

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 28 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.

## **BIOFUEL (ETHANOL CONTENT) BILL 2007**

## **POLICE SUPERANNUATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

## **PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (WASTE) BILL 2007**

## **STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2007**

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

## **UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (KURING-GAI CAMPUS) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

This bill is identical to a bill introduced during the previous Parliament. That bill was unable to be debated during the term of the previous Parliament because of the cancellation of private members days, which afford the only opportunity for non-Government members to have legislation considered. This legislation remains important for a reason that I will refer to at the end of my remarks.

The University of Technology (Kuring-gai Campus) Bill 2007 has a clear and simple purpose: it will ensure that the Lindfield site continues to be used for educational purposes. The history of the site is interesting. In February 1961 the then State Labor Government purchased the site for the stated purpose of "public instruction", that is, education. In April 1971 William Balmain Teachers College opened on the site. In 1974 William Balmain Teachers College changed into the Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education. In 1990 the University of Technology was created with the old Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education as its Kuring-gai campus. The legislation establishing the University of Technology, Sydney, section 18 (2), states:

The Council shall not except with the approval of the Minister, alienate, mortgage or demise any lands of the University.

In establishing the University of Technology, Sydney, and vesting property in the new tertiary institution, the expectation was that the land would continue to be used for those educational purposes. However, there is a frustration in the community that I represent. It is that in vesting the site in the University of Technology, Sydney in 1989 no provision was made for the site to be returned in the event it was ever found to be either no longer needed or surplus to requirements. It is clear, from reviewing documents relating to the establishment of the University of Technology, Sydney and the transfer of the land, that the intention was that the site be used for educational purposes. That was confirmed by the fact that the transfer of the land to the University of Technology, Sydney at the time was done in exchange for a single dollar. That goes to the nub of the issue here.

The University of Technology, Sydney has proposals for redevelopment of the site and vacation of the site by the university to enable unit development. Those proposals are rejected by most members of the community that I represent and by most right-minded people. There is a clear desire expressed in the debate on the proposal for the site, for this piece of land, as a publicly-owned asset, to be retained for educational purposes. If the prudent thing had been done back in 1989, a clause would have been inserted in the transfer documents saying in effect: Here is a piece of land, we are going to vest it in the University of Technology,

Sydney, for a single dollar, and it will be used for educational purposes. And a further clause would also have been included to say: If at any time the land is not needed or is surplus to requirements, it will be returned to the Crown in exchange for another dollar.

I have no doubt that if the only profit that the University of Technology, Sydney could make out of the site were a single dollar return to it from the State Government, the university would have found a way to have a continuing role with the site. The great beauty of the University of Technology, Sydney Kuring-gai site is that it overlooks Lady Game Drive and the Lane Cove National Park. It is deep in the residential suburb of Lindfield. It is served principally by two residential streets, Eton Road and Westbourne Road. Motorists who wish to turn south onto the highway use Grosvenor Road, which goes past Lindfield Public School.

Delivery of 400, 500 or 600 units to the site will significantly impact local residents by traffic volume alone, let alone one's views about maintaining in public ownership an educational precinct. Traffic in parts of the area, particularly outside Lindfield Public School at the intersection of Grosvenor Road and the highway, is a cause for concern now. That concern has prompted the Government recently to put in speed cameras and the like. Wherever significant traffic loads occur beside a school, there are issues. Development of the University of Technology, Sydney Kuring-gai site for unit development will simply make traffic conditions in that area worse.

This legislation can resolve the matter. It would ensure continued use of the site for educational purposes. Importantly, it is based upon a precedent—an earlier example of a State Government stepping in to stop the alienation of a similar property. Highly significantly, the current State Government established the precedent to which I refer. In 1999 the then State education Minister, John Aquilina, rushed the University of New South Wales (St George Campus) Bill through Parliament. That legislation, which passed both Houses, stopped the University of New South Wales selling the site of another former college of advanced education. That site had earlier housed a teachers college and had been similarly transferred to a higher education institution for just a single dollar on the same expectation that it would be used for educational purposes. The parallels with the current situation at Lindfield are extraordinary. In justifying the 1999 decision to move special legislation to prevent the sale the then State education Minister declared:

I am not willing to see a valued educational facility like that at St George wound down and taken out of the public domain.

The same should apply to the University of Technology, Sydney Kuring-gai site at Lindfield. The then education Minister pointed out that the legislation establishing the University of New South Wales, and specifically that section outlining the university's functions, did not contain a clause relating to "selling public assets". I note the same omission in relation to the legislation concerning the University of Technology, Sydney. The then Labor Minister for Education and Training stated:

The public interest will suffer if the university effectively removes the land from public use.

I say the same about the Kuring-gai campus on the Lindfield site of the University of Technology, Sydney. Finally, this Government's former education Minister noted his responsibility under the 1989 Act to approve or otherwise any proposed sale of land. Section 18 (2) of the University of Technology, Sydney Act gives the State education Minister the same power. That is, the current Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. John Della Bosca, MLC, could, without need for this legislation, refuse to allow the University of Technology, Sydney to sell the Lindfield site. I regret that, to date, no such refusal has been forthcoming. I regret that the State Government seems to have double standards. I regret that what was apparently sound policy when it came to the St George campus will not be applied to the Kuring-gai campus. I regret that the 1999 refusal to allow a university to sell a site—a refusal which was based, in the words of this State Labor Government, on the absence of public interest—is not being repeated in 2007, and that is why this bill has been introduced.

The University of Technology (Ku-ring-gai Campus) Bill is simple. If passed it would prevent the site from being used for anything other than educational purposes. This legislation is important. It is urgent because last Friday the Minister for Planning indicated that he would take planning control for this site from Ku-ring-gai Council. Residents in this area now have no doubt that this site is going to be sold by the university and redeveloped. There are two opportunities to stop it. One is for the Minister for Education and Training to refuse, under the Act, to allow it to be sold. The second is for this legislation to be passed and for the land to be retained for educational purposes.

I previously raised the interests of Moore Theological College in relation to the site. I do not want to verbal the Moore College representatives, but I understand the reason that issue has not proceeded is the return the University of Technology, Sydney expects to get from the site. It paid one dollar and is expecting to get

between \$30 million and \$60 million in return. That is why enormous pressure is placed on the State Government for the maximum unit development on the site. It is poor public policy, it is poor treatment of a public asset and it does not fit with what this State Government was prepared to say about another site in 1999.

A number of proposals have been made over the years for alternative educational uses, not just from Moore College. Private schools have made suggestions. There have been suggestions about the relocation of public high schools. Members of the school community of Lindfield Public School—in which I declare an interest, as I have a child in year 2—have asked me why we do not move Lindfield Public School off the highway and put it on the university site. If there is going to be development of units, as there are up and down the highway at Ku-ring-gai, they can go on the old school site. Whatever the outcome, the public interest is best served by maintaining the site for educational purposes. The best outcome would be for this legislation to pass, for the Minister for Planning to reject the approach by the university and for the Minister for Education and Training to stand up for the protection of an educational asset in the community.

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

### **PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORATES AND ELECTIONS AMENDMENT (TRUTH IN ADVERTISING) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Donald Page.**

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr DONALD PAGE** (Ballina) [10.12 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The object of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment (Truth in Advertising) Bill is to prohibit inaccurate and misleading political advertising. Under current New South Wales law, the misleading advertising provisions that apply to business do not apply to political parties or political candidates. Political advertising should meet similar standards of probity and honesty as commercial advertising under State and Commonwealth law.

The law as it stands in New South Wales allows people to seek and obtain political office and power through political advertising that can be totally fraudulent. This lax attitude to truthfulness fosters a culture that deception is simply part of the political game, rather than a serious attack on the integrity of the political system. It is imperative that we restore the public's faith in the accuracy of political advertising because people in a democracy are entitled to expect honesty and accuracy from their leaders. If the integrity of our political system is to be assured, it is essential that information provided to voters in determining their decision about voting not be inaccurate or misleading.

