposal to provide services to third parties (including a proposal to establish a business to provide such services) which relate to the former Minister's former portfolio responsibilities during the last two years in which the Minister held ministerial office,

would give rise to a reasonable concern that:

- (c) the former Minister's conduct while in office was influenced by the prospect of the employment or engagement or the proposal to provide services; or
  - (d) the former Minister might make improper use of confidential information to which he or she had access while in office.
- (4) If the Adviser is of the opinion that accepting the proposed employment or engagement or proceeding with the proposal to provide services might give rise to such a reasonable concern, but the concern would not arise if the employment or engagement or the provision of services were subject to certain conditions, then he or she must so advise and specify the necessary conditions.
- (5) The Adviser's advice must include:
- (a) a general description of the position offered, including a description of the duties to be undertaken, or the services to be provided, based on material provided by the Minister or former Minister but excluding any information that the Minister or former Minister indicates is confidential; and
  - (b) the Adviser's opinion as to whether or not the position may be accepted, or the services may be provided, either with or without conditions.
- (6) Where the Adviser becomes aware that a Minister or former Minister has accepted a position, or has commenced to provide services, in respect of which the Adviser has provided advice, the Adviser must provide a copy of that advice to the Presiding Officer of the House to which the Minister belongs or to which the former Minister belonged.

#### **Keeping of records**

- (7) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser shall be required to keep records of advice given and the factual information upon which it is based.
- (8) Subject to clause 6, the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser shall be under a duty to maintain the confidentiality of information provided to him in exercising his function and any advice given, but the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser may make advice public if the person who requested the advice gives permission for it to be made public.
- (9) This House shall only call for the production of records of the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser if the person to which the records relate has: in the case of advice given under clause 1(a), sought to rely on the advice of the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser; or given permission for the records to be produced to the House.

#### **Annual meeting with committees**

- (10) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser is to meet annually with the Standing Committee of each House designated for the purposes of Part 7A of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act.

#### **Report to Parliament**

- (11) (a) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser shall be required to report to the Parliament prior to the end of his annual term on the number of ethical matters raised with him, the number of members who sought his advice, the amount of time spent in the course of his duties and the number of times advice was given.

- (b) The Parliamentary Ethics Adviser may report to the Parliament from time to time on any problems arising from the determinations of the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal that have given rise to requests for ethics advice and proposals to address these problems.
- (12) That a message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the passage of the resolution.

## BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

### Financial Year 2007-08

#### Debate resumed from 21 June 2007.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [10.40 a.m.]: I am pleased to contribute to debate on the Labor Government's 2007-08 budget. I look forward to legislation going through the Legislative Council this week. Mr Speaker, I look forward to your contribution to the budget debate later this year. These days budget speeches and budget days are good for governments, but they are not so good for oppositions. However, that has not always been the case. In 1988 or 1989—the term of the Greiner Government—budget days and budget debates were a good opportunity for the Opposition to highlight the inadequacies of the Government. We had a dramatic reduction in rail transport, the Curran report, the slashing of government services in the north-western part of Sydney, and the cutting, mid-stream, of the electrification project between Riverstone and Richmond.

Budget days presented oppositions with an opportunity to highlight pretty tough and unfair budgets, but that has not been the case since 1995 with Labor budgets. This budget, like so many that have come before it, reinforces an objective view that the State's finances are being managed responsibly. We all have different priorities and we place a different emphasis on different aspects of the budget, but most commentators have given this budget a tick, which demonstrates that this State Government is managing the funds responsibly. I formally say, "Well done" to the Premier and the Treasurer. In the atmosphere of congratulation, I also congratulate the Premier on leading the Labor Party back into government for what I consider to be another well-deserved four-year term.

Each year it has been my role in the budget debate to comment on various portfolio allocations to my electorate. It might not be possible for me to mention them all, as there are far too many to mention in one brief speech to the House. Further, general allocations that do not relate specifically to various portfolios will benefit my electorate, as part of the wider community, and in particular the western suburbs of Sydney. Those areas have received record allocations for education, health, transport and ever-increasing numbers of police. In a general sense those budgetary allocations affect all electorates in New South Wales and, in particular, my electorate of Mount Druitt.

Before going through some of the budgetary allocations for my electorate, I would like to say a few words about the criticisms levelled at the Government by the Leader of the Opposition. The other day I listened to his speech on the audio monitor in my office. The main focus of his speech, which lasted for about 22 minutes, was to announce an infrastructure fund—which is hardly something new; Liberal leaders have talked about that in recent times—and to talk at some length about how that fund would be managed, audited and so on. To support the need for such a fund he fell back on tired and tried Liberal Party chestnuts and made references to an infrastructure crisis in New South Wales—in defiance of all the capital that is being spent on infrastructure—the run-down state of our schools, a lack of vision, and so on. He was then more specific but contradictory when he said that even though this Government was not building enough it should not build a desalination plant.

Let me comment briefly on that project, which has been the subject of much public discussion. The Premier has already given a firm commitment that he will continue with that project. I call on the Premier and the Government to ignore those knockers and those critics. Prior to the formal announcement of a desalination plant I could not count how many times someone said to me, "When will the Government consider a desalination plant as an option for Sydney's future water supply?" Before it became popular to knock the project, many in the community, including former Opposition leaders, said that a desalination plant should be considered as a means of addressing future water needs. I ask the Premier to put the Opposition's policy and its current comments on the desalination plant into the same file, historically, as Mr Menzies' opposition to the Snowy Mountains scheme and Mr Greiner's opposition to the Darling Harbour project were put—both, of course, are part of the Australian and New South Wales landscape.

There have been many arguments about why we need a desalination plant. One of the most short-term comments I have heard—it probably came from the Greens, who are supposed to have some sort of long-term

environmental strategy, policy or vision—was that it has been raining for the past few weeks. We have all seen the rain and we have welcomed it. However, we must look at the bigger water supply picture. In 2004 I asked the Minister for Energy and Utilities the following question on notice:

In what year did the Warragamba Dam become operational?

I again highlight another great Labor Government project. I also asked:

How many customers are currently drawing water from the Sydney Water Supply ...

Of course, I was referring to 2003-04 statistics. The Minister's answer was quite interesting:

The population supplied as at 30 June 1961 was 2.34 million and the number of properties served was 620,944.

By 30 December 2003 no new dams had been built but there was a marginal increase in capacity. The Minister stated:

As at 31 December 2003, a population of approximately 4.2 million was supplied by Sydney Water and the total number of properties served is 1,653,911.

There was substantial growth in the number of people drawing water from storages in the Sydney catchment and pressures were being placed on our water supply. All members should support the Government's options—desalination is only one option—to ensure that we have more water capacity in the future. I also asked the Minister:

On average, what is the number of new customers connected to the Sydney Water Supply each month?

The Minister replied:

Based on a six month average, approximately 2,709 new connections are made each month.

So those new connections were being made in 2003. In my electorate, and in surrounding areas, there has been a population explosion. New suburbs are being created and in older suburbs large blocks of land are now being subdivided. Three or four homes are now being built on blocks where there might have been just one home. Land is being released on the old Wonderland site, which extends throughout the western suburbs of Sydney. Thousands of people and new businesses will be involved and each one will have to connect to the Sydney water supply. Opposition members are cutting off our desalination option, which is extremely short-sighted. As the Minister said, more than 2,700 new connections are being made every month. It does not really matter whether the recent rain makes our dams overflow, whether they are all at 100 per cent capacity, or whether they remain at 100 per cent capacity for the rest of this year: with more and more customers connecting to our water supply every month that water will be drawn down much more quickly.

The Government should stick to its guns, maintain its desalination, recycling and other water efficiency proposals, and critics with only short-term strategies should be put in their place. The Leader of the Opposition, as leader of the Liberal Party, followed the tradition of a long line of Liberal leaders of attacking Labor governments for not building enough. Yet, on the other hand, he opposed any major project that a Labor government proposed to build. Political watchers should get the message: if they want to know the policies of Liberal governments in the future they should look to the past. They contribute nothing and oppose and criticise nearly everything. These criticisms of the Government's expenditure on infrastructure are just politics. It is an historical fact that the Iemma, Carr, Unsworth and Wran governments allocated more expenditure in this area than did the former Coalition Government.

**Mr Thomas George:** Who wrote your speech?

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** I wrote my speech. The member for Lismore has had record expenditure in his electorate. When Labor members find out how much is being spent in the Lismore electorate they will all knock on the Treasurer's door to ensure that similar amounts are allocated to Labor seats where constituents would appreciate such record expenditure. One of our former Ministers called the member for Lismore an ungrateful sod for not appreciating the great funds that go to his electorate.

Like all members, budget day for me is to listen to the Treasurer's speech, get the budget kit and search it to see what is in it for my constituency. Like children on Christmas morning, we see whether promises have

been kept and whether there are any surprises. I am pleased to report that the Mount Druitt electorate has done very well again—as has the electorate of Lismore. Of course, there are always projects that still need to be done and issues that need to be addressed, and that will apply this year as it will every year in every electorate. However, just because there is always more to be done does not mean that what is being done and has been done should be criticised. I certainly will not do that.

Over many years the Mount Druitt electorate has continued to get a fair share of the State budget. In the past I have been pleased to acknowledge projects such as the Mount Druitt courthouse, the Mount Druitt train-bus interchange and the easy access upgrade to Mount Druitt railway station. Those expenditures alone amounted to around \$12 million. Issues outstanding include improving access to the Rooty Hill railway station and increasing the number of parking spaces at the Mount Druitt railway station. We will continue to lobby for those projects and acknowledge one fact: future projects such as these, and the past ones I have mentioned, will be achieved only by a Labor Government.

I acknowledge how well Mount Druitt has done in the Education budget. The Opposition has, unsurprisingly, highlighted the need for extra maintenance funding for schools. There are a large number of public schools around the State, some have been built in the past year and others were built in the 1800s. It is safe to say that we can spend more on schools. I suspect that regardless of which party is in Opposition in 100 years time, members will still make speeches highlighting funding for schools. My electorate, like many electorates, is made up of new schools, schools built over the past 10 to 20 years, and schools that can date their buildings back to before Federation, such as Colyton and Plumpton. Schools such as Rooty Hill Primary School, which has just celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, represent a large number of schools built between the 1950s and 1980s to address the expanding population of the local community.

Some schools were built at a time when halls, freestanding libraries and the like were not standard equipment. However, down the road we will see modern schools that have been built with such facilities. There will always be pressure to bring older schools up to the standard of the modern ones. It is just common sense. This coming financial year I will be happy to see the record amounts allocated to school maintenance being spent on a large number of much-needed projects in the electorate. These projects will include things such as pavement reconstructions, painting, refreshing classrooms, erecting security fences and the like.

The big item mentioned in the budget is the funding for the Rooty Hill High School library. The announcement of that project ended a long campaign by the school community going back to the mid-1990s. A makeshift library built from old classrooms many years ago will be replaced. Another long-running battle has come to an end locally: the Eastern Creek Primary School won its fight to have a demountable library replaced with a new library. This has come on top of a recent upgrade of the preschool section of the school.

On the subject of old battles being won, I congratulate Colyton Public School on its success in getting a hall for the school, which will be built during the coming four-year term. I acknowledge not only the Government but also the former Minister for Education and Training, the member for Marrickville, for getting these projects off the ground. I was very disappointed, as were the schools in my electorate, when I learned that the member for Marrickville was relinquishing her ministerial duties. Her decision to put her role as a mother and wife ahead of her career makes her a very special person in the world of politics.

As Minister for Education and Training, the member for Marrickville was a good friend to public education, especially in my electorate of Mount Druitt. Her personal involvement in the major issues I just mentioned is no doubt the main reason for the success of those local campaigns. Her actions in taking deputations, listening to the arguments and finally making positive decisions are very much appreciated. I, the school communities of Rooty Hill High School, Eastern Creek Primary School, Colyton Primary School and many other schools with smaller projects, record a very big thank you to the member for Marrickville for her role as the Minister for Education and Training. She was involved in many other issues in other electorates, but I will leave that for another day.

The budget, which has been handed down with a surplus, once again has shown that the good management of the State's finances by a Labor Government is here to stay. There has been a general endorsement of the budget not only by those in the media and financial world but also by some members of the Opposition. We can always find faults with every budget but, generally speaking, most people believe that the Treasurer and the Premier have got things just about right with the 2007-08 budget. I commend the budget to the House.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [10.55 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the budget estimates and related papers 2007-08 with a great deal of concern. As I highlighted in the House last week, what the Government has espoused in relation to transport services and what is in the budget papers are two vastly different things. I place on record my extreme disappointment that when I raised the issue last week and asked the Minister for Transport to debate those issues—because there are broad discrepancies in what he is saying and in the interpretation in the budget papers—he refused to do so. That is a sad blow to commuters across New South Wales who are struggling to get to and from work on time. It demonstrates that the State Government has a totally arrogant approach to public transport issues. It also demonstrates that the Minister for Transport has purposely misled the community in relation to transport spending and allocated funds to transport.

Before the budget papers were released to members of Parliament, the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer publicly espoused that this year's budget has record spending in the Transport portfolio. However, when one looks at Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 1, page 3 – 1, the 2007-08 budget has cut nearly \$93 million, or 2.7 per cent, in funding for operating expenses for transport services. This means that currently commuters who catch buses, trains and ferries should expect that services can only get worse when \$93 million has been ripped out of the budget for transport services. That is not saying things will stay the same; it is saying things will get worse.

The one thing that concerns me is that because of the Labor Government's 12 years of mismanagement of the transport portfolio the public is being convinced that it should be able to put up with bad transport services and that it is appropriate to rip \$93 million out of transport services in this year's budget. That is a huge act of dishonesty by the State Government. It has bandied around a figure of \$5.8 billion. That is just an announcement—that figure does not appear in the budget papers—when everything the Government has purported to put in the budget papers is added up. What is worse, the Minister for Transport has not made any mention of the fact that he is ripping \$93 million out of transport services.

From where is this money being ripped out? We get a clue to that when we look at Budget Paper No. 3, Volume 2, page 19 - 17, where it is foreshadowed—in black and white—that the budget for passenger rail services will decrease by 11 per cent. The September 2005 train timetable had 416 fewer daily rail services than the previous timetable. Train commuters have to face the prospect of overcrowded carriages, particularly at peak times; no air-conditioning on trains in summer; and no public toilet facilities when they travel from the Central Coast, the South Coast, the Blue Mountains or Penrith. They have to put up with record numbers of skipped stops because trains are so overcrowded they bypass stations. The community suffers as a result of poor rail services. It impacts on people's quality of life, on the time they spend with their families and on their ability to get to work on time. I have talked to people who must rise at 4.30 every morning in order to get to work at 9.00 a.m. because they do not know whether the scheduled train will arrive. That is tragic. The Government's message to rail commuters is that it will not make things better; in fact, in this budget it has reduced funding for rail services by 11 per cent.

The new 2005 rail timetable slashed 416 daily rail services—no questions asked—and this budget does nothing to address that issue. In the lead-up to the last State election the Opposition announced that it would reinstate the peak services that were slashed. We saw what was happening to the rail network and on rail platforms around the State at morning and afternoon peaks. Yet the Government continues to limit rail services, and the 11 per cent cut will make the situation even worse for commuters. It is interesting to note that even though the Minister for Transport has slashed 416 daily rail services—purportedly in order to slow down the system—he still fudges the figures for on-time running. But even those targets have not been met. This year alone train services across the entire CityRail network met their monthly on-time performance target only in January, when the system is quietest. The State Government cannot meet its own fudged on-time running figures. The rail network is slower and less safe. There are 416 fewer daily services, fewer air-conditioned carriages and huge ticketing problems. Yet the Government's response is to slash the transport services budget.

The Government has severely slashed other transport services. It continues to announce so-called transport infrastructure projects but it must draw a distinction between announcements and actions. The Minister and the Treasurer raise expectations in the community with these announcements. If people from elsewhere in the universe heard them they would assume that the transport system is to receive a huge boost in infrastructure spending and services. But nothing could be further from the truth. If there is one symbol of this Government's dishonesty and mismanagement of transport services it is the Tcard, or integrated ticketing, project. In 1997 the State Government announced that by the Olympic Games Sydney and New South Wales would have an integrated ticketing system, that commuters would be able to use one ticket to catch different modes of transport and that an integrated ticketing system would provide smoother, more efficient transport services.

Seven years later that ticketing system is nowhere to be found. In fact, before the State election the Minister postponed the Tcard trial five times because he was worried about what it would reveal. I call on the Minister to tell the people of New South Wales when the Tcard system will be in place. When should commuters expect to be able to use in Sydney the sort of integrated ticketing system that operates in many cities around the world? The budget papers reveal that last year the Government spent \$75 million less than it promised on the Tcard project. The project was supposed to be completed seven years ago but there is still no indication as to when it will materialise.

As to rolling stock, the Government has been talking for many years about replacing 600 non-air-conditioned train carriages. But the budget papers reveal that that replacement has been delayed by a further two years. So rail commuters will have to endure at least another six hot, sweaty summers without air-conditioned carriages because the State Government has once again failed to deliver on its promise. Instead of delivery in 2011—which was bad enough—the budget papers reveal that that date has been pushed back by two years. Buses are another area of concern. The budget contains no funding beyond 2008 for the project to replace 505 buses in Sydney and Newcastle. How will the Minister make that commitment materialise?

Let us consider the rail links that have been announced. The State Government has failed to allocate any capital funding in the budget for the commencement of work on the proposed central business district rail link, the north-west rail link or the south-west rail link. The Government has allocated a meagre total of \$56 million to these projects for investigations and feasibility studies. Some money has been set aside for land acquisitions but not one cent has been allocated for rail link construction. The Government announced the north-west rail link project 10 years ago but the budget papers allocate not one cent for it.

The budget also confirms that there have been massive funding blow-outs in other critical infrastructure projects. The cost of the important Clearways project has blown out again. The Government continues to provide no details about how far it has progressed and when it will be completed. We know only that the estimated cost of the project has been revised up to almost \$2 billion. The budget papers confirm also that the cost of the outer-suburban train carriages has blown out by \$37 million and that the project will be delayed by another two years. Regrettably, this means that commuters who travel to Sydney or the regions—whether it is the Central Coast, the South Coast, the Blue Mountains or Penrith—must do so in carriages with inadequate facilities. Time and again we hear heart-wrenching stories of people with medical conditions who are embarrassed because there are no facilities on trains. The Government has not provided the outer-suburban carriages that it promised so inappropriate carriages are used to carry people long distances to and from Sydney.

The Hunter rail carriages project has suffered another cost blow-out of \$41 million and a delay of two years. The total cost of the Epping to Chatswood rail link has increased from \$1.39 billion to \$2.28 billion and will be completed two years late. The project has doubled in cost but has halved in size because the extension to Parramatta has been shelved indefinitely. These are but some examples of the Government's dishonesty in relation to public transport services. The Minister refuses to debate the issue in Parliament. He claims that everything is fine and that people who rely on the provision of effective public transport have nothing to worry about. But time and again the system lets commuters down. Rather than injecting more money into the system and providing better services, the State Government is slashing transport funding. This affects every member in this place, and it affects my constituents in the Willoughby electorate.

Peak hour queues at bus stops in the Willoughby electorate are a huge problem and my constituents are turning their backs on public transport. Constituents in the Willoughby electorate are between 5 and 10 kilometres from the Sydney central business district, yet at peak hour every morning excessively long queues of people must wait to catch buses. I have watched as buses have gone past bus stops and not picked up commuters. As a regular user of those bus services, I know how unreliable they are. I often rely on bus services to get from my electorate office to Chatswood for meetings or to come to the city, and I know it has become the normal practice for residents of this State to have to factor in that their bus or train is likely to be late and therefore they have to leave home an hour or an hour and a half earlier. I am sure many in the gallery today who catch public transport have to factor in that their transport will be late. I see some heads nodding. Public transport users must factor in extra time because of their concerns that buses and trains will not arrive on time.

The Willoughby electorate suffered the slashing of a number of services last September, notably the 272 and 273 routes, which were very popular and well patronised routes that bring commuters to the city. The State Government slashed express services on those routes between 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. each day. Willoughby electorate residents no longer have an express service from Willoughby to the city each day between those hours. The Government is telling students, part-time workers, pensioners and independent

retirees around the State and in Willoughby electorate who need to use public transport during the day: You can take the long way, you can afford to waste time on public transport, we do not care.

In relation to transport issues affecting the Willoughby electorate, I am concerned that this year the Government has not provided money for easy access at Artarmon railway station. Artarmon is a fast-growing community in close proximity to the Royal North Shore Hospital, Chatswood and St Leonards, yet easy access is not provided at Artarmon railway station. The community has been fighting for easy access for a long time, and I am proud to have brought their concerns to this place. Regrettably, Artarmon still has not been included in the Easy Access program.

I am extremely concerned by cuts in daily rail services, particularly in peak times, and the impact of those cuts on residents in the Willoughby electorate. I have seen commuters who caught a train in peak hour from St Leonards station, which I do occasionally, with their faces against windows. That is how crowded conditions are. More often than not, trains do not stop at the platform because of the Government's cutting of services and the unreliability of services. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

A number of other issues impacting bus and train transport in the Willoughby electorate have not been addressed in this budget. I raise yet again the Chatswood to Epping rail line and the redevelopment of the Chatswood railway station. Residents in the Willoughby electorate deserve an upgraded railway station. We look forward to it. Chatswood is one of the largest stations on the North Shore or north of the harbour. But the community is being asked to pay a high price for a new railway station. The State Government will be imposing 500 extra apartments on the Willoughby electorate, without providing associated infrastructure.

One of the associated infrastructure issues is public education. Across the road from the site of the proposed towers of 500 extra units is Chatswood Primary School, which for many years has been fighting for funding to build permanent classrooms. Chatswood Primary School is an outstanding school, with an outstanding principal and teachers. The students excel in academics and sports, and the school has a number of chess champions, maths champions and computer champions. It is a diverse school; at home, 68 per cent of children speak a language other than English, primarily Chinese. The school has gone to great lengths to boast proudly about its wonderful diverse community. However this growing community needs permanent classrooms.

At the moment, playground space is taken up with demountable buildings. Space that children and teachers would use for education is taken up with demountables. The school has requested capital works funding on a number of occasions, but regrettably this year that is not on the list of new projects. I implore the Minister for Education and Training to look at this issue and to make sure that Chatswood Primary School is included on the list next year.

I also want to speak about Chatswood High School. As a person who has attended a comprehensive public education high school, I know the benefits of such institutions. Chatswood High School is a great school. It fought off the State Government's closure plans. We are extremely happy and proud that the school is growing. It has an excellent principal and great teaching staff, with a strong parents and citizens association and a great school community. For stage one funding, this year the State Government has allocated only \$110,000. I am relieved that the school has now been listed for stage two funding; it has lobbied for stage two funding for the past three or four years. This was promised, and it is finally in the budget papers. But there is a catch: there are no dollars for stage two funding. The Government has listed the school for stage two funding without allocating any money for it.

**Mr Ray Williams:** They have to wait an extra hour to get a bus.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN:** Exactly. Whereas Chatswood High School and the community were promised vital stage two capital works funding, in this year's budget papers, after three years of announcements and no action, the Government finally listed the school for that funding. But, guess what? No money has been allocated. I will be working with the school community and continuing to advocate on behalf of Chatswood High School. The State Government purports to be an advocate of public education, but when it comes to supporting comprehensive high schools and high schools that need capital works funding it turns its back. This is yet another example of that. I will continue to work closely with the school community to get that funding very soon.

In addition, I have raised concerns relating to health services in the Willoughby electorate. Regrettably, once again, the budget does not contain an allocation of any money for the reinstatement of mental health

services to the centre in Hercules Street, Chatswood. Yesterday I was appalled to learn of Minister Sartor's announcement to close Roselle Hospital and Callan Park, because what is happening at Callan Park and in Chatswood is happening to mental health facilities all round New South Wales. The Government is closing down community-based facilities, and this is putting many communities in a difficult situation.

I speak from personal experience when I say that when the Chatswood mental health facilities were relocated to the hospital sites, parents, families and friends of those who use those facilities came to see me in my electorate office and told me about their personal anguish because the State Government has done the wrong thing in closing down such vital facilities. We now have a working party in the Willoughby electorate comprised of Willoughby council officers and many concerned residents. I urge the State Government to reconsider its position in relation to mental health facilities in Chatswood. Such community-based facilities are vital for people who are not in acute care. We need to ensure that people in our community have appropriate facilities to deal with their illnesses. Regrettably, again, the State Government turns its back on such an important policy area.

Another health issue in the Willoughby electorate that I want to raise in my budget speech relates to the redevelopment of Royal North Shore Hospital. This redevelopment is behind schedule and over budget, as is every other major project in this State. Most concerning is that the new plans do not include provision for a hydrotherapy pool on the site. Many people have contacted my office and expressed concerns that their medical condition and their health will be dealt a huge blow because this facility will not be on the new site. Area health services are now much larger than they have been, and the Northern Area Health Service extends to the Central Coast. Though I have pushed the area health service and the Minister about the future of the hydrotherapy pool, the only response I have received is that there will be one in the area. Well, that could be anywhere between the Harbour Bridge and the Central Coast. That is not good enough.

Another issue about redevelopment of the hospital site that is of major concern is parking. Many staff members, physicians and nurses have contacted my office and said how difficult it is for them to get to work, park their cars and get about their businesses, as have patients, families and friends of patients. Parking is a basic issue and should not cause so much grief for so many people, but again this demonstrates that the State Government does not care about getting the details right in these important projects. Transitional arrangements impact on the lives of so many people, but the State Government's response is nonchalant. It disregards the concerns many people have raised.

I am proud to be the shadow Minister for Citizenship, an important folio responsibility that has always been dealt with in a bipartisan fashion. However, I am concerned about the lack of funding for community schools, which is an area in which the State Government must provide funding. I attended a community school every Saturday for 11 years and I know the benefits of such schools and the support they provide families who utilise mainstream services, particularly families who are new to Australia. I am concerned that the future of community schools is compromised because the State Government has not provided them with adequate funding for many years, which means that many communities and many families will not benefit from such a facility.

Volunteer teachers currently run community schools. They give unstintingly of their time to their respective communities and they deserve some support. Why will the Government not support community schools? Why will it not support communities that wish to learn a second language? In addition to the social and cultural benefits provided by learning a second language, it is a great boost for tourism in Sydney and New South Wales, and also our relationship with other cities and countries in our region of the world. I ask the State Government and the Minister to reconsider the funding of community schools.

I return to where I began, transport services. I am absolutely appalled by what the budget papers do not offer for public transport. I am appalled that the State Government's message for rail services is that nothing will get better. In fact, things will get worse. The Government has projected an 11 per cent drop in funding to rail passenger services. I am concerned that no funding has been provided beyond 2008 for the new bus fleet that has been announced. I am also concerned that there is no prospect of resumption of the 1,500 weekly bus services that were slashed last year because the Government has failed to provide any additional funding. In fact, it has cut funding for buses. None of the 1,500 bus services that were slashed will be resumed, which will affect all commuters who relied on them, especially in peak times.

I have recently spoken about ferries at length in this place. The budget does nothing to improve the safety record of Sydney Ferries, which is currently under question. It is important to place on the record at every

opportunity that the State Government purposely put a line in the terms of reference within the current commission of inquiry into Sydney Ferries to exclude discussion of the two fatal accidents. It is outrageous, especially given that Minister Watkins and the State Government have ignored so many recommendations of the Office of Transport Safety Investigation. In fact, the Sydney Ferries maintenance budget was cut by 27 per cent in the last budget. There is no prospect of any of that money being provided, given that slash in transport services.

On average, every ferry in the ferry fleet breaks down at least once a month. It is little wonder that every week 4,500 people decide that they will no longer catch Sydney ferries. Recently, when the Cremorne wharf ferry sank during the storms, the appropriate agency put up a notice saying that the ferry would resume normal services within seven to 10 days. Unfortunately, the people who use that wharf are still waiting. There is no doubt that commuters who use buses, ferries and trains have been getting a raw deal from the Government for 12 years. The concern is that the budget does nothing to address the problems. The budget slashes money from the delivery of transport services. The State Government has failed to be honest with the community on major infrastructure projects.

The State Government makes record announcements, but what is in the budget papers is extremely different. According to the budget papers, what the Government says it will do and what the Government is doing is a different matter. It is extremely concerning that every major infrastructure project is way behind schedule and that announcements the Government made 10 years ago have not received one cent of funding in the budget papers. When I put forward a motion to debate these issues, every person on that side refused to debate it. Notwithstanding the major problems in the State budget, the State Government has an obligation to be honest with the people of New South Wales. It should tell people how bad things are and how it will fix them, instead of providing inappropriate budget funding [*Time expired.*]

**Mr STEVE WHAN** (Monaro—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.25 a.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Government's budget, which is a very positive budget for the people of the Monaro electorate and the people of New South Wales. I will highlight some of the benefits for Monaro and also analyse the rather meagre response from the Opposition, a response which saw it offer a single initiative—a \$4 billion infrastructure fund funded through asset sales. The Opposition then went on to promise \$7 billion worth of spending. Already in this parliamentary term the Opposition is taking the same approach it took during the election campaign: promise everything, but fund nothing. It is a prescription that the people of New South Wales know cannot be delivered upon. This year Premier Morris Iemma and Treasurer Michael Costa brought down a \$45 billion budget. I am pleased to say that it has delivered on the commitments I made to the Monaro electorate prior to the last election, and it continues to deliver on the important projects I have been working on in the years since my election.

In the next financial year more than \$140 million will be invested in infrastructure in the Monaro electorate, which is an impressive figure for infrastructure investment in a rural electorate. More than \$30 million will be invested in important road maintenance and important new roads projects. The Lanyon Drive duplication, which is one of the key issues I campaigned on prior to the last election, was funded in the budget. Planning money was allocated and \$8 million was committed to duplicate the road. The project must be carried out in cooperation with the Australian Capital Territory Government because the road goes across the Australian Capital Territory Government border. The Australian Capital Territory and the Commonwealth governments will also supply funding for the road. I am pleased to see that this commitment, which I promised some time ago, has been delivered on in the budget.

The Kings Highway has been allocated funding for pavement resurfacing and for the continuation of work at Black Gully, which is in between Braidwood and the Clyde Mountain. This work will improve alignments and safety on that part of the road. Funding has been allocated for roads in the Snowy Mountains. Safety work is being done in areas that have been taken over by the Roads and Traffic Authority in recent years, such as improvements to safety barriers, alignment and surfaces. The Queanbeyan Hospital, a \$50 million project, is well underway. A large slab of that money will be spent over the next financial year to provide a great new hospital for Queanbeyan, which will increase the 36 beds in the current hospital to 60 beds in the new hospital. The fact that construction of the new hospital has been, and is, underway makes it even more amazing that prior to the last election the Opposition ran television, radio and telephone campaign advertisements trying to tell people that nothing was happening, even though those who bothered to visit the area could see it being built.

The Bombala Hospital continues to be funded in the budget. The new hospital will be completed by the end of the calendar year. It is a great boost for a small town. The State Government office block is well

underway and continues to be funded, as is the Queanbeyan TAFE. One of the initiatives with which I am particularly pleased is that the Minister for Housing, Matt Brown, is delivering \$4.2 million for public housing in Queanbeyan, which is important for reducing waiting lists and providing more appropriate housing, particularly for older people. It is part of Premier Morris Iemma's commitment to public housing to encourage older people to move out of larger houses in which they have been living. Work is still underway in Cooma on new extensions to TAFE and to the jail. The Government also has announced funding for a new bus stop in Cooma for CountryLink and other coach services. Forestry is vitally important for the future economic strength of the Monaro region. Funding in this year's budget will enable State Forest roads to be constructed in Bombala and second-row plantation will be undertaken in State forests.

Jindabyne fared very well in this year's budget as \$3.5 million, which is a huge boost, will be spent over the next year on Jindabyne's sport and recreation centre. The centre is the home of the Winter Academy of Sport and, therefore, is the home of some of Australia's potential Olympic and Paralympics skiers who train there regularly. They must be very excited about the near-blizzard conditions in the Snowy Mountains currently that have dumped a lot of snow in mountainous areas overnight. New teacher accommodation has been built for the Jindabyne Central School. Gaden's trout hatcheries extensions are well under way and have been funded from the Government's fishing levy. The funding will enable a new hatching room to be constructed and that will be used to grow trout to a larger size than is currently the case, making them more viable when they are released into the lakes. That is a fantastic initiative and it supports a multimillion-dollar recreational fishing industry in the Monaro region.

One of the most important parts of the Perisher Range work that has been funded by park entry fees is the sealing of roads around the Perisher resort, particularly at Smiggin Holes and in parts of Perisher itself. Sealing the roads will reduce erosion and run-off from dirt roads, which can lead to degradation of the precious alpine environment. The sealed roads enable us to reduce environmental impact and will be easier to maintain over the long term while allowing scope for the expansion of accommodation and tourism. The other important investment in the Perisher Range this year has been on sewerage works. Recycled but fully treated water will be used for snow-making so that when the temperature falls below zero, lots of white snow will be pumped out.

The entry station to the Alpine Way heading up to Thredbo will be upgraded over the next financial year so that queues will be reduced. In Jindabyne a new town fire truck worth over \$330,000 will soon be delivered. Over the next four-year term the Government will deliver on a number of other election commitments made by the Premier to my electorate, including promises to upgrade classrooms and science laboratories at schools such as the Karabar High School, Monaro High School, and Bombala High School, to name just three. Upgrades will also include food technology and toilet block renovations at Karabar High School as part of the Government's budget response to the needs that have been conveyed to me by the local community. That is a very positive way in which to provide resources for electorates.

However, the Opposition seems to think, as the former Leader of the Opposition used to say, that facilities should be delivered on "day one". As a member of a political party that is in government, I point out for the information of the Opposition that a budget must be drawn up for the provision of resources, facilities and services, and improvements are delivered over a four-year period of government. The budget sets the right conditions for increased prosperity in rural and regional communities. The overall budget figures show good economic management and sound leadership by the Government for the State. Net worth in New South Wales will increase from \$136 billion in 2007-08 to \$146 billion in 2011. It is interesting to compare the net worth of the State under this Government with the net worth of the Federal Government, which this year will hit zero.

An indication of the good economic management by the New South Wales Government is that the value of New South Wales assets compared to liabilities continues to increase. I mentioned earlier the infrastructure spending in the Monaro electorate, but overall in New South Wales in the next financial year the Government will spend \$12.5 billion on infrastructure, which represents 2.5 times more than the Howard Commonwealth Government will spend on infrastructure for the whole of Australia. It is worth repeating that during the next year in New South Wales, 2.5 times what is spent by the Federal Government for the whole of Australia will be spent by this Government on infrastructure. When one considers that the New South Wales State budget is one-sixth the size of the Federal Government's budget, that is a really impressive indication of infrastructure investment in New South Wales.

As usual, we have heard Opposition criticism of New South Wales taxes and complaints that the Government should spend more money but reduce taxes. One of the interesting features of the budget papers is that taxation paid per capita in New South Wales, including the goods and services tax and Federal Government

taxes, is the second lowest in Australia. That gives the lie to the Opposition's claims that New South Wales is a high-taxing State. What should be taken into account when one examines the taxation burden in detail is that New South Wales is still disadvantaged by the goods and services tax revenue distribution arrangements. New South Wales people pay a larger share of the goods and services tax but receive a lower return than residents of other States. Some State taxes are imposed to make up for the shortfall in goods and services revenue distribution to this State.

How much does New South Wales receive from the Federal Government from goods and services tax revenue disbursements on a per capita basis? New South Wales receives \$1,721 per capita from the Commonwealth Government from the goods and services tax. I live in Queanbeyan, which is adjacent to the Australian Capital Territory. About four or five kilometres away from where I live, people from both Queanbeyan and Canberra live in similar houses, have similar incomes and have similar interests. It is highly probable that people from Queanbeyan and people from the Australia Capital Territory work alongside each other because people from Queanbeyan travel to Canberra to work and vice versa. Residents of the Australia Capital Territory receive \$2,466 per person from the Commonwealth Government in goods and services tax revenue distribution, whereas Queanbeyan residents receive \$1,721 per capita. Is that a fair distribution of goods and services tax revenue, especially when New South Wales is contributing a larger share of the goods and services tax through its large population?

The distribution of goods and services tax revenue is even more unfair relative to Queensland because that State is faring extremely well economically. The Queensland Government can afford to subsidise petrol prices by 8¢ a litre because the goods and services tax revenue that is distributed to Queensland provides an additional \$300 per capita more than the per capita revenue distributed to New South Wales. That proves that the revenue distribution from the goods and services tax is very unfair and makes it tougher for New South Wales to put together its budget. The Federal Government is raking in massive additional revenue this year. Even taking into account the tax cuts announced by the Commonwealth Government, Commonwealth revenue will increase to more than \$289 billion, of which New South Wales receives \$19.1 billion.

Since the goods and services tax was introduced and since the High Court struck out a whole lot of New South Wales duties, New South Wales and the other States have been placed in an amazing situation. Of the tax revenue that is collected in Australia and redistributed to New South Wales, the Commonwealth taxation component is 82 per cent, the New South Wales component is 16 per cent and local government accounts for the remainder. However, New South Wales is responsible for spending approximately 40 per cent of its budget on infrastructure. The tax revenue sharing distribution arrangements have developed in a very unfair way. The fundamental reason for the very annoying blame game that continues between the Commonwealth and the States is the vertical fiscal imbalances in the Australian Federal system.

Local government is even worse off than the States because the Federal Government has failed to ensure that its funding for local government keeps pace with increases in revenue. This year increases in Federal revenue outstrip the increases in grants distributed by the Federal Government to local government. That means that ratepayers in local government areas are burdened with higher rates. Local government, like any other level of government, has to face increasing costs, such as increases in petrol price and in infrastructure construction costs. I turn now to the Coalition's alternative proposals outlined by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of The Nationals.

**Mr Richard Amery:** This'll be brief.

**Mr STEVE WHAN:** I would be brief if I talked only about their policy initiatives. There is no doubt about that. I will analyse their contributions. The Leader of the Opposition spoke for 20 minutes. He spoke about the need for leadership and vision but failed miserably to show that. He did not announce any policy initiatives, except for the Infrastructure Fund, which I will refer to later. Fifteen minutes of his speech was criticism, offering no alternative. That summarises the Opposition. The one suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition was for a new Infrastructure Fund, which he said he would be funded through the sale of New South Wales retail electricity businesses. He said that would raise \$4 billion.

The Government is investing \$50 billion over four years, but the Coalition thinks that \$4 billion is enough to invest in infrastructure forever. That is the Coalition's whole policy. The Coalition said that the \$4 billion fund, which is to be funded by asset sales, would be managed by an independent board. That might sound familiar to people who have heard about the funds set up by the Liberals. It is similar to what the Commonwealth has done with the Future Fund. A lot of money from the sale of Telstra and other assets has

been put into the Future Fund, and it is managed by an independent board. What does that mean? Recently it was revealed publicly that the independent board was seeking investment advice from overseas, that is, it was not seeking Australian advice or creating Australian jobs. The Commonwealth Government threw up its hands and said that decision had been made by an independent board, it had nothing to do with the Commonwealth Government and that the Commonwealth Government could not tell the board how to do things.