During the recent election campaign, the New South Wales Labor Party ran a series of negative advertisements about the New South Wales Coalition across a range of mediums that were grossly inaccurate and misleading. These advertisements misrepresented the Coalition's policies and the business history of the former Leader of the Opposition. For example, the Labor Party ran advertisements accusing the Coalition of planning to cut 29,000 jobs from the public sector, claiming front-line positions, including nurses, police and teachers, would go. These advertisements featured prominently on television networks throughout the State and in other campaign material produced by the New South Wales ALP. In one advertisement in this series, Labor used paragraphs from two *Sydney Morning Herald* stories and added quotation marks as proof that the Leader of the Opposition at the time, Peter Debnam, said those words.

In fact, the Coalition's policy was to have an employment freeze in the backroom bureaucracy in Sydney only and this was announced publicly. Savings made in this process would be diverted into the employment of more front-line employees like police, nurses and teachers. The New South Wales Australian Labor Party fabricated information and deliberately misled the New South Wales voting public. Yet under the current law, there are no legal repercussions for producing such inaccurate and misleading advertising.

This bill would put in place penalties for a person who authorises, causes or permits the publication of an electoral advertisement if that advertisement contains a statement purporting to be a statement of fact that is inaccurate and misleading to a material extent. This applies to advertisement published by any means—

including radio or television or on the Internet. This bill also applies to local government elections. This bill would legislate the application of fines for persons or body corporates who are guilty of this offence. The maximum penalties are \$11,000 if the offender is a natural person, and \$110,000 if the offender is a body corporate.

The Electoral Commissioner would be the regulator—the judge—of whether a statement purporting to be fact is inaccurate and misleading to a material extent. The bill provides the Electoral Commissioner with two options if an advertisement is found to be misleading and inaccurate to a material extent. These are, firstly, to request the advertiser to withdraw the advertisement from further publication; and/or, second, to request the advertiser to publish a retraction in specified terms. If the advertiser refuses to comply, the Electoral Commissioner can go to the courts to impose a fine. Under the bill, it is a defence if the defendant can show they took no part in determining the content of the advertisement and they could not reasonably be expected to have known the statement to which the charge relates was inaccurate and misleading.

This bill is based on section 113, clause (2), of the South Australian Electoral Act 1985 which has been successfully implemented for many years. Similar legislation was introduced at the Federal level by Senator Andrew Murray. Senator Murray also recognises that misleading and inaccurate electoral advertisements can persuade voters to vote in ways that they would not normally, based on misleading political advertising. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth Parliament never passed that legislation.

Misleading and inaccurate advertising erodes our democracy and makes a mockery of our political system, increasing distrust among voters, and brings about electoral results that may have been different, had the campaign been based on truth and accurate representation of policy and other relevant information. Political elections should be based on truth and accuracy, and voters deserve an assurance that this is the case. Accuracy and honesty are required of business and individuals in our society and I believe political parties and political candidates should be subject to the same standards. This bill will outlaw misleading and inaccurate advertising to ensure elections are held in a climate of truth and honesty. I encourage all members to support this bill if they want to guarantee the future integrity of our democratic processes and our political system. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **TRANSPORT (SAFETY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT) AMENDMENT (ALCOHOL) BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Geoff Provest.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [10.20 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The object of the Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment (Alcohol) Bill 2007 is to amend road safety legislation that specifies a zero blood alcohol level for interstate P-plate drivers on New South Wales roads. This issue came to my attention when I was campaigning in the Tweed during the recent State election. Members of the local police force raised the issue through the New South Wales Police Association. I raise it in this House because it is causing these police officers a great deal of angst and confusion. It should be noted that this problem is not confined just to the New South Wales-Queensland State border. It is also being experienced on the New South Wales-Victoria State border. In a recent case in Albury a Victorian P-plate driver escaped a charge for drink driving on New South Wales roads through a loophole in the current New South Wales road safety legislation.

In 2004 the New South Wales Government introduced the Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Amendment (Alcohol) Bill, which provided that all New South Wales P-plate drivers must adhere to a zero blood alcohol level. However, the legislation contained no specific blood alcohol level provisions for interstate P-plate drivers, therefore providing a loophole that allows interstate P-plate drivers to drive with a legal blood alcohol limit of up to 0.05. This is extremely dangerous and poses a threat to the users of New South Wales roads. I raised the loophole in the legislation in late 2006. In a response from the New South Wales Minister for Roads, the Hon. Eric Roozendaal, in December 2006, he indicated that he would move to rectify

the problem, saying he had taken the issue to Cabinet and gained approval to introduce legislation in the first session of Parliament.

To date the legislation has not been introduced. In fact, the member for Ballina, Don Page, raised this issue with the Hon. Michael Costa in 2005, but no action was taken to amend the legislation. The New South Wales Government should have introduced this legislation immediately. While this loophole remains open, it allows P-plate drivers to get behind the wheel with alcohol in their system, and the lives of motorists on New South Wales roads, particularly in the Tweed, and of interstate P-plate drivers, are being put at risk. The cost of enforcing the amendment to the legislation is minimal and can be met from existing police resources. This legislation will result in the standardisation of P-plate alcohol restrictions. I ask for the support of the House in ensuring that this important bill is passed.

Shortly I will go out with members of the local police force to witness their good work within the Tweed. Unfortunately, our local P-plate drivers, particularly those from Queensland, have become aware of the loophole in the legislation and they have a tendency to flout the law, which sets a dangerous precedent for New South Wales-based P-plate drivers. I foreshadow that I will speak in this place on a number of cross-border issues. Although I respect all members of this House and the way in which they represent their electorates, my electorate is rather unique because it has a line down the middle of the road that causes a number of problems, whether it is road safety, traffic legislation or building codes.

I have introduced the bill in an effort to save young people's lives. I am sure the Government would agree it is worthwhile, and would not stand in its way. New P-plate laws that will prohibit the number of passengers travelling in a vehicle with a P-plate driver after certain times will be introduced shortly. Once again, those laws will not apply to interstate P-plate drivers. Further legislation will be required to subject them to New South Wales laws. Queensland and Victoria identified similar problems, and passed appropriate legislation in 2006 to deal with cross-border P-plate drivers. The bill will bring us into line with Queensland and Victoria. Perhaps in future the States could work together to introduce a national code for provincial P-plate drivers. I commend the bill to the House.

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

#### **ROYAL REHABILITATION CENTRE SYDNEY SITE PROTECTION BILL 2007**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts.**

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove) [10.27 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney Site Protection Bill 2007 will protect the site of the Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney at Putney by ensuring that the City of Ryde Council remains the consent authority for any application to carry out development on the site. It will prohibit the carrying out of excessive development on the site by ensuring that satisfactory alternative arrangements are made for users of the site displaced by any development, including the Riding for the Disabled Association of New South Wales. It will protect certain buildings on the site from demolition or alteration and require them to be maintained by reserving part of the site as public open space. It will require community consultation in relation to the carrying out of development on the site and the management of that open space.

This is of significant concern not only to the people of Putney but also to those in the surrounding districts. This morning on 2GB with Jason Morrison I was privileged to present the concerns of the Weemala Residents and Advocates Committee. About 41 vulnerable residents have lived in Weemala for up to 50 years. The member for Hawkesbury, who shows a great deal of care and concern for his community, will understand—and I notice he agrees with me—these people must be protected. It is unfortunate that I have to raise in this House the fact that they will be thrown out of their homes in Putney.

I pay tribute to their carers, their loving family members and friends, who spend so much time with people who are not only wheelchair bound but also confined to bed as a result of various spinal and brain injuries. These people are going to be thrown out of their home and sent to, allegedly, community housing

because of the greed of the board of the Royal Ryde Rehabilitation Centre. These people live on site. It was originally set up as the Home for Incurables and was given, token value, to a board to ensure that these people would be looked after. There will be 800 units built on the site—an overdevelopment. I want to praise the Prime Minister for his stance on this issue. The Prime Minister has served his electorate well for more than three decades.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Tirelessly.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** Tirelessly. The member for Hawkesbury is spot on.

**Mr Ray Williams:** Passionately.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** The Prime Minister has a passionate commitment. He has served tirelessly not just the people of Bennelong but also the people of this country. I put on record that our country has not been better served by any Prime Minister in its history than by Prime Minister John Howard. These 41 individuals, the most vulnerable of our community, are more victims of the Minister for Planning Frank Sartor's planning policies in New South Wales.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** Shameful.

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** It is shameful. The member for Willoughby is spot on. We all suffer from the disgraceful, draconian policies of cranky Frankie, the Godzilla of planning who crashes his way through New South Wales. I will put on record an open letter the Prime Minister wrote to Frank Sartor, the Minister for Planning—or lack of planning—about the proposed development of the Royal Ryde Rehabilitation Centre. The Prime Minister wrote:

Dear Mr Sartor,

I write to voice the concern of many residents of Bennelong to the proposed development of the Royal Rehabilitation Centre, Sydney site at Ryde.

The plan you approved in March 2006 will see the development of up to 800 dwellings on just sixteen hectares of residual land on the site.

Although this matter falls within the responsibility of your government, I continue to receive telephone calls and letters from concerned local residents about this issue.

The residents are very concerned. He continues:

Ryde City Council has urged you to channel ingress and egress traffic onto Victoria Road, not Charles Street or Morrison Road. Traffic flows on Morrison Road are already 300 per cent above your Roads and Traffic Authority's own guidelines.

This is their own guidelines. The Roads and Traffic Authority's guidelines state that the traffic flows are 300 per cent above expected limits. That shows the Government's lack of planning and stupidity when it wants to add another 4,000 movements on that road. There was a fatality of an elderly resident—may God rest her soul—three weeks ago. An extra 4,000 movements is disgraceful.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Have you still got the poster up on your wall?

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS:** The member for Monaro seems to find the fatality of an old lady amusing.

**Pursuant to standing orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

## **RURAL COMMUNITIES IMPACT BILL 2007**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Debate resumed from 21 June 2007.**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [10.30 a.m.]: I support the Rural Communities Impacts Bill. This bill is an innovative and appropriate policy response to one of the greatest issues facing our great State—that is, the

challenge of uneven and inequitable growth and development. New South Wales can be divided up according to growth and development: the Newcastle-Sydney-Wollongong conurbation, which is struggling with overdevelopment; the coastal zone outside the metropolitan area, which is working to manage growth and development; and the rest of New South Wales, which all too often is faced with underdevelopment and a loss of investment.

This trend has been starkly demonstrated by Bernard Salt in *The Big Shift*, which examines the rural-city population shift. Mr Salt's statistics indicate that in 1900 there were 2.3 million people in inland and rural areas, and 100 years later there were 3.3 million. In the capital cities in 1900 there were 1.2 million people, and 100 years later there were 12.5 million people. The statistics are as stark for coastal cities. In 1900 there were 300,000 people living in coastal cities, and by 2000 there were 3.6 million people. The statistics are even more stark in the final quarter of the last century when the population in metropolitan areas grew at double the rate of rural areas. The city populations grew by 3.2 million and the rural population by just half a million. In New South Wales most of this unsustainable urbanisation occurred on Labor's watch.

To create a sustainable future for New South Wales, its diverse communities and culture and our unique natural environment, we must address the need to equalise growth. A big part of this process is to recognise the impact that planning instruments have on rural communities. That leads me to the specific part of the bill that I wish to commend—that is, the requirements in clauses 16 to 18 that a rural communities impacts statement must be prepared, exhibited and considered before the creation of an environmental planning instrument. The ability of the Minister for Planning to create an environmental planning instrument gives him enormous power over the future development of New South Wales. None of these environmental planning instruments is reviewable by this House; they are ultimately determined by ministerial, or should I say Sartorial, fiat. It is appropriate and indeed overdue that the Minister should be expressly required to consider the impacts of his decisions and of all planning instruments on rural communities—for example, the effect of such instruments on opportunities for growth, employment, education, transport and the protection of the natural environment.

My community of Pittwater is absorbing huge amounts of growth to the detriment of our precious local environment. Not even a generation ago koalas were commonplace in Avalon. Today they are virtually gone. Increasing traffic is taking a devastating toll on wildlife as crowded roads present a great risk to our disappearing native fauna. Pittwater has a median house price of well over \$750,000 and continued growth is making it increasingly unaffordable for young people. Pittwater has growth in density and traffic that we do not need. It detracts from our water quality, our environmental amenity and the local character of our communities, while other areas of the State are struggling to survive. Entire villages and hamlets are disappearing as jobs and opportunities are sucked into the vortex of the big cities. A wonderful rural lifestyle is becoming harder to obtain. Rural communities impact statements are an important device to ensure that governments are conscious of the consequences of their decisions on country areas. A great example of a rural communities impacts statements relates to the heritage listing of the rural community of Braidwood. A wonderful job was done focusing on the impacts on the community.

**Mr Steve Whan:** A great decision.

**Mr ROB STOKES:** As the member for Monaro interjects, it was a wonderful job. I commend this bill as an appropriate and overdue policy response to the problem of uneven growth in New South Wales.

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER** (Orange) [10.38 a.m.]: It gives me pleasure to speak on the Rural Communities Impacts Bill. I note with pleasure that the Acting-Speaker, the member for Baulkham Hills, is in the chair. Being the owner of a property near Rylstone that carries fine wool sheep, he understands the importance of this bill. The purpose of the Rural Communities Impacts Bill 2007 is to require Ministers to consider, by the preparation of rural communities impact statements, the likely impact of certain legislation and Government proposals on rural communities. According to the agreement in principle speech, the bill is intended to ensure that Government decisions are not made without due consideration of their impact upon rural communities. Similar bills were introduced in 2004 and 2006. I congratulate the Leader of The Nationals, Andrew Stoner, on reintroducing this bill. I hope the Government has an improved understanding and a more sympathetic approach to this proposal, which is intended to assist people living in country and regional New South Wales.

The bill will ensure that the Government is fully aware of the impact of its decisions on some of our most vulnerable communities and country people before decisions are made. It will require rural communities

impact statements to be prepared for any bill, regulation or environmental planning instrument that may affect rural communities. In 1996 the then Premier, Bob Carr, promised that any major changes proposed by government departments that would have an impact on rural New South Wales would be subject to rural communities impact statements. He said:

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

Surprise, surprise, that did not eventuate—hence the need during this term of Parliament for the Leader of The Nationals, Andrew Stoner, to reintroduce this bill in the hope of eliciting Government support. I am aware through contacts made with my electorate office and from speaking to people over past years that one of the most significant policy impacts on rural communities involves rural subdivisions. I note that an inquiry is under way currently. I hope we will have an outcome from an inquiry by the end of this month. We were told that the inquiry would make recommendations by the end of June, and time is running out.

We are trying to encourage people to take up residency in the bush for a tree-change lifestyle. We are encouraging them to move to major provincial towns such as Orange, Dubbo, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga. People who have moved from Sydney and overseas into provincial areas do not want to move into the central business district of provincial cities. When they move to the bush they want to enjoy a country lifestyle. A number of doctors, surgeons, teachers and other professionals have been encouraged to move out of Sydney to Orange and they want to buy their little piece of Australia. They have properties in sizes ranging from two hectares to 100 hectares on the outskirts of Orange. The same could be said for Mudgee. People have also moved there to enjoy a tree-change lifestyle.

If we do not have a sufficient quantity of rural blocks of land for sale two things will happen: first, we will fail to attract professionals that we need in rural areas to help our economy and add to our diversity and, second, the price of small vacant blocks or house properties will become out of kilter with the expectation of what a little piece of Australia might cost. We need to have sufficient relatively small blocks of land for people to purchase if we are to successfully encourage people to move from Sydney and from overseas. If we are fortunate enough to attract people from overseas, they should be able to choose the type of property they want.

However, for as long as I can remember the Government has prevaricated over the types of subdivisions that will be allowed, and a cloud hangs over the rural property market. I have heard that some councils have adopted subdivisions of 100 hectares and others have adopted subdivisions of 1,000 hectares. The councils do not know what subdivisions to allow, so the matter needs to be clarified. As The Nationals proposed in the lead-up to the March 2007 election, councils should be given the power to make decisions about subdivisions in relation to their size and location within their own local government area because they have a better understanding than the Government about what ratepayers require.