That is what we heard from the State Opposition as well. It said it will set up a fund to be financed by asset sales and managed by an independent board. Where will the money go? It was interesting to learn what could be done with that \$4 billion. The Leader of the Opposition said that \$2 billion would be spent on schools. The Leader of The Nationals went further. He jumped up and said it was terrific that the Coalition would have \$4 billion that it could spend anywhere. Typically, during the election campaign he went around the countryside and promised to spend more and more. He said that the Coalition would invest \$2 billion in schools and reinvest in alternative assets such as education, water and roads and iconic projects such as the Bells Line of Road Expressway. That proposal alone is worth about \$5 billion, so \$7 billion of the \$4 billion that they propose to have in the bank had already been allocated. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Once again the Opposition has demonstrated a complete lack of economic knowledge. Members of the Opposition remind me a little of a famous American, former President George Bush, who said, "It is clearly a budget, it's got lots of numbers in it." The Opposition's analysis of the budget seems to have the same depth as that erudite comment from the then leader of the free world. The Leader of the Liberal Party, in his budget reply speech, criticised the Government, and no doubt we will hear that repeated by all Opposition members. That seems to be what they do: regurgitate their leader's speech. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Government has had a \$15 billion windfall over many years, which should have been spent on infrastructure.

It is true that government revenue, including the Federal Government's revenue, does increase over time. That is what happens when an economy grows. Receipts come in and some of the money is given back in tax cuts and some is spent on improving services. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Government should not have spent that \$15 billion the way it did. The Government spent it on increased pay for important people such as nurses, teachers and police. New South Wales currently has the highest paid teachers, nurses and police in Australia, and that increased pay helps us to attract and retain those important public servants. However, the Leader of the Opposition says that is a waste of money. Let us not be distracted by any of his silly denials. That is what he really means, and that is where the money has gone. He cannot say it has disappeared into an invisible bureaucracy somewhere; it has gone into the bulk of the New South Wales public sector workforce. The Government has spent more money on those people. Members on this side of the House are proud to have spent more money on paying them the wages that they deserve.

The Leader of The Nationals gave a speech similar to that of the Leader of the Opposition. He said that it was no achievement to get record revenues in a time of unprecedented prosperity. What a turnaround that is! During the last election campaign one of his candidates was quoted as saying in local media that New South Wales was in recession. That was not true; he clearly did not understand what a recession is. It turns out that New South Wales was not even in negative growth, which is what is needed before we are anywhere near a recession. When it was convenient for Coalition members to talk down the economy during the recent campaign, they claimed the State was in recession. Only a couple of months later they claim that the Government is not doing anything good because the State economy is growing so well. People can see through that double standard.

The Leader of The Nationals, as one would expect, gave a grovelling, ringing endorsement of the Commonwealth's industrial relations changes. Most people think that those changes have gone too far and need to be wound back by a Rudd government. He overcommitted the \$4 billion to be spent on infrastructure and spent the remainder of his speech in a silly personal attack on the Premier, right down to criticising his choice of ties. Can members believe that the Leader of The Nationals spent the last few minutes of his budget reply talking about whether the Premier's voice sounded good in Parliament, whether he got good grabs, and his choice of ties? What a waste of time! More than anything, that shows the irrelevance of The Nationals to country New South Wales.

Despite bragging about their election gains at a time when they thought they would do well, they gained only a 0.4 per cent swing. And why was that? It was because they spend their time whingeing, being irrelevant and not delivering for their constituents. I predict that in their responses to the budget The Nationals members will list all the things that they have failed to deliver to their electorates. In contrast, Country Labor members are able to list the things that we have gained for our electorates by being assiduous in our jobs of lobbying Ministers and taking positive and constructive views to our ministerial colleagues.

I turn now to the State Government's superannuation performance. Recently the member for Manly spoke about superannuation. He is a new member of this place. He came into the House with his colleague from Pittwater. I label them the Umbilical Brothers: they always seem to be together and they have an amazing similarity. They seem to be happy fellows, and that is nice. The member for Manly talked about the Premier's rainbow, referring to a graph he had found on page 4-16 of Budget Paper No. 2. He said that the graph was terrible, because superannuation liabilities will increase over the next couple of years. If he had bothered to read the section on superannuation from page 4-13 onwards he would have learnt that the \$5.4 billion increase in unfunded superannuation liabilities in 2006 is due largely to a change in accounting rules; it was a change in the way it is measured.

The most important thing the member for Manly did not mention when talking about the rainbow graph was that the Government has moved from pay-as-you-go superannuation, that is, paying people their benefits as they become due. It will be very expensive as the bulk of the baby boomer workforce will retire over the next few years. The Government invested the money and by 2030 that entire superannuation liability will be fully funded. That is another example of the excellent economic management of the Government. Revenue that has been raised over the past few years has been put to good use: the superannuation liability is proof of that. The Treasurer acknowledged in his Budget Speech the Government's continuing desire to help people who are still suffering because of the drought. Over the past few weeks there has been some good rain but, in the inland areas of New South Wales, the drought is nowhere near over.

Members should compare the Treasurer's remarks with the budget reply speech of the Leader of The Nationals, who, apart from a throwaway line, failed to mention the drought. That is a sad indictment of the state of The Nationals. This budget acknowledges the impact of the severe drought; it has reduced crop production by about 70 per cent and there have been cuts in farm output. Importantly, the Treasurer acknowledged in his speech the Government's continuing willingness and desire to help people suffering from the effects of the drought. Overall, this is an important budget for New South Wales. It delivers on the commitments made by the New South Wales Government and, once again, reveals the paucity of Opposition policy.

I predict that we will hear from Opposition members in this budget debate a litany of whingeing, a lack of positive comments and no positive plans for their electorates. That comes down to a failure of the Opposition and not of the Government, which is delivering. It comes down to a failure of the Opposition to have properly developed policies and alternatives for the people of New South Wales. As they did at the last election, the people of New South Wales will judge Opposition members when they promise \$29 billion worth of unfunded expenditure, make silly promises about a \$4 billion infrastructure fund and promise to spend \$7 billion straightaway. It is not viable or sustainable and the people of New South Wales will judge Opposition members for that. I commend the budget and thank the Premier for delivering on his commitments to the people of the electorate of Monaro.

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD** (Hornsby) [11.52 a.m.]: The 2007-08 budget is an unlucky thirteenth Labor budget for New South Wales because of the Government's failure to deliver to the community. The only certainties in the budget are record tax revenues and infrastructure delays and blowouts. My colleague the member for Willoughby spoke in detail about the transport portfolio and no doubt other members will speak about portfolio allocations in their electorates. This thirteenth Labor budget is unlucky for us all as we are still struggling to fix the infrastructure and service delivery problems that have plagued this State for more than a decade. If the Labor Party put as much effort into delivering projects as it put into making media announcements we would be in a much better position.

The New South Wales Labor Party can claim little credit for the budget surplus, which has occurred because of strong investment returns and employment growth, and the Federal Government's excellent economic management. Labor cannot be believed on infrastructure or capital spending because last year it did not even spend what was allocated in the budget. Because of Labor's inability to manage infrastructure projects, last year it underspent \$213 million of its capital works budget, which meant no school upgrades, new roads and hospitals. The Premier and the Treasurer also underspent \$236 million of the maintenance budget so vital hospital, school and police equipment has not been repaired. In effect, Labor has saddled future generations with a massive increase in debt.

Total sector net debt will more than double from \$15 billion in 2006 to about \$39 billion by 2011. Whilst there are some welcome tax reductions, the land tax reduction amounts to little more than a return of bracket creep. The paucity of detail in this budget and its lack of transparency make it difficult for members of the community and members of Parliament to ascertain what is being spent in each electorate. Today I will

speak in detail about issues that affect my electorate. I might appear to be repeating earlier speeches that I have made in this place, but the Iemma and Carr governments have neglected, overlooked and ignored many issues and projects in my electorate, so I will address issues that have arisen in every suburb. I call on the Government to provide funding for most of these projects, as they are not easily identifiable in the budget.

On first blush it appears as though not much funding has been allocated for the Hornsby electorate. I will refer also to a number of projects that have been mentioned in the budget. The people of Hornsby are disappointed as many of the concerns that they raised have not been addressed in the 5½ years that I have represented them. The Government allocated \$135 million over four years to match Federal Government funding to widen the F3 from Cowan to Mount Colah. An amount of \$21 million was allocated for the completion of the redevelopment of Hornsby hospital, which includes a brand new accident and emergency department, maternity unit and paediatrics unit. A psychiatric emergency care centre that was located in the accident and emergency department is operating with skeleton staff. A mental health intensive care unit is just about to be opened. That begs the question whether there is enough staff to run that centre. I ask the Minister for Health to assure administrative staff at Hornsby hospital that enough staff will be provided to ensure the centre is operational 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Work on Hornsby railway station—the completion of stabling facilities and a new platform—is well underway. However, I am disappointed about the lack of parking facilities adjacent to Hornsby station. The member for Willoughby said earlier that our transport system is lacking in many areas. Only this morning I received a complaint from somebody about the cramped condition of railway carriages. People have to wait to catch a train because so many passengers are packed into the carriages. Constituents in the Hornsby electorate are familiar with these cramped conditions.

**Mr Thomas George:** That is if you've got a train.

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD:** As the member for Lismore said, that is if they have a train. When I travelled by train on Sunday I was surprised to learn that it was travelling to the North Shore. So much maintenance is being carried out at the weekend that rail buses have to be utilised. Is that a cost saving? What maintenance is being carried out? I asked at Hornsby station for a copy of the timetable but they had run out. Perhaps that is just another way of hiding the poor timetabling!

Some \$16.5 million has been allocated for sewerage connection to Brooklyn and Dangar Island. The project will cost a total of \$56 million, some of which has been provided by Gosford City Council. The connection has been a long time in coming and involved extensive community lobbying of the relevant Ministers. The project could have included a recycling facility, which would have addressed community concern about outfalls under Brooklyn Bridge and helped to ease water shortages on the Central Coast. But the Government has not listened, and the project is well under way. I have raised this several times in this place. There is also concern about the rebate that residents were promised. Residents have also received no detailed information about the connection or the alleged sale of land to Sydney Water for the site of the sewerage treatment plant. I have requested those details, and I look forward to receiving that information.

Some \$7.1 million has been allocated for sewerage connections to the Mt Ku-ring-gai industrial area, which is another longstanding project. I met recently with local business owners who are totally disgusted that the gravity system that was to feed into the main sewer tunnel is to be changed to a pressurised system. As a consequence, business owners will be required to operate pumps on the 300 sites. This is a cost-cutting exercise, although I concede that there may be concerns about adverse effects on the Berowra Valley Regional Park. Under the new plan each business will have a 24-hour capacity tank and an electric pump. In light of the increasing focus on climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, it seems shortsighted to force businesses to use an electric pump 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 365 days a year into the future. I call on the Minister for Water Utilities to examine the situation and to revisit the decision about the planned sewerage connection for the Mt Ku-ring-gai industrial area.

That is the extent of the funding for my electorate listed in the budget, apart from the combined project funding, which is extremely difficult to decipher. The Hornsby community was expecting additional expenditure for several projects that have been needed for some time, but that has not been forthcoming. Although the Government has not yet made the announcement, I have become aware that Neringah Hospital is to lose 15 palliative care beds. Members may recall that Neringah Hospital was threatened with closure in 1996-97, as was Hornsby hospital. Public outcry forced a rethink on that occasion but Neringah appears to be under threat again. We expect the Government to announce in July that the facility will close at the end of the year, or shortly thereafter, and that patients in our area will have to travel to Greenwich for treatment.

I urge the Minister for Health to consider the situation carefully. The hospital and its outreach services assist a quarter of a million people, and we desperately need to retain the 15 beds. The hospital's services have been whittled away over the years—for example, about six weeks ago it had 19 beds. We must keep palliative care beds in the area, if not on the Neringah site then at Hornsby hospital. Some years ago rehabilitation services were moved successfully from Neringah and I believe the same could be done with the palliative care beds.

The Hawkesbury River railway station at Brooklyn has the most formidable flights of stairs to the platforms that I have ever seen. Residents and the Brooklyn Ratepayers Association, which recently changed its name to the Brooklyn Community Association, have expressed concerns about the stairs. I call on the Minister for Transport to address the matter urgently. Shortly before the last State election a 24-year-old man fell down the stairs and subsequently died. The matter is urgent and to this point has been ignored. The Cowan area has pump-out issues. It was promised a sewerage connection—almost on the never-never. However, it is not among the next 10 villages to be connected but among the last 20. I call on the Government to expedite the connection of sewerage to the Cowan area. Residents face exorbitant pump-out costs, which they fear will increase when Cowan is the only village in the area without a sewerage connection. The local outdated railway crossing needs attention. The station toilets are almost always closed and ticketing options are extremely limited.

The communities of Berowra, Berowra Heights and Berowra Waters extend over a large area. I have said many times during my 5½ years in this place that Berowra Public School needs a new hall. At present it has a very dilapidated demountable that is not weatherproof and that does not accommodate all students. It is extremely unsatisfactory. The school lost its original structure due to a series of unfortunate events and has been unable to secure government funding for a new hall. In the past couple of years a serious landslip has occurred on Berowra Waters Road. I believe the Government should assume management of this major regional road, which needs attention desperately. The local council does not have enough funds to manage adequately the many roads for which it is responsible so the State Government should take control of them.

Last year the Premier and the Minister for Transport opened Berowra railway station with a huge fanfare. Unfortunately, the station's parking is inadequate—Hornsby station faces a similar problem. The many people who commute from the Central Coast to Berowra station are being disadvantaged, as are local residents who wish to park near the transport hub and travel to the city or to other destinations along the North Shore line. Additional parking is needed desperately. All the Minister for Transport had to say about this oversight is that the issue is not about parking but about getting people from the Central Coast into the central business district—which was a real slap in the face for local people. The Government should address this problem urgently. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

In relation to policing, the local shopfront police station has an allocation of one police officer. That is totally inadequate for the population. I have drawn attention to a lack of police numbers in the Hornsby electorate. Police in the Ku-ring-gai Local Area Command do a fantastic job, but the system is letting them down. They try very hard to meet the needs of the local people, but there are just not enough of them. I have a letter dated 5 June 2007 from David Cain, a Berowra resident, regarding police staffing. I will read part of it onto the record:

As my local member, I would appreciate your representation of this issue in NSW Parliament on my family's behalf.

Specifically, please ask the NSW Police Minister to provide figures detailing the percentage of time, on a "24x7x365" basis, that Berowra Police Station is:

- (a) open "in any capacity whatsoever"; and
- (b) open in a capacity, with sufficient officers, that permit the immediate response to incidents of crimes (as they arise) in a patrol car. That is, **NOT** simply a "lone officer manning the front desk", who's not permitted to leave the station, and therefore is unable to respond to incidents of crime.

The letter continues:

My concerns are as follows:

**Crime in Berowra – attributable to PART TIME POLICE STATION**

The SMH has been running a number of articles about youth crime on the Central Coast.

I would like to highlight that Berowra, while generally a nice and peaceful suburb, is also seeing a rise in crime.

This is mostly attributable to the BEROWRA POLICE STATION operating on a PART TIME basis. The station's CLOSED more often than it's open.

**Crime – Example 1**

The Clayton's nature of this police station was demonstrated on 22<sup>nd</sup> February this year, when a robbery occurred at Berowra Petroleum Service Station. Three men stole a sum of cash.

This service station is DIRECTLY ACROSS THE ROAD from Berowra Police Station:

Berowra Petroleum Service Station: 111 Berowra Waters Rd

Berowra Police Station: 106 Berowra Waters Rd

Further details of this crime are reported ...

He gives information about where more information can be obtained. If the Minister is interested, he could go to that source for more details. Mr Cain continued:

**Crime – Example 2**

The Hornsby Advocate reported LAST WEEK that two shops (Absolute Thai and Michel's Patisserie) in the recently opened Berowra Heights shopping centre, were victims of break and enter theft.

This shopping centre is only 300 metres from Berowra Police Station.

That letter gives a first-hand indication that the people of Berowra are none too impressed that they have a police station that really is now a white elephant; there is very little activity from it. This large population needs more police presence. In regard to Mount Colah, again I stress the need for traffic lights at an intersection either at a reopened Beryl Avenue, Foxglove Road or Excelsior Road. I cannot overemphasise the seriousness of this issue; people on the western side of Mount Colah have great difficulty getting onto the Pacific Highway to travel south. I have been asking for these traffic lights since I was elected, and prior to that Steven O'Doherty was asking for them. We had some black spot funding. However, the Roads and Traffic Authority, due to its failure to consult adequately with the community, caused us to lose that funding.

The audit done by the Roads and Traffic Authority a couple of years ago did not take into account traffic movements in peak hours and other busy times, like Wednesday evening and Saturday morning. This was therefore a flawed audit. Last year a Roads and Traffic Authority representative promised a public meeting of 100 people that the authority would review the audit and go back and revisit those times. However, I recently received a letter from the Roads and Traffic Authority to say that no such promise was made. Obviously, people in the Mount Colah area are very disappointed. Quite frankly, it seems it will take a death before the Government, in a knee-jerk reaction, puts lights there, where they should be. We will keep pressing for traffic lights at this intersection, we are not giving up, so the Government should expect many more representations about that.

The Asquith Boys High School has a basketball court that has been cracking. These problems have been attributed to many other events. Laughably, the most recent reason given is that the drought has caused the cracking. That is a total joke. The basketball court consists of cement blocks coated with tar, so it does not take long for the tar to sink into the cracks in the blocks and cause occupational health and safety issues for those entering the school or walking across it to get to the administration block. I have raised that issue in this House many times.

The electorate has a number of problems with intersections. One in particular is the intersection immediately in front of the strip shops that cars use to cross the railway bridge to turn right to travel north on the Pacific Highway. That is a very dangerous intersection, and I have raised this matter also many times. I have mentioned the need for increased parking at the Hornsby railway station. If the Government wants people to use its trains—if they possibly can, given the low number of rolling-stock and inadequate timetables—we must have more parking at a major hub. Existing parking facilities are just unbelievable.

Hornsby hospital needs child and adult mental health facilities. I have mentioned that we have a psychiatric emergency care unit, and the mental health intensive care unit is about to open, but, regarding child and adult mental health facilities, concerned parents are calling me to say that their child, teenager or young person had been admitted to the adult ward at the hospital. That is not adequate or appropriate for children by any stretch of the imagination. Children and young people have special needs, and they should be in an area of their own. The Government cannot be sincere about spending a lot of money to improve availability of mental health facilities there when a child and adolescent unit is a glaring omission.

In relation to the old maternity unit, the lower floor is still vacated. I call on the Government to make a decision as soon as possible to place the diabetes centre in that unit. We need a diabetes educator there, along with the endocrinologists, podiatrists, dieticians and others who can assist in the treatment and care of patients with diabetes. This morning I attended a Diabetes Australia briefing, which gave us a lot of information about projected numbers of such patients. Though the number of people who suffer with this illness cannot be accurately estimated, the information we were given is quite frightening. Obviously we need a diabetes centre to bring together the necessary services at the Hornsby hospital.

I have previously raised issues relating to power and sewerage services for the Galston area. This is a lovely little village, but it is desperately in need of sewerage connection. It has sullage pump-out problems similar to those in the Brooklyn area. I once again call on the Government to fast-track the Galston sewerage connection. Galston and Cowan are the last of 10 villages awaiting connection, and I ask the Government to fast-track those projects, because there is no mention of them in the budget. In relation to power, despite expenditure of \$20 million, which has gone some way to reducing the number of blackouts and brownouts, the Government needs to bring forward the building of a substation to solve the problems in the Galston area.

New Line Road impacts on Galston people who use that road to drive to work or to schools or otherwise go about their business. This road is an absolute nightmare. In the past week I have had a number of meetings with various people about the need to upgrade New Line Road. Many points along this stretch of road are totally inferior and cannot cope at peak hours. Local people are very frustrated. There are accidents on the road, and residents feel they are trapped in their homes, particularly in the estate off Sebastian Drive. For example, Sebastian Drive needs a roundabout adjacent to the estate, because residents cannot exit the estate onto New Line Road any other way.

I call on the Government to listen to the Round Corner Task Force, the South Dural Residents Action Group and the many people who raise this issue almost daily. This is a desperately needed upgrade, but the Government has overlooked and ignored it for too long. The people of Cherrybrook also need to access to New Line Road. I know the member for Hawkesbury wholeheartedly agrees with me. He also has issues relating to New Line Road, Old Northern Road and Hastings Road in his electorate, and he has raised those matters on many occasions.

I would like to mention a number of issues and make some comments relating to the budget. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 June carried a front-page article entitled "Water bill up \$100, Electricity up \$100, Gas supply cut". What is the Government about? It gives with one hand and takes with the other. I quote from the article written by Andrew Clennell and Marian Wilkinson:

WATER bills will rise by about \$100 a year to pay for Sydney's new desalination plant, pitting consumers already facing an expected \$100 increase in electricity bills by 2010.

As the State Government struggles with an unprecedented strain on water and energy, it also emerged yesterday that 400 big businesses had their gas cut off last week to ensure supplies could be guaranteed to half a million customers.

The Premier, Morris Iemma, announced yesterday that the desalination plant would be running by 2010 and be twice as big as originally announced—producing 250 megalitres a day, or about 15 per cent of Sydney's supply.

But to be commercially viable, it will operate about 300 days a year, despite earlier suggestions it could be turned off when dam levels are high. This drew immediate criticism from environmentalists, who say the plant will be another power guzzler adding to greenhouse gases. It will take 450 gigawatt hours a year to run the plant, about 0.7 per cent of NSW's current power consumption.

I note that there was a blackout in Mount Colah last week. On Sunday night there was a blackout in Waitara. This really is not good news. Obviously our grid is not in as good a condition as it could be. This information puts fear into people. One has to wonder why a desalination plant was thought of in the first place when there is precious little recycling and stormwater run-off goes out to sea. It is an absolute abomination of policy. It is a watery plan for the future. It is not good enough. The people of New South Wales expect much more from the Government. Recycling does not exist in Brooklyn. Why did the Government not put it in? It would have been forward thinking. No-one can really understand why recycling was not attached. Now they hope that with the replacement of the mains water pipe the Government will see its way clear to attach recycling. We have power problems and water problems, but it seems that more power will be used and utilities used as cash cows for the Government. I call on the Government to reconsider the construction of a desalination plant and to increase recycling opportunities 100 fold. Recycling in Brooklyn is a lost opportunity. Recently I received a letter about water leaking from pipes. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr GRANT McBRIDE** (The Entrance) [12.22 p.m.]: I congratulate you, Madam Assistant-Speaker, on your appointment. Coalition policy in the 2007 election was to sack 20,000 front-line workers—police, teachers, nurses, community workers and emergency service workers—to support the Federal Government's industrial relations laws, which have been universally rejected by the people of Australia, and to commit to spend \$29 billion. The previous speaker, the member for Hornsby, outlined a list of more spending. The alternative was a vote for the Labor Party, which was committed to improving and expanding front-line services and infrastructure. It was a clear choice, and on 24 March the people entrusted the State's future to the Iemma Labor Government. The budget has delivered on this commitment across the whole of the State. The budget recognises the responsibility entrusted to the Iemma Government on 24 March. Only a Labor Government can deliver the strong financial management needed to support jobs and economic growth. Only a Labor Government can deliver improved services and better infrastructure.

The Iemma Government is committed to expanding and improving front-line services, not cutting them. The budget meets that commitment, with record spending of \$44.6 billion on services, including our innovative trade schools and after-hours general practitioner clinics. The Government is committed to significant investment in the State's infrastructure—for example, the desalination plant and other water programs in the metropolitan area and across the whole State. The budget meets that commitment with a record \$12.5 billion for capital works in the 2007-08 budget and nearly \$50 billion over the next four years. It is an incredible funding commitment to infrastructure across South Wales. The Government is committed to continuing Labor's proud record of reducing taxes. The budget meets that commitment by cutting taxes yet again by \$343 million in the coming year and by \$2.6 billion over the next four years.

The Government is committed to strong management of the State's finances. The budget meets that commitment by delivering yet another Labor budget surplus. The budget result for 2007-08 is expected to be a surplus of \$376 billion, with surpluses averaging \$500 million in the following years of the forward estimates period, thereby protecting the States triple-A credit rating, something that slipped when we were placed on credit watch under the last Conservative Government in New South Wales. Furthermore, since 1996-97 and including 2007-08 Labor will have delivered an unprecedented 12 consecutive budget surpluses, with more to come. Since the last budget New South Wales has endured a drought that has reduced crop production by 70 per cent, two interest rate hikes limiting the recovery of the housing sector, high exchange rates hurting local producers, and a spike in petrol prices hitting family spending and business profits. Despite this, and in contrast to repeated and absurd claims that New South Wales was heading towards recession, our economy has continued to grow, and grow well.

We have yet to hear an apology from the Opposition for the claim it made that we were heading for a recession. But we had a surplus. Unfortunately, the Opposition forgets that. Those opposite are about doom and gloom. They are about talking down New South Wales. They are continually belittling the State. Notwithstanding their lack of support for the State we have come out well yet again. In 2006-07 both consumer spending and infrastructure investment were robust. The unemployment rate stayed at 30-year lows and the percentage of people of working age with a job reached record levels. However, this, of course, assumes a stable interest rate environment. All members of Parliament understand the detrimental impact of rising interest rates on their communities.

There is no greater priority for the Iemma Government than improving public services. The result in March was an endorsement of this priority. To meet our election commitments in health, in 2007-08 total expenditure by NSW Health will increase by \$831 billion to \$12.5 billion, an increase of 7.1 per cent. Health expenditure now makes up 28 per cent of the State budget, up from 24 per cent a decade ago. The State Government is continuing to invest in health across New South Wales. The Iemma Government will increase its focus on prevention and early intervention, including investments in breast screening, statewide eyesight screening for preschoolers and the Healthy at Home Program to assist the elderly stay out of hospital. A program developed on the Central Coast for elderly people to return home early from hospital was criticised by the Opposition, but it works fabulously. Recently my mother went into hospital for a serious operation and came home under that program. I can assure every member of the House and every person in New South Wales that the assistance program works. It puts people in an environment they like and they enjoy, which leads to increased recovery and reduced recovery time.

We are not just putting money into health; we are actually improving health services and being innovative. The budget contains 12 new after-hours general practitioner clinics around the State, with clinics to open in the coming financial year in the Shoalhaven and at Dubbo, Broken Hill and Ryde. The Central Coast has one general practitioner clinic with another coming online soon. They make an enormous difference to country

and regional areas in New South Wales that do not have general practitioners. Because there are no after-hours general practitioner services patients end up in accident and emergency departments of hospitals, which puts enormous pressure on our hospitals. If the Federal Government were fair dinkum about improving health and hospital services in regional and country New South Wales and if it were a partner in after-hours general practitioner clinics, which it could be under its licensing regime for general practitioners, it would be right behind New South Wales and support us in that program.

The Federal Government should be supporting New South Wales in the provision of health services and providing support that counts. It could assist by changing licensing arrangements pertaining to general practitioners to ensure that general practice services are provided right throughout New South Wales. For the first time, expenditure on mental health services will exceed \$1 billion this year, representing an increase of \$105 million or 11 per cent over last year's allocation. This Government is genuinely committed to improving mental health services across the State. Since becoming Premier, Morris Iemma has made mental health services a key priority and has overseen a 23 per cent increase in funding in this important area. The issue of mental health is being addressed seriously by the State Government.

Education and Training expenditure closely follows Health and accounts for 23 per cent of the State budget. The expenditure includes more than \$5 million for new trade schools at Penrith, Wyong, Sutherland, Tamworth and Nambucca Heads as part of the Government's 25 trade schools that will be established by 2011. I am pleased to note that a trade school will be established in the Central Coast at Wyong. In contrast to the State's attention to trade schools, the Federal Government's program has not even got off the ground in my electorate. I am sure the same applies to other areas of New South Wales as well.

**Mr Barry Collier:** Big on rhetoric, yes.

**Mr GRANT McBRIDE:** The Federal Government is good at announcing programs, but not when it comes to delivery, which is an important point. Because the State Government, not the Federal Government, delivers services, that point should be kept in mind by the Commonwealth Government and it should work in conjunction with the States. The Government's Education and Training election commitments have been met by the budget and include the Connected Classrooms program to provide New South Wales school students with access to new technology that is transforming education. I had the opportunity to see the implementation of technology in one of the high schools in my electorate. The Government is committed to improving the quality and retention of new teachers by providing additional support during their first year of teaching. That program will make a great difference to improving education across the State. The Government has also funded a transition to year 7 initiative to assist students who are moving from primary school to secondary schools and a \$8 million package to encourage physical activity and combat childhood obesity.

The Iemma Government is undertaking the largest-ever expansion of rail transport in the State's history. To meet the Government's commitments to commuters, total expenditure on Transport in the budget is \$5.8 billion. Another Labor priority is looking after families. Spending by the Department of Community Services will increase by 11.6 per cent to a record \$1.26 billion. Over the past four years there have been consecutive major budget increases for the Department of Community Services to not only the Central Coast but across the State. I should point out that a totally new service in the form of a facility for workers has been established at Gosford and Wyong, which has led to a significant increase in community service workers—some 80 new workers across the whole of the Central Coast. That is what the Iemma Government is about: delivering and improving services to areas where they are needed. The Department of Community Services budget allocation includes expansion of the Supernanny Hotline, which is a 24-hour parent advice line that will provide additional support for parents and families, and the commencement of the Positive Parenting Program for parents of 3- to 8-year-old children.

The Government will also provide \$90 million for 275 additional child protection, early intervention and out-of-home caseworkers as well as expanded services for children who are in out-of-home care. That is a very important issue on the Central Coast. This area of government services has received increasing funding over the past four years in my electorate in recognition of its special needs. Expenditure by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care will total approximately \$1.9 billion, which represents an increase of \$136 million or 7.7 per cent. Implementation of the Government's record 1.3 billion Stronger Together package will expand in 2007-08, including continuation of programs to assist families by promoting community inclusion and improving existing services for people who have disabilities. I pause for a moment to discuss the promotion of community inclusion programs. Two programs have been established on the Central Coast. With confidence I inform the House that the programs are excellent and are making a difference as well as delivering

for our communities by being inclusive. The program reaches out to the local community by empowering them to take action on their own behalf to address issues related to the community or to their own health and welfare.

Record police numbers have resulted in crime being driven down at ever-increasing rates in almost every area. The latest independent statistics from the Australian Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research show that crime rates in 16 out of the 17 major categories are either stable or decreasing, and the Central Coast is a good example of that decrease in crime rates. The Central Coast is now a very safe community, notwithstanding the carping of the Opposition. As a previous Opposition speaker mentioned, in the context of crime statistics people on the Central Coast are safe. Statistics recorded in my electorate over the past 10 years indicate that crime rates over time have reduced progressively. When I was elected approximately 15 years ago, the Central Coast had major crime issues, in particular at The Entrance during the Christmas-New Year holiday period, but crime rates since have been reduced to almost zero. In the most recent holiday period, no arrests were recorded. Whereas previously during the period approximately 15 people were arrested, there have been no arrests. The police are doing great work. I commend the police on the Central Coast for their energy and their success in delivering services for their local community. That is what this Government is about—delivering better services to the communities of New South Wales. This is a great achievement for the New South Wales Police Force, which is firmly backed by the Government by the provision of tougher powers, equipment, resources and the support it needs to continue to drive down crime statistics.

To complete the computer-aided dispatch system and improve recording of information, \$1.9 million has been allocated. The recent devastating floods in the Hunter and on the Central Coast were a grim reminder of how much we rely on our emergency services in times of natural disaster and during other emergencies. In 2007-08, spending on Emergency Services will reach a record \$831 million, which represents an increase of 9 per cent. This includes a record \$51.5 million for the State Emergency Service including more than \$540,000 for 20 new floodboats and \$800,000 to provide safe reliable vehicles for our State Emergency Service volunteers. Everyone involved in the provision of emergency services on the Central Coast ought to be congratulated on their response during recent floods. Those involved in the coordination centre established in the Wyong electorate at the Wyong Shire Council, which is now dealing with many issues across the full spectrum of flood and stormwater damage, also deserve congratulations. I live alongside a river and I am all too familiar with the situation during floods. We were blacked out and isolated for three days.

To address climate change, the Government has established a fund with an allocation of \$310 million which includes \$30 million for a public facilities fund to help schools, hospitals, libraries and other community facilities to save water and energy, a \$20 million energy-efficient schools program to install efficient lighting and to provide grants up to \$25,000 for projects such as solar power, and \$20 million to install a rainwater tank in every New South Wales Government school for general, non-drinking uses and to assist with other award efficiency-related capital works. A number of schools in my electorate already have taken action, particularly the Berkley Vale Campus of the Tuggerah Lakes learning community. This Government's investment in infrastructure for 2007-08 includes expenditure of \$1.9 billion on Transport, \$1.9 billion on Roads, \$657 million on Health, \$617 million on Education, \$627 million on Housing and \$388 million on law and order. Infrastructure spending for 2007-08 in commercial areas includes \$2.9 billion on electricity, \$2.2 billion on water, and \$191 million on ports. Major new capital projects include \$209 million to construct Hunter Water's Tillegra Dam.

I point out in the context of the management of water resources on the Central Coast that the Tillegra Dam is both a short-term and a long-term solution. Notwithstanding the funding that has been committed to the Central Coast's water authority for what is known as the boomerang connection, the simple fact is that that option does not come on line for another four years. Immediate assistance for the Central Coast in the provision of a water supply relates to the Tillegra Dam. Without the Tillegra Dam, the Hunter could not guarantee supply of 50 per cent of the Central Coast's daily water consumption that is currently being sent down the line from the Hunter to the Central Coast. There has been good news as well for the Central Coast; big news in a big way. A record \$258 million has been allocated for vital Health, Education, Roads and Transport infrastructure projects for 2007-08. The Iemma Government is meeting its commitment to improve and upgrade important infrastructure on the Central Coast—roads in particular. That is and has been a driving issue on the Central Coast.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** A good pun.

**Mr GRANT McBRIDE:** Yes, a nice little pun, and I thank the member for acknowledging it. The Government has changed gears, we have moved up into top gear, and, in fact, we are in overdrive when it comes

to roads on the Central Coast. The budget allocated \$80 million to upgrade roads on the Central Coast including \$14 million to widen the Central Coast Highway to four lanes between Ocean View Drive and Tumbi Road; \$12 million for the Pacific Highway dual carriageway upgrade from Tuggerah to Wyong between Anzac Road and Johnson Road; \$10 million to widen the Pacific Highway to four lanes from Lisarow to the F3; \$3.4 million for Avoca Drive, The Entrance Road to Sun Valley Road; an upgrade of the Brisbane Water Drive-Central Coast Highway and Manns Road, at \$1.7 million; \$3.3 million for intersection improvements at Dane Drive; \$1.7 million to upgrade the Pacific Highway and Dog Trap Road intersection; and so on.

I acknowledge the efforts of Michael Costa, followed by Joe Tripodi and Eric Roozendaal as Minister for Roads. On the Roads issue, we are not only in overdrive but are committed over the next four years for funding to continue. The Government made a major commitment to roads on the Central Coast, \$300 million over the next four years. Already \$100 million of work is underway as we speak. Over the next four years \$300 million will be spent on roads on the Central Coast. The growing community, which is basically 35 years young, is driving around on old, existing roads. The old Pacific Highway is still on the same alignment as it was in 1935. With that growth, we are now catching up with the need for infrastructure in our community. That was the commitment of the State Government.

The Premier committed to building infrastructure and honouring the Government's commitment to services and infrastructure across the State. I commend both the Treasurer and the people who were part of the budget committee for their work. I commend the Premier for honouring his commitment, something rarely seen in modern politics. New South Wales has a Premier who outlined his commitments in the State Plan, which is working. The Government is committed to the State Plan and that has resulted in funding going to areas where it is needed and allows funding to be planned into the future. One problem in Australia, particularly with the Federal Government, is no long-term planning, no long-term commitment, and no commitment to long-term infrastructure issues across the nation.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [12.42 p.m.]: Does the member for The Entrance believe that if he makes those comments often enough someone will believe him? Members on this side of the House certainly do not believe what he said. The 2007-08 budget should have presented many opportunities for the State to progress. The budget lacks vision and a degree of courage; it is nothing more than the same cobbled together budget that we have seen over the past 12 years. What is particularly disappointing is that this budget clearly demonstrates that the Government is beholden to unions in New South Wales, both as to how the Government is to function and how service delivery is to be provided to the wider community.

The publicity surrounding the budget and Michael Costa has come and gone. The budget lacks an opportunity for the State to progress in the way that it can and it should. There is no doubt that New South Wales should be the greatest State in Australia, and it should be ahead of every other State and Territory for service delivery and infrastructure. But what did we get? We got a budget that completely and utterly missed the point. The Government is still in denial about the state of infrastructure and services in this State. I will touch on areas that will be very hard for the member for Drummoyne and others to listen to.

The best example I can give is that in last week's budget, with a surplus of \$376 million, the Government slashed the Disability Services capital works budget by 10 per cent, from \$71 million to \$64.2 million. Budget Paper No. 3 notes a negative 9.6 per cent growth in capital works funding for Disabilities. Today there was another example of a parent having to gatecrash Parliament House, and the office of the Minister for Disability Services, in order to have an audience with the Minister to address the parent's needs. I cannot believe that the Government produces so many glossy pamphlets yet when it comes to the hard, cold reality it is found wanting. How can any member of the Government agree to a reduction in building more respite places in this State? How can the Government and its members, including the member for Drummoyne, who is present, do nothing when a fully equipped respite facility for people with profound disabilities built on the far South Coast has remained unopened for two years?

That facility has not been opened because the Government will not give it recurrent funding. The member for Drummoyne continues to make snide remarks from the other side of the Chamber. She should go to the Minister for Disability Services and ask her to commit recurrent funding to that facility. Quite frankly, the Opposition is sick to death of the nonsense from the Government in relation to service delivery and infrastructure. The Government is all about spin, public relations, glossy pamphlets and going to the press gallery and saying that it is doing something. Yet when local communities judge the Government's actions it is found to be wanting time and time again.

There is nothing more disgusting than Nardi House remaining unopened for two years, while the local community has fought tooth and nail to get the Government to agree to recurrent funding. A previous Minister for Community Services, Faye Lo Po', promised recurrent funding for Nardi House so that people with profound disabilities could attend there. But what do we get now? The Minister for Disability Services, Kristina Keneally, appeared on National Nine News and said, "Well, we want to actually now open it up for people with other disabilities." What the Minister fails to understand is that the facility was purpose built. It is constructed without handrails, because people with profound disabilities cannot use handrails; and if they fall over or slip, there is a likelihood they might hit their head on a handrail and injure themselves.