The adequacy of health services has a major impact on country lifestyles. Inadequate health services may result in people deciding not to move to the bush. There is a perception—and sadly in some cases the perception is a reality—that rural areas do not have the health services that a modern society requires. The impression is compounded as health services become fewer and farther between in remote and western areas of the State. The Federal Government has undertaken many initiatives to establish rural clinical schools to promote doctors being trained in country areas. Statistical and historical evidence shows that doctors, nurses and dentists who are trained in country towns tend to be retained in country towns when they graduate. History tells us in relation to general practitioners that if general practitioners are trained in country towns there is a good chance of retaining 82 per cent of those doctors. Although rural health services have a long way to go before they achieve modern standards, the Federal Government has provided assistance in the form of very strong initiatives. I congratulate the Federal Government on its \$62 million dentistry training package for country towns. There is a critical shortage of dentists in the public and private sectors.

Why should country people have to travel to Sydney to obtain specialised health services? Although there is no real expectation that country towns will provide every medical service, far more health services could be provided in country towns than is the case at present. I know that elderly people especially have a dire fear of having to go to Sydney. It is stressful enough for them when they need to have an operation even in their own town, let alone when they have to seek treatment in Sydney. History shows that people who live in far-flung western areas often put off having an operation because of their fear of travelling to Sydney, partly because of their inability to pay for accommodation for their supporting partner or friends to accompany them. For those reasons, we need to have as many medical services in country towns as is possible. I note that the State Government promised Orange a new hospital, but four years have elapsed since the original promise was made.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** Oh, rubbish! You are ridiculous. You are the most ungrateful member of this Chamber.

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER:** The Government promised that construction would commence on the new hospital in 2002 and that it would be completed by 2005, but the project has not started. It was supposed to be finished by 2005.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Wayne Merton):** Order! I call the member for Bathurst to order. The member for Orange has the call. He will be heard in silence. The member for Bathurst will cease interjecting.

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER:** When the hospital project commences I will thank the Government. The project is years late already, with no starting date in view. Aside from that problem, other detriments associated with living in country towns include country rail lines continually being threatened with closure. Over the past few months attempts to have the rail line upgraded in Mudgee and Gulgong have been unsuccessful. That rail line has been threatened with closure. The locals understand that the Government intends to suspend services on the line as early as this week. Once the services are suspended the track will go downhill. The freight service is already limited. The Government appears hell bent in its attitude that anyone who wants to use the line must upgrade it rather than its being a Government or taxpayer responsibility. That is a disgrace. Only the operator of a coalmine would be prepared to upgrade the line to the required standard to carry genuine freight. I congratulate the residents of Mudgee and Gulgong who are desperately trying to keep the line open.

With regard to health services, I hope the Government is working as hard as possible behind the scenes to replace the two doctors who have resigned from the Gulgong medical practice. Mudgee general practitioners are providing as many services as possible, and I have an assurance from the Greater Western Area Health Service that it is doing all it can to replace the doctors as soon as possible. Today's doctors have different expectations and it is hard to attract them to small practices where they are required to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is a lot easier to attract doctors to a large practice that allows for rostering. We can only half blame the doctors for their attitude. Much more can be done to attract doctors to small towns. I hope that the two vacant positions at Gulgong are filled as quickly as possible. This Government has closed 32 obstetric facilities in small country towns, which has caused problems for pregnant women. I accept that some of those closures were warranted, but not all 32. It is totally unacceptable to expect a woman suffering difficulties with a pregnancy to travel 400 or 500 kilometres to give birth. That is another disincentive for people living in country areas.

As I noted, the former Premier promised in 1996 to introduce rural impact statements, but they never saw the light of day. I hope that the Government will accept this sound bill, which will impact on all rural communities. It will give local government direction and provide surety not only to people living in country areas but also to those thinking of moving to the country that facilities will be provided and that their standard of life will be equal to if not better than the standard of life enjoyed by those living in the city. If the provision of facilities is equal, the country lifestyle is a bonus. About one-third of the State's population lives outside the metropolitan area and those people deserve a voice. If the Rural Communities Impacts Bill is passed it will provide that voice. It will ensure that the Government is fully aware of the impact of its decisions on country communities. There has never been a greater need for this legislation than now; never before has New South Wales been faced with such a Sydney-centric Cabinet. Only two of the current Cabinet members hail from regional New South Wales.

**Mr Gerard Martin:** You can't count.

**Mr RUSSELL TURNER:** The member should tell me how many more there are. Country Labor is a spent force. There might be a couple of Country Labor members in the Chamber at the moment, but its numbers are declining. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN (Willoughby) [10.53 a.m.]:** I am pleased to support the Rural Communities Impacts Bill. The object of this bill is to require Ministers to consider the likely impact of certain legislation and other Government proposals on rural communities. I commend the Leader of The Nationals for introducing the bill. I also commend my Coalition colleagues who have raised their concerns about this Government's lack of consideration of rural and regional areas. I will address two parts of the bill that are particularly relevant to the Transport portfolio. I refer members to part 3, clause 9, which is headed "Assessment of likely impacts of proposed Acts on rural communities". This clause provides that a Minister or Government member who intends to introduce a bill must ensure before the bill is considered by Cabinet that a rural

communities impact statement has been prepared providing information about the likely impact of the legislation on the rural community. The Minister or member must have given consideration to that likely impact.

I also refer members to part 6, clause 19, which is headed "Assessment of likely impact of proposed Cabinet decisions on rural communities". It provides that a rural communities impact statement is to be prepared in relation to certain decisions before Cabinet and that it must be distributed to Cabinet Ministers and considered by them before any decision is made. I raise this issue because, had the State Government carefully considered the impact on rural communities of some of its decisions about transport services, those decisions would surely not have been made. I refer members to the Government's failure to provide sufficient support to CountryLink services. The Government has imposed an unfair pensioner booking fee on CountryLink services, closed CountryLink travel centres across New South Wales and increased fares.

Those moves are having a huge impact on people in country areas and on people from Sydney and other parts of New South Wales who travel to the country. Had this bill been in place when those decisions were being discussed, the relevant Ministers—Minister Watkins, in particular—would have been forced to produce an impact statement to determine the effect on country communities of their failure to support CountryLink. I am referring not only to the impact on tourism, which is substantial, and the impact on members of families who can no longer visit one another as often as they did because of the pensioner booking, but also to the impact on the living standards of many people across New South Wales, particularly those in country and regional areas who rely on CountryLink services.

The State Government has also refused to adopt the Coalition's policy of reopening the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line. That has had an impact on many people. The member for Tweed and the member for Clarence, who are in the Chamber, have been particularly impacted by that decision. Had this bill been in place, the Minister for Transport would have been required to produce a rural impact statement. He would have been required to talk to people in these communities to find out the potential impact of that decision. When he did his homework he would have realised that he could not make that decision. They are but two examples of the potential of this legislation.

The member for Orange mentioned his concerns about the future of a railway line running through his electorate. The New South Wales Coalition committed to resuming passenger rail services from Lithgow to Gulgong. Services on parts of that line are now under threat. Again, had the Minister for Transport been obliged to produce a rural impact statement he would have had to listen to what communities were saying. He would have had to tell his Cabinet colleagues that, given the potential impact on rural communities, the proposal must be rejected. However, that consultation process has been totally ignored. The Government does not care about rural and regional communities. That is demonstrated by its lack of support for public transport in rural and regional areas.

The 2006 RailCorp annual report showed that 1.7 million people made a journey on a CountryLink service in the preceding year. That was a decrease of 10,000 passengers compared with the previous year. The 2005-06 figure is nearly 800,000 passengers below the figure posted in 1996-97 and the lowest CountryLink patronage figure recorded since Labor came to power. After 12 years nearly 800,000 passengers have stopped using CountryLink services, and that is a huge concern. It is no wonder that has happened, because the Government has failed to support CountryLink. Last year CountryLink trains failed to meet on-time running targets for 31 of the 45 weeks that were surveyed. Decisions taken by Cabinet and the Minister, and their failure to provide sufficient support to CountryLink services, are prime examples of why this bill is so necessary. If the State Government were obliged to look properly at these issues and to put together rural impact statements to determine the results on rural communities of their decisions it would not have taken those decisions.