The Minister wants to open up the facility to people with other disabilities who do require handrails. She is turning a purpose-built facility for people with profound disabilities into a respite centre for people with other disabilities, and that completely ignores the trust deed. There are major safety issues with her proposal. Yet, there it is, fully built and paid for by taxpayers and by local community fundraising. It is a brand-new building, fully equipped with the latest world-class technology.

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** That is good to hear.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** But it has sat unopened for two years. And what do we hear from the member for Drummoyne? A smart alec comment, "That is good to hear." I could talk about some of the demands of families who have children with disabilities in her electorate. People who are struggling to get respite, people who are forced to threaten to leave their disabled children outside police stations or emergency departments in order to get the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the responsible Minister to act. What do we see in the budget? The Government has cut capital works for disability services!

Last week, when the Minister was questioned about this issue in Parliament, she made a boo-boo. When she responded she admitted that she did not follow the written answer, which resulted later in a rebuke from the Deputy Premier. He obviously gave her a slap on the wrist and said, "Don't do that again." Therein lie the problems of this Government. Quite frankly, Government Ministers who perform in front of the media are found wanting time and again. I hope Government members realise they have to refer some of these issues to the responsible Ministers. They must sit down with them and tell them about the hardships being faced by thousands of families.

The member for Drummoyne would be interested to know that last year, of the 1,197 people who applied for supported accommodation in New South Wales, only 149 people, or 10 per cent, were successful. This Government does not keep waiting list figures for supported accommodation or for respite care, so it has no idea about the level of unmet demand facing this State in the provision of supported accommodation and respite care for people with disabilities. Until it does, the Minister for Disability Services will not be able to sit around any Cabinet table and argue with Treasury or with the Treasurer about the level of resources required to meet the needs of people for whom she has responsibility.

The Commonwealth and the States now have an opportunity to work together. I have had meetings with the Commonwealth and I have had briefings with the Minister's chief of staff. I hope that this Government starts to think about the provision of services for families, carers and people with disabilities who are experiencing difficulty. It is not good enough that well over 1,000 people missed out on supported accommodation places. One-third of this State's respite beds are occupied by people who require permanent supported accommodation, preventing families in the community with a disabled child or adults with a disability getting respite. That ties down those families and brings them to a crisis point, such as that being experienced by families in North Ryde. People appear on programs such as *A Current Affair* and national Nine news to air their difficulties and to get action from the Minister and the Minister's office.

When more than 1,000 people missed out on supported accommodation and the Government slashed its capital works budget to build that accommodation one has to question the true social conscience of the Government. It is all about the next election; it is never about trying to work through a problem and solve it properly. Twelve months before the last State election the Government played catch up, announced funding through its Stronger Together project and said, "What a great job we have done", when there had been 12 years of neglect. This Government does not keep waiting lists and it has no idea about the level of unmet demand. The Government is in denial about service delivery and infrastructure in the Bega electorate.

In 2002 Eurobodalla Shire Council wrote to the Minister responsible for water, the Hon. John Aquilina, about difficulties that the shire was facing. For the benefit of Government members, Eurobodalla shire

incorporates towns such as Narooma, Moruya and Batemans Bay. In 2004, council's general manager wrote to Minister Frank Sartor and made clear the dire situation of the water supply in Eurobodalla shire. Three rivers provide water to the shire and there is a one-off emergency storage facility to which council turns when the rivers stop running. Two days before Christmas 2002 there was a blue-green algae outbreak in Deep Creek Dam, the one-off storage facility. The general manager of the shire wrote to the Minister and said that there could have been catastrophic consequences—and there could still be catastrophic consequences—if the Government did not act.

Last year Minister Campbell made all sorts of promises about funding water infrastructure for Eurobodalla shire. He promised millions but delivered only \$2.5 million for the \$32 million pipeline that is required. Ratepayers have been left with increased water charges of the order of about \$80 annually. That is not sustainable in a shire with a significant population on fixed incomes—pensioners, self-funded retirees and the like. We have a water shortage in what should be an incredibly prosperous community because this Government will not properly fund the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. The Government still has to confirm what level of subsidy will be provided to Bega Valley Shire Council for the Yellow Pinch pipeline.

The Government issues all the press releases in the world and Ministers say what a great job the Government is doing, but when it comes to funding these projects—there is no reference to them in the State budget—they are found wanting and ratepayers are hit with significantly increased water charges. When it comes to water this Government is all talk. It is happy to spend \$2 million on a desalination plant in Sydney but communities in country and coastal New South Wales will run out of water if there are extended dry periods. Eighty per cent of the State is still in drought. I say to the member for Miranda, who is in the Chamber and who is muttering under his breath, "How do members of your community feel about the \$2 billion desalination plant?" I am sure they do not view it too favourably, which is reflected in the election result. He won by only 0.6 per cent.

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** He still won.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** If Government members want to talk about election results, the member for Miranda won because of a grubby Greens preference deal. The hypocrisy of the Greens is reflected in that. There is no budgetary allocation for dental and mental health services. More than 1500 people in Pambula and Moruya hospitals are waiting to access public dental services. This Government is not willing to accept responsibility for that. It has a responsibility but it will not face up to it.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member for Bega has the call.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** This Government is not delivering what is required to meet waiting lists in coastal areas. This Government has not delivered acute care beds to the far South Coast. Between 120 and 140 patients are transported from the far South Coast to the Chisholm Ross facility in Goulburn, usually with a police escort, because for decades this Government has not delivered acute care beds to one of the hospitals on the far South Coast. I thought this Government would have addressed that problem. I seek an extension of time.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! I understand there has been an agreement that no further extensions will be granted and we will complete the debate.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I am seeking an extension.

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Ms Alison Megarrity):** Order! The member has requested an extension of time. All those in favour say aye, to the contrary no. I think the noes have it. The noes have it.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** The ayes have it.

**Division called off.**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I am also concerned about the Princes Highway, which the Government continues to neglect year in, year out. Government members are happy to blame the Federal Government for the condition of the Princes Highway, which is a State responsibility. The State Government refuses to fund black spots such as the Snowy Mountains Highway intersection, the mad mile south of Batemans Bay and Victoria Creek. The Government has not even bothered to apply to the Federal Government for black

spot funding to improve the condition of State roads. As a result the Princes Highway remains in the same neglected state it has been in for the past 50 years. The number of accidents and fatalities on that highway is tragic, yet the State Government has refused to allocate funding for it in this year's budget. The Government had every opportunity to apply for black spot funding and for money for regionally strategic projects under the Federal Government's AusLink program, but it has not done so. The Government refuses to deal with water, roads and health. The budget simply does not deliver for the people of the far South Coast.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Barry Collier and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

### ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bill reported:

Drug Summit Legislative Response Amendment (Trial Period Extension) Bill 2007

*[Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity) left the chair at 1.03 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTION TIME

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** In the absence of the Minister for Small Business and Regulatory Reform, and Minister for Ports and Waterways, who is in Newcastle serving the good people of New South Wales by assisting with the efforts to refloat the *Pasha Bulker*, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, and Minister for Finance will answer questions on his behalf.

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

#### Notices of Motions

**Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) and General Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

### QUESTION TIME

#### ABORIGINAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is to the Premier. In light of Marcia Ella-Duncan's comment that the office of the former disgraced Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Milton Orkopoulos, did not give a high priority to Aboriginal child sexual abuse and Federal concerns that he is not taking the matter seriously, why should the public believe anything he says on this issue?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Government is taking the issue seriously. I direct the Leader of the Opposition to my comments over the past four days, particularly my comments yesterday dealing with the Government's response to what the Prime Minister said on Friday—

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** —and the Government's response on a range of measures across a number of portfolios to deal with this issue. In addition, I point out that in last Tuesday's budget, about which the Leader of the Opposition had very little to say, the Aboriginal Development Program, which was a seven-year \$200 million program, has become a 10-year \$240 million program. I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the budget of the Department of Community Services.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I also refer the Leader of the Opposition to the Health budget. As to the second part of his question, which refers to specific initiatives, I can inform him of the Remote Area Attraction and Retention Program, which is about the recruiting and training of front-line staff.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I can also point out to the Leader of the Opposition, given that this was the subject of some debate yesterday, the \$1.2 billion budget of the Department of Community Services. Eleven additional caseworkers will take up positions in Bourke, Cobar, Walgett—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** You've got nothing in Brewarrina.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** "Brewarrina" says the Leader of the Opposition. We will make allowances for the member for Barwon because he is a new member. We will put yesterday down to a lack of experience rather than impute any improper motives to him. However, contrary to what he asserted yesterday, I am advised that the Brewarrina Community Service Centre remains open, and operates from a site in Bathurst Street. The Brewarrina office is part of a grouping of local offices of the Department of Community Services that also includes Bourke, Cobar and Walgett.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Staff at the four community service centres work closely together, supporting each other. The \$1.2 billion budget of Community Services covers support workers, staff, child support workers and family support workers in Cootamundra, Leeton, Coonabarabran, Mudgee, Tumut, Dubbo, Deniliquin, Broken Hill, Parkes and Wagga Wagga. When recruitment is complete caseworker position numbers in these locations will total 154, with 25 positions at Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar and Walgett across a range of portfolios—not only the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, but also in Health through the recruitment of mental health workers, child sex support workers and counsellors. The Government released its response in January and is getting on with the job of implementing the recommendations in the response and in its action plan.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** So why are people concerned?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** They are rightly concerned; of course they are concerned. The Leader of the Opposition seems to think it is not an issue. That is precisely why the Government responded. That is precisely why there are record increases in the budgets of Disability Services, Community Services and Health: to fund front-line services and staff. The Leader of the Opposition talks about services, but the Coalition went to the election with a promise to get rid of 20,000 workers in every portfolio across the board. That would have included the Department of Community Services, Disability Services, Health, mental health and Aboriginal Affairs. During his reply last Thursday the Leader of the Opposition slipped in a little pearl.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Opposition asked a question related to the matter referred to by the Leader of the Opposition during estimates hearings. The Hon. Robyn Parker asked the question he has just asked in September last year. The Director General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provided a response in relation to Ms Duncan's position. The Opposition has its answer. It is on the *Hansard* record. The director general provided the Opposition with a response, so let me return to front-line service support as far as expenditure on programs and staff are concerned. The little pearl dropped by the Leader of the Opposition during his reply to the budget last Thursday, hoping that nobody would notice, was the 20,000 positions. It was popped into the rubbish bin. He seems to think that at the time he was the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer, the only person who had ownership of the axing of 20,000 positions was the member for Vacluse.

I point out to the Leader of the Opposition that the day he became the shadow Treasurer and the Deputy Leader his signature was on the 20,000 positions. Either the Leader of the Opposition was too dumb to know the economic consequences of the loss of 20,000 public servants while he sat mute like a storekeeper's dummy, or he knew exactly what the economic and social consequences of the policy would be of losing 20,000 workers out of New South Wales services, and he sat in silence, deceitfully hoping to lie his way through the election. He thought that during his reply to the budget he could pop the 20,000 positions into the bin as if he had never had ownership of the policy. That is the kind of deception that the Leader of the Opposition is spinning in this place and everywhere else.

#### CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY

**Mr KERRY HICKEY:** My question is addressed to the Premier. Will he update the House on the Government's efforts to encourage clean coal technology in New South Wales?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I thank the member for Cessnock for his question.

[*Interruption*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Of course two of The Nationals would laugh at a question on clean coal and climate change because the only policy The Nationals had during the recent election was to end the prohibition on broadscale land clearing and roll back the protection of national parks. Of course they would be laughing about climate change and any policies associated with it—the greatest challenge facing the nation.

**Mr Thomas George:** What did Michael Costa say about it?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** What has the member for Lismore had to say about it?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Lismore will cease interjecting.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** What has the member for Lismore done about it, other than sit still and support a policy of ending the prohibition on clearing and getting rid of national parks? The member for Lismore should not worry about the Treasurer; he should worry about himself, The Nationals and the policies that the Coalition took to the State election. The Treasurer is a great supporter of climate change and has created a \$310 million Climate Change Fund. I am pleased to inform the House, in line with this morning's announcement with the coal industry of New South Wales, that we are taking this issue seriously and are forming a partnership. The industry has agreed to contribute \$400 million to the development of clean coal technology in this State. That money will be spent over the next decade to ensure that New South Wales leads the way on developing low-emission technologies. It is a perfect example of industry and government working together for the good of the people of Cessnock and New South Wales.

That is all happening with this in mind: we want to keep the lights on, keep jobs in New South Wales and maintain investment and economic growth while at the same time tackling climate change. We aim to strike a sensible balance between keeping the lights on, keeping jobs and investment going, making sure they are retained in New South Wales, and that the industry has certainty among the rules. This Government is about jobs, investment and strong economic growth—for that matter, a strong New South Wales economy—enabling us to take a leadership role in climate change.

This morning Mark O'Neill of the Australian Coal Association said the industry was genuinely committed to doing its part in the battle against climate change. He acknowledged that the State Government had taken a major interest and a leading role in this area, and would continue to do so for many years—long after the Leader of The Nationals has gone to Canberra.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Leader of The Nationals to order for the third time. He will cease calling out.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I am reminded that through this partnership the Government will assist industry to implement world's best technology to reduce emissions and continue to research new ways to provide cleaner energy. Earlier this year we launched several clean coal initiatives in the Hunter Valley and on the Central Coast including a \$20 million contribution to a geo-sequestration project. The project that was announced today will assist the Government to achieve its goal. I hope the Opposition joins us by supporting this partnership in tackling climate change research.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members of the Opposition will resume their seats.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Government will continue to work with industry on projects like the one we announced earlier this year during the launch of several clean coal initiatives in the Hunter Valley. I point out for the benefit of the member for Terrigal, on the Central Coast, that that includes a \$20 million contribution to a geo-sequestration project that has attracted matched funding from industry. But unhappily, as yet it does not have a single dollar—not one dollar—from the Commonwealth. The Government also has begun work to identify potential carbon dioxide storage sites in New South Wales, including 16 sites in the Darling Basin alone.

We have provided a \$1.9 million freehold grant for an ultra clean coal demonstration plant in the Cessnock electorate. We will ensure that the debate remains on a sensible footing. The coal industry is the State's largest export earner, supporting 67,000 direct and indirect jobs. Currently, coal production in New South Wales is valued at \$8.5 billion. As an export industry, it is worth \$6.8 billion to our State. The initiatives demonstrate that the Government is committed to our environment and to an economically prosperous New South Wales.

### **BOURKE SAFE HOUSES**

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that in Bourke police are putting children as young as two years of age in police cells at night because of a lack of safe houses, why has this Government refused to provide Bourke with either a safe house run by the Department of Community Services or a licensed community-run safe house?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Leader of the Nationals continues to peddle this nonsense.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** What nonsense?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The nonsense that somehow there is no effort being made to address this and other serious issues, but there is; in fact, there is a commitment to do more. One of the issues mentioned by the Leader of The Nationals was also raised in the Breaking the Silence report. It referred to obtaining support for very young victims and witnesses and getting them out of an abusive situation or getting the perpetrator out of the environment in which the abuse is taking place. If the Leader of The Nationals had bothered to read the Government's response, he would have seen that the major findings are addressed by the recommendations and the action plan that will ensure extra measures are undertaken to deal with victims and witnesses who require support. One of the key findings of the report was to provide support.

The report also revealed that a greater effort needs to be made to ensure that members of the Aboriginal community understand the services that are available and a greater effort needed to be made by government agencies to communicate and to work with Aboriginal communities to make them aware of available services, highlighting where there are service gaps. The report also stated that the Government should address those service gaps, and that is what we are working to do.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order: I am sorry, I am compelled to take a point of order under Standing Order No 129. The Premier has been raving on for several minutes; sheer gobbledegook. We are interested in young Aboriginal children who are being held in police cells because his Government has not provided a safe house. No more gobbledegook—we want answers.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals will resume his seat. The Premier's answer is relevant to the question asked.

### **HOUSEHOLD BURGLARY**

**Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Police. Will the Minister inform the House of the Government's continuing efforts to tackle household burglaries?

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** I thank the member for Strathfield for her ongoing interest in policing issues, particularly in the area that she represents.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Myall Lakes to order. I call the member for Terrigal to order.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** It is awful when someone breaks into one's home. One suffers not only a financial loss but the personal invasion also causes great distress to victims.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Today the Audit Office tabled a report evaluating how the New South Wales Police Force is dealing with household burglaries. Specifically, the performance audit looks at how well the New South Wales Police Force responds to, investigates and reduces household burglary. I am pleased to

report that the Police Force has maintained the downward trend in household burglaries, which have fallen 30 per cent in the past five years and are now at their lowest level in a decade.

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

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** For the benefit of the member for Myall Lakes I will repeat those figures, because they are important. The figures support the work of our police, unlike him and many of those opposite. Household burglaries have fallen 30 per cent in the past five years and are now at their lowest level in a decade. New South Wales police deserve credit for this great result.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn members of the Opposition that the tactic of continually talking while Ministers are giving their answers will not be tolerated. Ministers will be heard in silence. I place all members who have been called to order on three calls. They will listen to Ministers' answers in silence.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** Your need to intervene, Mr Speaker, again demonstrates the lack of support for the New South Wales Police Force from those opposite. The member for Terrigal is laughing again.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: My point of order is that under Standing Order 129 you cannot provide the ruling you have just provided and then allow the Minister to start provoking individual members of Parliament. It has to be fair on both sides, Mr Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has the call and will continue with his answer.

**Mr DAVID CAMPBELL:** I will, but before I do so I will repeat those statistics, because it is difficult for members opposite to understand them. Household burglary rates have fallen 30 per cent in the past five years and are now at their lowest level in a decade. New South Wales police deserve credit for that great result. The Audit Report found that the large drop in household burglaries was due, in part, to the strategies implemented by the New South Wales Police Force. Those strategies include the New South Wales Police Force Fundamental Response to Crime Guidelines. Those guidelines set out the tactics employed by each and every local area command with regard to break and enter offences. The guidelines cover strategies for gathering intelligence, investigation, deployment of officers and resources, supervision, prosecution, review and crime prevention.

While the number of household burglaries has plummeted, the report did find, significantly, that only a small number of those burglaries are being prosecuted. The legal action rate is at around 6.4 per cent. The report is another important issue, but, again, the Leader of The Nationals is babbling on, rather than listening to this important information. The report states:

Break and enters are hard to solve, because unlike crimes against the person, such as assault, there is often a lack of witnesses and a lack of evidence which would be necessary to charge and convict an offender.

The report also suggests that while some cases are never solved, the offenders responsible may be prosecuted by police for other burglaries. The Government will ask police to review all the issues raised by the Auditor-General to ensure they are providing the best service possible to the public. I am pleased to inform the House that the Government is indeed taking action and I have already asked the New South Wales Police Force to standardise the information packs that they give out to burglary victims. They give them tips on home security, strategies to combat household burglary, and new community safety precinct committees, and they will seek advice on a new system to have break and enter data for households and commercial properties collected separately. These positive changes will build on the great work already being done by the New South Wales Police Force.

In its report the Audit Office makes 17 recommendations for improvements to the way police deal with household burglaries. The recommendations are important management tools for the Police Force. Many of the Audit Office's recommendations are already covered by our strategies and initiatives under the State Plan. Our strategies to achieve reduction in household burglary include better coordination of crime prevention resources; reductions in drug and alcohol related crime, and improved capability to respond to crime. The Government is spending \$9.2 million in this year's budget to address the issue of DNA collection and testing, which will help police in responding to household burglaries.

That spending includes initiatives to boost crime scene investigation, such as the recruitment of 150 new scene of crime officer positions, and the allocation of \$1.4 million for a robotic DNA processing platform to speed up the testing of DNA evidence. It also includes the allocation of \$3.9 million for a digital

imaging system, which will streamline the processing of crime scene images, using wireless technology. The Government is committed to reducing property crime, as outlined in the State Plan. We have recognised the impact of household burglary on the community and we have established a target to reduce property crime against households by 15 per cent by 2016. That is why on top of the steps already underway the Government is carefully considering all of the recommendations of the report so that we can continue to find ways to make New South Wales a safer place to live, work and raise a family.

### **ABORIGINAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

**Mr GREG APLIN:** My question is directed to the Minister for Emergency Services. Given that he was chief of staff to Milton Orkopoulos, running an office not only accused of failing to act on the "Breaking the Silence" report, but also of trivialising Aboriginal child sex abuse, is the Minister on the frontbench, not because of his ability but because of his willingness to cover up Labor's scandals?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I did not catch the end of the question. I was sickened by some of the stories contained in the "Breaking the Silence" report, as I am sure all members of this House were.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has the call and he will continue his answer. I place the member for Murrumbidgee on three calls to order.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I was sickened and disgusted by some of the stories that emerged in that report. The Government has come up with a whole-of-government response that has been adequately funded and is in implementation. It is a good response; it is backed by the Government and it is the right thing to do.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** You turned a blind eye!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of The Nationals is on three calls to order. He has continued to interject. I ask the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms to remove him from the Chamber.

*[The Leader of The Nationals left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]*

### **WARRAGAMBA DAM**

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA:** My question without notice is addressed to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the House on the latest information on Warragamba Dam?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the member for Terrigal that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** This morning the Sydney Catchment Authority advised the Government that following heavy rainfall over Warragamba catchment in recent weeks it detected a change in the turbidity of water in Lake Burragorang behind the dam wall. As can be expected in the wake of the weather we have been experiencing, a cloudy plume of floodwater has reached the dam wall, which was picked up early by the intensive monitoring of the Sydney Catchment Authority. It is a normal consequence when we have had 200 millimetres of rain over the catchment since 7 June. While it has pushed our dam levels to around 50 per cent, it has also resulted in nutrients, soil and other debris being washed into our creeks and rivers.

The advice to me is that to date our rigorous water testing program has revealed no pathogens in the raw water, which is water taken from the dam before it is filtered and chlorinated and supplied to households. The chief health officer has advised me that there is no concern about the quality of filtered water being provided to households. Members would be aware that following the 1998 giardia outbreak the Government took a number of steps to ensure Sydney's water quality was closely monitored and always maintained. The McClellan inquiry highlighted the need for an alternative water supply to Warragamba if there was an issue over water quality. Prospect Reservoir was identified as a possible source of water during these periods and at other times such as periodical maintenance of the Warragamba pipelines.

In planning for such an occurrence the Government commissioned the 1,400 megalitre a day raw water pumping station at Prospect Reservoir at a cost of more than \$50 million. This major infrastructure project allows us to access up to an additional 28,000 megalitres and, therefore, provide an alternative water supply for Sydney for at least three weeks. Of course, the Sydney Catchment Authority and other expert agencies will advise the Government on this issue and, as a priority, the public will be kept informed. Because of the

long-term planning and investment—it is a good investment—we will be able to access this water from Prospect, if that is the eventual advice to the Government.

The Sydney Catchment Authority constantly monitors its storages so it can then draw the best quality water from the dam. Steps have already been taken to move the off-take level at the dam to avoid drawing any highly turbid water. The Sydney Catchment Authority is continually monitoring the water in the lake to take appropriate action if the stormwater plume moves. The quality and the supply of Sydney's drinking water is secure because of the actions that have been taken and the investment that has been made in the past. Let us cast our minds back to the election and to the Opposition's water policy. Members might recall that proposal, plan, policy—

**Mr David Campbell:** Joke.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** As the Minister for Police said, the dumping of sewage into Prospect Reservoir was a joke. The proposal was to dump sewage into Prospect Reservoir, the back-up system, in case something went wrong. That statement was backed up with the statement that the Opposition would never build a desalination plant, only to find that it applied to Sutherland shire and not to the electorate of Maroubra. What would have become of the contingency plan if the Opposition had won the election? Prospect Reservoir, our back-up supply of drinking water, would have gone, washed away like the last shred of credibility the Opposition has on water.

#### DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES WILCANNIA OFFICE

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** My question is directed to the Premier. Will he reopen the Wilcannia office of the Department of Community Services, given that it has been closed 12 out of every 14 days, and that it displays a sign stating, "Go to Broken Hill"?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I am advised that two caseworker positions—

*[Interruption]*

Opposition members should stay tuned. They have no cause to make any comment when it comes to community services. I am advised that two caseworker positions—and I emphasise the word "positions"—have been allocated to deliver services in the Wilcannia area. These caseworker positions are now based at the Broken Hill community service centre. Staff from Broken Hill travel to Wilcannia on a weekly basis to provide services in the field. Opposition members must have been asleep when the 2007-08 budget was announced last week, as an extra three caseworker positions are to be funded at Broken Hill.

I will make an allowance for another new member and assume that when the budget was delivered last week the new member for Murray-Darling was also asleep. That brings the total number of caseworker positions to 16 at that location. I am further advised that efforts continue to recruit caseworkers to be based full time at Wilcannia. The positions—at the commencement of my answer I emphasised the word "positions"—are fully funded, unlike the last time the Opposition had responsibility for the budget of the Department of Community Services.

**Mrs Jillian Skinner:** But they are not there.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** No, the positions are fully funded. Despite extensive efforts it has proved difficult to recruit for the positions, so those efforts are continuing. That is why, in addition to its own recruitment initiatives, the Department of Community Services is also participating in something the Minister for Emergency Services referred to a little while ago—a whole-of-government response to doing more and doing better in this area, including what I mentioned earlier—the Remote Area Attraction and Retention pilot program. Extra positions have been funded and the officers are there. Staff members are working with other staff in areas such as health, mental health, juvenile justice, policing and in the Office of the Attorney General to deliver appropriate services. I am also advised that the Department of Community Services continues its recruitment efforts to fill the two positions that are funded in Wilcannia.

**Mr John Williams:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, which relates to relevance. What happens on other days when—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murray-Darling will resume his seat. The Premier has concluded his answer.

**DAYLIGHT SAVING EXTENSION**

**Ms MARIE ANDREWS:** I address my question to the Minister for Tourism. How will the move by the Government to extend daylight savings help tourism operators and businesses in New South Wales?

**Mr MATT BROWN:** I thank the member for her keen interest in an exciting aspect of this State's summer months. I am pleased to inform the House that all of New South Wales is set to enjoy an extra month of daylight savings following landmark discussions amongst south-eastern Australian states and Territories. After a period of dialogue and consultation, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and the Australian Capital Territory have reached an agreement on the harmonisation and extension of existing daylight savings arrangements. It comes after members of this House, like the member for Monaro and his Country Labor colleagues, have been pushing for consistency with other States. Under the new scheme daylight saving will start three weeks earlier, on the first Sunday in October, and will end a week later, on the first Sunday in April. Daylight saving is synonymous with long summer nights, the chance to go to the park after school, to have a swim after work or to take a long walk in the evening with friends or the family dog. People can attend outdoor events such as—

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

**Mr MATT BROWN:**—Sculpture by the Sea at Bondi, the Parkes Elvis festival in January, the Rose Spectacular at Hunter Valley Gardens in October or Ballina Riverfest in November, to name just a few.

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

**Mr MATT BROWN:** Daylight saving is popular with a significant proportion of the New South Wales population, and the changes are about getting rid of confusion, reducing the regulatory burden, giving people more time to spend outdoors with their family or friends and giving an added boost to our tourism industry.

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

**Mr MATT BROWN:** By achieving uniform start and finish dates among those States that have, and are committed to keeping, daylight saving time, life becomes so much simpler for everyone. The proposed changes will contribute positively to the New South Wales economy by injecting an extra month of evening sunlight into tourism. In fact, regional operators are excited by this change, and I will share some of their comments with the House. Mr Gerd Beurich, General Manager of Mantra on Salt Beach, Kingscliff in the Northern Rivers, said:

I really support this initiative, who needs sunshine at 4 am? Where we are on the beach it makes sense to give people more time to enjoy outside—

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

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

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Whilst we all appreciate the value of tourism to New South Wales, I refer you to Standing Order 128 (4), which states that questions should not refer to debates in the current session, and paragraph (5), which says that questions cannot anticipate discussion upon an order of the day or other matter. Only this morning the Government gave notice of its intention to introduce a bill to extend daylight saving, which I assume we will debate at a later time. The Minister will have ample opportunity to contribute to that debate. Government members get to ask only five questions of Ministers and to grill them about government affairs. Questions such as this are a waste of backbenchers' time given that members will have the chance to raise issues when the relevant legislation is debated.

**Mr John Aquilina:** To the point of order: There is ample precedent to enable Ministers to discuss issues in a broad context. The Minister for Tourism is not referring to the legislation, and he is certainly entitled to advise the House on issues relating to daylight saving—which is a matter of great interest to the general public. The Minister was asked a general question about daylight saving and he is answering it in general terms.

**The SPEAKER:** I will hear one more speaker on the point of order.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** To the point of order: This is not about precedence but about the new standing orders that were adopted by the House, with the support of the Leader of the House and the Independent Speaker. The standing orders are on the table. When the member for Riverstone was Speaker he ruled the comments of the member for Cessnock out of order and sat him down under the same standing order. I ask that you uphold the standing orders consistently. You should direct the Minister to resume his seat.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough on the point of order, and I have consulted the Clerk. The question is in order.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It would be courteous of members to listen to what I am saying. It is important that the Minister realise that he cannot raise matters relating to legislation that is being considered or of which notice has been given.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will heed your ruling. As I was saying, Mr Gerd Beurich, the General Manager of Mantra on Salt Beach, said:

Where we are on the beach it makes sense to give people more time to enjoy outside, especially on holidays.

Greg Binskin, General Manager of Tourism Wollongong, said:

Tourism Wollongong sees this as a very positive move allowing people more time to enjoy tourist facilities in regional areas. They will have more time to enjoy their holidays, spend more money and to drive our economy.

Todd Coates, Managing Director of BridgeClimb in Sydney, said:

Extended Daylight Saving hours will mean visitors to Sydney & local residents will have more opportunity to experience Climbing our iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge in daylight hours ... We also believe that extended Daylight Saving hours will not only benefit other NSW attractions but will benefit the NSW Tourism industry as a whole.

John Parche, General Manager of Byron at Byron, enthused:

It's fantastic. It gives people more time to enjoy an outside holiday. The weather here is fantastic at that time of year. **If only Queensland would change its ways.**

The extension of daylight saving will give us another fantastic opportunity to take the family out of town for a break in regional New South Wales. I encourage everyone to use the extra time to take a trip, even if only for the weekend, to places such as the Blue Mountains, the South Coast or to the many great country towns such as Bathurst or Armidale. Daylight saving also has the potential to encourage a more active and healthy lifestyle by allowing sporting teams to practise during weekday evenings in daylight or by inspiring children to leave their television sets and play some sport. I am sure that the Minister for Health appreciates all possible assistance in the war against obesity. I am sure that the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water will also welcome the changes.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: Backbenchers do not get many opportunities to speak and to ask questions in this place. Ministers get many chances to speak.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** What's the point of order?

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** It relates to Standing Order 128. The Minister for Tourism could have made a ministerial statement on the subject before question time. He could introduce the relevant legislation and speak to it in reply. He can do whatever he likes.

**Mr David Campbell:** You're just wasting time.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** You are dead right: This is a complete waste of time. The Minister has canvassed your ruling on several occasions, Mr Speaker. Questions about tourism are fine but Government members must abide by the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. I have indicated already that the question is in order. The Minister's answer has taken some time. I ask him to conclude his comments.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** An additional four weeks of daylight saving will have a positive impact on the people, the environment and the economy of our great State.

### COMMUNITY INTEGRATION AND HARMONY

**Ms LYLEA McMAHON:** My question is addressed to the Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship. How is the New South Wales Government working to create an integrated and harmonious community?

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY:** The Iemma Government is working hard to build a harmonious and integrated community in New South Wales. In fact, it is a key part of our State Plan, which was developed in partnership with the community. Today I launched the Community Relations Report, which was compiled by the Community Relations Commission. It outlines the ways that we are working in New South Wales to build a harmonious and integrated community. The community already has some wonderful resources to facilitate this, from the tremendous volunteer spirit in New South Wales to our great love of sport. The report highlights the power of sport as a unifying factor in our community and considers projects that will attract people from communities with non-English-speaking backgrounds into Australian Rules football, surf lifesaving and cricket.

Today I was joined by Mr Dale Holmes, New South Wales General Manager of the Australian Football League, who spoke about the success of the league in broadening the appeal of the game to all sections of our community. Only last year the Australian Football League won the main prize in the National Multicultural Marketing Awards for its success in encouraging more people from diverse backgrounds to watch the game, play the game and to train as referees. We were also joined by the highly successful Australian Football League schoolboy team from Belmont North Public School, which comprises players from many different backgrounds, including refugees from Sierra Leone.

The Iemma Government will continue to promote strong community relations into the future. We all want to live in a harmonious community. We all want to build a community that we are proud of. We all want New South Wales to be the best it can be. Building harmonious communities is everyone's responsibility. It requires us all to make an effort, and the Iemma Government is leading the way in building a strong community while meeting its commitments to the people of New South Wales.

### KOGARAH ELECTORATE OFFICE THEFT

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** My question is directed to the Leader of the House. The Independent Commission Against Corruption, the police and the Premier's Department have had six months to investigate his failure to report the theft of \$16,000 of taxpayers' money. Despite the Premier's pledge, he has still not advised the House in relation to a question I asked three weeks ago. Will the Leader of the House tell us whether he has been interviewed? Has he been cleared of corruption?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the House cannot be asked a question.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: On the first day of Parliament new sessional orders were introduced. They provide that, for the duration of the current Parliament, unless otherwise ordered, all provisions of the standing orders that apply to Ministers be read as also applying to the Leader of the House. According to the standing orders, members are able to ask Ministers questions about public affairs. The Leader of the House cannot take the big salary and then pick and choose the standing orders that he wishes to apply to him.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will confer with the Clerk on the advice that I received. The Leader of the House has no portfolio. I am happy to discuss the matter with the Clerk and seek further information, but that is the advice I have received to this stage.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: Mr Speaker, I do not want to challenge your ruling.

**Mr John Watkins:** Well, you are!

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** No. I point out, for the benefit of the Deputy Premier, that this House has a set of rules. Mr Speaker, you continue to remind us about that set of rules. On the first day that Parliament sat we got a set of sessional orders, which tell us how those rules will be interpreted on a day-to-day basis. Those rules are

very clear. They are clear enough for any of the journalists to understand. All provisions applying to Ministers will apply to the Leader of the House. Mr Speaker, instead of going to the trouble of discussing this matter with the Clerk outside this place, the Leader of the House can simply answer the question. That will take him about 30 seconds—or won't it, John?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will not hear any more on the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition has heard the advice that I received but, given the nature of the question, I undertake to review the matter and give a ruling. Given the circumstances, I will allow the member to redirect the question.

### **KOGARAH ELECTORATE OFFICE THEFT**

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the police and the Premier's Department have had six months to investigate the report to the former Speaker of the theft of \$16,000 of taxpayers' money, and despite the Premier's pledge to give me an answer to a question I asked three weeks ago, will he tell the House whether the former Speaker has been interviewed and has he been cleared of corruption?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I can provide the member with the following advice. My concern was, as soon as this matter was raised with me, to ensure that the proper investigating bodies were informed of the alleged wrongdoing and that they were undertaking investigations. On 14 December 2006 I instructed the Director General of the Premier's Department, Dr Col Gellatly, to ensure that, over and above the internal parliamentary investigation, appropriate notifications were made to both New South Wales Police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption about this matter. On 7 June 2007 the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly provided the new director general with a copy of correspondence received from the New South Wales Police Force and the Independent Commission Against Corruption stating that they had investigated the matter and proposed to take no further action.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Mr Speaker, I seek leave for you to direct the Premier to table those reports.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murrumbidgee cannot seek such leave in the circumstances.

**Question time concluded.**

### **BREWARRINA COMMUNITY SERVICES**

#### **Personal Explanation**

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES,** by leave: Earlier the Premier said there was a Department of Community Services office open in Brewarrina, and that it was fully operational. There is a building in Bathurst Street, but it is not a Department of Community Services office. It is operated by one person. It is a Family Services office. They are not trained to deal with child protection issues.

**Ms Virginia Judge:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Barwon will resume his seat while the member for Strathfield takes her point of order.

**Ms Virginia Judge:** That is not an appropriate matter for a personal explanation.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** They need to take this issue seriously.

**Mr John Aquilina:** To the point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Barwon will resume his seat. The Leader of the House wishes to speak to the point of order.

**Mr John Aquilina:** A personal explanation enables a member to explain how his rights as a member have been traduced or how his reputation has been impugned. It does not allow him to respond to an answer to a question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order. Does the member for Barwon wish to proceed?

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** No.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Suspension of Standing Orders: Routine of Business

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Leader of the House) [3.16 p.m.]: I move:

That standing orders be suspended to permit at this sitting:

- (1) the introduction and mover's agreement in principle speech on the following bills, notice of which was given this day for tomorrow:
  - Standard Time Amendment (Daylight Saving) Bill 2007, and
  - Renewable Energy (New South Wales) Bill 2007;
- (2) an additional speaker on the matter of public importance;
- (3) from 7.30 p.m. and until the rising of the House no divisions or quorums to be called; and
- (4) at the conclusion of Government Business, the House adjourn without motion moved.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI** (Murrumbidgee) [3.17 p.m.]: The Opposition will not support the motion to suspend standing orders. Tonight there ought to be provision for quorums and divisions. I do not know what those on the Government side have arranged tonight. Is there some fundraiser? Is there some snouts-in-the-trough type of event on tonight?

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Gerard's having another raffle!

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Is there going to be another raffle? What is going on tonight that we should have no quorums or divisions? What are the three words that sum up this Government: lazy, lazy, lazy! How about Government members doing some work! Clearly they have no interest in the standing orders. The Government introduced sessional orders to give the Leader of the House unprecedented powers. He is not a Minister. He got sacked from that job because he stuffed up. He accused a kid—a kid, mind you—of a heinous crime: taking a gun into school. His former press secretary now works for Kevin Rudd, so God help Australia!

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: The member for Murrumbidgee might be taking this opportunity to canvas anything he wants to. The motion raises the narrow point of whether standing orders should be suspended, and I ask that the Opposition Leader of the House be brought back to the leave of the motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will allow the member for Murrumbidgee some latitude in these circumstances, but he should watch his language.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Mr Speaker, we have all seen first-hand today the latitude you give in respect of the standing orders and the sessional orders. This Government is so disorganised—

**Mr John Aquilina:** Point of order: On several occasions the Opposition Leader of the House has sought to give a different interpretation to your ruling. Indeed, he canvassed your ruling in relation to the standing orders of this House. He cannot be excused for his ignorance. He is the Opposition Leader of the House and he should know precisely what the standing orders stand for. The ruling you gave, on the advice of the Clerk, should be sufficient for the member for Murrumbidgee to know that he should not keep misrepresenting the issue raised regarding the standing orders. Mr Speaker, I ask that you bring him to order and direct him to cease misrepresenting what is before the House.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I accept your ruling, Mr Speaker, but that does not mean I have to like it and that does not mean I have to stand in this place and tell you how much I love your rulings. You made the ruling and I sat down. That is fine. The motion is an indication of how pathetic, lazy and disorganised the Government is. In the first couple of months of this new Parliament, since the election, its failings have been exposed because of its laziness. The Government has its eye off the ball. If Government members spent less time at fundraisers and more time at work—

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order: Once again, the member for Murrumbidgee is straying a long way from what he should talk about. If he wants to talk about laziness, where was he on Friday when we were debating ethanol? Where was he then? He was too lazy to turn up to participate in the debate. Lazy, lazy, lazy!