I mentioned that the pensioner booking fee is having a huge impact on many people in country and regional areas. I thank the many commuters, pensioners and their families as well as the peak pensioner groups who have contacted my office to express their concerns. Since the Government introduced this booking fee in March 2006 pensioners have been slugged a total of \$10,000 a day. The booking fee is charged on the voucher system, which is supposed to be free. However, since March 2006 any bookings on the CountryLink service that are cancelled or changed are still charged the fee. People have told me that they had to cancel their booking for health or family reasons, yet they were obliged to pay that fee. Since that tax was imposed 53,000 senior citizens have been forced off the rails—and the Government is scrounging \$10,000 a day in fees.

In the first eight months of the introduction of that fee \$2.6 million was raised. This matter is of enormous concern and impacts on tourism in rural and remote community areas, where train lines are an

important way of bringing tourists to those communities. Obviously, tourism is under threat because of the imposition of the booking fee. Many families in rural areas do not see each other as often because of the imposition of that booking fee. Many people who need to travel to Sydney or other centres for urgent medical or other appointments are suffering because of that booking fee. The lack of support for CountryLink by the Government and Minister Watkins is a prime example of how the bill will obligate Ministers to carry out proper impact statements and require them to give significant consideration to the impact of their decisions on rural and regional communities. The State Government has failed to do that, especially for transport services.

The changes to CountryLink over the past 12 years are just appalling, as are the changes to country rail services in the past 12 years. The Government often ignores good and sound advice, but perhaps if this bill had been in place the Government would have been obligated to consult with communities and to incorporate the impact of their consultations in their decisions before the introduction of regulations, guidelines, taxation or legislation. I commend the Leader of The Nationals for introducing the bill and I support my Coalition colleagues. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL** (Clarence) [11.04 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to talk on the Rural Communities Impacts Bill, an important bill that was introduced by the Leader of The Nationals, Andrew Stoner. As usual, it takes The Nationals, the true voice of country and regional New South Wales, to bring an important matter to the fore. He asked not only where is Country Labor but also who is Country Labor? Country Labor should be standing with The Nationals on this issue to ensure that country people have proper representation and proper consideration before any bills are passed that impact on them. In 1996 the then Premier, Bob Carr, promised that any major changes proposed by government departments for rural New South Wales would be subjected to a rural communities impact statement.

That was an ironclad guarantee, and we know what they are worth because we know what happened to the ironclad guarantee that a bridge would be built across the Clarence River, no matter who won government. A similar ironclad guarantee was given that \$7 million would be spent on operating theatres at Grafton. Ironclad guarantees are pretty soft when given by those on the other side of Parliament. In 2004 Mineral Resources NSW, NSW Agriculture, NSW Fisheries and State Forests NSW amalgamated to become a super department, the Department of Primary Industries. At that time it was proposed to sell a number of agricultural research stations, including one at Grafton. It is obvious that the Minister has little understanding of the operation of the Grafton Agricultural Research Station. The operation of that new super department is virtually identical to that of the research station. The station's fishery research included silver perch, its forestry research included hardwood plantations and its agricultural research included weed control, beef and soya bean crops, an alternative to sugar cane on the North Coast. Soya has become one of the biggest areas of production on the North Coast.

Legislation was introduced that provided for the closure of agricultural stations, but without any rural impact statements or community consultation. It took the community as a whole to protest, to write letters to newspapers highlighting the issues, and to hold multiple meetings with the Minister to get some action. This matter was raised in Parliament many times before the Government finally realised that it had an asset that it should not close, because it may lose out if it did so, and because of the impact on the community of that closure. The research station was a valuable asset for the Department of Primary Industries. Community angst over the proposed closure of the agricultural research station and the failure of the Government to carry out serious community consultation on the economic, social and environmental impacts of the closure led to the Leader of The Nationals introducing this bill.

Country Labor members, whoever they are, should support the bill because they represent rural communities. The Native Vegetation Act and the Threatened Special Conservation Act are needed, but they should have involved community consultation. They should provide not only for the environment and conservation but also for the economic and social impacts on communities. There needs to be a fine balance. If a rural impact statement or community impact statement were prepared on each bill introduced into Parliament a better, fairer and more sustainable outcome could be reached. That outcome would be supported by affected people in rural communities, farmers, graziers, fishermen, and others.

Two years ago I visited an 800-hectare property at Bungalwalgon, near Casino. The owner brought the property to grow tea-tree, as it is a natural tea-tree growing area. He cleared small parcels of tea-tree in the low scrub area and replanted commercial tea-tree. On his property he had only 150 hectares for the tea-tree plantation. He needed to clear another 50 hectares. This farmer, who is a real environmentalist, nurtures fauna

and flora in the area and takes pride in the fact that he has on his property some beautiful natural billabongs, some of which are 20 to 30 feet deep, that have abundant bird and animal life. This true conservationist, who works around the natural environment, could not even obtain permission to clear the extra 50 hectares of scrub to make his property a viable operation.

The Government said it would implement legislation to enable it to buy land in national parks and to pay people to be custodians of these properties, but this farmer has received no assistance. Even though his property was declared a unique, pristine and high-value conservation area he got no help from the Government to make it viable and maintain an ecological and commercial balance, with an emphasis on the environment and conservation. These legislative provisions are so strict that there is no room for movement or compromise. This Government would achieve a far better environmental outcome if it ensured that this farmer was a custodian of that property. He sold everything he had and borrowed money to buy what he calls his paradise and to make a living out of it. He should be the true custodian of his property.

A farmer near Whiporie mortgaged himself to the hilt to acquire a 1,000-hectare property. He wanted to clear timber from 200 hectares and run cattle on the property and grow tea-trees. The farmer, who has to go back out west to work, comes home two days every three weeks to see his family. Last year when he came into my office he was in tears and on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He said that he was not permitted by legislation to run cattle on his property to pay off some of his mortgage. The Government should ensure that community impact statements are prepared to establish what impact its legislation might have on custodians of this land. These people are not there to rape and pillage the land and leave nothing for their children; 99.9 per cent of them are there to ensure that there is equity in their property and a balance with the environment, and that it is sustainable for their children and grandchildren.

Unfortunately, this Government, which relies heavily on Greens preferences, runs the environmental or conservation line and at the same time cuts back funding for the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. Towns such as Iluka, located on pristine waterways that do not have a sewerage system, are not receiving any funding for the implementation of such a system. Those areas are becoming contaminated as a result of septic tank seepage into waterways. The Government does not provide money to achieve better environmental outcomes for local communities and it prevents people on the land from earning a living just to ensure that it receives cheap Green votes in Sydney—votes obtained through fear and misinformation.

Reference was made earlier to the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line and to the need for the Government to ensure that a rural communities impact statement is prepared. That rail service requires major upgrades. If the Government maintained XPT services or introduced light rail the maintenance costs on that rail line would be cut in half. Commuters would be provided with public transport from Casino to Murwillumbah and hopefully down the track the rail line would be extended to the Gold Coast. People in Sydney take public transport for granted. If they miss a bus they have to wait for only 5, 10 or 15 minutes for the next one. If country commuters miss a train they have to wait years for the next one. They probably will have to wait until the Coalition is re-elected before this service is restored.

If services on the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line were restored they would connect five different communities. The services, which might be available on four days a week, would provide transport for people to travel from the country to the coast and vice versa. It would boost tourism in the area and provide transport for commuters working in other parts of the State. However, that service is not being provided because this Government wants to save a few dollars. An impact statement should also have been prepared in relation to pensioner booking fees. That might have no impact on people in Sydney but people in the country, and especially war veterans, rely on XPT services from the North Coast to Sydney so that they can seek repatriation benefits or attend hospitals for treatment.

Pensioners now have to pay about \$40 on top of the cost of their tickets. That fee will make it difficult for a large number of aged pensioners who live on North Coast to travel to Sydney. The Government imposed additional fees on the fishing industry in the form of fishery management charges, environmental research charges and other ongoing costs. The fishing industry is now facing an uphill battle with cheap imports and high fuel prices. Last year one fisherman told me that he had been in the industry for 50 years. In the past, when things got tough he would tie up his boat and go cane cutting. In those days he had to pay only a couple of dollars in mooring fees and other fees. Fees now cost him \$2,500 to \$3,000 and mooring fees cost him another \$10,000 to \$15,000.

The Government imposed these additional costs without consulting industry about its ability to absorb these additional fees. These additional fees impact not just on fishermen and their businesses but also on families and communities that rely on those businesses. I am sure that those members of the Labor Party who are in the Chamber are interested to hear what I am saying because this legislation obviously impacts on their rural communities. The Government must ensure that any new legislation does not impact adversely on people in country New South Wales. The bill contains a definition of "rural community", probably for the benefit of members of the Labor Party and some Liberal members. Clause 3 defines the meaning of a rural community. The wording in this bill is akin to the wording that is used to explain something to children in kindergarten. Clause 3 (1) (a) states:

The Sydney metropolitan area, that is the area constituted by the local government areas of ...

The bill then details all the suburbs in Sydney. However, it fails to make any mention of all the country areas.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [11.19 a.m.]: I had not planned to speak on the Rural Communities Impacts Bill. The member for Clarence said that parts of it were kindergarten stuff. I simply remind him that the Leader of The Nationals introduced the bill. I have been sitting here for the past hour, doing my morning Chamber duty, and I cannot stand to be lectured any longer by members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals about the impacts of the Government's legislation and actions on rural communities. I will address the issues that they raised. It is asking a lot of me to do Chamber duty in this place on private members' day and be lectured by Coalition members. I challenge them to provide a list of what they did for rural communities when they were in office.

The member for Willoughby, the shadow Minister for Transport, said that the Government should have prepared a rural impact statement before it introduced the CountryLink booking fee and closed a rail line on the North Coast. I ask the shadow Minister: Where was the Greiner Government's impact statement when it stopped the rail service to Griffith? Who reinstated that service? It was a Labor Government. Where was the impact statement when the Coalition Government closed the rail service to Broken Hill? Who reinstated that service? It was a Labor Government. To pick up a point raised by the Minister for Transport, where was the rural impact statement when the Leader of the Opposition's team bulldozed Darnick railway station? For that matter, did the Greiner Government prepare a rural impact statement when it introduced a booking fee for CountryLink services? As I have often said, when it comes to credibility those opposite have none but when it comes to hypocrisy their cup runneth over.

The member for Bathurst, who is a Country Labor member, reminded me that the Greiner and Fahey governments closed 14 rail lines. Yet Coalition members claim that the Government should consider the impacts of its actions. As I said yesterday during my speech on the budget estimates and related papers, before Coalition members talk about what they will do in the future they should look to their past. It is a sorry history. I challenge any Opposition member to identify the one rail service or piece of rolling stock that a Coalition government provided. It was the Silver City Comet in 1938—and a later Coalition Government got rid of it. Those opposite have a poor record when it comes to providing rail services and rolling stock for country New South Wales. Cabinet discusses the impacts of legislation on rural communities. It is part of the process and it is in the Cabinet minutes. We have had such debates for many years. Cabinet discusses the potential impacts of any legislation before it is introduced in this place. So the bill before us is seeking something that the Government does already.

Being lectured by the member for Willoughby is bad enough, but the member for Clarence then treated us to a lecture on issues such as the environment. I think he referred to "true conservationists". The following old adage is true of The Nationals: If it moves shoot it, and if it grows chop it down. Yet members of The Nationals tell the Government to consider conservation outcomes, recognise true conservation values and so on. The Nationals voted against the vegetation legislation. Of course that bill impacted on rural communities—it involved clearing land and so on. But we cannot be short-sighted: What about the long-term impact on rural communities if we do not do something about land clearing? Are The Nationals the only group left in the world who believe land clearing should continue unabated and uncontrolled forever?

The member for Clarence referred to water management, and accused the Government of appeasing the greenies. I do not think the Greens are particularly visionary; Labor governments leave them for dead when it comes to caring for the environment. The Government has nothing to apologise for. We introduced legislation that improved our waterways. It can be argued that introducing controls on water allocations will have an immediate, short-term impact on rural communities. But I challenge The Nationals to consider the long-term implications of not managing our water quality and water allocations. If Labor had not been elected in 1995,

imagine what the land-clearing situation would be like today! What would our rivers and water quality be like today? If Labor had not been elected in 1995 imagine the state of our environment today? What would have happened if The Nationals had been in charge of natural resources legislation? Our imagination should have no bounds when it comes to considering those hypothetical questions.

The member for Clarence mentioned jobs, the relocation of research stations and so on. When Labor came to office in 1995 more than 10 per cent of New South Wales Department of Agriculture employees worked within 40 kilometres of the Sydney General Post Office. About eight years later we had reduced that figure to 1 per cent. The Labor Government continued the Greiner Government's policy—to give credit where it is due, it was introduced by Ian Armstrong—of decentralising the Department of Agriculture. But did the Coalition Opposition care about rural communities and the impact of new jobs in country towns when it moved motions in this place condemning the Government and me, as the then Minister for Agriculture, for having the hide to send Department of Agriculture jobs—and the Rydalmere agricultural research station in particular—to various cities and towns throughout New South Wales? The Nationals did not care about the impact on rural communities when the Government transferred jobs from Rydalmere and from other Department of Agriculture agencies to country towns. The Coalition's record of transferring jobs to regional communities is very poor.

The member for Clarence mentioned the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program. I challenge the member for Tweed, who is sitting opposite me, to ask the relevant Minister on notice—if he does not want to, I will—to provide a list of every country town in rural New South Wales that has had its sewerage system upgraded, its water—

**Mr Geoff Provest:** Two in my electorate have been waiting four years.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** I will repeat the challenge: Pick up the blue piece of paper on the table and write a question on notice for the relevant Minister. He should ask how many country towns have had their sewerage systems upgraded and their water supplies secured. He should ask also how many have benefited from recycling projects. I urge the member for Tweed to put that question on the notice paper. How much money has Labor spent on the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program since it came to office in 1995? That will put paid to The Nationals' arguments about what is happening with water and sewage in country towns. We are proud of our record. Opposition members pick out a budget line item and say, "The money is down this year" or "That money was not spent." But the Government has an elaborate and comprehensive program that involves consulting country communities and country councils before water and sewerage works commence. I recall talking to the Mayor of Wakool, Mr Shannon—who is now retired—about upgrading the town's water supply and sewerage works. We did extensive work with that community.

**Mr Thomas George:** That was when you were Minister.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** It was when the Labor Government was in office. The member for Lismore continues to mislead the House and rural communities. In the 30 seconds remaining I will make one point. The member for Willoughby's criticisms of the Government are unfounded. The record of the Liberals and The Nationals on delivering transport services to New South Wales is appalling. They should never stand in this House and criticise anybody. It is appropriate to note that when it comes to decentralisation of jobs to the country, an issue raised in this debate, it was Coalition members who supported no confidence motions and censure motions to stop government jobs going to regional New South Wales.

[*Interruption*]

The member for Lismore should check *Hansard*. His name is on the list of voters trying to stop government jobs going to rural New South Wales. I challenge them to put on the notice paper a question asking how many country towns have benefited from Labor governments upgrading their water and sewerage programs. The bill requires the Government to consider the impacts on regional communities of any legislation. It is unnecessary because this Labor Government already does that, and has been doing that since 1995, when Labor was returned to government after the seven dark years of Coalition government. I thank the House for its attention.

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

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

### Membership

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

That:

- (1) Anthony Paul Stewart be appointed to serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters in place of Diane Beamer, discharged; and
- (2) a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Suspension of Standing Orders: Routine of Business

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

That standing orders be suspended to provide that:

- (1) following the completion of the consideration of General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 2, Government Business take precedence over General Business until 2.15 p.m.;
- (2) Government Business be considered following the completion of private members' statements; and
- (3) from the commencement of private members' statements and until the rising of the House, no divisions or quorums be called.

## HEALTH SERVICES RESOURCES

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.32 a.m.]: I move:

That this House notes the Government's failure to provide sufficient resources for frontline health services to guarantee that hardworking doctors, nurses and allied health professions can meet the needs of patients and their families.