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Those opposite come into this place and to try to rush things through. The motion is about trying to rush everything through—the daylight saving bill, everything—because they are so disorganised and so lazy. The "Breaking the Silence" report was handed down one year ago, but what did they do? Nothing, nothing, nothing! I do not know what is distracting them, but they have been too lazy to do anything about it. Now they have been caught out by the Federal Government and by the media. The theft of \$16,000 was hidden, swept under the carpet until the media exposed it and then, suddenly, there was a flurry, "We will report it to the ICAC. We will report it to the police. The Premier's director general will investigate it." They are utterly lazy at the absolute expense of New South Wales taxpayers. We are happy to participate in this House if the standing orders are upheld—something that you said, Mr Speaker, was one of your priorities on the very first day of this Parliament. But every single day the Government has suspended standing orders to change the rules to suit it. All I ask from the Government is that it gets its act together and starts doing some work for New South Wales.

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Leader of the House) [3.22 p.m.], in reply: After having listened to that tirade, all I can say is, "Bring back Tink!" We had to listen to his chainsaw voice, but at least he made some sense. The blinkered vision of the Opposition Leader of the House made absolutely no sense at all. He talked about the Government's so-called laziness, but last Friday we dealt with seven bills, six of which were passed. He was not sighted in this place. Where was the Opposition Leader of the House when we were working to put the bills through?

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

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA:** For the information of the member for Murrumbidgee, we will call no quorums or divisions this evening because, for the most part, we have dealt with the legislation we had to deal with this session. This evening we will take note of the budget. Both members of the Opposition and members of the Government would like to be able to take note of the budget without having to be interrupted by senseless quorums and needless divisions on the say-so of the Opposition Leader of the House, the member for Murrumbidgee. It is about time the member for Murrumbidgee, as he has been warned on many occasions in the past four years at least, made some examination of the standing orders of the House, learnt what the standing orders were all about, was able to properly interpret the standing orders and abided by the Speaker's decision.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 47**

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

**Noes, 37**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Gadiel	Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Morris	Mr Souris

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Report**

**Mr Allan Shearan**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 1 of 2007", dated 27 June 2007.

**Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Allan Shearan.**

**PETITIONS****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**

Petitions requesting the removal of the \$10 booking fee on pensioner travel vouchers, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock** and **Mr John Turner**.

**Ballina High School Bus Shelter**

Petition requesting that a bus shelter be constructed on public land outside Ballina High School to protect students from the weather, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

**Bermagui River**

Petition requesting funding for dredging of the Bermagui river entrance, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

**Lismore Base Hospital**

Petition requesting funding for stages 2 and 3 of the Lismore Base Hospital redevelopment and for rehabilitation beds to be maintained, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

**Shoalhaven Mental Health Services**

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

**Hornsby Palliative Care Beds**

Petition requesting funding for Hornsby's palliative care beds, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

**Sunflower House, Wagga Wagga**

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

**Tumut Renal Dialysis Service**

Petition praying that the House support the establishment of a satellite renal dialysis service in Tumut, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

**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**.

**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**.

**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**.

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

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [3.31 p.m.]: I move:

That General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 10 [Currawong Retreat] have precedence on Thursday 28 June 2007.

My motion reads:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Currawong Retreat in Pittwater is threatened by development which could destroy its unique cultural, environmental and historic values.

- (2) notes that Currawong is not currently being considered by the Heritage Council of New South Wales for recommendation for inclusion on the State Heritage Register.
- (3) calls on the Minister for Planning to take urgent action to place Currawong on the State Heritage Register.

The sands of time are running out for Currawong. If current events are allowed to proceed, within a short time this most beautiful and important coastal site in New South Wales could be irrevocably damaged by development, and lost forever as a public amenity. That is why this motion is a matter of priority. Currawong Beach, on the shores of Pittwater, was significant to the Garrigal people for thousands of years before Arthur Phillip sailed in and declared it to be the most beautiful stretch of water he had seen. Yet Currawong now is threatened.

In 1949 the union movement became custodian of a 23-hectare site to celebrate the enshrinement of workers' rights, such as the 40-hour week and paid annual leave. They developed a retreat which has allowed thousands and thousands of working families to enjoy this unique landscape. Yet early this year, Unions NSW voted to sell Currawong for \$15 million to a property development company. We do not know what the developers plan to do. But we know that if this House and the Government do not act now, Currawong will be lost. The very same company recently was responsible for a development in Bondi that has produced 30 luxury apartments valued at approximately \$8 million each. As I speak, it is almost certainly planning something similar for Currawong. It should remain a public beach. If people want private beaches, they should go to Europe or Italy in particular where they will find private beaches galore. But this is Australia, this is New South Wales, and our beaches should be public beaches.

What should be a public beach will soon become the exclusive preserve of the multimillionaires who will be able to afford to live in over-blown mansions that will probably be built there. This must be stopped. That is why this motion is so urgent and should be reordered to be given priority. The fact that Currawong is not currently on the State Heritage register is perverse. It is surrounded by the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park which, quite rightly, enjoys full protection. It recently achieved full protection by the Federal Government recognising its heritage and environmental value. Why has Currawong never been given the same protection?

This is a matter of priority because in the past few days, the Minister for Planning—the mendacious Minister for Planning—has given misleading information about the status of Currawong. In answer to my written question on this matter, the Minister stated:

I am advised that the Heritage Council is currently assessing a nomination for the site to be included on the State Heritage Register.

But this week, my office, when making our own inquiries at a senior level in the Heritage Office, was told that this is not the case—I emphasise "not the case". The Minister was wrong. The true position is that although a nomination for Currawong has been received at the Heritage Office, no decision has been taken as to whether the Heritage Council will carry out a formal assessment. I repeat—no decision! The Heritage Council is not "currently assessing" the nomination.

**Mr Frank Sartor:** Point of order: We know the member for Pittwater is a new and enthusiastic member, but when another member takes a point of order, he should withdraw to allow the point of order to be heard. The member for Pittwater made a remark to which I take exception, and I ask him to withdraw it. He referred to me as mendacious and I take offence to it. He accused me of being a liar, and I take offence to that.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the member for Pittwater to withdraw the remark.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** I withdraw the word "mendacious". But there has been no decision and the Minister's answer was, shall we say, misleading on that point. The Heritage Council is not currently assessing the nomination. As a matter of precedence, the House needs to discuss these matters and get to the bottom of what the true position is.

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Leader of the House) [3.36 p.m.]: The Government cannot understand why the member for Pittwater would want to push down in rank the motions of which notice has been given by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Penrith and the Leader of the Opposition. The motion is denied.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 37**

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

**Noes, 45**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Hodgkinson	Ms Gadiel
Mr Souris	Mr Morris

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

**State Economy**

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne) [3.46 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority because progress has been made by the Iemma Government to deliver real improvements for the people of New South Wales by investing record amounts of money in infrastructure and key services. My motion should be accorded priority as the Government is working hard, every day, to meet the key service needs of our local families. My motion should be accorded priority because the people of New South Wales deserve to see first hand the failure of the Opposition to produce any real policy. The laziness of those opposite directly impacts on the people of New South Wales, who expect to see a real Opposition, not one concerned more with internal machinations rather than offering decent policy. My motion should be accorded priority because what we see in New South Wales is an Opposition in a virtual policy-free zone, headed by the Leader of the Opposition. I commend the motion to the House.

### Aboriginal Child Sexual Abuse

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [3.47 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority because that would allow me to table what should be the policy of this Government on child sexual abuse, the "Breaking the Silence" report. If its recommendations were implemented and backed by funding, that would start to end the cycle of child abuse in Aboriginal communities. My motion should be accorded priority because that would allow debate on comments by the author of that report, Marcia Ella-Duncan, who in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* is quoted as saying that when she met with senior staff in the office of the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs they sought to ridicule and use inappropriate language about the issues raised by her report. As well, she said, "I found it offensive and it indicated to me that the level of seriousness with which the issue was being taken was not very high. It certainly didn't generate any confidence."

If my motion were accorded priority, that would allow the current Minister for Emergency Services, the former chief of staff to Minister Orkopoulos, to come into the Chamber and explain to the House what the terms were that upset Marcia Ella-Duncan so much, and who used them. It would be fascinating to have the former chief of staff to Minister Orkopoulos detail exactly those comments to which Marcia Ella-Duncan took offence and who was actually using them at that time. If my motion were allowed to be debated, that would allow Federal concerns about the way in which the Government is treating this issue to be taken into consideration.

Last Friday the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, reported on consultations between his Federal bureaucrat and State bureaucrats on the issue of child sexual abuse. He said that the responses were "entirely inadequate, weren't going to protect children, and the issue was not being taken seriously". My motion, if accorded priority, would allow debate on Premier Iemma's comments and the commitment he gave to the authors of the report that the response to the report would be a joint response. That did not happen. The Government's response was eventually tabled over the Christmas period and made available without any contact details. Even the Aboriginal communities who were interested in the report could not access the report.

If my motion were accorded priority it would enable debate on what the Premier said today in this House—what might otherwise be termed mendacious were it not for the recent point of order taken by the Minister for Planning. The Premier clearly misled the House. The Brewarrina office of the Department of Community Services [DOCS] has been closed for three weeks. Why has the Brewarrina office been closed for three weeks? In the words of the Walgett office:

Brewarrina DOCS office has been closed for 3 weeks as we are snowed under and Natalie is over here helping.

If my motion were accorded priority it would enable the Premier to come into this Chamber and to explain why front-line officers in the Aboriginal community in Wilcannia and Brewarrina are only sub-officers. If the motion of the member for Drummoyne were as true as she claims, why is it that the two communities at the heart of the "Breaking the Silence" report are not being offered the full services of the Department of Community Services? The comments by the Walgett office to the Department of Community Service were made today, shortly after the Premier told the Parliament that the Brewarrina office was open. Clearly, that is another case of the Premier misleading this House—an issue about which the member for Pittwater should be concerned.

If my motion were debated today it would enable the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to participate in this debate, either in relation to New South Wales or nationally, on child sex abuse in Aboriginal communities. For six days the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has remained silent. For six days he has been taking his salary under false pretences. Clearly, he is not interested in the single biggest issue affecting Aboriginal Affairs not only in the nation but also across the State. If my motion were accorded priority today it would enable the Premier to accept my challenge to visit front-line Aboriginal communities with me. He should get out of Macquarie Street, stop listening to what his bureaucrats, his chief of staff and the head of the Labor Party are telling him, and open his eyes to what is happening in Aboriginal communities across this State.

Children, both male and female, across our communities are facing threats on a daily basis. Child sex abuse is four times more likely in Aboriginal communities than it is in the wider community. If my motion were accorded priority today it would enable the Premier to come into this House and explain something to the public. Would the Premier be behaving in the same way in relation to this threat, this epidemic of child sex abuse, if it were affecting the non-Aboriginal community? If my motion were accorded priority it would enable the Premier to come into this Chamber—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Apart from being a shameless and disgraceful political comment—

**The SPEAKER:** What is the point of order?

**Mr Michael Daley:** The Leader of the Opposition is clearly imputing improper motives to the Premier and is therefore transgressing Standing Order 73.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I understand the sensitivity of Government members on this issue. Despite what the Premier says in this Chamber day after day, the reality is that the cycle of child sex abuse in Aboriginal communities is continuing, and it is a disgrace. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 45**

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

**Noes, 37**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Gadiel	Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Morris	Mr Souris

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

## STATE ECONOMY

### Motion Accorded Priority

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the progress made by the Government to deliver real improvements for the people of New South Wales by driving the economy and investing record amounts in infrastructure and key services;
- (2) notes the Opposition's failure to produce any real policies; and
- (3) condemns the Leader of the Opposition for failing to take action to produce any real policy to benefit the people of New South Wales.

This motion has been accorded priority because the laziness of those opposite impacts directly on the people of New South Wales. The Iemma Government is working hard to deliver on its commitments, and recognises that the people of this State deserve no less. But, unfortunately, those opposite do not seem to take it so seriously. The Leader of the Opposition has form on this front. During his 12 years in Parliament he has been so focused on getting his hands on the top job, and on the internal machinations that come with it, that he has taken his eye off the ball when it comes to delivering for the people of New South Wales.

In those 12 years the Leader of the Opposition has seen off four Liberal Leaders of the Opposition: Peter Collins, Kerry Chikarovski, John Brogden and Peter Debnam. Yet we are stretched to find a decent policy from him in all that time. In his book *The Bearpit* former Liberal leader Peter Collins sums up quite aptly the performance of the current Leader of the Opposition prior to the 1999 State election. He begins by describing the Leader of the Opposition as "ambitious" and says that it was his responsibility to:

... vet all policies before the election campaign, to remedy deficiencies and to help ensure deadlines were met.

He continues:

By the end of 1998, when the people who had dragged their feet began to blame me for shortcomings in policy making ... O'Farrell sought to remain invisible, reminding no-one of his key role not only as gatekeeper but as an integral part of the process.

That was back in 1998, and we all know that Mr Collins did not quite make it to the 1999 poll as leader because he was rolled by Kerry Chikarovski. The current Leader of the Opposition was so busy with the internal bloodbath that he forgot to do his job as the policy gatekeeper. But, as the Demtel man says, "Wait, there's more". At the time Mr Invisible was also supposed to do some policy heavy lifting in his area of responsibility as shadow Transport Minister. What happened? To put it bluntly, nothing happened. The *Daily Telegraph* of 27 March 1999 stated:

Opposition leader Kerry Chikarovski quietly dumped plans to unveil the Coalition's multi-billion dollar transport strategy ... despite threatening to unleash a series of big policy hits, just two were unveiled.

The Opposition went to the 1999 State election with no transport policy. That was the area of responsibility of the current Leader of the Opposition—

**Mr David Campbell:** Not much has changed.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE:** No, it has not. It was the same in 2007. There was no policy from Mr Invisible. The people of New South Wales saw through the Opposition's facade. Two State elections later, and the Leader of the Opposition is showing no signs of having learnt from his mistakes. His budget response last week was pretty much reflective of his political career: lazy, boring and unoriginal. Not content with just stalling on the Opposition's costings before the 2007 State election as the shadow Treasurer, the current Leader of the Opposition backed out of the charter of budget honesty—a cowardly act indeed. Then just a day before polling day—

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Point of order: I draw your attention to Standing Order 73, "Reflection on Members by substantive motion only", which states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

I ask you to direct the member for Drummoyne to address the motion before the House. If she wishes to attack members she must do so by way of substantive motion.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough. There is no point of order.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE:** Just a day before polling day he announced that the Coalition's commitment had reached \$9 billion, perhaps hoping that the monumental blow-out would go unnoticed by the people of New South Wales. But the people of New South Wales do not like having the wool pulled over their eyes, and the results of the last polls speak for themselves. But rather than taking personal responsibility for the mess, he blamed the photocopier. Yes, that is right: The current Leader of the Opposition would like us to believe that one photocopier was responsible for the desperate eleventh-hour delivery of the Opposition's \$9 billion election costings. That was the best excuse he could come up with when he told the assembled press, "I'm sorry if you're annoyed because the photocopier slowed it all down." Frankly, it annoyed me too.

**Mr David Campbell:** You have chased them all out of the Chamber.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE:** Yes, I have, and with great pleasure. If a lone photocopier can threaten to unravel \$9 billion in election costings, I shudder to think what else could have happened. The Deputy Premier put it well last week when he described it as an unconvincing "the dog ate my homework" excuse. He did not buy it, and neither did anyone else. [*Quorum called for.*]

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

With this track record in mind, we probably should not be surprised that the Leader of the Opposition simply dusted off comments made by former Premier Nick Greiner, Federal Treasurer Peter Costello, and other Federal Liberals in response to the latest State budget. We thought we almost had a policy when he spoke of selling off the State's electricity business to the tune of \$4 billion—almost, but not quite! In a speech delivered by former Liberal leader Nick Greiner on 22 February this year—a mere four months before the Leader of the Opposition delivered his lightweight budget reply last week—there are some remarkable similarities because Mr Greiner also appears to be very fond of the idea of a \$4 billion sell-off. That was something he made very clear in that speech in Sydney back in February, months before the Leader of the Opposition tried to plug the idea as his own, when he said:

Why anyone thinks that NSW taxpayers are better off owning the [electricity] retail business ... rather than spending the approximately \$4 billion ...

There we have it: an Opposition with not an original thought in sight, a policy crafted by Nick Greiner himself, an Opposition in a virtual policy-free zone headed by none other than Mr Invisible. May I say that the difference between the Government and those opposite could not be more stark. On Monday this week the Premier issued a list detailing no less than 160 decisions taken since the people of New South Wales entrusted the Iemma Government with another term. The Leader of the Opposition left his team high and dry and was not even capable of producing a transport policy in the lead-up to the State election. The Government, on the other hand, has made an extensive number of important transport-based decisions to deliver better services to the people of New South Wales.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Point of order: Speakers have ruled that members are not permitted to read prepared speeches. The member for Drummoyne is reading page for page, word for word, line for line, a prepared speech. She cannot even string a sentence together.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member is referring to copious notes.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE:** In the weeks immediately following the poll, it was straight back to business for the Iemma Government: construction began on the \$17 million Pambula bridge; an upgrade at Merrylands railway station was completed; cashless buses began running through the Lane Cove Tunnel to help increase public transport use; and new senior managers were introduced to RailCorp to act as advocates for passengers. What have we seen from the Opposition? Nothing! We ask ourselves the question: What has the Leader of the Opposition actually been doing since he got the job he coveted so much? Unfortunately, the answer is—very little.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury)** [4.10 p.m.]: I am more than happy to speak against the motion and to vote against it. It is just another of the pat-on-the-back motions that seem to have been so prolific since

I became a member of this House. The pat on the back is for the Premier, who probably needs a lot of self-adulation, pats on the back and reassurances from his own party. He has done precious little this week about key service delivery, contrary to what is espoused in the motion. The service delivery to which I refer is for Aboriginal families and the abuse of Aboriginal children.

The Government, which should be running services on behalf of the State, has acted disgracefully and shamelessly in neglecting little children, some of them as young as six months old, who are being raped. I cannot understand how anyone on the other side of the Chamber could allow that while they had the "Breaking the Silence" report in front of them for 12 months. Let me get down to the crux of the matter. It is for members on the other side of the House to make the decisions on behalf of the abused, neglected and raped children in our society. Had those children been white, imagine the outrage from our community. Because these are Aboriginal children, the Government cares not one bit. It sat on a report for twelve months—until when? Until the Federal Government raised the issue because Aboriginal children across this country are being abused, neglected and raped. What is this State Government doing? Nothing. It sat on its hands while the "Breaking the Silence" report remained on the shelf and gathered dust.

**Mr David Campbell:** Point of order: A modicum of accuracy is required in debates in this place. The member has failed to recognise that the Government released its response to that report in January. This was a comprehensive response that the Government and agencies are working through, and it is entirely appropriate—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** What is the point of order?

**Mr David Campbell:** That the member should speak with some degree of accuracy.

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

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** Mr Speaker, thank you very much for your ruling on a vexatious point of order taken by the Minister for Police, who one would think would have learnt a little bit more in the time he has been a member of this Chamber. This morning the Prime Minister was asked why the Federal Government had not intervened when Aboriginal children were being abused and raped, some of them at a very young age. The reason, as the Prime Minister outlined, was that such offences are matters for criminal justice, and that one of the jurisdictions responsible for criminal justice is the Government of New South Wales.

The Minister for Police should know full well that it is his role, through his ministry, to deliver justice to those Aboriginal families and the abused and neglected children. I cannot understand how any person, any parent with any credibility or compassion in their bodies could allow children to be abused and not act for 12 months! Can members imagine their own children, or the children of anybody they know being raped and them saying nothing and doing nothing? That is what this State Government has done. It sat on its hands and this report for 12 months—one year—neglecting Aboriginal children. That is unforgivable. It is a shameless act of neglect on the part of the New South Wales Labor Government. It is a shameless neglect of its obligation to this community.

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** Point of order: The member is clearly misrepresenting the position of the Government. He should not be allowed to do that when debating this issue.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Under which standing order is the member taking her point of order?

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** Relevance, under Standing Order 129.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The motion is broad in its compass, and the member has not strayed from it to this point.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** Mr Deputy-Speaker, it is good to have you in the chair to ensure that the debate addresses key services, which have been raised in the motion. The member for Drummoyne moved the motion to give the Premier a pat on the back. She should be giving the Premier a smack in the face because that is what he deserves. The Premier deserves nothing less than a smack behind the ears for neglecting Aboriginal children in this State. We had a history lesson from the member for Drummoyne. If we go back over the history of this State, we see that the slight improvement in the New South Wales economy can be directly attributed to the Howard Government. In 1996 the Federal Government inherited a debt of \$96 billion from the previous Labor Government of Australia. Not only that, it incurred the debt at a time when interest rates were nearly

17¾ per cent. As first home owners, my wife and I had to pay interest rates of 17¾ per cent. That put home ownership for the people of Australia completely out of reach. Of course, that was at the time—who can ever forget it?—of the recession that we had to have, delivered by none other than the Prime Minister who also left us the \$96 billion debt.

The only way the Labor Party can ever run a country or a State is to drive it into debt. That is why we are debating the motion and that is why, when the Government tells us how it is driving the economy, small business people of this State know where it is driving the economy. That is down; the Labor Government is driving the economy through the floor. Only two weeks ago the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the small business policies of the Government are disgraceful. Only 4 per cent of small business owners in New South Wales—you can count them on one hand—support the Iemma Government's policies on small business, but 44 per cent think its policies are disgusting. They think the Iemma Government has the most appalling policies on small business—and it does! The Government does not listen to small business owners, who employ 50 per cent of our workforce. They are the backbone of this country. The Government does not want to listen. Small business owners have been crying out for payroll reform for years, but the Government is doing nothing.

I refer briefly to infrastructure provision. Some \$2 billion of New South Wales taxpayers' money will be invested in a desalination plant. But the Premier said that he would never, ever commence the construction of a desalination plant until the water level in Warragamba Dam fell to 30 per cent. It is now at 50 per cent, but he has made promises to some mates. He is going to pay \$2 billion for a desalination plant when recent reports show that if water tanks were installed in a mere 5 per cent of Sydney homes a desalination plant or another dam would not be needed for at least a decade. But the Government does not want water tanks. It would rather waste \$2 billion of New South Wales money constructing a desalination plant that no-one wants and no-one needs. We do not need a desalination plant and we do not need the failed policies and self-adulation of the Government. We do not need the rubbish motions moved by the member for Drummoyne.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON** (East Hills) [4.20 p.m.]: I will share a little bit of history with the House that may interest the member for Hawkesbury. The Labor Party was elected to govern the State in 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007. I would have thought the majority of small business people strongly supported the Iemma Government and voted in great numbers to put us on this side of the Chamber for the fourth consecutive time, which is a record in any Australian Parliament. That is something he will have to get used to as he spends almost the next four years on the other side of the Chamber.

I do not mind Barry O'Farrell. He is a personable guy. He followed Richmond, as I once did, but that is another bit of history. He has not really done much since he was elected. He spent a lot of time being the deputy leader to everybody. He was the deputy leader to Peter Debnam, to John Brogden before that, and to Kerry Chikarovski for a time before that. He has always been happy to be the deputy, but now that he has the job, what has he really done? He has done nothing. He has been a lazy man. I know how hard he worked years ago because I was the one who brought it to the attention of the House when he lost weight and shaved off his beard—something I refuse to do. I went only halfway. Even then, when he was ready to be the leader, he did not have the bottle to take the job.

After John Brogden went, he let Peter Debnam have it, but he made sure he stood close enough to poor old Pete so that as Peter was announcing policies in his swimming togs—the budgie smugglers that offended everybody—he would say, "Peter, get a bit further forward, mate, because you are going so bad that I really will have the bottle to take the job." But when he got the job what did you do? It is three months since the State election and we heard nothing until last week, when he made a very ordinary reply to the budget. We hardly got 20 minutes worth. He said he was going to sell the retail electricity business for \$4 billion and that was it, one old policy that Nick Greiner made a hash of years ago that probably helped our election in 1995.

The Leader of the Opposition has been in this House for 12 years, but he has not had the bottle to take the job. However, leadership is about more than getting the job. When you get there you have to create policy. Some years ago sniffer dogs were brought into the Parliament. Some people were not impressed by that. They found no evidence of anything that was really nasty, and the one thing they did not find was an Opposition policy. They could not find one. They went to all the rooms throughout the Parliament but they could not find an Opposition policy. It is an historical footnote and it is true. Members can go back and check it. Bob Carr, the previous Premier, referred to it once.

Since 24 March we have had a mandate to govern and the Opposition has a mandate to be in opposition. It has the right to whinge, but fancy coming into this place complaining and trying to dredge up

Aboriginal issues when the history of the Coalition in dealing with Aboriginal issues in New South Wales and the whole of Australia is deplorable. I give credit to the member for Wakehurst because he is fair dinkum about it. Some members of The Nationals who were recently elected referred to Aboriginal issues, but I have never heard them raised by Barry O'Farrell or any other members on the other side of this House. They do not care at all.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Point of order: The member has been here long enough to know that he should abide by Standing Order No. 75.

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

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** Of course not. The point is that the substantive motion seeks to condemn the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Point of order: My point is just that—Standing Order No. 75 states that no member is to be referred to by name. Clearly, he does not understand the standing orders.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** The member for Wagga Wagga does not have a point. The member for Ku-ring-gai is not fit to lead the Opposition, but it has no-one else. I note those opposite have referred to Pru Goward as a potential leader. One only has to read the *Daily Telegraph* every day to know that she has made mistake after mistake and referred to the wrong Minister after Minister. Her first question bagged women in the New South Wales Parliament. She went off about it being a blokey place. That is all about the people on her side because no-one on this side has ever said anything critical. She is going nowhere. It is time that some of those on the Opposition frontbench moved back to let the wonderful young talent, like the member for Hawkesbury, come forward and give us their views. After all, the member for Hawkesbury has some ability. He stacked a couple of thousand people from small business into his electorate to rot the balance and get into this place. Good luck to him! Now he stands in this place, waves his hands around and looks like some sort of thug, but the point is—

**Mr Ray Williams:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** Of course it is relevant. You spoke in the debate.

**Mr Ray Williams:** I would think I have taken quite a few more than just a couple of thousand. That is a disgrace!

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The member for East Hills has the call.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** I want Hansard to note that he admitted that he had stacked more than a couple of thousand into—

**Mr Ray Williams:** I didn't say anything about that.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** He just did. He said on the point of relevance that he hoped he had stacked more people in, and it is in *Hansard* right now.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL** (Clarence) [4.25 p.m.]: I speak to the so-called motion that is really nothing more than a darn joke dealing with progress made by the Lemma Government to deliver real improvements for the people of New South Wales by driving the economy and investing record amounts in infrastructure and key services. What a joke! In NSW—Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong—yes, but areas outside Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong are lost.

[*Interruption*]

The member for Drummoyne would not know because she probably has not been there. In relation to the Breaking the Silence report, it is obvious that many on the other side of the House do not understand Aboriginal issues. The member for East Hills said that not many on this side understand Aboriginal issues, but many of us understand them and many of us get out amongst Aboriginal communities.

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** Don't insult our intelligence! Don't insult us!

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL:** The member for Drummoyne has probably never been to a mission. She should not talk about anything. There are problems in Aboriginal communities, and it is a shame that the Government has done nothing about them. Health is probably one of the major key services in country New South Wales.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Biggest-ever budget.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL:** Big budget, great budget. Since the election Murwillumbah Hospital has been downgraded from level 4 to level 3 and Grafton Base Hospital from level 3-4 to level 3. Before Christmas Grafton Base Hospital held a rally. It was a scream for help. Doctors and senior clinicians said that accident emergency departments in Grafton and Maclean are at crisis point and were ready to collapse. Where is all the help from this caring, feel-good Government? Nowhere. The money is in Sydney. I recall Craig Knowles, the Minister for Health during the 2003 election campaign. Two days before the election he was dressed up like Dr Spock in an operating theatre gown with a mask around his face saying, "We will have world-class operating theatres here". He promised \$7 million to develop operating theatres. He promised that it would be one of the best and most advanced operating theatres in country New South Wales. Where is it? Sadly, it was another broken promise.

A week before the election, Bob Carr and the hapless Labor candidate for Clarence were standing on the veranda of the South Grafton District Ex-Servicemen's Club and looking at the Grafton Bridge when he said, "You will have a new Grafton Bridge—\$7 million." When he was asked whether it would be delivered, no matter who won the election, he replied, "The money is there. It is in unallocated RTA funding." The amazing thing is that the Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] could not find it, so what happened? As soon as Bob went out of politics, another promise became a broken promise by this Labor Government that has invested so much in the State's economy, infrastructure and key services—but only in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Recently I visited the Maclean District Hospital. As much as the nurses do their best—

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** Yes, and you should thank them.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL:** My word, I thank them very much. They are working in almost Third World conditions. The hospital has not had as much as a coat of paint, let alone anything else, for 30 years. The doctors have reached the point of walking out, just as they have at the Grafton hospital, yet still there is no improvement. I invite Government members to keep throwing interjections at me. Before the election another hapless Labor candidate promised on behalf of the Government a new health facility at Yamba. Where is it? Not one cent in the budget has been allocated toward that project. It is yet another broken Labor promise.

The Premier referred to building infrastructure and developing the economy in country New South Wales. The port of Yamba ranks fifth in order of importance in New South Wales, ahead of Sydney, Port Jackson, Port Kembla, Newcastle and Eden. I have been calling for maintenance dredging of the shipping channels to enable shipping and export to be carried on and to service Oceania, South-East Asia and the South Pacific, but there is no money for that. We have made request after request of the Minister for Ports and Waterways to fund the storage facilities at Goodwood Island wharf that services the port, but not a cent has been allocated. The Government's inaction is inhibiting and retarding economic growth in country New South Wales. There is nothing in this record budget to alleviate the situation. Preschools have been discussed many times in this House. Surely there would be a good funding level for preschools, but where has it gone? It certainly has not gone to country New South Wales.

**Ms Angela D'Amore:** We have funded 10,000 childcare places.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL:** In other States there is a 99 per cent participant rate, but in New South Wales there is an 86 per cent participation rate. Many kids are not being given opportunities that kids in other States are given.

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA (Wollondilly) [4.30 p.m.]:** I am pleased to speak to the motion because of all the rhetoric I have heard previously. I point out that 28 per cent of the \$12 billion has been allocated to Health. New places for preschools will be rolled out. That will not happen "yesterday"; it will roll out during the implementation of the budget over the term of the government. Perhaps some people do not understand the way in which budgets work. Soon after the election the Leader of the Opposition admitted that the Coalition parties had failed the people of New South Wales by not presenting a decent alternative government. He also

acknowledged the need for change, but provided no policies for change. I listened to a number of Opposition responses to the budget, but so far nothing has changed. The Opposition has no new ideas, no new policies—just the same old rhetoric. I am new to this House, so I listen intently. All I hear is whingeing.

By contrast, let us look at what the New South Wales Labor Government, under Morris Iemma, has achieved just this week. On Monday alone the Premier announced the preferred tenderer for the Western Sydney recycling project—a project worth around \$250 million, representing jobs for local communities, which will provide full recycling. That is an absolutely fantastic project. He also announced the preferred tenderer for the Kurnell desalination plant. The Government moved on and made a decision. The tender came in at a lower than anticipated project cost of \$1.76 billion, thereby saving New South Wales consumers money and working towards drought proofing Sydney. That is what the Government is working toward—drought proofing Sydney. The rain is temporary. We are not immune to drought and it can come back.

The Premier also announced a new Health infrastructure board to oversee the delivery of the Iemma Government's massive hospital building program. We heard a great deal of rhetoric from the Opposition about that measure today. The Premier also announced a new Major Events Corporation—and why not compete with the other States—with the appointment of John O'Neill as interim chairman. The Premier also announced a new rural and regional task force to examine and provide advice on key issues—economic, environmental or social issues—affecting rural and regional communities across New South Wales. This Government is out there!

The list I have provided to the House demonstrates the unwavering commitment that the Iemma Government applies to delivering on its commitments and improving services for the people of New South Wales, from Bondi to Bourke, in service areas ranging from securing a water supply, to providing first-class health facilities, to hosting major events. The list of projects I have provided was announced on one day in the life of the Iemma Government. But from those on the other side of the Chamber, led by the member for Ku-ring-gai, we cannot find one new policy—not one. The Leader of the Opposition staked his leadership on "new people with new ideas". Three months into the job, he has failed to deliver. While the Opposition wallows in budget bashing, the Government is getting on with the job in members' electorates. It is investing record amounts in infrastructure, with the biggest investment by a State Government in our nation's history—nearly \$50 billion over four years. It is delivering improvements in key areas such as health and education.

According to March performance figures, our hospitals are treating people faster and are performing more elective surgery, despite the ongoing rise in emergency department activity. Our year 7 and 8 students have just recorded their best-ever results in literacy. Class sizes in the early school years continue to get smaller. I have an education background and can assure the House that that was the best decision ever made in relation to education. We continue to work hard to drive the New South Wales economy. The New South Wales Government has just delivered its twelfth consecutive budget surplus and tax cuts, and the changes in this year's budget will amount to \$2.6 billion over four years. Our economy is strong and is continuing to grow according to the latest Sensis Business Index, showing New South Wales had the biggest jump in business confidence across the nation in the recent quarter.

The latest State final demand figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that spending in New South Wales in the March quarter rose by 1.2 per cent, after having increased by 1.4 per cent in the December quarter for 2006. The Iemma Government is working hard to meet its commitments to deliver real improvements for the people of New South Wales by driving the economy and investing record amounts in infrastructure and key services. Members opposite have failed on this front, yet have the hide to call us lazy. Give us some new ideas! Show us your new plans! Try to keep up with a progressive and focused government—a government that has a plan it intends to deliver through responsible financial management. The Premier delivers at grassroots level to the people of New South Wales and, in particular, to an area in my electorate, Macarthur.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne) [4.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Hawkesbury, the member for East Hills, the member for Clarence and the member for Wollondilly for their contributions to the debate. I will deal briefly with remarks made during the debate by some speakers. In particular, I refer to the remarks made by the member for Hawkesbury. He did not have one positive comment to make regarding the budget. The member should acknowledge the money that was allocated to his electorate for the benefit of his constituents by the Labor Government. After all, if he is not happy, he could always give it back. I am sure it could be distributed to other electorates that would be more than happy to acknowledge the funding.

The member for Hawkesbury had the audacity to refer to interest rates, despite the six hikes in interest rates that have occurred over the past couple of years. He had the audacity to refer to interest rates when we know that currently families spend more than 60 per cent of their income paying their mortgage. We also know that home ownership will only ever be a dream for many families. I think it is a bit rich that the member for Hawkesbury, on the one hand, failed to acknowledge that the residents of his electorate are suffering under interest rate rises while, on the other hand, he had the audacity to refer to previous Federal governments in eras when people could still afford to purchase a home. Families were in a position to purchase a home in days gone by. He referred to securing our water supply by issuing a desalination plant, but he refused to acknowledge that the Opposition had exactly the same policy as ours—only the location was different. That shows how much he knew as a candidate when he was campaigning during the recent State election.

I thank the member for East Hills for his comments. He highlighted that in 12 years the Leader of the Opposition has produced no policies of any significance, and I think I know why. The Leader of the Opposition does not have a backbone and he is unable to muster enough conviction to put forward policies for the State or provide alternative policies to the residents of this State. But that is all right—the Labor Government is quite happy to do that.

I note also the comments of the member for Clarence. He acknowledged record investment in New South Wales, in particular on the Central Coast and in the Illawarra. I thank him for those positive comments because I am sure those Labor members would be very happy with that. However, he failed to acknowledge that the Health budget is 28 per cent of the State's budget. That means there will be record spending in mental health services. However, the member for Clarence refused to acknowledge that our doctors and nurses are under stress, and does he know why? It is caused by something called a recruitment problem because the Federal Government has cut nursing positions at universities. The member for Clarence has failed to understand that registered nurses who staff our public hospitals are tertiary educated and they require university degrees. There are three tiers of nursing: registered nurses, enrolled nurses and assistant in nursing.

**Mr Thomas George:** They do a fantastic job. Stop knocking nurses.

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE:** Yes, they do a fantastic job and that is why we need more of them. The member for Clarence went on to ridicule the hygiene procedures in an operating theatre, which we commonly call "scrubs". He might learn something if he looked at the hygiene procedures when nurses have to wear gowns. He also refused to acknowledge that this State Government will increase preschool positions by 10,000. I hope my son will be on one of those places in two years time. I note the comments by the member for Wollondilly, and I thank him for that. He is a new member and I believe he makes an outstanding contribution to this Chamber. He was right to say that the Opposition has no new ideas.

The Opposition failed to acknowledge that the Government is embarking on major recycling. The multimillion-dollar Western Sydney recycling plant involves the biggest investment ever with \$50 billion over four years. The Federal Government is to invest \$5 billion nationwide, every year, while the New South Wales Government is to spend \$12 billion. I am glad that that point was raised because we need to acknowledge that the State Government is putting aside more than \$12 billion every year for major infrastructure projects for the people of New South Wales while the Coalition Federal Government, which is propped up by the State Opposition, is putting aside \$5 billion. That is \$5 billion from all the goods and services tax money that it has collected from New South Wales taxpayers. That is an absolute disgrace.

The Iemma Government is working hard to deliver real improvements for the people of New South Wales. As the Premier said on election night, the Government has been delivered a mandate with a message and the Opposition should listen; a message that requires us to work hard, to get public services right. It is a message that this Government takes very seriously. Ever since the election day results came in it has been back to work for the people of New South Wales, and rightfully so. As we focus on delivering our commitment, where is the Opposition? It is nowhere to be seen. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 45**

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

**Noes, 36**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Gadiel	Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Morris	Mr Souris

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**CLIMATE CHANGE****Matter of Public Importance**

**Ms CLOVER MOORE** (Sydney) [4.52 p.m.]: Today I speak about the need for urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our cities to tackle climate change resulting from global warming. Climate change is one of the greatest threats currently facing our planet. There are serious impacts for Sydney, including food and water supply, more extreme weather including windstorms and cyclones, hail and flooding, high temperatures increasing, heat-related illnesses, and death. British economist Sir Nicholas Stern warned that the economic cost of inaction to reduce climate change is far greater than the cost of action. While around 50 per cent of the world's population lives in cities, they consume a disproportionate 75 per cent of the world's energy and is responsible for 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, most significantly through the burning of fossil fuels for energy supply and transport.

As such, the world's largest cities have a critical role to play in reducing carbon emissions and reversing dangerous climate change. We have to move from high-energy use models to approaches that

conserve energy and maximise renewable sources. From 14 to 17 May I represented Sydney at the C40 Climate Change Summit held in New York, which was attended by mayors and delegates from the world's largest cities and represented some 400 million people globally. The summit was an opportunity to showcase innovative and best practice ideas from around the world, to share information about emerging technologies, and to pool resources to support the development of a new green economy. I found particularly inspiring the partnership between business and local government in leading the response to climate change. Interestingly, a common theme was the lack of action by State and Federal governments, in direct contrast to local government.

One of the summit's most important messages was that future growth and economic development are compatible with action to address climate change. It is often wrongly suggested that reducing greenhouse gases will destroy Australia's economy. On the contrary, giving priority to environmental sustainability will strengthen the emerging green economy. It is not necessary to renounce our modern way of life in order to combat climate change. As consumers place increasing value on sustainability, industry will adapt to survive—it always does. Many of the businesses represented at the summit clearly understood that the future of their companies relied on their capacity to adopt sustainable business practices and provide sustainable products. Buildings account for around 50 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and up to 70 per cent in more developed cities such as New York and London. Therefore, promoting energy-efficient buildings is vital if we are serious about addressing climate change.

While I welcome Government programs for rebates and subsidies to existing households and businesses through the Climate Change Fund, I am concerned that this program replaces previous funds that would have expanded the energy conservation industry so that we can compete with the infrastructure-building sector. The fund incorporates the water and energy saving funds and will replace water and energy efficiency programs that are still required. New South Wales needs a strategic energy efficiency plan, not a mishmash of policies and rebates. While these are valuable tools to encourage sustainable decisions, a systematic, coordinated approach is necessary to make the quantum leap that we need to make and that the climate change crisis requires.

Businesses are very aware that a deteriorating physical environment is not conducive to growth. Business leaders are shifting to more sustainable and renewable technologies that present opportunities for a new green economy. Sydney City, together with Parramatta and North Sydney councils, are working with business to deliver greenhouse gas reductions through tenancy fit-outs of older building stock during lease turnovers. These can occur after three years. More than 30 companies—including Multiplex, DTZ Australia, Minter Ellison and Westpac—have joined. At the Climate Change Summit in New York the C40 group and the Clinton climate initiative announced a \$5 billion project to retrofit public buildings to make them more energy efficient.

Five global banks each committed \$1 billion, which is available immediately to fund this work, with repayments being made from future energy savings guaranteed through four international energy companies. The scale of this project means that the level of demand created will bring prices down and accelerate the uptake of energy-efficient products and services in city buildings. The City of Sydney will be working with the Clinton climate initiative and the C40 group to ensure that Sydney benefits from this program through its application to City of Sydney properties. The city would like to enter into a partnership with the State to accelerate the greening of other public buildings. If we are to prevent new apartments from becoming obsolete or requiring expensive retrofits in the future, the State also needs to recommit to the 40 per cent energy efficiency target previously promised for multilevel buildings in the Building Sustainability Index [BASIX].

High-rise apartments produce more greenhouse gases per resident than other dwelling types and they require stronger action. The Building Sustainability Index was already weakened for multilevel built units by allowing targets to be met with appliances such as clothes dryers and refrigerators. The Australian Conservation Foundation warns that many high-rise blocks will achieve Building Sustainability Index requirements by providing energy-efficient fridges, which can be replaced at any time and will ultimately fail to save energy. In the city, apartments make up 70 per cent of new residential development and are vital to the Government's urban consolidation policy. Despite this, the City of Sydney is blocked by the State from pursuing stronger targets that will help protect our planet's future. I strongly urge the Government to lift these bans so that councils can achieve the improvements that our communities expect and need.

There are similar challenges for existing residential buildings and progressive initiatives are needed to address them. One model being adopted in major cities internationally is to require sustainability ratings and initiatives at the time of property sale. A strong renewable energy market is also vital for cities to be sustainable.

While cities are powered primarily by coal-fired energy, they will be limited in their ability to reduce emissions substantially. The Government's commitment to a 10 per cent target by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2020 is modest by international standards. This financial year the city budgeted for 20 per cent and we are looking at becoming Australia's first carbon neutral council by using only accredited green power or other approved offsets.

I support environment groups' call for a 25 per cent legislated renewable energy target, which would encourage and expand the renewable energy industry to meet Sydney's demand. Another key theme emerging from the C40 Climate Change Summit was the role of transport in creating more sustainable cities and the need to reduce traffic congestion. There is broad acceptance in many cities of the need for radical change. Indeed, London, Singapore and Stockholm have pursued this and discussed their success at introducing congestion pricing, which has worked due to their adequate public transport infrastructure.

Mayor Bloomberg is planning similar action in New York. I regret that the Government members are not interested in the most important issue facing the planet at the moment; they should have their conversations outside the Chamber. Public transport in Sydney has been allowed to run down, and integrated ticketing has been delayed. Toll roads have taken priority. Car use in the Sydney metropolitan area currently dominates and is estimated to increase to 44,700 million kilometres travelled by 2030, or by more than 50 per cent of 2002 car use.

Transport-related greenhouse gas emissions are increasing rapidly and there is no strategy in place to achieve the massive cuts required. Sydney seriously needs an efficient, environmentally friendly mass transit system to curb the growth in car use. A planned, sustainable, integrated transport system that provides for public transport as well as the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists is essential. A single State transport authority is required to coordinate services with long-term sustainable goals. City of Sydney has adopted a cycle strategy and action plan, as well as a pedestrian plan. If we give Sydney residents real transport choices the evidence from progressive cities worldwide suggests that people will be attracted away from private vehicles to a greener transport system.

Sydney, in common with the rest of the world, faces the unprecedented challenge of global warming. That challenge must be addressed now. We know that Sydney's environmental footprint is equivalent to 49 per cent of New South Wales, and if we continue as we have in the past it will reach 95 per cent in just over 20 years. City of Sydney has launched Sustainable Sydney 2030, which involves all sectors of our community in developing a vision for our future and identifying how we want our city to be in 2030. Business and the community are leading, and the State and Federal governments are lagging behind public expectations.

It is time for a collaborative approach by community, business and all levels of government to create a strong and internationally competitive green economy. Sydney can have an efficient, sustainable, vibrant, green economy. The biggest impediment to solving the problem of climate change is not the lack of new technologies but, to this point in time, a lack of political will. I call again on the Federal and State governments to work with City of Sydney and with businesses to radically reduce Sydney's greenhouse gas emissions by investing in and promoting green city infrastructure.

**Ms VERITY FIRTH** (Balmain—Minister for Women, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer), Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water (Environment)) [5.01 p.m.]: I agree with the member for Sydney about the importance of climate change. It is indeed the big political issue this century. As a fellow City of Sydney councillor, I am also glad that Sydney is working with other major cities around the world and is associated with Clinton's climate initiative and the C40 Climate Change Summit. That is a positive move, and I congratulate the Lord Mayor and member for Sydney on making it.

However, I disagree with the member for Sydney about the role of the Labor Government in tackling climate change. In fact, I am very proud of the Government's environmental achievements, especially the way in which we are tackling the pressing issue of climate change. Climate change is a critical threat to the future environmental and economic prosperity of New South Wales, Australia and the whole planet. That is why the Government has committed funding from this budget to programs that address climate change. I am sure I do not need to remind the House—many members know a lot about climate change—of the Stern report, which describes climate change as "the greatest market failure the world has seen". The costs of runaway climate change could be so high that failure to take precautionary measures now would be not only environmentally reckless but economically disastrous.

Early action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will cost far less than inaction because it will enable a smooth transition to a less carbon-intensive economy and avoid the inevitable economic shocks of delayed

action. However, we are talking not just about economic shocks but about the real human impact of allowing global climate change to continue unabated. Millions of climate change refugees will be created, especially in countries around the world that are not equipped to deal with that problem. Clearly we must act now. I am proud of the Iemma Government's achievements in acting on climate change. I am proud that we were the first State in Australia to set strict targets to reduce greenhouse gases, cutting back to 2000 levels by 2025 and by 60 per cent by 2050, as recommended by the CSIRO.

The Government led by example when it established the New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme, which was one of the first carbon-trading schemes in the world. In fact, New South Wales has the second-largest carbon market in the world outside the European Union. I think we should be proud of that. We have now slashed greenhouse gases by more than 40 million tonnes, which is equivalent to taking nine million cars off the road in a year. Today the Minister gave notice of his intention to introduce the New South Wales Government's mandatory renewable energy target of 10 per cent renewable energy by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2020. This should save 115 million tonnes of greenhouse gases by 2030.

In the 21-month lead-up to the last State election there were several announcements and achievements—some of which relate to my electorate, so I ask members to bear with me. We began to replace the State Transit bus fleet with natural gas and Euro 5 clean diesel buses. In addition, more than 1,300 pre-2000 buses will be fitted with exhaust control devices that will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 90 per cent. The Government also announced the establishment of Australia's first-ever all-green bus depot at Leichhardt, in my electorate. It will be the home of the nation's biggest and greenest bus fleet, with more than 95 per cent of buses that operate from the depot being gas powered. The depot is also adopting renewable energy and water-saving measures. We have begun our trial of biodiesel fuel mixes at Sydney Ferries, we granted planning approval for the \$40 million, 600-megawatt Munmorah gas-fired power station, and we approved the wind farm at Taralga.

Members will be aware that in the recent budget we provided the Department of Environment and Climate Change with almost \$1 billion in funding to protect the environment. The allocation of \$977.4 million in the budget means that the department will be strongly resourced to tackle the State's most significant environmental challenges. It delivers on environmental solutions that will assist in people's backyards and with heavy industry. Today I announced that we are doubling our low-base licensing fees for industrial polluters of heavy chemicals that cause the very damaging petrochemical smog in Sydney. The budget also allocates money to programs that regulate industry and reduce the amount of emissions released into the environment. The Government has included money for the maintenance and protection of our 776 national parks and reserves. There is also funding for the restoration and protection of rivers and wetlands.

The budget includes the first allocation of funding to meet our commitment to establish the \$310 million Climate Change Fund that we promised during the election. A total of \$70 million will be delivered in the coming financial year. That is what the Iemma Government is about: meeting our practical and sensible commitments to the people of New South Wales. The Climate Change Fund will help families and industry tackle the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The fund will pay rebates of up to \$1,500 for an approved rainwater tank plumbed into a toilet or washing machine, starting from 1 July this year; up to \$1,200 for an approved solar hot water system as of 1 January 2008; up to \$300 to convert from electric to an approved gas hot water system from 1 October 2007; and up to \$300 to install energy-efficient home insulation from 1 October 2007.

As members will be aware, the new Climate Change Fund will provide rebates to existing households and businesses that adopt more sustainable water and energy measures. We encourage families and businesses to take advantage of these rebates and to do their bit to reduce greenhouse gases. I note also that the Premier has delivered good news that we are making real progress on the sustainability front in relation to new homes. The Premier announced recently that more than 90 per cent of new homes built in New South Wales now have water tanks and two-thirds of them have gas power. We are beginning to make some changes in that area, which is great news. It shows that our early action on climate change is already paying dividends.

As I said at the outset, climate change is the key political issue of our age. I am glad that the member for Sydney raised the matter today and that the Parliament is discussing it. I sometimes feel that some of the New South Wales Government's very real environmental achievements get lost in the electioneering, debates, and political toing and froing. It is important to remember that when the Coalition was last in power in 1994 there were 328 national parks in New South Wales there are now 770. There are now nearly two million hectares of wilderness in New South Wales, which is an increase from 650,000 hectares in 1994. The

Government has created six marine parks and 40 per cent of the beautiful New South Wales coastline is within the national parks system. We should be incredibly proud of that, and I am. Although there is a lot to do on climate change, and it is a big structural issue that we will all have to tackle together, I know that we are heading in the right direction. Hopefully, with the help of all members of this House, we can initiate some positive changes.

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn) [5.10 p.m.]: Climate change, I think we all agree, is a huge policy challenge for this State, this nation and this world. Whether or not we agree on the causes of it, there can be no doubt that we are experiencing changes in the climate. Unfortunately, we beg to differ with the New South Wales Iemma Government about its role in reducing the effects of climate change and the introduction of policies that will prevent it progressing.

In particular, the Minister referred to a Climate Change Fund with a paltry \$310 million for climate change measures—a lot of which, I am pleased to say, were adopted from Coalition policies. Very little of that is new money; it comes from existing funds and really is a reallocation of savings programs into a new, rebranded fund called the Climate Change Fund. The record is fairly dubious on climate change. Declaring more national parks does not alter the fact that those parklands, before they were national parks, were contributing to the production of oxygen and the capturing of carbon. So, in a sense, that is a status quo policy.

The New South Wales Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme, which even its own architects are now expressing concerns about, has claimed reductions in emissions of 40 million tonnes, equivalent to removing 90,000 cars from the streets. That view is not shared by all. The Centre for Energy and Environmental Markets at the University of New South Wales has found not only that the potential reduction from the scheme is only 24 million tonnes, but that the scheme is so badly constructed that it might actively discourage emission reduction by business.

If the Government wishes to ensure that consumers and businesses in New South Wales are part of the effort on climate change, it has to consult consumers and businesses. The Minister referred today to the doubling of a levy. The Minister might also have referred, for example, to a couple of other environmental levies, such as the liquid waste levy, which was introduced post haste in this House without any consultation with business—which does not believe for a moment that the measure can be introduced on 1 August. This is an example of a Government that might talk about climate change but has not appreciated the single most important factor in good policy on climate change: consulting stakeholders and winning from them agreement that there be changes in commercial behaviour and activities.

The Government's recent decision to exempt BlueScope Steel from its carbon trading emissions scheme is another example of Labor's dodgy brothers policy on climate change. That exemption has set alarm bells ringing throughout business in New South Wales—not as a criticism of BlueScope but as a criticism of a Government that is prepared to enter into a secret arrangement to exempt a major emitter of gases from the scheme on the grounds of some alleged improvement in its technology. The exemption might cause business in this State to fear that climate change will be pursued by the Government as a way of doing background deals.

The fact is that good climate change policy, to be effective at the State level, needs an effective carbon trading emissions scheme that does not have unintended consequences and is easily administered, that encourages public infrastructure that enables a reduction in consumer demand for electricity and petrol, including public transport and urban design, and in addition has policies that encourage the reduction in consumer demand—for example, the use of petrol, recycling, and reduced demand for electricity. Unless all those elements are brought together and the community is consulted and made to feel part of climate change policy, changes in behaviour will not be made willingly. Instead, price signals for the economy will be distorted, and some communities and parts of society will unduly suffer. So, yes, we all agree that climate change is an important policy issue and must be addressed by this House in a bipartisan way. But we have a long way to go. To date, I would say the climate change policy that we observe is extremely limited, distorted and in many ways misleading.

**Mr PETER DRAPER** (Tamworth) [5.14 p.m.]: We in Australia are witnessing evidence of very clear changes to our climate. I was pleased to be able to speak last week in support of a bill introduced by the Minister for Climate Change, Phil Koperberg, that established a Climate Change Fund to help residents of this State address this important issue. We are facing a crisis. It is one brought on by increasing greenhouse gas emissions. It is a crisis backed by growing scientific evidence that unless we move to address the situation now, emissions will inflict untold damage on our way of life, people's health and the economy. The Federal Government has had

the opportunity to take action on climate change, but it has had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the debate. Where is the ratification of Kyoto? Where is our national emissions trading scheme? And what are our reduction targets?

Many members are aware that the last five years have been among the hottest in Australia since record keeping began. Average temperatures in this country have risen by almost one degree since 1910. The CSIRO is predicting that by 2030 New South Wales will be up to two degrees warmer and by 2070 as much as 6.4 degrees warmer. A report on the Namoi released recently showed that by 2050 Tamworth will have a climate similar to the climate that towns 150 kilometres west of us currently have. The latest Bureau of Meteorology report for New South Wales stated that Sydney had its hottest autumn ever this year and that May 2007 was the hottest May on record. Despite record rain in the Hunter and Central Coast regions, and the current threat of floods in the Gippsland area of Victoria and a number of southern communities in New South Wales, the drought has yet to end. If anything, the extreme weather patterns we are experiencing now seem to vindicate expert opinions that we should expect more similar occurrences resulting from increased greenhouse gas emissions.

The Greens recently introduced a bill into the New South Wales upper House to prohibit the development of new coalmines and new coal-fired electricity generating capacity, or indeed any other activity to extend the life or increase the capacity of existing coalmining or generating facilities. Their bill also seeks to retract approval for the Anvil Hill coalmine and for the coal loader expansion in Port Newcastle. The Greens seem to be trying to phase out any reliance on coal in this State. However, given the escalating demand for electricity, I feel their initiative may be rather premature. I have spoken in this place about a number of energy initiatives, and in particular about the use of solar energy and ethanol. On solar energy, if Australia followed the example set by Germany we could move our housing sector's greenhouse gas emissions to zero through rolling out new technology. That would reduce our reliance on coal-produced energy without jeopardising jobs and our way of life.

**Pursuant to standing orders business interrupted.**

#### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

**ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Grant McBride):** I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Mr SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

1. That Ms Sharpe be discharged from the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and that Ms Fazio be appointed as a member of the committee.
2. That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the resolution of the House of 27 June 2007, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly fix the time and place for the first meeting of the committee.
3. That a message be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly conveying the terms of the resolution agreed to by the House.

Legislative Council  
27 June 2007

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

#### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

##### **Notices of Motions**

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

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

##### **MOUNT KURING-GAI INDUSTRIAL ESTATE SEWERAGE SCHEME**

**Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD (Hornsby) [5.20 p.m.]:** I refer to the proposed Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate sewerage scheme. In view of the matter of public importance on climate change, it is appropriate that I raise the issue at this point. The Government pats itself on the back on climate change, but there is a change in policy in the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate area from a gravity system to a pressurised system for

connection to the main sewer, which will mean that 300 business sites will have to install an electric pump with a 24-hour retention tank. Obviously, the pump would operate around the clock, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. It would rely on an adequate power supply and the absence of blackouts or brownouts, which occur from time to time.

I call on the responsible Minister and highlight for the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water that this is not the best situation. Recently the plan was put on display and I know that Sydney Water will consider and address all the submissions in an internal document called a decisions report. I hope that Sydney Water can alter its original plan to install a gravity system. I quote an article from the *Bushland Shire News* of June 2007 titled "Hornsby Council an environmental leader":

Hornsby Council is fast becoming New South Wales' most environmentally-friendly council. We are also helping residents to save water, energy and money.

Since 2000 council has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 25%. In the 2005/06 financial year council reduced its water consumption by 21%.

I congratulate Hornsby Shire Council on its many environmental awards. I call on the Government to help Hornsby Shire Council, which will be a partner in the installation of the sewerage treatment connection to the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate, to continue in this vein. On 13 June I met with a number of business people from the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate area, who are extremely concerned about the sudden change from a gravity system to a pressurised system. I am sure that those in the industrial area will make many representations to the Government, urging it to change its mind. They expressed extreme concern about the cost of the proposal and the environmental issues associated with it. They have written to Sydney Water, and I will quote from some of their letters. A letter from Sifa Pty Limited, dated 1 February 2007, states:

We are writing to you today to express our great concern and our total objection to the proposal put forward by Sydney Water for the installation of a pressure sewerage system for the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate.

Sifa Company is a medium sized business which has operated in the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate for over 24 years. As a long-term local business, we truly appreciate the uniqueness of a well-established industrial estate within its bushland setting. We have in the past and will in the future undertake all reasonable steps to protect it and our own unique investment; however, Sydney Water's proposal for a pressurised sewerage system is neither reasonable nor protective.

A letter from John Hellyar from Rob Edwards Electrical to Sydney Water dated 2 February 2007 expresses the same sentiments. The letter states:

In our opinion it is not reasonable to introduce a pressure system, normally reserved for low lying areas, to probably the highest geographical location within greater Sydney. Surely this fact alone would make a gravity sewer system the most reasonable alternative.

I quote from a letter from Doug Thomson from Thomson Landscapes and Garden Supplies, who expresses his dissatisfaction in these terms:

As a resident of the Mount Kuring-gai industrial estate I am dissatisfied by your proposal. I do not oppose improving water quality, but there are several problematic issues arising from the Review of Environmental Factors.

He goes on to express how unhappy he is with the change in plans. I also have letters from Civilab Australia Pty Limited and Artarmon Joinery Pty Limited, which also express extreme concern about the industrial estate.

### **EDMUND RESCH RESERVE, REDFERN**

**Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY** (Heffron—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.25 p.m.]: I voice concerns raised by residents in the Heffron electorate about the City of Sydney Council and in particular the lord mayor's failure to address nuisance caused by dogs in the Edmund Resch Reserve, which is a small parcel of public land in Redfern. I am advised that it is less than 200 metres by 50 metres in size. It is bounded on all sides by high-density apartments. Previously dog owners were allowed to use the reserve to walk their dogs off leash between 6.00 p.m. and 8.00 a.m. Residents of the area have been continually woken up as early as 6.00 a.m. with significant numbers of dogs off leash and barking loudly.

I have viewed video footage that shows up to 20 dogs in the park off leash and barking during the early hours of the morning, the middle of the day, and the afternoon. More disturbingly, I have also viewed video footage of a mother and father pushing their baby in a pram through Resch Reserve being chased by a pack of seven violently barking dogs. My constituents have taken the most direct and appropriate action by writing to

the lord mayor. Although she has responded in writing, she has not addressed the continuing problems with dogs in the reserve. During February 2006 all signage was removed from the reserve. Because there was no signage, the residents were able to allow their dogs to roam freely, barking during the day and night.

At the time local rangers indicated to my constituents that they were not able to take action against dog owners in breach of regulations as there were no signs to explain the restrictions. Surely the City of Sydney can organise itself so that parks are not left without signage. I understand that this applies not only to Edmund Resch Reserve but also to the Burren Street Playground in Erskineville. My constituents have contacted the lord mayor's office, but they feel the real problems are being ignored. According to my constituents, on one occasion the lord mayor publicly referred to them as "canophobes" for raising concerns about loud barking dogs, insulting those who are just after help in their local area. Instead of listening to the concerns raised by local residents the lord mayor pushed through a 24/7 off-leash park in Edmund Resch Reserve, which allows dogs to be off leash 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Making Resch Reserve a 24/7 dog park is inconsistent with other 24/7 parks in that it is a small enclosed area extremely close to residents. In my opinion and in the opinion of many surrounding residents this reserve is unsuitable for off-leash use 24 hours a day, seven days a week. My constituents tell me the council gave them a guarantee that they would have an option to comment on this change and that the council agreed to notify all residents via letterbox drop before the proposal went on display. Residents around Edmund Resch Reserve tell me that never happened. These residents are sick and tired of being ignored when they raise genuine complaints. I am not saying that the residents living in this area should be banned from walking their dogs altogether. In fact, I simply support the reinstatement of the off-leash hours from 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. As a dog owner, I realise the important role that pets play as companions. Moore Park, just over the footbridge and less than 50 metres away, is suitable for this use as it is already an off-leash park 24 hours a day. It certainly does not surprise me that, according to local residents, Clover Moore, who lives only two blocks from the park, occasionally walks her own dogs in Edmund Resch Reserve.

This comes down to commonsense. This park is utilised by people from all walks of life for all types of purposes. It makes sense to create rules that reflect that. A real solution needs to be reached, taking into consideration as many individual needs as possible. It is clear that Edmund Resch Reserve is unique from other parks in Sydney, and it should be treated as such. In my hand is a DVD that shows a pack of dogs chasing a mother, a father and a small child. It also demonstrates the loud noise that is created when 20 barking dogs are running around in a confined area. I am advised that this disc was delivered to the lord mayor's office some time ago. It seems to me that the lord mayor has not had an opportunity to view this DVD. Therefore, I am more than happy to personally deliver it to her office after the conclusion of my speech. Perhaps then she will listen to the concerns of local residents when they say enough is enough. Perhaps then she will enact a sensible policy for dogs in Edmund Resch Reserve.

### NORTH COAST FRUIT BAT COLONIES

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—Deputy Leader of The Nationals) [5.30 p.m.]: Although I have previously discussed in this House the problems associated with fruit bat colonies, the stage has now been reached at which solutions offered by councils and the Government to resolve this problem are totally unacceptable to the residents of the Coffs Harbour electorate. Fruit bats are known as grey-headed fruit bats or flying foxes, but however they are described, there are numerous colonies of them in the Coffs Harbour area and in Woolgoolga. In the *Daily Telegraph* on 25 June 2007, an article under the headline, "Like bats out of hell—Endangered creature swoops on park land", refers to a similar situation at Parramatta Park. The article describes the bat colonies as smelly and causing environmental problems by denuding vegetation. The article also states:

The Melbourne Botanic Garden spent \$3,000,000 relocating the bats that were causing havoc in the area.

As the parliamentary representative for Coffs Harbour, I have taken proposals to the local council and the Government to organise relocation of the bats. Currently there are between 10,000 and 50,000 bats colonising areas that are directly adjacent to residential areas. The stench and the dangers they pose to nearby residents are totally unacceptable.

Unfortunately in another newspaper published today, misinformation is being circulated which suggests that one of the diseases that has been identified as being carried by bats is not really contagious and people should not worry about it. Residents of Gundagai Street, Coffs Harbour, have been taken to hospital with mysterious viral diseases that have caused people to lose weight and suffer a whole range of ailments. I believe

that disease is caused by bat guano. The solution devised by the council plays right into the hands of the National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as the State Government because it is based on removing some of the undergrowth in the area. The four-stage plan is described as follows:

**"Stage One:** Removal of weeds and camphor laurels which are located nearest to the affected residences in Gundagai and Oriana Streets ...

**Stage 2:** Bat exclusion zone plan team – no higher than four metres, using appropriate species to prevent roosting. Buffering between camp core and bat exclusion zone to provide a minimal use zone ...

**Stage 3:** Vegetation modification, to provide the weed control in roost area. Roost tree planting – low-lying rainforest species. Work starts in 2008.

**Stage 4:** Flood plain plants, with additional core roost plant, buffer and exclusion zones. Work expected 2008 onwards ...

To reduce the awful smell people are advised to close windows and doors against prevailing winds, use household air fresheners and install air-conditioning.

In the fight against droppings residents can clean up the mess before it sets, remove clothes from the line before dusk, use a first flush or spillage system on rainwater tanks, and don't drink the water and install cleanable surfaces.

The situation is that grey-headed flying foxes have moved into the area. I want the Government to make a proper assessment about the number of grey-headed flying foxes and other species of bat in New South Wales. The North Coast has millions of bats. In Kempsey at night the sky almost blacks out when bats are airborne. The same situation occurs at Susan Island at Grafton and on Bellingen Island as well as other areas all along the coast. In the town of Bellingen bats have denuded vegetation on an island in the river. and the colony is still there. Bat colonies leave a filthy stinking mess that distresses residents. For the council to suggest that it is up to residents to spend money on insulating their houses, air-condition their homes, cover clothes lines and swimming pools and install first flush components on rainwater tanks is utterly unconscionable.

Residents have a right to live in their homes. As far as I am concerned, fruit bats are not an endangered species. A proper assessment would verify that there are tens of millions of fruit bats in the North Coast areas of this State. Surely it is reasonable to adopt the same approach as adopted by the Melbourne Botanic Garden and the Sydney Botanic Garden and move the bats on. Prior to 1998, there were no bat colonies in Coffs Harbour. They have increased and the colony has reached proportions that not only are totally unacceptable but also pose a health risk. Fruit bats carry the lissa virus and, according to Dr Chris Tidemann, the lissa virus is as near to rabies as it is possible to get. In other words, it is a rabies virus.

Narranga Public School has bats roosting in the school grounds and in properties that are adjacent to the school. The bats defecate all over the school's equipment. Young children are exposed to defecation by the bats as well as dead or injured bats on a daily basis. It is high time that the Government took a stance and provided assistance to the council to move the bat colonies on. The Government should do a proper assessment of the number of bats in New South Wales. If the numbers are excessive, they should be taken off the endangered species list. Last week a bill was introduced into this House that confirmed the listing of bats as an endangered species. That is a joke. The matter needs to be attended to immediately.

### ART FROM INSIDE EXHIBITION

**Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE** (Strathfield—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.35 p.m.]: I inform the House of the Art From Inside exhibition that was held recently in my electorate at the Australian Catholic University, Strathfield. This annual exhibition and competition is selected from works exhibited by inmates and former inmates who participate in the project run by the Prison Fellowship of Australia. Through educational programs in correctional centres, inmates are encouraged to develop their skills and express themselves through painting, drawing and applied art.

The theme for this year's exhibition, Where Love Meets Justice, was greatly contested and is a visual testament to the dedication of the Prison Fellowship of Australia and the positive impact that the project had on the inmates and former inmates. If we turn our thoughts to the themes of the exhibition, where love and justice meet, we begin to realise the importance of both love and justice and how these two concepts are absolutely fundamental to our wellbeing. It becomes apparent that for many of us our sense of both love and justice is nurtured within us from an early period in our lives and subsequently we feel a sense of warmth and safety. In a positive sense, we feel it when we are shown love and treated justly. In an interesting quote the white American slavery abolitionist, Harriet Elizabeth Beecher Stowe, once said:

If the artist dips their brush into their soul they paint their true nature into their pictures.

I believe that this exhibition provides inmates and former inmates with an opportunity to express what is the true nature of their soul. Through painting and drawing, art can help to heal the emotional and spiritual wounds of inmates and assist them in their efforts to accept justice. It is also beneficial in so far as it can provide a focus and interest for inmates and facilitate the often-difficult task of finding their place in society on release from correctional facilities. The fact that many former inmates continue to participate in the project underlines this statement, but more importantly it provides evidence that a valuable support mechanism available to inmates on release is being utilised. I have no doubt that this project is of great benefit to inmates, many of whom suffer from low self-esteem and low self-worth.

The benefits of this creative project to the wider public cannot be overlooked. It is a wonderful example of a socially inclusive project for a marginalised sub-group that sadly and tragically exists in our society. It leaves me in no doubt about the potential of projects such as this and about the role they have to play in reducing the rate of recidivism. I congratulate the Prison Fellowship of Australia on all its efforts in organising this very moving exhibition. In doing so, I acknowledge their courage and commitment to the work they do. I particularly thank Steven Nicholson, the Chair of Prison Fellowship of Australia; Michael Raj, the President of the Baulkham Hills Rotary Club, for sponsoring the event; Milton Shaw, the Chaplain at Cessnock Correctional Centre; Ian Minnis, executive director of the Prison Fellowship of New South Wales; Janet Siebols, a lecturer in visual arts at Australian Catholic University, who played a very big role in the exhibition.

Most importantly I thank the artists: for drawing, Dwayne Lancaster, Vu Pham, Thanit Jiankiat, Wilfredo Felipe and Vance Raeburn; for painting, Rahimullah Chekeri, Wilfredo Felipe, Bruce Moir, Rebekah Macdonald-Brown and David Cooper. In congratulating those artists in this Chamber I acknowledge their work and their willingness to use art to express themselves and bring about a positive change in their lives. I hope and pray that art can continue to be a catalyst for change, for both inmates and former inmates, and the inspiration provided by the Prison Fellowship of Australia will help them to lead more fulfilling lives.

I thank the Australian Catholic University for allowing the artists to use its beautiful gallery. I attended the opening a couple of years ago, when it was an old stable on the campus. It has been refurbished with great lighting. To allow the facility to be used for a project such as this captures the essence of the Australian Catholic University, which is in my electorate. The organisation, Prison Fellowship of Australia, is active in a lot of other projects. It provides the mechanism for gifts at Christmas for the children and families of prison inmates. It provides support at court and is involved in many other wonderful ventures. The organisation is always looking for more support and help. Perhaps as a result of me bringing this matter to the attention of the House, some members might find themselves able to assist the great work that the organisation does for those who, for whatever reason, have found themselves in correctional facilities. I commend the organisation to the attention of the House.

### INNER-CITY BUS SERVICES

**Ms CLOVER MOORE** (Sydney) [5.40 p.m.]: I call on the Government to improve inner-city bus services for Sydney's most densely populated area, where residents currently experience serious traffic congestion and air pollution, particularly as increasing private vehicle use is adding to greenhouse gas emissions. The 311 bus services were reduced following the 2001 Eastern Suburbs Bus Review from a 20-minute to 30-minute service and cut again in 2006 to a 45-minute service. In 2003 I worked with residents to stop State Transit Authority plans to remove the Elizabeth Bay loop. I have repeatedly asked the Minister for Transport to increase services and improve reliability, but the response of the State Transit Authority is that traffic congestion makes the service unreliable, and that services will not be increased until there are more passengers.

The State Transit Authority does not realise that people will continue to desert buses if they do not come on time or, worse still, they do not come at all. That leads to more congestion and less efficient buses, a vicious and frustrating cycle. One constituent waited for an hour in the rain for the 311 bus, her third experience in three weeks when 311 buses ran very late or were cancelled. It has taken months to get a current timetable at one bus stop on this route. I make regular representations on behalf of frustrated and angry constituents and table petitions about this bus service, and it is raised at every local community meeting. I have repeatedly asked for a review of the 311 bus service, including destination surveys, and for shuttle or feeder buses.

Inner-east residents say that the 324, 325 and 326 buses have deteriorated, that buses no longer run to timetable during peak travel times, and are often full when they arrive and do not stop. One constituent says that outbound buses are already full when they reach his stop at Martin Place during peak periods, and what used to

be a 10-minute bus trip now takes up to 50 minutes. In response to community pressure and my representations, the Government has responded with extra bus services on the 300 series routes and promised to supply bendy buses to carry more passengers. However, I regularly see groups—sometimes 20, sometimes 30, and I recently counted 40 people—waiting in Baptist and Crown streets bus stops in Redfern and Surry Hills for 300 series buses that arrived, but were already full.

A constituent told me that she depends on the 300 series buses to take her to her evening shift as a nurse, but she regularly has to catch a taxi to avoid being late. On one occasion she arrived 15 minutes early for the bus, which came 25 minutes late. She told me that the Transport Infoline did not respond to her complaints. The limited response to complaints has forced me to prepare "how to complain about late buses" information for constituents, a sad indictment of poor service levels. I have been pushing for years for the 352 and 355 bus hours to be extended into the evening and at weekends for travel across suburbs to get to hospitals, cinemas and education institutions. A recent email from a resident noted that night-time services on these routes would reduce traffic congestion for major events at the sporting stadia and Moore Park. Clearly, that is something we all want.

One 200 bus passenger told me that 50 regular passengers have formed a regular taxi-sharing group because they regularly have to use taxis due to the unreliable buses on that major cross-harbour peak hour route. Outside peak hours that service was cut from 30 minutes to one hour apart, making it harder for older people and those who rely on buses. Residents tell me that the 389 bus service is also regularly late, and they are forced to take taxis and add to traffic congestion. While many are pleased with the new 333 express pre-pay service, this has come at the cost of fewer 380 buses, which are important for people who live between the city and Bondi.

The Ultimo-Pyrmont peninsula has had dramatic increases in its residential population in recent years, yet bus services have been declining. The 441, 442 and 443 services now use the Anzac Bridge and inner-city residents have lost these services. The 501 services have been reduced on weekends, and an invalid pensioner told me about waiting at the Miller Street bus stop for 50 minutes for a bus to Town Hall. I have been asked by that group to meet with the Minister, and I have asked him to receive a delegation. The City of Sydney council does not have responsibility for public transport, but the council has put resources into this vital community service, with a free community bus service on Thursdays and Fridays linking Redfern, Waterloo and Glebe residents to essential services and amenities. I have asked council officers to investigate other routes that need shuttle bus services. Residents are tired of underfunded, badly maintained and poorly managed public transport. The New South Wales Government must increase bus services and provide public transport as a community service rather than a commercial enterprise.

### ULTRA CLEAN COAL PROJECT, CESSNOCK

**Mr KERRY HICKEY** (Cessnock) [5.45 p.m.]: I advise the House of the initiatives taken in the Cessnock electorate to help reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions across the world. To reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions the Ultra Clean Coal Project in Cessnock is able to wash coal, take the stone and the impurities out of coal, obtain the carbon content and briquette that carbon content, break down the carbon and blow it into the turbines, thus giving a much brighter spark or a much better burn with a lot fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. When I was Minister for Mineral Resources I was fortunate to visit Japan and meet with the Mitsubishi group, which studied the process in 2004. It is now testing that process.

That is great news for Cessnock. The test plant has been located in the area for the past three years and is now to be made larger. It will test burn the briquettes and produce power within the grid system. It is good to know that the Government Ministers are working in a constructive way. The plant has the potential to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 24 per cent to 27 per cent. Applying that process, once it is proven, to all the world's generators, will have a major impact on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Members who represent Sydney electorates talk about addressing climate change by reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, but they continually use the city transport systems. The impact of those CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on global climate change is immense.

The Fidel or White Mining Group, under John Langley, a great ambassador, is testing the CO<sub>2</sub> briquettes. It has put millions of dollars into this project each year and has worked tirelessly. Travis Duncan first came to see me when I was Minister for Mineral Resources about transforming the briquettes before there was any public pressure, before any talk of climate change, and before Coal21. The group should be congratulated and thanked on the hard work it has done. We will never avoid coal being a baseload for power stations. We need to find better ways of producing electricity using coal and the White Mining group is working hard to do just that. John Langley is working extremely hard to promoting the process.

The Minister for Lands allocated funding for this project, which will benefit not just Cessnock and New South Wales but also the world. Once this process is up and running and it is being utilised it will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 24 per cent or 27 per cent. That will go a long way towards reducing global warming and the heating of the earth. I spent up to a week with John Langley selling this proposal to the Mitsubishi group and saw it go from a small sample plant to a plant that is generating electricity for the grid. I know this is only the first step of many. I wish the company well and I hope that the project succeeds. It is a great news story. This group worked tirelessly on it and invested its own money. It had the foresight and vision and the project should be promoted positively. It goes to show that the coal industry is not a dirty industry; it is promoting itself in the long term. At the end of the day this is about ensuring that we have cheaper electricity for the benefit of all.

### TEACHER SUPPORT

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast) [5.50 p.m.]: In its recent budget the Government announced funding for the mentoring of new teachers employed by the Department of Education and Training. Whilst I acknowledge that announcement I wish to refer to two teachers who have been let down by the system and who are examples of how the Department of Education and Training and the Government do not support beginning or experienced teachers. The first example relates to a highly experienced teacher at Ulladulla High School, a respected mathematics teacher for more than 25 years who is teaching at the highest levels of this subject.