I move the motion particularly in the context of the recent State budget. I will focus on some comments that have been made by health professionals in relation to that budget. The Australian Medical Association issued a press release on 19 June 2007 to express its concern that "medical staffing levels are not adequate to deliver safe and effective care." The association said that more senior doctors were needed in hospitals for patient care and for the education of the increased numbers of medical students now undergoing training. The association referred to the need for State-funded clinical educators in public hospitals.

It is ironic that the State Government has always tried to shift the blame for a lack of doctors and a lack of training places in universities on the Federal Government. Although there has been an increase in the number of training places provided by the Federal Government, those doctors are unable to complete their training because the State Government is refusing to fund clinical educators and to provide for their placement in public hospitals. That is the view expressed by the Australian Medical Association in its press release. The association goes on to say that it is continuing to receive reports about "cuts to services, particularly in rural and regional areas" and states further:

There are continuing incidents of concern in emergency services, due to lack of senior personnel, equipment or beds.

The association referred to health infrastructure announcements made this year. Dr Andrew Keegan, President of the Australian Medical Association, says:

... a number of the Budget initiatives were announced last year and others remain in the planning stage. NSW has lagged in spending on mental and rural health over many years, and our public hospitals are still under stress. There is a long way to go.

Those views were echoed by the Rural Doctors Association. It is ironic that this House has just been debating the need for government and Cabinet to consider and assess the impact of their decisions on rural and regional communities and the allocation of resources through the budget process. The Rural Doctors Association, a very fine peak body representing doctors working in country New South Wales, pointed to the need "to immediately invest additional funding in training and other support measures for the state's rural doctors" and said:

In the past 12 years alone, the number of rural GP obstetricians in NSW has more than halved—from 257 in 1994 to just 123 statewide in 2006 ... The number of rural GP anaesthetists has shrunk from 128 to 88 in the same period, and the number of rural maternity units has been cut from 67 to 36.

The Rural Doctors Association, through its President Dr Les Woollard, points out that the Government "continues to scrape together *just \$3 million annually* to provide training for rural doctors in procedural work such as obstetrics, anaesthetics, general surgery and emergency care." That is a disgrace because many reports have pointed out that the health of country patients is worse than that of their counterparts in the city. It is unfair to the people working in our system—the very dedicated and hardworking doctors, nurses and other allied health professionals—that they do not have those resources so that they can do the right thing by their patients.

I refer now to some consequences of the lack of funding. The medical associations spoke about difficulty in meeting the needs of patients through emergency departments. The Government was very slow to post this year's data for emergency departments. The most recent data available is for March 2007. According to that data 35,611 patients were not seen within clinically appropriate times for the urgency of their conditions in our emergency departments. That is 23 per cent of patients who went through the triage system in hospitals. I would like Government members who will oppose the motion to explain to the doctors, nurses and the more than 35,500 patients why they think that is acceptable. How could they rightly claim that their Government is providing the resources necessary to enable these very hardworking clinicians to do the right thing?

In addition, 21 per cent of patients who required admission to hospital for further treatment—towards or for emergency procedures in operating theatres—were not seen within the benchmark of eight hours. I want to point to some hospitals where the struggle is greatest. At Nepean Hospital 1,841 patients, or 44 per cent of those who went through the triage system, were not treated in time. That is an unbelievably high figure.

It is ironic that the member who spoke in this place before me was the member for Mount Druitt, a Labor member. It is a shame he is not in the Chamber because 42 per cent of patients who were triaged at Mount Druitt Hospital were not seen within clinically appropriate times. At Port Macquarie the figure was 41 per cent; at Westmead, 39 per cent; at Coffs Harbour, 36 per cent; at Blacktown, 36 per cent; at Wyong, 35 per cent; and at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, 33 per cent. That means that 1,300 children waited longer than they should have, according to the seriousness of their condition, to be seen in the emergency department. At Lismore 32 per cent of patients were not triaged within clinically appropriate times. At the Prince of Wales the figure was 31 per cent and at Dubbo it was also 31 per cent. I could keep going. In March this year some 55,972 patients—effectively a figure of 56,000—were on elective surgery waiting lists, which is more than 25 per cent more than the number of patients on the elective waiting list when the Labor Government was first elected on a promise to halve hospital waiting lists. At that time 44,707 patients were on the waiting list.

Patients on the elective surgery waiting list who were treated in March had waited 2.58 months—nearly three months—for treatment. In March 1995, when the Labor Government promised to halve hospital waiting lists, the waiting time was one month. Things have gone from bad to worse. Hospitals with the largest number of patients waiting for elective surgery are John Hunter Hospital with 3,489, Gosford Hospital with 2,500, Concord hospital with nearly 2,000, Bankstown hospital with 1,800, Sydney Hospital and Sydney Eye Hospital just over 1,700, Coffs Harbour hospital with just over 1,700, Wagga Wagga hospital with just over 1,700, Liverpool Hospital with about 1,700 and the Children's Hospital at Westmead with 1,600. Why do we have such a problem in our hospitals?

Government members will rave on about extra funding for Health in this year's budget. The reality is that when the 4 per cent pay increases to Crown employees are costed in, the Government needed an extra \$285 million just to break even. When the new contract arrangements that were negotiated with visiting medical officers—I think it will still happen, and the Australian Medical Association would like to know if it does not—are costed in, the Government needed an extra \$87 million. When an inflation rate of 8.6 per cent for the non-wage component of health expenses is costed in, which was the average over the past five years, the Government needed an extra \$242 million. The total is \$614 million.

When I compared this year's Health budget to last year's revised budget I realised that it is not nearly enough. The figures show that the Government needs \$559 million more than was spent last year. That means that the Health budget is a long way short of providing the amount needed just to keep up with pay increases and inflation. If members opposite want to refer to the budget I would like them to explain exactly what services will be cut, how the waiting lists will blow out and how much longer patients in emergency departments will have to wait for treatment.

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.42 a.m.]: The Iemma Government's 2007-08 reveals a record \$12.5 billion for the vital Health portfolio. This is yet another example of our ongoing

efforts to improve and expand public services, and meet our election commitments. The Health budget now represents 28 per cent of the total State budget. It continues to build on the Iemma Government's achievements to deliver essential health services to the people of New South Wales. But, perhaps more significantly, the budget marks an important shift towards early intervention services through health promotion, disease prevention, and health care services at home and in the community. This new focus represents a concerted effort from the State Government to keep people healthy and out of hospital. I emphasise that this new focus will not come at the expense of investment in acute care services. Rather, the 2007-08 budget will ensure that our doctors, nurses and allied health professionals have the resources they need to respond to increasing pressure on the health system.

New recurrent initiatives outlined in this year's Health budget include \$54 million for improved access to hospital and community-based treatment, and \$6 million for five intensive care beds and three neonatal intensive care beds, including a flexi cot to assist twins or other multiple births. The 2007-08 budget also represents a record expenditure on Health capital works. This year we will invest \$714 million on capital works as part of a \$2.4 billion commitment to Health capital works over four years. We have also dedicated new funding of \$35.8 million over four years for nurse recruitment, and new training and retention initiatives. A further \$46.5 million will be allocated in 2007-08 to our ongoing Investing in Nurses initiatives, with new funding of \$6 million over four years for 30 new nurse practitioners in nursing and midwifery and \$8 million over four years for 1,600 scholarships for registered and enrolled nurses. Some \$2.5 million will be provided over four years for 125 rural midwives to undergo additional education, and for a further 125 scholarships to attract midwives to rural communities.

The Iemma Government's 2007-08 budget also includes \$8 million over four years to establish 12 new after-hours general practitioner clinics, which were announced during the election campaign. These clinics are a new initiative and will help to ease the burden on emergency departments, and give hardworking families across the State access to the services they need. The New South Wales Government's 2007-08 budget also provides an additional \$8 million for oral health, bringing the annual allocation to \$138 million. Some \$4 million of these new funds will be used to reduce waiting lists for children. The remainder will be targeted at increasing the number of dental therapists and hygienists, and expanding rural oral health centres. In line with the new early intervention approach the budget dedicates an extra \$6.5 million over four years to anti-obesity and healthy living campaigns.