It is alleged that at 10.00 a.m. on 18 October 2006 during a mathematics lesson Michael Cvetkovic was neglectful in his duty of care to students when he allegedly failed to take reasonable action to address disruptive student behaviour which resulted in a physical assault in the classroom by one student on another. Since that incident the teacher has been removed from the classroom and placed on alternative duties, which essentially meant doing nothing while waiting for the outcome of an employee performance and conduct investigation. It was not until this year that the teacher was given an opportunity to respond to the allegations.

I have written to the Minister regarding the time taken to investigate this incident, and I have asked a question on notice in this place. Eight months have passed since the alleged incident and still there is no outcome to the investigation. The teacher is suffering considerable stress and humiliation as a result of the process and there is a lack of support for him by the Department of Education and Training. The class in which this incident occurred has been a cause for concern in the past due to students' extremely disruptive behaviour towards other teachers, one of whom was allegedly assaulted by a student in the class and, as a result, was on leave for some time. Mr Cvetkovic has been abused by students in this class and has referred the behaviour of the class to the principal and the head teacher.

I am of the opinion that this teacher has not been supported. It appears as though he has been victimised as a result of speaking out about the behaviour of this class, and the system, including its leadership and the school executive, has been unable to support him. I have asked for him to be reinstated, and I note the widespread support in the media today for him from former students and teachers alike. It should also be noted that whilst the teacher remains on alternative duties, more than 50 per cent of current mathematics staff at Ulladulla High School are not trained to teach mathematics. Michael Cvetkovic is tutoring and mentoring these teachers in his own time since they are struggling to cope with a syllabus for which they are not trained.

The second issue relates to the annulment of a beginning teacher of Aboriginal descent after only 18 months of teaching. This beginning teacher received two degrees from Wollongong University and is qualified to teach infants and primary school. Marion Worthy, the young teacher in question, was appointed to Moss Vale Public School in 2005 and, rather than being allocated a class as was the usual practice, was given the responsibility of teaching art to a number of classes, apparently due to her aboriginality. It appears that while at Moss Vale Public School this young teacher was given limited mentoring as a beginning teacher, was then transferred to East Nowra Public School and was allocated to the preschool for which she was not trained. Again, apparently this step was taken due to her Aboriginality and the fact that the preschool class comprised mostly Aboriginal students. In my opinion the young teacher was not provided with appropriate mentoring and was not assisted with issues of assault against her in the classroom. This young teacher said:

I was disadvantaged from the commencement of my employment at Moss Vale as I was not allocated a teaching position but given relief from face to face teaching load, teaching art to 12 separate Year 1 to Year 4 classes, teaching more than 350 students.

I do not believe that DET guidelines for beginning teachers of the Institute of Teachers requirements, were properly followed.

I was not provided with adequate support at p2 at Wayeela Cooina Preschool. During my time there I was assaulted 19 times being kicked, spat in the face and scratched until my forehead and leg bled.

Apparently, after reporting these incidents she was told that this sort of thing happened all the time. That was the extent of her mentoring and assistance. I request that the process involving Miss Marion Worthy be re-examined in light of her lengthy response to the allegations against her, and that in future beginning teachers are afforded appropriate and relevant assistance and mentoring in challenging situations, which is what Ms Worthy faced at both the schools at which she began.

I also request the Minister immediately to reinstate Mr Michael Cvetkovic to his former position at Ulladulla High School due to his expertise in the past, and the overwhelming response he received in the press today and from the local community, especially past students who are now in positions of leadership throughout the country. They have written and expressed concern about how he has been treated by the Department of Education and Training and also within the school. I request that he be reinstated. This lengthy process, which has already taken eight months to resolve, is shameful and disgraceful. This teacher, who supposedly is on alternative duties, has been sitting in a classroom with no equipment and is doing nothing. As a result he has suffered extreme stress and humiliation.

### **MARRICKVILLE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE**

#### **ROSEMOUNT GOOD SHEPHERD YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [5.55 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to two community organisations in my electorate of Marrickville that do fantastic work providing services and support to children and young people and families. On Saturday I attended an event organised by Marrickville Youth Resource Centre to showcase the services it provides to young people in the Marrickville area and to celebrate Refugee Week 2007. I have enormous admiration for the work of the Marrickville Youth Resource Centre and its director, Julie Robinson. The Marrickville Youth Resource Centre has been providing support and services to people in the Marrickville centre for over 20 years.

It provides recreation, education, cultural and arts programs to young people between the ages of 12 and 24. The centre shows great commitment to young people and creativity and resourcefulness in the way it provides its services. The highlight of Saturday's event was the launch of the new music studio. Marrickville Youth Resource Centre received funding from HBOS Australia Foundation for the studio. That funding has been used to buy new equipment that will enable young people to record their own music. This will provide a valuable and much-needed resource for young people in the Marrickville area. We know the importance of music in young people's lives. The studio will enable young people creatively to express their views and to tell their stories. It will build the self-esteem of young people and provide valuable opportunities for them to learn new skills.

The open day was a great success with food, displays and performances, including the Pacific Islander group performance, a Tai Kwon Do demonstration, and traditional dancing. The event on Saturday was part of a number of events that occurred across Australia as part of Refugee Week. The theme for Refugee Week is the Voices of Young Refugees. Marrickville Youth Resource Centre has a strong commitment to working with young refugees. Refugee Week is an opportunity to acknowledge the amazing contribution that refugees make to Australia and to draw attention to their needs and concerns. Many events have been held in Marrickville as part of Refugee Week, including an all nations indoor soccer competition, a refugee awareness and cultural event, and a mural launch.

Many refugees who have settled in Australia have made Marrickville their home. Often these refugees' experiences have been traumatic. Rarely do they have the chance to make plans for their departure or to say farewell to family and friends. They often flee with only the clothes on their backs and they do not know where they are going. They often have little chance to prepare themselves for life in their new country and frequently suffer severe trauma. I pay tribute to these people who come to Australia and, in exceedingly difficult circumstances, make a home for themselves and their children.

Refugee Week is a chance to highlight the circumstances of refugees and to reconfirm our commitment to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. I congratulate Marrickville Youth Resource Centre on its successful open day and for all it has done for young people in Marrickville. Another community organisation in my electorate that supports children, young people and families is the Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services. I recently visited its premises at Marrickville Road to meet with Marcia Cunningham, director of the centre, Sister Noeline White, chairperson of the board, and other staff members. I was very impressed with the breadth of services provided by Rosemount, its willingness to support some of the

most marginalised young people, and the staff's dedication and commitment to the work that they do and evidence-based practice.

Under the extremely competent directorship of Marcia Cunningham, Rosemount provides adolescent and family counselling, a sexual assault counselling service, a day program for young people aged between 15 and 17 years who are having difficulty at school, and a study support centre for young people who left school prior to gaining their school certificate. I met some of the young people on the day program when I visited the centre, and they were most enthusiastic about its benefits. The program runs five days a week for 10 weeks, in line with the school term. It includes daily workshops covering topics such as assertiveness and self-esteem, confidence and resilience building, assistance with returning to the school system, and work preparation skills, numeracy and literacy workshops.

The program aims to re-engage young people with education. Many of the young people who are referred to the program have families with a range of complex issues, which can include drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues and family violence. The teacher on the day program faces the job of engaging students in learning when many have lost their confidence to succeed academically. Programs like this are so important because young people who are disengaged from education are much more likely to have poor job opportunities, poor health outcomes and a lesser quality of life than other young people. If we can pick up these young people at this stage and re-engage them with education and training we are offering them the chance to make a successful transition to adulthood. It is not easy work but, importantly, Rosemount recognises the need for follow-up support, which is provided by the aftercare worker. The Marrickville electorate is very fortunate to have the Marrickville Youth Resource Centre and the Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service supporting our community. I pay tribute to both these services.

#### **BARWON ELECTORATE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE MEDALS AWARDS**

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon) [6.00 p.m.]: Last Sunday I was honoured to attend the presentation of State Emergency Service long service medals to members from Moree, Boggabilla and Garah. I acknowledge that the Minister for Emergency Services is in the Chamber. For more than 50 years the State Emergency Service has been an integral part of our community, providing invaluable coordination and support in times of emergency, particularly during flood, fire, rescues and more recently community events. The camaraderie within the service is outstanding, as is its commitment to serve the community in times of need. Not only is this group an iconic element within our local community but also it is an excellent role model for both young and old when it comes to community service. Over time, I have been impressed by the service's commitment to training. The members are highly skilled in their work, train on a regular basis and have certainly gained the respect and confidence of our community.

Following the presentation the last of the Moree crew arrived home from the Hunter after the devastating floods. A number of crews had been commissioned to help out in the Hunter, with the final crew returning after 10 days of clearing trees and helping residents resettle in their homes. The much-acclaimed newly formed Aboriginal State Emergency Service unit members were also part of this crew. A sign of how well these volunteers work together is reflected in the fact that the unit now comes under the one banner of Moree State Emergency Service.

As we live on a flood plain it has always been recognised that we can expect emergencies. Towns such as Garah, Boggabilla, Boomi, Mungindi and Moree are regularly inundated with floodwater. The State Emergency Service, which grew out of the Civil Service after the 1955 floods, came early to Moree, with the first controller, Bill Tait, appointed in 1957. Over time, a flood warning radio network was developed in the Gwydir Valley, comprising a series of gauges linked by radio to the regional headquarters in Moree. During the 1971, 1974 and 1976 floods this network proved invaluable as State Emergency Service workers sought to evacuate more than 400 residents, who were temporarily accommodated at the showground. I might add that the 1976 flood went through our house at about two foot.

Unit members work closely with other service-based groups, such as the Salvation Army, in times of need and emergency. Over the past 30 years State Emergency Service members have been called more and more not only to help police with car accident support but also during times of storm and tempest, helping to secure residences, businesses, farms and livestock. The service's expanded role has meant further growth in equipment, ranging from boats, motor vehicles and rescue equipment. The profile of the State Emergency Service across the north-west has been recognised within government, the local community and beyond, with funds raised and allocated going towards the significant expansion of headquarters in each of our centres. All levels of

government must maintain their support for this vital service, as recently demonstrated by the Hunter experience. As the Premier acknowledged in Parliament, if left to the Government and paid service personnel the response in the Hunter would have been neither affordable nor adequate.

I congratulate all State Emergency Service volunteers and staff. The recipients of 10 years service medals were Chris Clark from Boggabilla; David Denyer from Garah; Mary Mather from Garah; Robyn Peters from Garah; Ashton Campbell from Moree; Rob and Ruth Armstrong from Moree; Lola Hurst from Moree; Steve Martin from Moree; and Susie O'Brien from Moree. A 35 years service medal was awarded to Allan McLachlan from Moree. The 40 years service medal was awarded to "Mr SES", Des Hurst, from Moree. The 50 years service medal was awarded to Elmer Knobel from Moree, who is a founding member. He served originally in the Civil Service, and has seen the unit transform into the current-day State Emergency Service. Elmer Knobel is one of the three remaining founding members in New South Wales. Congratulations to you all: our community is both proud and thankful for your outstanding contribution and service to our communities.

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie—Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Water Utilities) [6.05 p.m.]: I join the member for Barwon in congratulating State Emergency Service members and Rural Fire Service [RFS] volunteers throughout the State, but particularly the locals in his patch. They have done an absolutely outstanding job in recent weeks in the disaster zone in the Hunter and on the Central Coast. I had the chance to meet a number of volunteers at the Rural Fire Service annual conference at Mudgee, where I took the opportunity to congratulate members who had come from far and wide to help with the recovery effort. As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have said, our community and Australia as a whole are better for having people who are prepared to give their time and assistance during recovery operations. Each time they swing into action it is an absolutely tremendous example of Australian heroism. They enjoy the support of both the Government and the Opposition. On behalf of the people of New South Wales, I congratulate the State Emergency Service members in the electorate of the member for Barwon who recently received long service medals.

#### **LIONESSE CLUB OF CAMDEN CHARITY MOTOR SHOW AND FUN DAY**

**Mr GEOFF CORRIGAN** (Camden) [6.06 p.m.]: I inform the House about the wonderful work that the Lioness Club of Camden does in my electorate. In May this year the Camden Lionesses celebrated their thirtieth anniversary. I congratulate them on 30 years of tireless dedication to the community. However, this afternoon I want to talk about the Lioness Club of Camden Charity Car Show and Fun Day that was held at Camden showground on Sunday 3 June 2007. This is the thirteenth year that the car show has been held. It was particularly popular this year because the oval was covered in green grass instead of dust—people who show their cars do not like dust.

The yearly car show is the Lioness club's main fundraiser, with all proceeds going to the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter Service. This year's show attracted more than 300 entries ranging over numerous categories. The judges had a difficult job as every car on show looked magnificent. I speak with some authority on that point, as I was one of the judges. I must highlight the fact that the show raised \$17,000, which was handed to the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter Service last week. Raising that much money is hard work and, although she would not want me to single her out, I congratulate Maria Campton, who starts visiting sponsors two to three months before the event.

At the risk of boring the House, I will name the sponsors who supported this wonderful event. The gold sponsors are J. C. Diesel Tune, Camden Lioness Club, Camden Lions Club and Camden Automatics. The silver sponsors are Funnells Electrical and Macarthur Lions. The bronze sponsors are Hayters Paving and Timber, Crown Hotel Motel, Bryans Furniture One, Elite Autos, Eagle Automotive Centre, Merino Tavern, Narellan Smash Repairs, Camden Exhaust Centre, 4 x 4 Megastore, Geoff Corrigan M. P., Leagues the Way, and Storage King Penrith. Other sponsors included Tildsley Butchers, B. H. Automotive, Looking Class, Col's Clip Joint, Adcar Auto, Maria A. Salon, Home Quarters, Camden Country Fresh, Road Runner Models, Flash Signs, Camden Show Society, Argyle Street Fine Jewellery and Campbelltown Trophys.

Although it is not possible to mention everyone who helped on the day, I note that Camden, Macarthur and Tahmoor Lions clubs helped with the barbecues, parking and general organisation. Helpers on the day included Steve Leonards, Nick Brill, Steve Hyland, Gary Pracey, Keith Maddock, Peter Richardson, Donna Campton, Judy Fletcher, Bob Beveridge and Bruno Sirol. I congratulate last year's president, Iris Crane, and the newly elected president, Beverly Croucher, for the hard work that they and all the Lionesses put into the car

show. Before concluding I should give a brief rundown on the Lioness Club. When I was preparing for this speech today, one of my colleagues asked me what Lioness clubs are. The organisation's website notes:

Lioness Clubs are a vital part of the world's largest community service organisation – Lions Club International, which today has more than 1.4 million members in 186 countries.

Lions Clubs International was founded in 1917, while the first Lioness Club was formed in 1975 in Mount Pleasant, North Carolina USA. The first Lioness Club in Australia commenced in 1976.

So about a year after the Lioness Club was formed in North Carolina, the Lioness Club of Camden was formed. The website also notes:

In Australia there are about 150 Lioness Clubs with 2500 members who enjoy helping people in their community who are less fortunate than themselves.

At the same time the Lioness enjoy a bond of friendship that extends not only within Australia but throughout the world.

The website goes on to say who can join the organisation, that membership is open to both men and women, and so on. They do a fantastic job. Not only did they raise money at the car show; they raise money throughout the year. I always see them at the Camden Golf Day or any time there are fundraising activities going on. The Lions and Lionesses work tremendously well, as I am sure they do in the electorates of other members. I congratulate all those involved in the Camden Lioness car show, particularly all those who worked so hard to make it a success. I wish I had got all their names, but that did prove difficult. People who would like to see photographs of the car show can go to [www.streetcommodores.com.au](http://www.streetcommodores.com.au), the online magazine. If they look up the Camden Lioness car show they will see all the photographs of those wonderful cars.

#### **NORTH SHORE ELECTORATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [6.11 p.m.]: I refer to traffic and transport issues in my electorate, as I do so often because they really are the major concerns for my constituents. As all members know, the Government frankly had a very flawed plan—which I am grateful that it has backed away from—to widen The Spit Bridge. That project would have thrown away about \$59 million. Unfortunately, that money has not been reallocated to provide any solution for what is the major problem, not only for the people of my electorate but for others traversing it to and from the northern beaches peninsula. Traffic jams through the electorate are as bad as ever, and they grow worse by the day.

The NRMA identifies The Spit and Military roads as among the worst in the city area. In fact, a review by all traffic reporters included The Spit and Military roads as the most dangerous and worst for traffic jams. At times, traffic is at a standstill—not just in peak times mid-week, but equally bad on weekends. One of the solutions lies in improving public transport. I also want to spend time talking about public transport in the area. I refer, in particular, to the need to upgrade the bus fleet to be more modern in respect of ticketing and technology to give users better information about when buses are arriving and so on. The technology is available to provide this sort of information. It has been trialled but not continued with. I call on the Government to get with the modern day and age and to invest money in these transport services—to get people out of their cars and into public transport.

I turn to ferry services. For some reason, when I mention ferries many Labor members go into fits of laughter, as if ferries are not a legitimate form of public transport. Ferries keep many cars off our roads. Sadly, the Government is making an obvious effort to downgrade ferry services. I recently wrote to the Minister for Transport seeking information about what is happening, in particular, with ferries that go to Taronga wharf. I often stand on the wharf and talk to constituents. Often I see 40 or 50 people arrive to catch the 7.30 a.m. or 8.00 a.m. ferry, but they just do not turn up. The people then scramble to try to get on a bus back to the main road to find their way into the city. That is very short-sighted, because those people will give up—maybe that is the Government's intention—and start driving.

I am very concerned about the state of ferry wharves in the electorate. Those who watched the news of the terrible storms on the long weekend know that the wharf at Cremorne Point dropped into the ocean. I went down there the next day and for the next couple of mornings to talk to commuters. I wanted to see whether buses were being used to provide them with alternative transport. Everyone was laughing their heads off at a sign which read:

We wish to advice [sic.] that the Cremorne Point wharf has received substantial storm damage resulting in it being unusable.

Repairs are immediately being undertaken and we anticipate this will take in the vicinity of 7 to 10 days.

We thank you for your understanding and patience.

The residents of my electorate are very understanding and they have a great deal of patience, but they do not think the wharf will be fixed any time soon. They will not hold their breath. That sign was obviously a farce, a joke. It did not treat commuters seriously and did not treat this very serious issue of public transport seriously. Finally, I refer to trains. I have ongoing correspondence from constituents who live in the Waverton-Wollstonecraft area who are going through hell because their lives are interrupted by digitalised voice announcements at stations from early in the morning until late at night, such as, "Stand clear, doors closing." I have received about 150 emails from constituents whose sleep is disrupted. It is a bad health issue. I ask the Government to resolve it.

## **LOWER HUNTER GREEN CORRIDOR**

### **LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE POLICING**

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [6.16 p.m.]: I wish to speak about a number of matters. As a new Independent member of this House I acknowledge that I have a lot to learn, but I have been rather surprised at the amount of time the Government spends on proposing motions of self-congratulation, particularly post budget. It seems to me that this is not useful to the people we represent, but given time I may form another view. There are times the Government deserves acknowledgement and gratitude for its actions, and I wish to mention a number of those that have a bearing on the Lake Macquarie electorate and the region.

I have recently acknowledged the excellent response of the Government to the Queen's Birthday weekend storm that caused so much destruction and personal loss in the Hunter and Central Coast. I understand that disaster recovery is proceeding well, and this is largely due to the genuine commitment of the Government, from the Premier down, and government agency staff to work with our local community including non-government organisations, councils and community groups.

I thank the Hon. David Campbell, the Minister for Police, for our recent meeting regarding police resources in the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command and for the subsequent action to alleviate the policing crisis in Lake Macquarie. The addition of 20 general duties officers and three detectives will ease the burden on the local area command. It provides a valuable step along the path to equitable provision of staff and facilities. In so saying, I am not seeking to take any credit for influencing this decision. I take the decision at face value as recognition of the claims and representations made by local police through their association.

I also thank the Hon. Phil Koperberg, Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water, in anticipation of the forthcoming dedication of 13,800 hectares of land in the lower Hunter green corridor. On Sunday 1 July 2007 he will bring this land under the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of the reserve system. This conservation corridor is a great example of how a government can achieve progress on a community vision. From its beginning in 2003, a coalition of 50 environment groups have sought protection of a green belt circling Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

The goal is to retain habitat for a diverse range of species and to protect ecological connections from Stockton Bight, across the Hunter estuary, along the Sugarloaf and Watagan ranges and connecting to western and southern Lake Macquarie. The Lower Hunter Green Corridor Coalition has a broad objective underpinned by a series of realistic and logical goals that have been readily understood and supported by the regional community and government. The coalition's success is significant because much of the land going into the reserve system is located on the edge of expanding residential areas of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

The Government, through the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and the Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan, is attempting to achieve a balance between development and conservation. It is essential that the views of the community influence and direct the way the plans deliver the future of a region. The land to be dedicated this Sunday will be a major step, but in the words of a recent campaign slogan, there is still more to do. For example, in the electorate of Lake Macquarie the long-term future of a proposed open-cut mining site at Awaba has yet to be resolved. Open space connections from the spine of the green corridor to the lake need a clear mechanism of protection and management. It may be that this land, or significant components of it, will need to be acquired to ensure its preservation for ecological purposes in perpetuity. There is still more to do and plenty of opportunity for criticism and, dare I say, self-praise. However, I am pleased to acknowledge the Government when appropriate and look forward to seeing the Government achieve more.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I remind the member for Lake Macquarie that in future his private member's statements must relate to matters affecting his electorate.

**Private members' statements noted.**

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **Matter of Public Importance**

**Discussion resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr PETER DRAPER** (Tamworth) [6.21 p.m.]: Evidence I examined suggests that if Australia matched the annual international growth rate of photovoltaic installation, by 2020 every home in Australia could be powered by zero emission energy. As I said in my earlier contribution, the solar energy industry in Australia recently released a blueprint showing that if we commenced in 2010 with 685 megawatts of photovoltaic capacity, which is a quarter of what Germany will install, with a 20 per cent yearly growth, by 2020 Australia could install more than 22,000 megawatts of solar panels. This would equate to a large three-kilowatt photovoltaic system on every residence in Australia. The industry points out that 22,000 megawatts of clean solar energy is equivalent to 11 large coal power stations running at full capacity. That is a tangible, yet achievable, goal to set, but it requires cooperation and involvement from all tiers of Government.

In developing the use of solar technology, we are fortunate that Germany, California and Japan have borne the considerable cost of creating volume markets for these panels. As I pointed out previously, it is anticipated that by 2010 solar panels are projected to fall in price by as much as 40 per cent. Most people would be willing to consider the technology if it were to become affordable, and now with initiatives from State and Federal governments we are putting solar power in reach of more householders. For several years I have lobbied to extend the water tank rebate to country residents, so I was pleased to support the recent bill to provide funds so this initiative will become reality. Country people will now also be able to access rebates of up to \$1,500 for residents who connect their tanks to toilets and washing machines. Tamworth has received good rainfall over the past few years, but, as is the case in many areas across the State, the rain just has not fallen in the catchment.

Thankfully the latest falls have seen levels in Chaffey Dam rise to 21 per cent, but a report released earlier today by Minister Koperberg shows that the Peel system has sufficient supply to meet only 60 per cent of Tamworth's water needs, 50 per cent of the local stock and domestic needs, and only 50 per cent of high security needs. There is insufficient supply to meet the needs of general supply irrigators. In my opinion this data presents a compelling case to double the capacity of this dam. By encouraging people to collect their own water to flush toilets and operate washing machines the rebate scheme will reduce reliance on town water and save significant amounts of this resource across the State. Through the insulation and hot water system rebates, we will also see reductions to greenhouse gas emissions and also electricity bills. Individuals can make a tangible contribution to addressing these challenges, but they need the support of all levels of government to make it possible. As I have stated previously, we have the way; all we need now is the will.

**Ms CLOVER MOORE** (Sydney) [6.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for contributing to the debate. I thank the member for Balmain, the Minister Assisting the Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water (Environment) and a fellow city councillor, and I thank the members for Goulburn and Tamworth. Clearly, this is the most important matter we will deal with in the House. There is no more important matter than the future of our planet. All speakers agreed that it is the greatest challenge we face and that we need to take urgent action. Speakers outlined various actions that are needed. The fact that 50 per cent of the world's population now lives in urban centres—in Australia it is 80 per cent—is underlining the increasingly important role of cities in shaping the future of our planet and addressing climate change. The great cities of the twenty-first century will be economically competitive while being environmentally sustainable. This was the message of the leaders of world cities representing 40 million people who met recently in New York. For a city to have a successful green economy it is clear that all levels of government and business must collaborate.

I believe that the community is ready to work for a greener economy and that it expects action from every level of government. On the evening of 31 March more than two million residents of Sydney and 2,000 of the biggest corporations in Australia switched off their lights and appliances for an hour as part of the Earth Hour project in a joint stand against global warming. This project is something I took to New York. Next March it will be go international. It is a way that people can say they will take a stand and take action in their lives to address climate change. I believe there is a very important leadership role for governments to play by creating a

market for, and supporting investment in, green technologies. We need a systematic coordinated approach to make the changes that the climate change crisis requires. Local government must work with Federal and State governments to achieve this. We need a planned, sustainable, integrated transport system across our cities to provide for all our needs, while reflecting long-term sustainability goals.

There are great opportunities to address climate change and to shift to a new green economy. Even the failure to maintain and invest in old public infrastructure in the past couple of decades in New South Wales means that there is now an opportunity to invest in a new green approach and introduce new infrastructure to replace the old infrastructure. New infrastructure must be based on green renewable technologies and industries. The environmental issues we face do not mean that we have to renounce our modern way of life to combat climate change. Rather, we have been provided with an opportunity to redevelop and re-engineer our cities and towns as cleaner, greener, more sustainable and welcoming places. This is what other cities around the world are doing. While much of our urban infrastructure is ageing and overdue for renewal, this makes it right for replacement by new, greener, more sustainable alternatives.

Future growth and economic development are compatible with measures to address global warming. Business is only too aware that a deteriorating physical environment is not conducive to growth. Business leaders are shifting to more sustainable and renewable technologies that present opportunities for a new, greener economy. New South Wales can have an efficient, sustainable, vibrant green economy. The fundamental requirements are for energy- and water-efficient commercial and residential buildings, and efficient and reliable alternatives for transport. I call on the Federal and State governments to work with local government, business and the community to radically reduce Sydney's greenhouse gas emissions by investing in, and promoting, green infrastructure.

**Discussion concluded.**

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

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

#### **CRIMES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (MOBILE PHONES IN PLACES OF DETENTION) BILL 2007**

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

**Debate resumed from 7 June 2007.**

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping) [6.28 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition, which does not oppose the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Mobile Phones in Places of Detention) Bill 2007. It appears that there have been continuing incidents of mobile phones being used in correctional centres in New South Wales. Recently mobile phones have been used to intimidate correctional centre staff and witnesses, as well as to organise escapes and criminal activity outside the prison. I understand that murders have been organised using mobile phones. They are often found in common areas in correctional centres, which makes it difficult to determine to whom the phone belongs, thus making it difficult to prove possession under the Act.

It is a bit difficult to understand how use could be proved. Use would be more difficult to prove than possession unless a call were intercepted, the voice is able to be identified, the phone is put back in its cubby hole and the SIM card is taken out. It is hard to see why possession would be insufficient, but the Government wants to add that, and the Opposition of course wants to discourage prisoners from making covert phone calls and arranging to commit further crimes.

The bill will amend current arrangements to expand the offence to allow for the prosecution of individuals who have used the phone by inserting the term "use or possess" in relevant sections. I would have thought that the legislation would be more effective if the Government had sought to make the penalty cumulative. When prisoners are convicted of escape, a cumulative sentence is added to their current term of imprisonment as a deterrent. I submit that the same justification could be used for a cumulative sentence to be imposed for the use or possession of mobile phones in a jail. A cumulative sentence would be a potentially discouraging factor. It is difficult to understand how possession does not capture use. Possession is defined in various Acts as someone having actual or de facto control or custody of a prohibited item. It is a legal question whether someone is borrowing or has actual possession, but there may be strong arguments to suggest that someone borrowing is in possession.

One other matter to which I wish to draw attention is what I consider to be a cheap shot last Sunday by the Attorney General before he left for New Zealand to attend the Ministers for Corrective Services conference. He attacked the Federal Government for prisoners accessing mobile phones and said that the Federal Government had not expedited the availability of a facility for jamming mobile phone calls made from jails. He mentioned in his statement that at the conference he was attending in New Zealand he would urge the Federal Government to take action to approve laboratory tests of devices that are capable of jamming prisoners' calls.

The Attorney General would well know that the delays have been largely caused by difficulties with corporations that are carriers of mobile phone services. The devices are prohibited imports and the technology has not altogether proved, in places such as Israel and Italy, to be capable of being used with absolute success. The difficulty with jamming is that it cannot be confined to the prison but may affect people who live in the neighbourhood or near a prison. Why should the legitimate mobile phone calls of residents be jammed? Why should prison officials who work in offices near or around jails and who need mobile phones—for example, to be able to alert other authorities when there is a riot or a fire in the jail or some other emergency—have their phone calls jammed? The jamming technology would need to be very sophisticated so that it would home in only on prisoners and nobody else. Generally it is illegal to take mobile phones into prisons. If corrective services authorities were provided with sufficient funds, they could ensure that more thorough searches take place.

The big problem is not so much mobile phones because by some means they have been brought into prisons—either by having been thrown over the prison wall, having been secreted in goods that have been delivered to prisoners, or having been slipped to prisoners during a contact visit—but SIM cards are much more difficult to locate because they are very small, as anyone who has a mobile phone would know. Nevertheless I am not convinced that corrective services officers have sufficient resources to be able to thoroughly search visitors. The Attorney General referred to maximum security prisons and one would think that there would be exhaustive searching of visitors taking place in those jails. The Australian Communications and Media Authority is about to authorise laboratory trials, and the Attorney General would be well aware of that.

The trials will ensure that normally banned sophisticated jamming devices are able to block out legitimate mobile phone calls without interfering with legitimate phone calls and other necessary communications. Surely the Attorney General would accept that it is essential to ensure a quick response time in emergencies and to maintain the ability of police officers to be in communication with each other. Communications between prison authorities and police forces should not be jammed. Generally prison officers use two-way radios. A matter that must be examined by laboratory trials that will be conducted between the Australian Federal Police and Telstra is whether two-way radio communication used by prison authorities will be jammed by the devices. Steps should be taken to ensure that that does not occur. The Attorney General should accept that residents who live in homes near prisons are entitled to maintain full access to the telecommunications system without interference or jamming.

A number of prisons throughout the State are not far from residences. The Goulburn maximum security facility is one I can think of and Long Bay jail is another. Some of the other establishments such as those in Silverwater and Parklea are surrounded by residential areas where residents' mobile phones could be jammed if a device were implemented. This is not a simple matter of blaming the Federal Government in a pre-election stunt. I reiterate that while the Opposition does not oppose the legislation, we make the point that there are other considerations that should not be trivialised. I note that the Attorney General left the country before this legislation was dealt with, despite the legislation having been first read earlier this month. At a time when the Opposition was responding to the legislation, I would have thought that the Attorney General should have been present to shepherd the legislation through the Parliament—if he was truly concerned.

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.36 p.m.], in reply: I thank the honourable member for Epping for his contribution to the debate. Of course the Attorney General is concerned about the use of mobile phones in prisons—that is the reason the legislation has been introduced. The possession and use of mobile phones by prison inmates has been identified by correctional authorities as a growing problem. Mobile phones remain a significant issue in the management of correctional centres because they represent a serious threat to the security, good order and discipline of the prison or correctional centre.

Inmates can use a mobile phone to plot escapes, organise criminal activity and intimidate correctional staff and their families. Indeed, one inmate was convicted of conspiring to murder a prosecution witness by using a mobile phone from behind bars. That is why this amending legislation will strengthen ongoing efforts to crack down on the use of mobile phones by inmates and will contribute to the good order and security of places

of detention. The member for Epping discussed the issue of proof in relation to use. There are a number of ways in which that can be achieved. One way is by eliciting evidence from witnesses who have been contacted by the use of the mobile phone that is in the prison. Witnesses may include a wife, a girlfriend, a family member or some other person.

The SIM card records are also very important in an exercise involving the detection and use of a mobile phone or part of a mobile phone. The SIM card may reveal that a number of inmates have used the phone, but unless the phone is found in their possession, charges cannot be brought against them. That is particularly frustrating when SIM card information indicates an inmate used the phone but that inmate cannot be charged because the mobile phone itself was not found on his or her person. In the Local Court magistrates have a discretion to make sentences cumulative, and that may be appropriate in some circumstances.

The member for Epping discussed the use of jammers. Over several years the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services has been seeking permission from the Federal Government to use mobile phone jamming devices in correctional centres. I am advised that negotiations have been ongoing. Telstra has been active in its efforts to find a solution to the problem of mobile phones in correctional centres. Telstra has worked very closely with Corrective Services and has identified new technology such as semi-intelligent mobile phone jammers that could be deployed in maximum security correctional centres, subject to an exemption being issued by the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

After ongoing discussions with the Department of Corrective Services, Telstra sought approval from Senator Helen Coonan, the Federal Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and from the Australian Communications and Media Authority to implement a pilot program of mobile phone jamming devices. Following satisfactory laboratory tests it is intended that mobile phone jamming devices will be trialled at a pilot correctional centre site. There is also a national working party on emerging technology and the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services is represented on that working party. It was established by the National Corrective Services Administrator's Conference, which meets regularly. Mobile phone jamming technology is under consideration by that forum. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

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

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

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 6.42 p.m. The House resumed at 7.30 p.m.]*

#### **APPROPRIATION BILL 2007**

#### **APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2007**

#### **APPROPRIATION (SPECIAL OFFICES) BILL 2007**

#### **PAYROLL TAX BILL 2007**

#### **STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET) BILL 2007**

#### **CHILD PROTECTION (OFFENDERS REGISTRATION) AMENDMENT (SUSPENDED SENTENCES) BILL 2007**

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

#### **RENEWABLE ENERGY (NEW SOUTH WALES) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Philip Koperberg.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG** (Blue Mountains—Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water) [7.33 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Renewable Energy (New South Wales) Bill establishes mandatory renewable energy targets for electricity consumed in New South Wales. As honourable members would be aware, the Government has committed to reducing New South Wales greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2025 and by 60 per cent by 2050. Increased consumption of renewable energy has the capacity to make a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is now widely accepted that deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions are required to address climate change. New South Wales is leading the nation in responding to climate change. It was New South Wales that introduced the voluntary GreenPower program—now a national program. New South Wales also implemented one of the first, and highly effective, mandatory carbon abatement schemes—the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme. New South Wales has also led the national debate on the introduction of a National Emissions Trading Scheme and the recently announced Climate Change Fund, worth more than \$300 million.

The Government is already working towards legislating greenhouse targets and recognises that a range of policy initiatives must be pursued if these targets are to be met. Policies already implemented include the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme, the Building Sustainability Index, Energy Savings Action Plans and Energy Savings Funds, GreenPower and a new Climate Change Fund. In 2006 GreenPower purchases in New South Wales were about 290 gigawatt hours from around 130,000 customers. Nationally there are more than 500,000 GreenPower customers. At present, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scheme supports natural gas-powered generation, generation from waste methane, efficiency gains from existing generators and end-use energy efficiency and fuel switching. Those technologies will help the Government meet its greenhouse targets in the medium term.

In the longer term, renewable energy will make a significant contribution to greenhouse gas reductions. The bill assists the development of a robust renewable energy industry that has the ability to fulfil that role. This bill will require that 10 per cent of electricity consumed in New South Wales by 2010 and 15 per cent by 2020 will have to be supplied by renewable energy, with the 15 per cent level maintained to 2030. This means that by 2020, the New South Wales mandatory renewable energy target will stimulate an additional 7,250 gigawatt hours of new renewable energy, driving up to \$3.5 billion of investment in the renewable industry across the national electricity market.

Over the life of the scheme, renewable energy generation is expected to total 121,000 gigawatt hours, which will result in greenhouse gas emission savings of about 115 million tonnes. The New South Wales mandatory renewable energy target aims to increase the percentage of electricity consumed in New South Wales from renewable energy sources. It establishes a market-based scheme that is closely aligned to the Victorian mandatory renewable energy target scheme. The bill is accompanied by a Supporting Information Paper, which provides further detail and explanation of the bill. The New South Wales Government invites comments on the bill and the Supporting Information Paper. The closing date for submissions is Friday 27 July 2007. The Supporting Information Paper is available on the Department of Water and Energy's website at [www.dwe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dwe.nsw.gov.au). I encourage everyone with an interest in renewable energy to take the opportunity to review the detailed information provided about the bill in the Supporting Information Paper.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Pru Goward and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

### **NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE AMENDMENT (LEASING AND LICENSING) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Philip Koperberg.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr PHILIP KOPERBERG** (Blue Mountains—Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water) [7.41 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Leasing and Licensing) Bill makes minor amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to remove anomalies that unnecessarily restrict leasing and licensing in parks. National parks are established to conserve areas with outstanding or significant natural and cultural heritage values. Our park system also has an equally important role in fostering public appreciation and enjoyment of those heritage values. It follows that regulating visitor access and activities in parks in an appropriate way is a vital feature of good park management. The State Plan recognises that there are many recreational and cultural benefits to be enjoyed in our State's parks. Indeed, the State Plan has as one of its environmental targets "increasing the number of visits to State Government parks and reserves by 20 per cent by 2016".

A further aim of the State Plan is to increase tourism as part of an overall strategy to promote business investment in New South Wales. A consistent framework for approving access to and use of parks is essential if the Government is to meet these important priorities. The National Parks and Wildlife Act establishes seven categories of park, which together comprise our State's park system, which are national parks, historic sites, state conservation areas, regional parks, karst conservation reserves, Aboriginal areas and nature reserves. Each different category of park is managed according to specific principles. Those principles guide what activities are permitted within those areas.

As an example, nature reserves are areas that predominantly are in a natural condition. Their main purpose is to conserve nature. Scientific research is also an important management principle. For these reasons visitation in nature reserves is carefully managed. Commercial activities are not encouraged. On the other hand, the management principles for regional parks emphasise providing recreational opportunities. Where this is compatible with its natural and cultural values, a regional park can accommodate a high number of visitors and an array of commercial visitor services. The management principles for the different reserve categories guide how visitors can enjoy and use the various categories of parks.

In addition, the leasing and licensing provisions provide a framework for managing commercial activities in parks. Commercial activities, including commercial guided tours, are permitted in parks for the enjoyment of visitors and to promote public understanding and appreciation of park values. The types of commercial operations allowed vary between parks but, as examples, the sorts of activities that are regulated by leases and licences include filming, food sales and organised adventure activities such as cycling, skiing and canoeing. However, the powers to issue licences and franchises for commercial activities are different across the different park categories. There are express powers in the Act that allow the issue of licences and franchises relating to national parks and historic sites. However, there are no such powers in the Act in relation to regional parks, state conservation areas, karst conservation reserves or Aboriginal areas.

This is an anomalous situation. It creates some uncertainty as to whether the Act was intended specifically to limit the grant of licences and franchises for commercial activities only to national parks and historic sites. There are no policy reasons why the commercial licensing and franchising provisions should differ between national parks, historic sites, regional parks, state conservation areas, karst conservation reserves or Aboriginal areas. The current differences appear to have arisen because some new park categories have been added to the Act since it was first proclaimed in 1974. That has created the present anomaly—commercial activities are authorised in national parks and historic sites but may not be authorised in other park categories that specifically emphasise recreation and sustainable visitor use as management principles.

These amendments will resolve this anomaly in the Act. They will specifically allow the Director General of the Department of Environment and Climate Change to issue licences to carry on a trade, business or occupation within state conservation areas, regional parks, karst conservation reserves and Aboriginal areas. The Minister will also be able to grant a franchise for the sale of goods and services in these parks. As well, the bill provides that, where the written consent of the director general has been given, state conservation area trusts and regional park trusts may grant licences to carry on a trade, business or occupation in the applicable park area. This arrangement is consistent with powers that state conservation area trusts and regional park trusts already have to grant licences to use and occupy land, again with the consent of the director general.

Standardisation of these provisions will help streamline the operation of commercial tourism and other commercial services in parks. Of course, any licensed activities will still need to be consistent both with the management principles under the Act and with each individual park's plan of management. Therefore, it is not proposed that the amendments will apply to nature reserves. This is because the management principles for this reserve category do not allow for the provision of significant visitor services.

There is a further anomaly in the leasing and licensing regime that is currently in place. This relates to lands that are reserved under part 4A of the Act. Part 4A allows the ownership of certain public lands, including existing parks, to be vested in Aboriginal land councils and then leased back to the Government on condition that those lands are managed as a park under the Act. Part 4A parks are under the control and management of the Director General of the Department of Environment and Climate Change until the board of management is appointed and takes on this role. Boards of management of co-managed part 4A parks have a majority of Aboriginal membership.

The issue to be addressed is that, unlike most other park categories, leases and licences to use or occupy land cannot be granted in state conservation areas and regional parks that are reserved and managed under part 4A. For example, licences and leases to operate kiosks, restaurants, on-park accommodation or telecommunication towers cannot be issued. Yet all other reserve categories under the Act, with the exception of Aboriginal areas, can be the subject of licences or leases to use or occupy land. State conservation areas and regional parks are specifically intended to provide opportunities for recreation and enjoyment by members of the public. Many of these parks depend heavily on the use of commercial services by visitors. However, as the Act now stands, existing leasing and licensing operations in state conservation areas and regional parks cannot be renewed, and new leasing and licensing arrangements cannot be entered into once these parks are reserved and managed under part 4A of the Act.

For example, the Government recently finalised historic negotiations for the hand back of land at Stockton Bight, between Newcastle and Port Stephens, to the Worimi traditional owners. Under part 4A the Worimi National Park, the Worimi Regional Park and the Worimi State Conservation Area have been leased back to the Government and will be managed by a board of management, once appointed. Under the current legislation, leasing and licensing operations in the Worimi National Park will continue, but leasing and licensing operations in the Worimi Regional Park and Worimi State Conservation Area cannot be renewed. Nor can new leases or licences be entered into. This situation is clearly inconsistent with the management principles for the Worimi Regional Park and Worimi State Conservation Area. It is also quite anomalous that these leasing and licensing arrangements can operate in some park categories reserved under part 4A but not in others. The bill inserts a new section to allow the director general to issue leases and licences to occupy or use land in State conservation areas and regional parks that are reserved and managed under part 4A of the Act.

Finally, the bill makes a statute law revision amendment to correct incorrect references to "proclamations" under division 4 of part 4A of the Act. The amendments will give certainty by specifically allowing commercial licensing and the granting of franchises in Aboriginal areas, regional parks, State conservation areas and karst conservation reserves—but not nature reserves—provided that in each case the activities are consistent with the park's plan of management. They will facilitate tourism and business opportunities in rural and regional areas, including for Aboriginal people, and ensure that there is a consistent approach to commercial licensing across the park system. They will clarify that leases and licences to occupy or use land may be granted in relation to Aboriginal lands reserved as State conservation areas and regional parks under part 4A of the National Parks and Wildlife Act. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Pru Goward and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

#### **STANDARD TIME AMENDMENT (DAYLIGHT SAVING) BILL 2007**

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

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.52 p.m.], on behalf of Mr David Campbell: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Standard Time (Daylight Saving) Bill changes the Standard Time Act 1987 to extend the period of daylight saving each year. Following a period of discussion and consultation, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have reached an agreement on harmonising and extending daylight savings arrangements from April 2008. I understand that New South Wales is the first to introduce legislation giving effect to that agreement. Harmonisation of daylight savings arrangements among

these south-eastern jurisdictions will reduce confusion about when daylight saving starts and finishes around Australia.

Presently, daylight saving in New South Wales runs from the last Sunday of October each year to the last Sunday in March. Under the new arrangements, daylight saving time will commence in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia on the first Sunday of October each year and finish on the first Sunday in April—a full six months of the year. In effect, the bill will extend the period of daylight saving by three weeks in spring, at the beginning of daylight saving, and by one week in autumn, at the end. This is good news as it means more daylight leisure hours after work and school, giving people extra time to indulge in outdoor activities at the end of their working or school day.

The new arrangements will be phased in, and 2007 will remain unaffected by the changes. In 2008, however, there will be an extra week of daylight savings at the tail end of the 2007-08 daylight saving period. Daylight saving will end on the first Sunday of April—6 April 2008—for the first time. For the 2008-09 period daylight saving time will last for a full six months, commencing on the first Sunday in October 2008 and finishing on the first Sunday in April 2009. The commencement of new times in 2008 will help businesses and families prepare to take advantage of the changes.

At present start and finish dates for daylight saving in New South Wales, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia are aligned. Daylight saving in Tasmania and New Zealand commences earlier: on the first Sunday in October each year. Western Australia introduced daylight saving for the first time in 2006 for a three-year trial period. A referendum will be held in 2009 at the end of the trial to determine whether Western Australia will keep daylight saving and align its start and finish dates with south-eastern Australia. Harmonisation will provide significant benefits to business around Australia by reducing the regulatory burden and giving greater certainty.

Extra daylight hours may also provide new opportunities for retail, hospitality, sport and tourism businesses. There will be more time for shopping, beach going, sightseeing and sport, generating new opportunities and business for these sectors. Extended daylight saving will also allow more time for family activities outside the house. The extra hour of sunlight towards the end of the day, when many people are awake, also helps the environment through a decreased need for electric lighting. There will be more time for people to enjoy recreational activities, especially outdoor activities. The modern Australian lifestyle means that there are limited opportunities to exercise, and obesity rates are increasing. The extension of daylight saving time will provide more time after work to exercise outdoors and contribute to the greater health and wellbeing of people generally. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Pru Goward and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

### **Financial Year 2007-08**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr PAUL GIBSON** (Blacktown) [7.56 p.m.]: Last Tuesday Michael Costa brought down his second budget as Treasurer of New South Wales. The Premier described the budget as New South Wales being "back in black", and the figures support that comment. The budget forecasts that economic growth in New South Wales will rise to 2.5 per cent in 2007-08, which is an increase from 1.5 per cent this financial year and 1.4 per cent in 2005-06. Last year the Treasurer, Michael Costa, predicted that there would be a \$696 million deficit in 2006-07. That did not happen. The Government has instead turned it into a \$444 million surplus. The Treasurer allocated \$960 million from this year's budget to pay off a debt accrued in the construction of the Chatswood to Epping rail line.

The Government expects total revenue of \$45 billion in 2007-08, which is about \$500 million more than last year. The Government will spend a record \$44.6 billion this financial year. Health is the biggest expenditure category, totalling \$12.5 billion. It is followed by Education and Training at \$10.5 billion, Public Transport and Roads at \$5.7 billion, Police and Justice at \$4.3 billion, Community and Disability Services at a record \$3.3 billion, and Environment and Natural Resources at \$2.3 billion. As the Treasurer said, State Government capital expenditure will increase by 28 per cent to \$12.5 billion next financial year, and total

\$50 billion between now and 2010-11. Total State sector debt will increase from 4.8 per cent of gross State product to 9.3 per cent by 2011, which of course will help to fund the record capital works program that has been announced. Everyone, from Standard and Poor's to small business, has accepted this budget as a very creditable budget that will maintain the momentum of the State and allow us to retain our position as the powerhouse of the Australian economy.

I note that Kevin McDonald, Chief Executive of the New South Wales Business Chamber, said the Government's approach is sound and well considered; the focus is on fast-tracking major infrastructure projects that will improve the economic capacity of New South Wales. This position is most unlike the seven budgets brought down by the Coalition Government, which had seven years of deficits. These so-called good managers of finance lost this State's triple-A credit rating. Labor, when it took over the Treasury benches in this State, found a \$12 billion shortfall. In a very short time we have picked up that debt, paid it off, got back the State's triple-A credit rating, and kept it. Not only that, in the meantime we have built and paid for the greatest Olympic Games the world has witnessed. I say this in all sincerity. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Look around this great State today and see all the major undertakings, whether Darling Harbour, the Opera House or the Harbour Bridge. Who built them? Labor State governments. So too with the Cross City Tunnel. In years to come people will say what a great piece of infrastructure that is.

Unfortunately, recent figures show that my electorate of Blacktown is one of Sydney's highest bankruptcy areas. Insolvencies in Blacktown have nearly doubled, from 384 in 1999-2000 to 764 in 2005-06. There was an overall rise of 83 per cent in bankruptcies in Western Sydney. Outer Western Sydney was also a hot spot with 524 personal insolvencies recorded in 2005-06, up 75 per cent over five years. That has nothing to do with the State Government's performance, but everything to do with the performance of the Federal Government—the Government that told us that interest rates would never rise. We have had six rises since that statement was made.

Of course, that has meant struggling families in places such as Blacktown have been unable to retain their homes and have virtually been put back out on the street. That has been compounded by high petrol prices and another matter spoken about of late, the grasp that Woolworths and Coles have over prices of groceries and so on. What has the Federal Government decided? It will pass the matter over to the consumer watchdog. "We are going to have a look at that", the Prime Minister said. And so he should. But the alarm bells ring when he wants it looked at just a few months before a Federal election. I suppose it is better late than never. There are many records in this budget.

I am getting back to Blacktown now. The budget allocates a record \$12.5 billion for Health. The Government, through this budget, is keeping the promise it made during the election. Some promises will be kept over the term of the Government—next year and the year after. Before the election the Government promised an almost \$2 million upgrade of the Blacktown Hospital's psychiatric emergency care service—and that is what we have in the budget. The money is in the budget to cover that. The facility will be completed by September this year; work on it has already started.

Access to specialist, acute mental health assessment and care will be substantially improved through this upgrade. The Iemma Government's investment will expand the emergency department to include two new interview rooms and additional purpose-built beds at Bungarabee House—the hospital's acute mental health unit. These services are badly needed. The budget allocates an additional \$555,000 this year for Blacktown Hospital MRI services. We have promised this for a long time. Some credit goes to the Federal Government, because before you can get an MRI machine you must get a licence. Who provides that? The Federal Government—not the money, not the \$4.5 million to put the machine in the hospital, but the licence.

I had a look at the licences issued by the Federal Government for MRI machines. Do members know where 70 per cent of them have gone? Not to the public hospitals, but to private hospitals right across this nation. Blacktown was lucky enough to get one. The MRI machine, worth \$4.5 million, was actually delivered to the hospital and early last Friday week it was put on a crane and taken up to level three, where part of the wall had been removed. The MRI is being installed at Blacktown Hospital as we speak. That is another promise made and kept by the Government.

Education has been allocated \$10.5 billion in the budget, another record. From that, Blacktown has done very well. Marayong Public School has been waiting for many years—including the seven years that the Coalition were in government—for a school hall. In those seven years it was first on the list to get a school hall. That did not happen. I am pleased to say that good things come to those who wait. We in Western Sydney are

fairly resilient. Eventually Marayong Public School has its hall. It is being constructed as we speak. It consists of a main hall space, canteen, general assistant's rooms, bulk store, a chair storeroom, boys and girls toilets, access toilets and a covered outdoor learning area. This will be a tremendous asset for that part of Western Sydney.

I have mentioned the record \$10.5 billion budget for Education, but there is a downside. The contrast is not of a matter within the responsibility of the Government; it is again a matter for the Federal Government. I said a little bit about this in the House yesterday. The Federal Government's action is occurring on the watch of Louise Markus, the Federal member for Greenway. What are they doing in this working-class area of Blacktown, with one of the highest populations in this nation, with a population of 300,000 people? They are going to close the university campus at Nirimba. That is to the shame of Coalition members in this place.

The Federal Government has tried to close the campus from day one. Originally, this university was to be built at Doonside. But the powers that be at the time decided Doonside was not quite elite enough, so they decided to build it on six campuses. One of those was at Blacktown, at Nirimba. From day one the Federal Government set out to make it fail. Attendances are decreasing; there is no doubt about that. But the same courses are being offered at Blacktown, Penrith and Parramatta—which are quite new facilities. How much money has the Federal Government spent at Nirimba? Not a zack. The students who go to Nirimba will tell you they do not feel they are going to a university. The teachers will tell you it is not like teaching at a university, because not one zack has been spent on it.

**Mr John Williams:** What are you doing about it?

**Mr PAUL GIBSON:** It's a Federal Government responsibility. There has been no publicity about this. People living half a kilometre away did not even know that there was a university campus there; there is no publicity, no advertising, no push for the kids in Western Sydney to have an opportunity for a future provided by a working-class university. What will the elitist Federal Government do? It will close down this education facility. The people of Blacktown will never forgive them for that. Nor will they forgive Louise Markus, because it is to be closed down on her watch. She should hang her head in shame.

I note from the local paper last week that she is going to do something about it. Like all good Liberal members, she is going to do something about it—she is going to take up a petition! Does she think that will make the Federal Government change its mind overnight? Where was she when the decisions were being made to close the campus in 2009? When the Rudd Federal government is elected later this year, she will not have to worry about a petition, because that university will remain open. A new hall for Walters Road Public School is not in the budget this year, but it will be built during the term of this Government.

**Mr John Williams:** Four years!

**Mr PAUL GIBSON:** That is right. There will be upgrades of toilets at Evans High School and an upgrade of kitchens at Blacktown Boys High School. Doonside High School and Doonside Public School will join the Priority Action Skills [PAS] Program, which helps to keep students from disadvantaged backgrounds interested in engaging in school. We are helping disadvantaged kids in Western Sydney who live in low socio-economic areas. But those opposite and the Federal Government are closing down the university, which will mean that working-class people cannot afford to get an education. It is like the old days when the hierarchy used to argue that we should not have libraries because no-one wanted the working class to be educated. We wanted to keep them downtrodden. The Government will do all it can to make sure that does not happen.

Through the Priority Action Skills Program schools will receive \$525,000 in the next two years as part of the \$16 million program to give young people in the Blacktown electorate a greater chance of achieving their educational potential. Without education you have nothing. You cannot take education away from the poorer sector of the community. Politically it is absolute suicide and morally it is totally wrong. The budget will provide \$250,000 to Family Development Services Incorporated to improve services for families with children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Again, we are helping the disadvantaged people of Western Sydney, which is something those opposite could learn from.

People would be shocked to see how many grandparents are bringing up little kids. They have brought up their own families successfully—three and four kids—but now, because mum and dad have died, shot through or whatever, grandparents are left with the kids. They are trying to bring up a second family, but they cannot cope. One grandmother who has a three-year-old and a two-year-old cannot cope. Without the funding,

schemes and services the State Government is providing, these people would be on the rack. Family Development Services Incorporated will provide families with the skills they need to cope, and provide extra support for the brothers and sisters of these children through Sib Shops, which gives siblings the chance to share their experiences with other brothers and sisters who are facing the same issues. The Federal Government could learn from what we have done.

A new specialised rescue vehicle will be delivered to the New South Wales Fire Brigades Blacktown fire station at a cost of \$487,000, which is an investment in the safety of local residents, visitors and our firefighters. This year a further \$5 million will be invested in supplying new public housing and upgrading existing public housing in the Blacktown electorate, which is terribly important. The Iemma Government will fund key capital works programs worth \$50 billion in the four years from 2007-08. The Federal budget has allocated a mammoth \$5 billion to infrastructure right across Australia. It is credible, and I think members would acknowledge that. But over the 10-year State Infrastructure Strategy the New South Wales Government will spend a record \$12.5 billion, which is \$34 million a day compared to the lousy \$5 billion the Federal Government has allocated right across Australia.

The budget allocation for roads in the Blacktown electorate is \$12.9 million, which includes \$6,000 for road safety, \$1.7 million for road network maintenance, \$5.2 million for road network development and \$6 million for traffic and transport. Some \$5.2 million has been allocated for the North West Transitway link from Blacktown to Parklea, \$4.1 million for the Blacktown corridor bus priority treatment on Richmond Road, Quakers Hill Parkway and Knox Road, \$1.5 million for the Blacktown to Parramatta corridor, \$173,000 for infrastructure maintenance council grants, \$152,000 for traffic facility council grants and \$6,000 for local government road safety. Investigations are being conducted on the pinch point corridors identified in the Urban Transport Statement on roads including Blacktown Road, Main Street, Great Western Highway, Prospect Highway, Reservoir Road and Richmond Road. The Government has committed \$4 million in 2007-08 on planning for 21 pinch point corridors in Sydney.

The Blacktown electorate will receive just under \$20 million in the coming 12 months for capital works and maintenance in the Transport portfolio. Blacktown has probably the best-kept secret in Australia: Narraginy reserve. Many thousands and thousands of people use it annually for picnics, sporting events, weddings and wedding receptions. Over the years Blacktown council has spent \$13.4 million on operating expenditure and \$7.6 million on capital works, which is more than \$21 million. The State Government is considering what it should do with the reserve. Many years ago there was talk that it would be given to Blacktown Council for a peppercorn rent, probably \$1, because the locals had done such a good job with it. The proposal fell by the wayside.

The Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor, is again considering it and I am hopeful that the people of Blacktown, Blacktown City Council and the ratepayers will receive good news from the Minister fairly soon telling them that the reserve, on which the council has spent more than \$21 million updating it and restoring it, will be given to the people of Blacktown and the ratepayers to look after. The budget highlights the great difference in philosophy between the Coalition Government and our Government. It could not be starker. I return to the proposed closure of a university in a working-class area—not snobsville—that is home to 300,000 people. The Federal Coalition did everything it could to force it to close. The Federal Coalition transferred courses to Parramatta and Penrith so that it would fail. Any student who had a look at the three campuses would naturally go to Parramatta or Penrith because the Nirimba campus was not like a university. It was never meant to be because the powers that be did not want a university in a working-class area like Blacktown. The people of Blacktown deserve a university. The people of Blacktown should have a university. The Federal Government should hang its head in shame if it tries to take it off them.

**Mr John Williams:** Point of order: I seek to move a motion that Gibbo should be a Minister, instead of those other boring—

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

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [8.16 p.m.]: After that last effort, I sometimes wonder whether the Government should not have that flag hanging in another spot so that its members can see what State they are in. A disaster was narrowly averted this morning. A commuter driving to work along Cormorant Drive, Kooragang Island, had the road beneath him collapse after a water main burst nearby. A telegraph pole fell onto his car, nearly trapping him. The water rose around him. I imagine that he would have been terrified but, luckily, he survived. This road is a death trap—an accident waiting to happen.

Upgrades have been continually stalled and, according to the 2007-08 budget papers, the Tourle Street Bridge upgrade was underfunded by \$1.5 million last year, falling well short of projected spending to keep to the upgrade timetable. This is a crucial arterial road for Port Stephens. It takes workers to Kooragang Island, the heart of Hunter coal exports, and it is the main route for Port Stephens commuters travelling to Newcastle. As I speak the road is closed, the bridge is closed, Kooragang Island is isolated from Newcastle, and traffic is detouring 30 kilometres and using the already overloaded Hexham bridge.

The Hunter Water Corporation's 13-year timetable for water infrastructure enhancement blew out by \$37 million in the last year. The Government is allocating \$2 billion for a desalination plant because it has not kept up with water supply infrastructure. The member for Mount Druitt gave the figures earlier today. Sydney's need for water is growing at 2,709 connections per month, but this Government has done nothing. How does the Government plan to power this \$2 billion white elephant? Where is its commitment to climate change? Is it a coincidence that former Premier Carr talked about nuclear power and desalination just before he retired to New Zealand? The Government has allocated \$4.7 million to Port Stephens to pipe water from Grahamstown Dam to the Central Coast—35 million litres a day going from the Lower Hunter water supply to the Central Coast. Talk about a bandaid solution!

**Mr Phillip Costa:** We're sending it back at the moment.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** Not for long. These may seem like numbers on a page, but to the people of Port Stephens they translate to life-threatening failures of regional infrastructure and inconvenience when they travel to work. The people of Port Stephens are disillusioned, which is why they swung so sharply away from the Government in the last election, not just because of failing regional infrastructure but also because of health care and policing. This Government should be condemned for its arrogant assertion that the Hunter region has been adequately serviced with health care resources in this 2007-08 budget. In my electorate of Port Stephens, not only has the Government denied any funding, any planning, or any further resources for the embattled Tomaree Community Hospital, it has not even lived up to its centrepiece commitment to Port Stephens in the election campaign: the construction of a new Nelson Bay Ambulance Station.

This comes hot on the heels of the denial of much-needed renal services funding to not only Port Stephens but the entire Hunter region. The Tomaree Community Hospital, which once was the Nelson Bay Polyclinic, for years has lacked resources. In 2005 the then Minister for Health, Mr Hatzistergos, saw fit to change its name, but little else. This is a hospital in name only. The Ambulance Service does not even class it as a hospital for the purposes of patient transfers, meaning local residents incur further costs when inevitably they need to be transported for more than 50 kilometres to obtain treatment for the more serious conditions. When pressed for his Government's position on this facility, which is run by the State and is a State responsibility, the Premier had the gall to blame this dire situation on the Federal Government.

The Government continues to pass the buck on health care in Port Stephens and seems unaware of its constitutional responsibility to provide appropriately funded health facilities. Nelson Bay is a growing area. Over the summer, its population swells with an influx of tourists. The Government is endangering their lives and the lives of the resident population by refusing to fund this vital piece of health infrastructure. Only this morning we were told that Port Stephens is a hot spot for type 2 diabetes. The Government has supposedly committed \$300 million to after-hours general practice services, but has not mentioned if even one dollar of that will go to the Tomaree. Not only has the Government failed to fund any upgrade or provision of further service to this hospital, it has also gone back on its word with regard to the Nelson Bay Ambulance Station.

During the election campaign the Government promised \$1.5 million to build a new ambulance station at Nelson Bay. Labor's candidate for Port Stephens—and it is a little-known fact that this gentleman is an ambulance officer who had tried hard, with bipartisan support, to obtain the Government's commitment—lobbied for a new facility. As a Port Stephens councillor and frequent visitor, I know that the current location of the Nelson Bay ambulance station is inappropriate. Yet with the handing down of this budget, only \$170,000 has been committed to Nelson Bay ambulance services, and the money has to be shared with the Deniliquin station. There will be no new facility, and no word about whether any of the 11 new ambulance officers will be sent there. It is a resounding backflip and a sad reflection on that Labor candidate, who is still an ambulance officer and is now the preselected Labor candidate for the Federal electorate of Paterson. He is still a Labor candidate, yet still there is no ambulance station for Nelson Bay. It is an embarrassing result for him, but a shocking blow to the people of Nelson Bay.

Before the Treasurer came to this place to deliver his budget, the Government made quite a fuss regarding its commitment of \$14 million for renal services in New South Wales, yet not one dollar was allocated

to the Hunter. It took community condemnation for the Government to belatedly announce \$500,000 for upgraded dialysis machines for three Hunter hospitals. Whilst metropolitan regions received \$14 million, the Hunter received enough for only half a dozen new dialysis machines. A resident of Nelson Bay will still have to drive to Newcastle to undergo dialysis. I put it to the House that the Government's commitment to the Hunter's health care needs is farcical at best, and outright fraud at worst. The Government's suggestion that its commitment to the Hunter should be commended is a joke. A quick perusal of the budget infrastructure statement reveals that the Hunter region's health care is mentioned on three occasions. On one of those occasions, in relation to the Nelson Bay ambulance station, the funding is to be shared with another site.

Maitland and Newcastle, which are two large regional centres, have received funding for community health care. The Hunter Valley community is not just Maitland and Newcastle; it is Cessnock, Raymond Terrace and Wallsend, and it even comprises areas that are represented by Labor Party members, who have missed out as well. The Sydney-centric Government has failed the Hunter and Port Stephens. If the Labor Government is trying to punish the people of Port Stephens for daring not to vote for them in the recent State election, it would do well to remember that it is also failing the 19,301 people who put their faith in it. For those 68 extra voters who put their faith in me, the snub comes as no surprise. Labor's failure extends not only to health care, but to police as well. The Premier must surely know the provision of effective health care and appropriate resources for local police officers are the two most important issues in Port Stephens. Yet in those two crucial portfolios only \$870,000 dollars has been earmarked for capital expenditure over the next four years. That is less money than is earned by one of his Ministers in the four-year period of budget roll-outs.

The Port Stephens police station has been allocated \$700,000 for continued upgrades. That is an unimpressive figure, bearing in mind that the new station will need \$12 million by 2010 and that in the last 12 months only \$80,000 has been spent. To compound the community's confusion, the people of Port Stephens do not even know where this police station will be built. There is no Port Stephens police station. There is a Raymond Terrace police station in Raymond Terrace, and it was this station that I and other concerned community members have been vocal about. The Government has a reputation in Port Stephens for changing names and not much else. We have seen an example of this in relation to the Tomaree Community Hospital. In the meantime, people are left wondering where their new police station will be, when will it be finished, how much will it cost, and where the new officers will come from to staff it. No answers have been given. The Treasurer has been evasive during his rare Hunter radio interviews regarding the budget. During the election campaign I made a commitment to fight for this police station, and I will continue to do so. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition committed \$25 million to this station in the campaign.

I have faith in our police, and I believe that if we give the police the resources and legislative powers they need, crime statistics will fall. I do not believe we are doing this at the moment. The police need more funds and more judicial support. The Government has been promising an upgrade for eight years, but the first \$80,000 for this project was allocated only last year. I would like nothing more than to go to the 2011 election saying to the people of Port Stephens, "It's done, your police station is finished", but I am not optimistic—and who would be? Eight years and \$780,000 later, for all intents and purposes, the Raymond Terrace police station is still a fibro shack. I call upon the Government in the strongest possible terms to make immediate provision for the upgrade of the station as a matter of urgency. To do otherwise is a gross neglect of the safety and wellbeing of not just Raymond Terrace and Port Stephens residents, but our many visitors as well.

The Pacific Highway is a significant piece of national infrastructure and forms the western boundary for much of the Port Stephens electorate. The upgrading of this important road is ongoing with freeway conditions from Hexham to just north of the Myall Way intersection, yet this intersection, which is the only trafficable entry point to the villages of Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest, Pindimar and Bungwahl, is a deathtrap. Despite a commitment of \$10 million by the Prime Minister, the Government will not contribute the \$6 million difference to make this intersection safe. When interstate B-doubles driving at 100 kilometres per hour on a freeway combine with grey Nomads at night and in the rain, everyone can foresee the disaster—everyone, that is, except successive New South Wales Labor Ministers for Roads. Is it any wonder that even residents in the Labor candidate's own community ignored him when he told them they did not need an overpass?

This budget should have been a unique opportunity for the Government to repair its damaged relations with the people of Port Stephens, the people who turned their backs on the Labor Party in the 2007 State election. Instead, this Government has failed. It has ignored the needs of this growing region. For that, it should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON** (East Hills) [8.30 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on the New South Wales budget for 2007-08. This is the ninth time I have had the privilege of addressing the House on a State Labor budget,

which is, once again, a budget in surplus that delivers on our election commitments to the people of New South Wales and, most importantly, increases spending to record figures in key services and infrastructure works in New South Wales. Last year it was predicted that the budget would be in deficit. The Coalition had hoped the budget for 2007-08 would be in the red for the first time since Labor inherited massive State debts from the Coalition in 1995. The diligence of Treasurer Michael Costa, MLC, and the determination of the Government under the leadership of Premier Iemma to maintain the State's triple-A credit rating means that this State is indeed open for business, heading in the right direction, on the right track and delivering services not cuts. The Government is becoming, once again, the driving sector of the Australian national economy. That has been achieved without sacking 29,000—

[*Interruption*]

The member for Murray-Darling should note that that figure was later revised down to 20,000, but at first it was 29,000. He was not here at that time, but the record shows that the figure was originally 29,000. That reduction would have been to essential front-line police, teachers, nurses, health and transport employees, Roads and Traffic Authority workers and the like, that the Coalition promised—

**Mr John Williams:** Point of order: The member is misleading the House. This is a story we hear from all members.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order.

[*Interruption*]

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murray-Darling will have a chance to contribute to the debate later. He should not do so through interjections or by taking frivolous points of order.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** The member should read the standing orders. A point of order is a point of order. His chance to make a speech will come later and then we will interrupt him. He should not make a silly mistake. The Coalition originally planned to sack 29,000 workers, and then thought that that figure sounded a bit tough and could be rounded to 30,000, so it reduced it to 20,000. However, the electorate rejected that. This afternoon we found out that the Coalition is getting used to being in Opposition. Members on this side of the House and those watching intently in their offices will recall that last year the Government introduced a bill to provide that our promises would be totally assessed by Treasury. The member for Vaucluse said that the Coalition would release its costings for the election a week or two before the election.

What happened? The current Leader of the Opposition came out with the "my dog ate my homework" excuse, or "the computer did not work" excuse, or "the photocopier did not work" excuse. He could not produce the Coalition's figures before the election. However, last week the Leader of the Opposition spoke for 20 minutes, which is the time I will speak for today. He claimed it was not much of a budget and that he could have done a better one. The test was not whether he could deliver a great speech in reply to the budget speech. I notice the member for Terrigal having a bit of a laugh. All the Leader of the Opposition had to do was make a speech before the 24 March election and convince the electorate that he had a good economic strategy.

However, the Coalition did not have a strategy and the Leader of the Opposition did not have a program. The Coalition refused to have its economic plans tested, although earlier it said that it would. The Coalition broke its promise. Bad move! The New South Wales economy is soundly based over the whole range of business activities and investment opportunities. Unlike other States, New South Wales is not dependent on the vagaries of the present mining and resources boom, which, if it ends, will leave the budgets of those States in tatters. The New South Wales budget is in surplus in the amount of \$376 million for 2007-08, with forward surpluses to average over \$500 million for the next four years. The 2006-07 budget result was a surplus of \$444 million, an improvement of \$941 million since the December half-yearly budget review. This is the twelfth consecutive budget surplus delivered by the Labor Government since 1995. Imagine how much more could be done in this State if we were not continually ripped off by the robber barons, Peter Costello and John Howard, directing that tax revenue raised in New South Wales go to other States.

[*Interruption*]

Mr Deputy-Speaker, in a moment I will call on you to eject the member for Murray-Darling. He should not be allowed to sit there and continually interrupt my speech. If he continues, I will have to seek an extension of time.

[*Interruption*]

The member for Murray-Darling cannot just sit there and continue to chatter away during my speech. If he has a good interjection, he should make it. If he has not, he should shut up.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! I have already asked the member for Murray-Darling to comply with the standing orders. He will have a chance to contribute to the debate later. He should remain silent and allow the member for East Hills to continue.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** As everyone in this Chamber knows Peter Costello and John Howard redirected \$3 billion of GST revenue raised in New South Wales. That goes to Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and South Australia. I do not suggest that we should not look after the poorer States, particularly Tasmania, and South Australia could do with some looking after. However, Queensland and Western Australia are doing nicely through the mining boom, thank you very much. Let us remember that the Coalition presently holds 21 or 22 of the 28 Federal seats in Queensland and needs to continue to pork-barrel those electorates for its political gain.

As I said, I genuinely believe that we need to look after the less populous and smaller States, but we are certainly being ripped off. Members on this side of the House continually say to members of the Opposition who complain that we are not doing enough that they should write to John Howard. They should acknowledge that they are not supporting New South Wales. All they are doing is propping up a government in Canberra that will not be in office in six months time. Even if New South Wales got \$2 billion of the \$3 billion in GST funding that is being ripped off by Canberra we would be going well. More schools and police stations could be built, police officers could have more equipment, we could have more nurses, hospital beds and mental health initiatives, and more Aboriginal health initiatives could be undertaken.

Despite all that, New South Wales is delivering the largest new infrastructure budget in the State's history. The New South Wales budget was positively received by the markets, business organisations and even the usual anti-Labor suspects who dominate the radio airwaves in New South Wales. What more proof do we need of its success? Ross Gittins wrote in a newspaper article that it was a top budget and it was a wonderful effort by Michael Costa to turn it around. When Gerard Henderson begrudgingly said something even vaguely positive about the Labor Party, one wondered whether he was speaking about the right party. Those guys must have been trying to regain some credibility after bashing us prior to an election. When the *Daily Telegraph* wrote that this was a massively, incredibly great budget, you knew that it had to be almost reasonable.

**Mr Phillip Costa:** That must have hurt.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** Yes, it must have hurt, as the member for Wollondilly said, because they do not like writing anything good about the Labor Government. After all the work put in by the shock jocks, the radio announcers, the bloke with the golden microphone and the guy with the parrot on his shoulder, they have so much egg on their faces it has become an omelette. They were pushing the Liberal Party, but come the election that went nowhere. The people have more sense. It is no good preaching to the converted, as they do in the newspapers and on the radio stations. We were doing better; we were delivering services to the electorate. The electorate knew that and that is why they re-endorsed us with such a great majority once again.

We were positively received, even by those who had been critical. There is no better reason for that than economic success. Standard and Poor's and every organisation that looks at the New South Wales economy has maintained our triple-A credit rating. New South Wales still leads the way in Australia. I will briefly highlight some of the telling figures in this year's budget. For example, in Health the total expenditure will increase by 7.1 per cent, or \$831 million dollars, to \$12.5 billion. Funding on mental health initiatives will exceed \$1 billion. That is \$105 million more, or an 11 per cent increase. I spoke on the Mental Health Bill that passed through this House a couple of weeks ago and pointed out that the New South Wales Government took its initiatives in mental health seriously.

The Federal Government has also undertaken to spend a lot more money on mental health services. The Federal Government will find out about that in three or four months when it attempts to fix up everything in the Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. People cannot be simply told to stop drinking or to stop doing the things it is alleged they have been doing. The Army and the police cannot just go in without nurses, doctors, mental health clinicians, mental health psychologists, and all the others who will be needed. The people need help; they do not need troops marching into their territory to take strong-arm action to deal with what is a very serious problem.

Education, which obviously has been one of my key interests for many years, will receive \$11.2 billion in funding—\$517 million more, or nearly 5 per cent in real terms, which is real money and real increases.

Funding for Transport has been increased to \$5.8 billion and funding for the Department of Community Services will increase by 11.6 per cent to a record \$1.26 billion. It should be remembered that before the 2003 election the then shadow spokesman for community services decided not to bother to provide funding for Department of Community Services workers. Opposition members wanted to get rid of them. It was too trendy, too left wing and the sort of bleeding-heart stuff that they did not need.

Over the past few weeks Opposition members said it was terrible that we did not have more workers. They should not talk to the Government about it; it is allocating additional funding for community services. They should write to John Howard and Peter Costello and ask for a bit more of the goods and services tax pie. We could certainly do with more Department of Community Services workers in New South Wales, just as every other State in Australia could do with more of them. The Federal Government saved up the money to enable it to pork-barrel for a few seats around the electorate.

**Mr Phillip Costa:** And \$10 billion on the Murray River.

**Mr ALAN ASHTON:** The Federal Government is spending \$10 billion on the Murray River scheme. That scheme was worked out on a postage stamp. It did not go to Cabinet's economic review committee; the Federal Government worked it out and thought of a figure that sounded good. At first \$9 billion did not sound very much so it changed the figure to \$10 billion to fix up the river scheme. To its credit, the Victorian Government worked it all out and decided that it just would not work. New South Wales said, "We will work with the other States. Let us look at the plan", but no plan was available for it to look at. The Federal Government produced a map of New South Wales and said, "There is the Murray-Darling. We will fix it." The Howard Government has been in office for 11 or 12 years and that is the best that it can do.

The Coalition regards law enforcement as its area. Everyone has to be scared and terrified because all these terrible people are in the community doing all these terrible things. As the newly appointed Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, said, crime has been driven down. We pay credit to Commissioner Ken Moroney for the great job that he did in driving down crime. No doubt people will always have a fear of crime or some sort of perception of it. We cannot help that. We must drive down reported crime, and crime that we can deal with. An amount of \$2.27 billion, an increase of \$90 million, will be spent on police. Our State Emergency Service, which did wonderful and outstanding work during recent flood events in the Hunter region and on the Central Coast, will receive record funding of \$831 million, or a 9 per cent increase, with \$51.5 million of that being set aside for volunteers in the State Emergency Service.

I live near the Georges River, fairly high up from the water. One Saturday night a couple of weeks ago a volunteer knocked on my door and said that the Georges River around Milperra and Picnic Point, which is where I live, could be declared a grade one flood event and that I might have to prepare to evacuate. Those people are volunteers and all members know just what a great job they do. Emergency service workers need to be funded. They give of their time for nothing so we must ensure that they have the proper equipment—boats, fire engines and protective gear—that they need. If they are out of pocket, they are paid an allowance, which is a big plus for the Government.

The New South Wales 10-year infrastructure program will receive more than \$12.5 billion in funding. Reference was made today to the Federal Government's \$5 billion infrastructure plan. This Government's plan will cost \$12.5 billion, up 29 per cent on last year's figures, which were up 16 per cent on the figures for 2005-06, and that is a 45 per cent increase in two budget outlays. An amount of \$34 million is being spent each day on infrastructure in New South Wales, which is great news. However, there is even more. There are no tax increases. Taxes have been reduced in the budget, which is good news for people in my electorate of East Hills. Four tax cuts worth \$343 million in 2007-08 will be increased to \$2.6 billion in the next four years, which will assist homebuyers, property investors and businesses.

Specifically in my electorate, other than sharing all the benefits of the budget I am pleased to acknowledge these items of expenditure: \$250,000 will be spent on modifying group homes; \$3.9 million will be spent on new public housing; \$3.7 million will be spent on maintenance work that is already in progress, giving a total of \$7.6 million for the East Hills electorate. An amount of \$31 million will be spent on competitive government sector works in 2007-08 in my electorate. The \$99 million Revesby turn-back facility, which is well on track—the lift wells have been built and are almost finished—will receive \$28.5 million this financial year. More than \$6 million will be spent on maintenance in the East Hills electorate, and \$580,000 will be spent on Bankstown community transport to assist frail aged and younger people with disabilities and their carers.

This year the Kingsgrove to Revesby quadruplication program and associated stations works will receive \$25 million, part of a \$450 million program to separate express and local services, thus improving travel times. An amount of \$30 million has been allocated for the Alford's Point Bridge duplication, which will help to unite the southern and northern parts of Bankstown right through to the Strathfield electorate. That will greatly ease traffic congestion and help Labor shire electorates and even the Liberal seat of Cronulla. We are thankful to the Government for that. The Government is spending \$2 million for Liverpool to Bankstown bus priority treatments on Henry Lawson Drive and Milperra Road; \$468,000 for infrastructure, maintenance and council grants; and \$139,000 for traffic facility council grants.

An amount of \$102,000 will be spent on the Henry Lawson Drive cycle path, Milperra, from Tower Road under Newbridge Road to Henry Lawson Drive, and \$22,000 will be spent on rail safety. I ask the Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. John Della Bosca, to increase specific spending on the school security fencing program for local schools in the East Hills electorate. I am sure that all members are in the same position. The Government has continued to roll out school fencing programs based almost completely on prioritising the schools where the greatest damage has been done. When other schools see what is happening, in a few years' time they will be entitled to ask, "When will we be next? "

Over the past few weeks I visited Picnic Point, Condell Park and Revesby South primary schools and Padstow Heights Public School, which are all located in my electorate. They all have the same priorities for fencing. They are now starting to make their voices heard in the local media, which is their right, and they are sending letters to me. Like me, I am sure other members will be talking to the Minister for Education and Training to see whether any more money can be found in the budget to carry out work at those schools. Revesby Public School also needs a toilet upgrade to meet urgent occupational health and safety requirements.

I also ask the Minister for Education and Training to find extra funding for maintenance at all high schools and that full upgrades, as required, be expedited at East Hills Boys High School and East Hills Girls High School. Those schools are now over 50 years old. One of them, which was built in the 1950s and is a traditional wooden building, must be fully upgraded. I will not be happy with low-level maintenance; they need, and are entitled to, proper upgrades. I commend the 2007-08 budget to the House. I enjoyed the repartee tonight and look forward to taking it up with any members who are brave enough to repeat it on another occasion.

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [8.49 p.m.]: The 2007-08 New South Wales budget falls dramatically short of Labor's election commitments to the northern beaches and to my community of Pittwater. This is no better illustrated than in the area of transport services. During the past two election campaigns and for more than five years Labor has peddled a half-baked policy that involves adding two lanes to the drawbridge at The Spit, which is a major road link between Pittwater and the central business district. Labor promised \$59 million—it was a line item in last year's budget—for The Spit Bridge widening project. Even though the project was widely panned by the northern beaches community—as evidenced in surveys conducted by the *Manly Daily*—a promise is still a promise, and Labor failed to deliver. It abandoned its formal promise to the people of the northern beaches—a promise that it clearly never intended to keep, despite losing hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars in the process.

To add insult to injury, in this budget Labor fails to apply the money earmarked for The Spit Bridge to other projects that would alleviate the massive traffic congestion facing residents of the northern beaches and Pittwater. Almost a quarter of a million people are on the wrong side of the bridge. In fact, no more than a small fraction of the money earmarked for The Spit has been provided to support transport projects across the entire northern peninsula. That is not good enough. There is a desperate need to provide better roads and public transport to serve the burgeoning population of Pittwater—a need that this budget hopelessly fails to address. A recent report commissioned by the Department of Transport and Regional Services revealed that the number of commercial vehicle trips on Sydney's main roads will double to 2.4 million a day by 2026. Car trips will increase by a quarter, to 9.9 million a day, of which 1.7 million will be squeezed into the two-hour morning peak. According to the report:

... a significant proportion of the strategic network is either over capacity, at capacity or nearing capacity.

Although most congestion occurs on routes to and from the city, it will expand across the network and establish itself in all directions. By 2011 Mona Vale Road and most of Military Road will be highly congested, and greenhouse gases and other undesirable emissions will rise substantially. As to traffic, the report forecasts a 60 per cent "overall increase in almost all economic, environmental and safety aspects" across Sydney.

Labor recently, suddenly and unexpectedly imposed a massive \$17,000 tax per lot in the Warriewood Valley, ostensibly to provide funding to pay for the upgrade of Mona Vale Road. I am not sure whether this tax is a legal impost as it was not imposed via a taxation statute and would appear to contravene the test imposed by the High Court in the Chicory Marketing Board case. The new tax cannot be a levy for services as the budget makes no provision for the upgrade of Mona Vale Road—a road on which there have been countless deaths and other tragic accidents in which my friends have been killed and injured.

Mona Vale Road was one of the strategic corridors nominated in the review of bus services undertaken by my constituent Mr Barrie Unsworth. Yet several years after this review was completed no funds have been allocated even to investigate the feasibility of running a viable bus service between Mona Vale and the employment and education centre of Macquarie Park. It is more than twice as quick for a Macquarie University student to drive to classes than to catch the bus. Money must be allocated to support a viable bus service on this route. The Wakehurst Parkway remains subject to flooding—it happened again just last week—and no money is being spent on upgrading it. This is despite the fact that a new hospital is planned—at least it has been in the planning stages for more than 40 years—at the junction of Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Road. But no money is allocated to upgrade the parkway. What is the point of having a new hospital if people cannot get there in an emergency? If Lord Wakehurst were alive today he would be ashamed to have the road named after him.

This budget fails to acknowledge the fact that Pittwater is being forced to accommodate unsustainable increases in population and density growth. It is unsustainable because, with more and more people moving to the Pittwater electorate in places like the Warriewood Valley and the rash of State environmental planning policy seniors living developments springing up without warning all over the place, no new infrastructure is being provided to support them. Let me put this growth in context. Over the next 24 years Pittwater Council will be forced to accommodate 4,613 new dwellings and Warringah Council will be forced to accommodate more than 10,000 new dwellings. This fails to include the massive Broadacre subdivision, which the Minister for Planning has planned for bushland and farmland at Ingleside.

Another 30,000 people—many more than 1,000 per year over the next two decades—could move to the area at the same time as Labor is closing or downgrading our local infrastructure. It has already closed Avalon and Collaroy police stations, downgraded Mona Vale Hospital, failed to invest in local roads and transport, and now it seems hell-bent on destroying our local environment as well. For the past 25 years there has been a ministerial direction that land releases on the northern beaches cannot proceed without proof of supporting infrastructure. Why, then, has this direction been quietly dropped? Is it a recognition that this budget fails to provide Pittwater with the infrastructure it needs to sustain the development that it is expected to support? I wonder.

What of health services for the people of Pittwater? There is enough money to keep Mona Vale Hospital on life support but it is so little in the scheme of things that it is a slap in the face for all the community volunteers who have worked consistently over more than 40 years to keep our hospital working. The promised new northern beaches hospital at Frenchs Forest still appears to be many years away. The Government promised that a new \$300 million hospital would be completed by 2010. The project's completion date has now blown out to 2012, and the Government has committed only \$12 million so far. At this rate I will be lucky to live long enough to see my grandkids born there—and, given that my daughter only said "dada" for the first time yesterday, that is a very long way away.

Another real and present health need for my constituents is to expand the range of drug and alcohol education and counselling services available in Pittwater. Young people report to me that illegal drugs and alcohol are used regularly at parties on the northern beaches. Like many other parents, I dread the use of drugs by young people and want to see the expansion of drug education programs in Pittwater. At the Manly end of the peninsula parents are able to visit the Manly Drug Education and Counselling Centre to get support and advice, as well as take part in outreach programs. I fear that not having such a unit at the northern end of the peninsula may be deterring some parents from seeking support and advice. It is time for more drug education resources in Pittwater, which are simply not provided in this budget.

Labor has not addressed the very real needs of our schools in this budget. While hard work by the community has secured some much-needed funding for new classrooms at the magnificent Newport Public School, other needs are not addressed at all. For example, the school hall at Barrenjoey High School and other areas of the school have ongoing maintenance needs. The staff and students at Barrenjoey constitute an amazing school body but it is not good enough that their school buildings are deteriorating to such an extent that a school event I attended on Saturday night suffered from electrical interruptions due to maintenance issues that require

urgent funding. My surf club patrol captain is the head of maintenance at Barrenjoey, and I know that his excellent service is undermined by a lack of funds.

Pittwater High School is doing amazing work trying to make the school carbon neutral but, with just \$20 million in the Climate Change Fund to support such projects, there is simply not enough money to go around all schools in the State. The peninsula community of schools urgently needs funding to support just two new staff to meet the needs of more than 6,000 students across the community. That money is simply not provided in the budget.

Pittwater's environment has not been served by the budget either. One of the most serious omissions is the Government's failure to protect Currawong from private developers. In 1949 the union movement purchased the 23-hectare site to celebrate the enshrinement of workers' rights, such as the 40-hour week and paid annual leave. It developed a retreat that has allowed thousands and thousands of working families to enjoy this unique landscape. But Unions New South Wales, in a highly political move, has decided to sell the site. If reports are to be believed, nearly two years ago the Department of Lands under the previous Labor Government expressed interest in the site. The department offered \$11.3 million in a bid to secure Currawong for the public—a rare example of a good idea on the part of the previous Government. But a week before the deadline for bids the Government mysteriously withdrew the offer.

A public explanation has been forthcoming only recently, with the director general of the Department of Lands quoted in the media as saying that there were insufficient funds. But in the 2007-08 budget the Government tells us that money is sloshing around. According to the Government, there is a huge surplus. Yet there is absolutely nothing in the budget about spending a tiny proportion of that surplus on stepping in now and saving Currawong from the private development company that subsequently bought the site and that could move the bulldozers in at any moment. This is what the budget does say. The budget tells us that it is a priority that the public "knows, values and cares for the State's heritage". So why has the Government failed to save Currawong? If this Government has a real vision for the future, it should immediately devote some of its budget surplus to acquire Currawong and protect it from destruction at the hands of private developers. Currawong is a jewel in the environmental crown and should be protected as part of the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. A relatively small investment would protect this beautiful place for generations to come, and yet in another example of this Government's short-sightedness there is nothing in the budget.

Another urgent environmental concern in my electorate is the noxious seaweed caulerpa taxifolia, which is spreading with worrying speed and quite literally choking large areas of Pittwater. Much of the affected area contains extensive beds of posidinia seagrass. Caulerpa replaces the seagrasses that form a vital habitat for fish and crustaceans and supports nothing but itself. Labor's failure to eradicate caulerpa through a sustained program of salting or matting when it first appeared in Pittwater means that we are left with a far more serious problem today. A one-hectare infestation of caulerpa in Careel Bay in 2002 has grown to more than 100 hectares and has spread to four locations in Brisbane Water, being detected there in autumn last year. Despite this obvious and growing problem, since 2001 the Government has spent less than \$150,000 on caulerpa in Pittwater. It spent nothing in 2005-06, nothing in 2006-07 and now nothing in the latest budget. We need to take decisive action because caulerpa has the potential to permanently alter the marine environment of Pittwater.

The Government needs to devote money to fund Pittwater Council's plans to use recycled water from Warriewood sewage treatment plant for local sports field irrigation. Sydney Water recycles just 3.5 per cent of drinking water consumed every year. The Auditor-General's Report recently said that "Sydney Water ranks amongst the lowest recyclers on a percentage basis when compared to other water retailers in Australia." Recycling wastewater from Warriewood is an important way to achieve more water savings. At the moment, effluent from the Warriewood plant is deposited at Turrismetta Headland, just south of Warriewood Beach. In wet weather, such as we have had over the past couple of weeks, we have bypasses of sewage direct from Warriewood to the ocean outfall at Turrismetta Head.

The problem is that the southerly swells often associated with low-pressure systems and high rainfall also produce the best swell conditions for Warriewood's surfing community. The southerly winds also push the effluent up the beach to Mona Vale. I have had enough throat infections from surfing at Warriewood to know that anyone who says it is safe to surf at Warriewood after heavy rain is crazy. Yet Warriewood is not even mentioned anywhere in the Sydney Metropolitan Water Plan, the State Infrastructure Strategic Plan, Sydney Water's 2006 Environmental Plan or even in the New South Wales State Plan. The Surf rider Foundation, ably led by Brendan Donohue, has been leading the charge to upgrade Warriewood for many years. It is time for action.

In other coastal issues, many parts of Pittwater are vulnerable to coastal erosion, as detailed in today's *Manly Daily*. Funds need to be provided to ensure that public and private assets on our beachfronts, as well as the beachfronts themselves and all the recreation opportunities that they provide, are made safe through sand nourishment projects. And volunteer marine rescue organisations, such as the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, which have provided so much assistance in recent storm events, get no additional funding at all in this budget, despite the vital emergency work that these volunteers undertake in our community.

I now turn to land tax. In the budget the Treasurer announced that the land tax rate will be reduced by just 0.1 per cent. That is all—just one-tenth of 1 per cent. However, this misses the point that the State's flawed land valuation system remains unchanged. Many Pittwater landholders are shocked, confused and upset about massive increases in their valuations over the last couple of years. One commercial premise in Avalon had a valuation increase from \$386,000 in 2006 to \$720,000 in 2007. Another shop in Avalon increased in value from \$354,000 to \$705,000 in just one year. The system is broke!

For householders, the current system unfairly benefits owners of luxury units, as opposed to detached houses, because the land value is divided by the number of units in a block. It is unfair, because a modest, detached home of a working family in Mona Vale might be worth a fraction of a luxury home unit in Bayview, yet a higher land value means higher rates and taxes for the modest home in Mona Vale—but no additional services. People have a right to know what taxes and charges are likely to apply to their land, and how they might reasonably vary from year to year. Valuations should be equitable so that people without the capacity to pay are not required to pay.

The Valuation of Land Act is more than 90 years old, and uses an archaic formula to determine land value. When the Act was written in 1916, most land had not been developed, and zoning laws did not exist, so that market value and land value were basically the same. After more than 12 years Labor has failed to fix the land valuation system, and missed yet another opportunity to do so in this budget. Instead the Government just perpetually plays around with the land tax rate; it imposes the premium property tax, then withdraws it; introduces the vendor tax, then withdraws it. The people of Pittwater and of New South Wales deserve some certainty about the tax regime so that they can plan their investments. It is just not fair for the Government to keep moving the goalposts.

Another tax that this budget fails to fix is the expensive and convoluted licensing scheme applied to residents who can only access their homes over the water in places such as Scotland Island and the western foreshores of Pittwater. The Government seems to be under some delusion that these people are wealthy. Many of them are not; many struggle and live offshore simply because it is less expensive than living on the mainland. Residents whose properties can only be accessed by water should not be discriminated against. You and I do not have to pay to drive across our nature strip, so why should offshore residents have to pay for much the same privilege? No-one should be taxed for the right simply to access their property, their own home. A lease fee on a "cost recovery only" basis would be a much fairer option. The few New South Wales homeowners who can only access their homes via water must be recognised as being affected by an anomaly and not treated with equity under the Government's licensing scheme. But the Government has not used the opportunity presented by this budget to remedy the problem.

In fact, this was a budget full of missed opportunities—missed opportunities and broken promises, like the promise relating to The Spit Bridge. The people of Pittwater deserve more. They have a right to expect a better standard of government—a government that keeps its promises, and a government that provides the services that all residents should receive, regardless of whether they live in a Coalition electorate or a Labor electorate. The Government is obliged to serve all of New South Wales—just as I, as the member for Pittwater, am obliged to serve all the residents of Pittwater, regardless of where they cast their vote.

My job as a member of Parliament is to represent everyone in my electorate. The same duty applies to the Government. It cannot play favourites; it cannot favour one electorate and not favour another. The Government must serve all of New South Wales, and the budget should be based on need, not used as a reward or a payback. The people of Pittwater are crying out for a fair share of infrastructure spending, on simple matters of safety such as Mona Vale Road, Mona Vale Hospital, and ensuring any land release at Ingleside is preceded by the necessary infrastructure, not afterwards when it is all too late. I will work hard on behalf of the residents of Pittwater to keep this Government to account.

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA** (Wollondilly) [9.07 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak on the excellent budget that the Government has brought down. I can sympathise with the comments made by the member for Pittwater.

I lived in Pittwater for some time and know well the issues he has raised. But I will draw a couple of comparisons that will require some explanation by me before I go into the detail of the budget. This budget is about fairness in the distribution of the limited funds that are available. The member for Pittwater commented on the growth that Pittwater will experience. Yes, that will bring certain pressures. But in my part of the world we are talking about 300,000 people and development that will make Canberra look like a little village. We need the Government—and I believe it is happening—to try to deliver resources and infrastructure where it is needed. That is where I believe this budget comes good. There is no panacea for Wollondilly. It is not one of the electorates that has received enormous amounts of money. What we have is important, and I look forward to the next few budgets, because growth in our region in particular will be even greater.

I congratulate the Treasurer on delivering a budget that is balanced and that will deliver services and resources to the families of New South Wales, particularly those in the Wollondilly electorate. During the election campaign my residents told me that we need to get the infrastructure right and we need to deliver quality services to the people, and that is exactly the focus of the budget with record spending of \$50 billion—I cannot even imagine how much money that is—over the next four years. I understand that this year is the largest yearly infrastructure spending in the history of the State. I am a new member and I am learning rapidly about how all this works. Having listened to many members speak I can see the challenges the State had to overcome to deliver a budget that is not only balanced but also has a small surplus.

I will focus on a few elements of the budget that support families in the new electorate of Wollondilly. I am very pleased to see that local residents benefit from \$3.7 million this year to resurface some of the iconic roads, such as the Hume Highway. An amount of \$550,000 has been allocated for Picton Road drainage. That money will be extremely well received, as we have some issues on our major interconnecting road. These projects are all about helping Wollondilly residents travel safely and comfortably to and from work. The electorate is quite large—100 kilometres from one end to the other. However, it is nowhere near the size of the electorate of my friend out west, the member for Murray-Darling, where it takes him six weeks to go from one end to the other. We have an extremely extensive road network and we need the dollars to maintain it.

Some \$1.7 million has been allocated to provide new public housing. We have a substantial amount of housing, and this money will go towards upgrading existing public housing in my electorate. An amount of \$250,000—small numbers compared to the total budget, but we are very appreciative of the money we get—has been allocated for the Camden and Campbelltown bus corridor along the Narellan Road coming down to Gilchrist, which is a priority stream program. I note that \$230,000 has been allocated for lighting delineation and skid-resistant pavement on some of the important roads, such as Menangle Road, where we have had some incidents. We are working to try to fix those hot spots. Some \$175,000 has been allocated for reconstruction works on Silverdale Road, which joins the northern part of my electorate and goes down into the central part. Over many years this road has been transformed with dollars from a rural road to a road of a high standard.

An amount of \$145,000 has been allocated for pavement reconstruction curve realignment on a road very close to where I live, Montpelier Drive, where we have had a number of accidents over the years. It is great to see that the road is getting the kind of attention it deserves. The budget contains \$7.9 million to upgrade water utilities in the Wollondilly area. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, we are experiencing some growth in the Wollondilly part of the electorate, which comprises Wollondilly shire and Campbelltown City Council. Nearly 3,500 new homes have been constructed and we are looking at expansion of utilities to service those homes. This budget also includes \$349,000 to provide six beds at Campbelltown Hospital, which will be open some time this year, to complete the Campbelltown Hospital's psychiatric emergency care centre. I acknowledge the fantastic allocation in the budget for mental health. The Premier has driven it and I commend him for it.

Planning has begun on the easy access upgrade at Picton railway station, which was an election promise. The team has been to the station, and it will be funded in due course. It is certainly important for us. At the moment Macarthur railway station is primarily a commuter car park, but it will become an important transport hub. We must consider a bus interchange because there will be literally thousands of bus movements a day. This commitment is one we made at the recent State election. We are upgrading Macarthur railway station by providing a fourth platform to cater for the growth we are anticipating. The Government is planning ahead. Other initiatives outside the boundaries of the electorate will benefit Wollondilly. I do not look only at things that are happening within the electorate. The Government has been looking at the region as well as the State.

Approximately 70 per cent of the people in my electorate travel outside the electorate to go to work. Therefore, regional services for Macarthur are most important to the families in Wollondilly. Other great

initiatives include the upgrade of the Endeavour trains. We use the Endeavour service to take us from our outreach rural areas into the electrification service at Campbelltown. A total expenditure of \$12.5 million has been allocated for the project. The budget also includes a mobile police station for Camden. I notice in the budget an announcement of a mobile police station in the Camden local area command, which services Wollondilly. We will benefit from such a facility.

The School Transport Scheme will benefit our particular part of the world because so many of our children have to travel quite a distance to go to school. Some of our children catch buses at half past seven in the morning. These subsidies will help. As I mentioned earlier, the Macarthur region is under extreme pressure to continue to roll out much-needed housing for the future growth of Sydney. Therefore, the implementation of the Metropolitan Strategy—in which I took part as mayor and president of Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils [MACROC]—is vital to my community not only for housing stock but also to plan and create opportunities for employment for our local people. The ongoing work allowed for in this budget will continue to engage our communities as we plan for the future.

As members may know, I come from an education background. I am passionate about the services we deliver to our children. An amount of \$14.2 million over four years has been allocated to establish the New South Wales Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening program. If we can get to children and assess their needs before they start school all of them will benefit. Some \$1.6 million has been allocated to maintain and embellish the Healthy Schools Canteen strategy. I highly commend it and look forward to its impact on the schools throughout my electorate. As I mentioned earlier, the psychiatric emergency care centre at Campbelltown is welcomed in my electorate. I notice that \$65.5 million has been allocated for improved mental health facilities in the budget. I commend the Premier and the Treasurer for giving that project such a high priority.

Some \$50 million has been allocated for bus priority work. As I mentioned earlier, infrastructure is a problem. We are now looking at ways of bringing services to our community. My electorate has seven railway stations and there are opportunities to improve the mobility of the community. I look forward to working with Government on delivering to my community. A project that is outside my electorate, but is still important to us, is the Great Western Highway between Penrith and Orange. I notice that the budget allocated \$56.5 million to continue the upgrade of that road, which our people use to access the west. Even though it is outside of Wollondilly it will have a direct benefit on those in my electorate. We also have \$20 million to continue the widening of the north-bound carriageway of the F5. This freeway would have to be the most important piece of transport infrastructure in my region. We must stop pussy footing around and expand the road to four lanes in both directions all the way from Narellan Road to the M7.

The Government has put its money where its mouth is. We hope that the Federal Government will come forward and support our request, particularly for the communities in Macarthur. I note that \$10 million has been allocated for the installation of underground distribution lines. There are plans to extend the 6,6000-volt line into the southern areas of Wollondilly. Only last month I discussed those needs with Integral Energy. I look forward to that expansion. We have a small community at Wilton. Integral Energy has told me that the cables will go underground and I thank Integral Energy for the work it is doing on the project. An amount of \$25 million has been allocated towards a new substation at Macarthur. The Government has recognised the value of providing infrastructure before the residents arrive. We need a power supply. As I said, we are experiencing substantial growth and it is pleasing to see that we are putting in the power supply before people take up residence.

The State Plan commits the Lemma Government to promote and increase the number of people using our national parks and reserves. The Wollondilly electorate is surrounded by national parks on three sides or by water catchment areas. My electorate is the location for most of Sydney's water supply. In my inaugural speech I highlighted the tremendous value that the reserves have to people in my electorate. The expansion of parks, particularly the management of existing parks, is welcomed. It highlights that this Government is committed to intergenerational capital by leaving a positive legacy for our children. However, one request that was not picked up by the budget, but will be the subject of my future lobbying of Labor colleagues, is a part of the Burrorang area that has not received an allocation. Of course I understand that not all requests can be met in my first term, but I will work on it.

Also \$5 million has been allocated for cutting-edge satellite imaging and it is a one-liner in the budget. Nevertheless, it is very important to be provided with the tools that will prevent illegal land clearing and waste dumping. Imaging has been used in the region on previous occasions to apprehend people who have been dumping dangerous substances such as asbestos in national parks. Satellite imaging is tremendously useful in

identifying people who are doing things they ought not be doing while simultaneously destroying our pristine environment. Local councils work very closely with the Sydney Catchment Authority. They have identified hot spots and have embarked upon a proactive plan to protect the environment. The budget allocation for satellite imaging will enhance those protections and I look forward to the results of the work they do. I will give the House an example of some of the problems we have had. Some years ago some people entered onto 50 hectares of land with two D9s and a chain. In no time, they cleared the land. That type of problem should be prevented from occurring. The difficulty with that case was that the subsequent restrictions placed upon people living in my community were horrendous. We need the right tools to prevent cowboys from doing irreparable damage to our environment.

Operations to protect our parks from fire, pests and weeds will also be boosted by an additional \$1 million a year. Capital funding is provided for improving infrastructure in such places as the Royal National Park. I realise the park is outside my electorate but I am a member of the National Parks Advisory Committee and it is good that we are looking after iconic national parks such as the Royal National Park. Grants to farmers worth \$17.5 million will be provided as part of the implementation of reforms in native vegetation management. I appreciate that this is an issue for members representing western electorates of the State, but it is also an issue for the people of Wollondilly where there is a substantial farm land belt. Many times farmers have spoken to me about the vegetation management Act. The budget has allocated funds to provide support for them.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change [DECC] will also place a strong emphasis on waste reduction with \$10.2 million available for councils who meet waste performance standards. I mention this because the Macarthur waste contract, which I signed as mayor of the council, will deliver world-class waste management services in the Macarthur region, which includes Wollondilly. State-of-the-art waste management will enable us to reduce our landfill substantially. This fund will be accessible to councils in the Macarthur region. This year almost \$53.8 million will be invested in bushfire tankers, fire engines and State Emergency Service units through the State. I mention that because the Rural Fire Fighting Fund is very important to my electorate. An unprecedented \$198.6 million has been allocated to that fund. Our volunteer firefighters will receive tankers, upgraded stations and completion of final stages of the fire control centres. The more funding that can be provided to our fire brigades and the State Emergency Service, the better.

The budget provides \$8 million to expand the West Camden sewage treatment plant and recycled water plant. This plant services a large area of Wollondilly. This upgrade will deliver a resource that can be utilised by the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, which is a leading research institute and also is in my electorate. Even though the treatment plant may show up on Camden's list, it serves both Wollondilly and Camden. The budget allocates \$10 million to progress planning and design work for sewerage services for Douglas Park, Wilton and Appin. My electorate has been waiting for this progress for some time, and very firm plans have been put in place as a result of this budget. This is a long-awaited allocation, and will be a major plank in the planning platform for the future.

Earlier today I mentioned the \$38 million Western Sydney recycled water initiative replacement flows project which each year will replace 18 billion litres of dam water for environmental flows from our dams, such as Warragamba Dam. This is important not only because it helps to protect Sydney's supply of drinking water but also riverine environments are located in my electorate. By producing a recycling program that provides a better environmental flow, the natural environment in my community will benefit.

As members are no doubt aware, this budget has a wide range of allocations providing direct benefits not only to my electorate but also across wider areas such as Macarthur and other parts of the State. It is a fair budget and, importantly, it is the first budget in a four-year fiscal plan that will deliver services, infrastructure and performance of our promises over this term of government. I would like to share with the House the fact that it is not just this budget's projects that I am proud of but projects in my electorate that were funded by previous budgets and will have an impact upon my electorate. One is the redevelopment of the Thirlmere Rail Transport Museum that has received a commitment of \$14.6 million. The museum will become an iconic tourist attraction. I am looking forward to the rollout of that project. Another project is one I mentioned during my inaugural speech, and that is the Warragamba Visitor Centre, at a cost of \$7.5 million. That project is progressing. We are in the process of formalising the fitting out of the emergency fire control centre in Picton at a cost of \$1.5 million, which will also serve the entire region.

Not all projects that I had been trying to procure during the election campaign have received funding in the budget. However I will persist with lobbying my colleagues because my electorate needs to have the community hospital at Thirlmere upgraded and I too have schools that do not have libraries. I will press the

Government to ensure that those facilities are provided. My electorate also needs an additional site for a school. Earlier I mentioned the growth in population in my electorate, and it is possible that in 10 years I will need additional sites for high schools. However, in the meantime we have to upgrade the existing Picton High School, which is the only high school in the Wollondilly shire. There are other high schools in the northern part of the Wollondilly electorate, but in Wollondilly shire there is only one public high school.

Another big project that I will discuss with my good friend the Treasurer is infrastructure that we require but I have seen no sign of, and that is a multideck car park at Macarthur. There is no sense in having the best railway interchange in the State with tens of thousands of people using the facility if they are unable to park their cars. For the benefit of Opposition members, I point out that not all electorates received everything they wanted from the budget. Nevertheless, this budget is an attempt to offer resources, services and facilities in a balanced way. I have a job to do in the next 12 months to convince the Treasury and Cabinet that projects in my electorate are much needed and worthwhile, just as members opposite have a job to do in representing their electorates. I will do that my way, and they will do it their way, but at the end of the day the community of New South Wales will benefit.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [9.27 p.m.]: I am mindful of the time constraints applying to my presentation and I will endeavour to be brief. I do not have 20 minutes. At the outset I state that as a person who reads newspapers and obtains some information from reading the *Australian Financial Review*, a couple of items mentioned in the Budget Speech alarmed me. The Treasurer during his Budget Speech mentioned pressure on interest rates. Pressure on interest rates has been created by the borrowings of Labor State governments. There is no doubt that those borrowings are putting huge pressure on interest rates. I state for the record that if interest rates increase, it is possibly for the reason I have stated and no other. The other matter that is very obvious is the current level of employment. Love it or hate it, I believe it is probably due to industrial relations laws put in place by the Federal Government that we are now experiencing the highest employment levels in 32 years.

I guess we have seen a lot benefits created by the Federal Government although it has copped a lot of criticism in this House. It really is serving the needs of this State Government pretty well. Another matter that needs to be addressed is the continual reference to the clawback of the GST. I read history, as do other members of this House. My reading informs me that since Federation there has been recognition that some of the wealthier States give to the less wealthy States and that there has always been an arrangement between the States that some of the money will go back to the poorer States. At a Council of Australian Governments meeting a decision was made to distribute a proportion of the GST to each State and Territory. Queensland and South Australia were definitely the recipients of the money tipped in by New South Wales. Bob Carr left that meeting cheering and punching his fist in the air, and saying what a great deal he had done to be caught out by only \$2.5 billion.

However, \$2.5 billion versus \$45 billion is probably about 5 per cent. I come from another world that deals with the performance of managing directors. If a managing director said he could not make ends meet because of a 5 per cent reduction in revenue, he would probably be looking for another job by Monday. This is a joke, and it cannot continue. It is pretty monotonous to sit on this side of the House and listen to that kind of debate. Concerning the electorate of Murray-Darling, some comments have been made on radio during this week about the ineffectiveness of non-Labor representatives. I inherited what the previous Labor member lobbied for—and the results have been pretty disappointing.

The electorate of Murray-Darling received very little, and that was probably due to my predecessor, who was a member of the Labor Government. I believe he achieved little recognition, and maybe he did not do the required lobbying. Certainly the wash-up for Murray-Darling was pretty poor. But that is history, and I can accept it. However, I am the new representative and I will talk about the things that disappoint me in the budget and what I need to lobby for in future. The Menindee Lakes have been a particular concern for the residents of Broken Hill as well as for the residents of western New South Wales. The state of the Menindee Lakes has been a concern for a long time. Some major earthworks need to be done, and the budget for that is about \$65 million.

Prior to the recent election, the State Government, in an attempt to make it look like it was doing something, engaged an organisation to put together a report, known as the Maunshell report. That report cost the Federal Government and the State Government \$20 million, but the report told us nothing we did not already know. We had an opportunity to spend that \$20 million, and it would have paid for a channel between two of the lakes—which is part of the major works that is required. It is pretty frustrating for me and for the people in western New South Wales to know that that money was wasted. The budget allocates \$4.1 million for the Silver

City Highway between Broken Hill and Tibooburra, a distance of 320 kilometres. Currently, about two-thirds of that road is sealed. Most people would agree that we should get on with the business, get the job done. That is what the Coalition wanted.

When I was a candidate, I discussed one of the priorities and it was decided that the completion of the Silver City Highway within four years should take precedence. The money allocated for work on the Silver City Highway to get earthmoving and other equipment on the site, which is 160 kilometres from Broken Hill, and to set up a camp, would chew up the amount of money allocated for that roadwork. The variable expenses would chew up the allocated amount, which is very disappointing. The Menindee to Pooncarie road is a priority for western New South Wales. That road can provide a lot of tourism to Menindee and Pooncarie. It could also facilitate the trucking of produce from the Menindee area via Pooncarie. Currently that produce is trucked to Broken Hill and then to Melbourne, adding 120-odd kilometres to the round trip. That road did not get a mention in the budget. The Cobb Highway from Ivanhoe to Wilcannia has been talked about and some work has been done on it. No completion date has been announced and it was not mentioned in the budget. The Arumpo Road, which runs from Buronga to the major tourist attraction at Mungo National Park, is unsealed and dangerous.

Tourists arrive in Mildura wanting to visit the Mungo National Park. They rent a car but are prohibited from using a hire car along that unsealed road, so they miss out on that wonderful opportunity. There have been some major accidents on that dangerous road; fortunately, not a fatality as yet. That road is of real concern for the residents. For 12 years there has been talk about the link road from Balranald to Mungo as part of supporting tourism for Balranald. As with the Arumpo Road, that link road needs to be sealed to promote tourism to the area. The Haydays Hostel, which I mentioned during question time last week, is of real concern for the residents of Hay. The Government promised, through the then Minister for Health, Craig Knowles, that a 24-bed hostel unit would be attached to the multipurpose service facility. That promise was reinforced in writing by the former Minister for Health, now the Premier, Morris Iemma. To date that has not been provided for in the budget. This matter is a real concern for the people of Hay, because they are working with a hostel facility that is past its use-by date and needs to be replaced.

The Federal Government would like to assist in this matter. I am sure that the Federal member, Kay Hull, has pushed the Federal Government as far as she can, but it has not provided the money so it is up to the New South Wales Government to meet the promise it made to the people of Hay. It is a pretty poor show that that has not been provided. A multipurpose service facility was announced for Wentworth, but it was not provided for in this budget, and no provision has been made for it through the Greater Western Area Health Service. Those facilities are approaching 80 years of age and need replacement. My community should have an updated facility, something that other communities take for granted.

I wonder about the maintenance costs needed to keep that building up and running versus replacement. The Government should get on and replace that old facility at Wentworth and build the multipurpose service facility. Currently the first phase of the development for the Balranald multipurpose service is under discussion. That facility has been promised for some time, and I will watch closely the progress of that undertaking. In my electorate there are three police stations. The one at Finley is held together by paint. The white ants have had a pretty good go at it. The local residents would like to burn it down but they are concerned about where the white ants would then go. The station is just hanging together. It needs replacement but there is no provision for that in the budget. The Moama police station is an old building, probably pushing 100 years of age. One of its filing cabinets is wedged up to make it level and not fall over.

These facilities are totally inadequate for police to work in, they are not functional and they need to be replaced. It is crazy to let things like this linger. The police station at Deniliquin, which is an issue of major concern, probably served the needs of Deniliquin about 60 years ago. The station now has demountable building after demountable building, which is now unserviceable, but no funding has been allocated for it in this budget. The Government promised to provide a fish ladder at Stevens Weir. A fish ladder would not mean much to many members but for the past eight years fisherman have been promised that one would be provided. Local fishermen and the local community believe in conservation, in conserving fish stocks and in allowing fish to return to their breeding grounds. For eight years the fish ladder has been overlooked and there is no provision for it in the budget. It is a job that I will have to do in the next 12 months.

It was interesting to hear some members referring to the amount of money that had been allocated to high schools in their electorates. Before the election I attended a public meeting in Balranald at which the president of the parents and citizens association announced that Balranald High School needed \$700,000 for

maintenance. For more than 12 years no maintenance has been carried out at that school and it has reached the point where it is unsatisfactory. There is something wrong with this Government if it cannot provide amenities for its school students. Any government wanting to win an election knows that it needs the support of local schools. This Government is not prepared to allocate sufficient funding to maintain and support Balranald High School.

At present Wilcannia is experiencing a housing crisis. The State Government contracted a fly-by-night operator to build new homes in Wilcannia but those homes, which are inadequate, have been only semi-completed. I do not know whether the contractor has been paid or who is responsible for rectifying this problem, but Aboriginal families in Wilcannia are living in homes that have gaps in the walls, which is not good enough. Someone must take up this cause. The Government allocated money for this project and that money has been spent, but no-one is interested in rectifying this problem. For those who are living in rural communities little things count. Broken Hill Police and Community Youth Club, which provides services to young people in the Aboriginal community, requires the appointment of two constables at that location. For over two years no police officers have been appointed to those positions.

The operation of that club is vital to the Broken Hill community. The club provides a great service by giving Aboriginal youth direction, guidance and support and by organising sporting events for them. Sport plays a big part in the lives of young people in Broken Hill. The Government must appoint two police constables to do the job and to ensure the satisfactory operation of that club. One person has volunteered to take up the position and another person has been nominated. The Government has an opportunity to appoint two police constables to that club, to get the ball rolling and to resolve these problems in the Aboriginal community.

The member for East Hills criticised Opposition members for highlighting purely for political reasons the problems that are being experienced by Aboriginal communities. I assure members that I am committed to resolving those problems. When I made my inaugural speech in this House I referred to a number of concerns, which I still have. I believe that plenty of people can be blamed for these problems. Recently I spoke to the Federal Government and established that it was happy to act and do something about it. These problems, which have been around for more than 50 years, will not be fixed in five minutes. The cycle must be changed. Young Aboriginal children must be protected from all the things that are destroying their lives.

There has been plenty of criticism about the antisocial behaviour of Aboriginal children, but we need to look at their origins. They have had a pretty tough life and they are living in an environment in which no white child would want to live. These pure young people are being exposed to outside elements that are having a devastating effect on their lives. They are growing up with chips on their shoulders and they feel different and disoriented from the rest of the community. I would hate to carry the burdens that are being carried by those Aboriginal children. We are paying for it to some extent through the lawlessness and social problems that are occurring. We need a generational change to fix these problems. If we start working on these problems now I guarantee that they will be solved in 50 years.

The member for Barwon and I have been exposed to, and have looked closely at, these problems but at no time has the Government sought to consult us. Those who have witnessed these problems firsthand should be involved in resolving them. We have talked to key stakeholders and to those who are involved and we see no solution to these problems. There is no easy solution. Young children growing up in Aboriginal communities must be provided with a safe haven—a place that provides safety and sustenance when they are in danger. These children must be permitted to experience the same things that our children experienced when they were growing up. They need a perfectly balanced life. As I said earlier, we need a generational change. We are about three generations away from solving these problems and achieving the assimilation that we need.

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

#### **SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

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

**The House adjourned at 9.49 p.m. until Thursday 28 June 2007 at 10.00 a.m.**

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