The budget also delivers on our commitment to provide \$14.2 million over four years to establish the New South Wales Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening Program. The budget will also improve access to health services in regional and rural areas. Approximately 38.8 per cent of the budget will be allocated to rural and regional New South Wales, which means that \$3.7 billion will be spent on rural and regional health services. Rural and regional areas will benefit from \$12.2 million over four years to establish new one-stop shop primary and community health services facilities called HealthOne. The first roll-out will establish a HealthOne in Corowa, Cootamundra, Molong, Rylstone and Manilla. These facilities will focus on health promotion, illness prevention and early intervention to ease the burden of ill-health. This is all part of the Government's commitment to improving health care services in the State and providing front-line health services to meet the needs of health professionals, patients and their families.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens) [11.48 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Our hospitals and our system for the provision of health care are in crisis. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Hunter region. The statistics are damning. Even the Government, which exercises an almost Stalinist-level of control over the figures its departments release for fear of harming its electoral chances, cannot hide from the fact that our hospitals are in trouble. In March 2007, 674 emergency department patients in the Hunter New England Area Health Service waited more than eight hours for a hospital bed, and 256 of those were at John Hunter Hospital. The John Hunter Hospital is the largest and, effectively, the only public hospital serving the Hunter constituency. Patients are not just waiting too long to be admitted; they are waiting longer than they should even to be treated. At John Hunter Hospital, 14 per cent, or 654 patients, were not treated in the required time.

Ambulance officers complain about ambulances being turned away from the emergency department at both John Hunter Hospital and Maitland Hospital. What is the Government's solution? It has no solution. It has gone back on its healthcare promises to my electorate, to the people of Port Stephens. The Government committed extra resources for the Tomaree Community Hospital, but what was in the 2007 budget papers? Nothing, not one red cent, for this community, which is crying out for more general practitioners, more nurses,

and services that live up to the name of their facility, which was given to it by the Government in a cynical ploy to make it appear as though it was fixing the problem. People from Nelson Bay have to travel 60 kilometres to the John Hunter Hospital when they need medical attention. They have no other choice, but what happens when they get there?

When it comes to surgery waiting lists, John Hunter Hospital is again the worst offender for damning statistics. There are 3,489 people who are currently waiting for elective surgery at John Hunter Hospital. That is more than any other hospital in the State and an increase of more than 500 since Labor first took office: 3,489 is an incredible, unbelievable figure. To put it in perspective, John Hunter Hospital has almost 1,000 more patients on its waiting list than the hospital with the next longest list, which is Gosford Hospital to the south. Labor's failure is far reaching, not only to the Hunter but to the Central Coast as well. Members opposite—and it is sad that a great many of them represent electorates in the Hunter—have no idea what is happening in the world beyond Sussex Street and Macquarie Street.

Across the Hunter New England Area Health Service there are nearly 8,000 people waiting, many in agony, for their operations. The number has risen by more than 1,000 since Labor first took office in 1995. The Government should take careful note of these figures if it wants the jewel in the Hunter's electoral crown, Port Stephens, to ever again be represented by a Labor member. The people of Port Stephens are angry enough to turn their backs on the Government, the Premier and the revolving door health Ministers, who have failed them in the past and have given no indication they will not fail them again. The Government has failed the John Hunter Hospital with regard to capital expenditure. In the previous budget the John Hunter Hospital access building was supposed to be completed within 12 months. This year's budget shows it will not be completed until 2008, a blow-out of two years. Originally the total cost of the project was estimated at \$97.4 million, but that has increased now to \$101.4 million.

When a government's surplus hinges on Federal tax credits, one would think that government would be more frugal and more economical in its spending, but not this Government. The John Hunter Hospital's second access project was first announced in the 2005-06 budget and was to be completed in 2006. This year's budget says it will be completed in 2008, another two-year delay. Estimated total costs for this project have blown out from \$4.7 million to \$7.5 million. The people of Nelson Bay would not mind a budget blow-out on their hospital, but it is hard to multiply the zero dollar investment the Government has made in the Tomaree Community Hospital.

During the election campaign the Government made a commitment, on behalf of its candidate who is an ambulance officer, to construct a new ambulance station at Nelson Bay. Now the State Labor Government has made a complete fool of this gentleman, who is now the preselected candidate for the Federal electorate of Paterson, by going back on its promise of a \$1.5 million replacement for this inappropriate facility. Instead the Government has offered a measly \$170,000 for what could only be a cosmetic upgrade. The people of New South Wales have already noted the failure of the Government to provide the front-line health resources that would guarantee health professionals will be able to meet the needs of patients and their families. The Opposition has noted this failure and brought it before the House today. When will the Government take note of its own failures and seek to have them rectified? It must do so soon, as the lives of thousands of Hunter residents are at risk.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER** (North Shore—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.53 a.m.], in reply: I will respond briefly to comments made by the member for Wallsend. Predictably, her comments were based on budget notes provided by the Minister or the Minister's office. Her response to the motion did not take into account in any way the increase in employee-related expenses or other operating expenses. The amounts allocated in this year's budget are less than those allocated in last year's budget, and the member for Wallsend referred to new budget initiatives but failed to say why the Government is still not explaining whose jobs and which services will be cut to pay for them.

The prevention initiatives referred to by the member for Wallsend were part of the Coalition's policy prior to the State election, but some initiatives, such as the after hours general practice clinics, are funded by the Commonwealth Government. If she does not know that, perhaps she should talk to general practitioners and find out which level of government pays for their services. The clinics are paid for by the Commonwealth Government, and so are the one-stop shops. I have spoken to many general practitioners who will be involved in the provision of these services, but they are not front-line services in hospitals and they will be partly funded by

the Commonwealth Government. That is hardly an initiative for the State Government to crow about considering it is a State Government responsibility.

The reason for the increasing demand for treatment in emergency departments is the backlog in elective surgery. Doctors are not able to get their patients admitted to hospital so either the patient becomes more ill and ends up in the emergency department or the doctors are telling their patients to present at emergency departments because they are unable to book people into hospital. Support for what I am saying is contained in a press release issued by the Australian Medical Association on 18 June relating to threatened cuts to medical services in Bathurst. The statement reads:

... intended drastic cuts in elective surgery lists without prior consultation. Doctors were also concerned by quota allocations based on actual operating time, omitting the time taken up by pre-operative procedures and theatre preparation for the next patient. Other concerns related to understanding of operating theatres and long delays in recruiting new nurses.

The motion relates to the Government's failure to provide doctors with the support and the time they need to treat their patients. The Government is not really genuine about recruiting nurses. I know the Government's Health website for months has published the number of vacancies for nursing positions. The figures have remained constant, yet the Government continually claims that it has employed more nurses. That begs the question: Are nurses leaving as fast as they can be recruited? Will the Government confess to what it is really doing, that is, putting agency nurses on the public payroll? The Government can be assured that I have very good contacts in nursing agencies. The hiring of agency nurses makes it look as though the Government is employing more nurses, but the truth of the matter is that there is still a very severe shortage of workers in our public hospitals.

I congratulate the member for Port Stephens on his contribution to this debate, particularly for standing up for the people of the Tomaree Peninsula. I have accompanied him on many visits to that area over the past year or so. There is no greater champion, formerly as mayor and now as the local member of Parliament, for those people. The doctors who work at the Tomaree Community Hospital provide an on-call service and should be given more resources so that more doctors will be attracted to the area, thereby meeting the needs of the community.

The Tomaree Peninsula is a community of older people and includes people who have retired to that most beautiful part of the world. They expect health services will be available for them locally. If they are unable to attend the community hospital after hours when the hospital is closed, they have to find some way of getting to the John Hunter Hospital. As the member for Port Stephens has already said, the John Hunter Hospital is perhaps the hospital that is under the greatest strain at the moment. Ambulance officers and others complain to me about long waiting periods, and ambulances have been diverted because there are too many people waiting for treatment in the hospital's emergency departments. People who live in the Tomaree Peninsula part of Port Stephens are being left high and dry. The Government needs to explain to those people and to people throughout this State its lack of support for the very dedicated practitioners who provide front-line services, instead of mouthing budget platitudes that mean nothing.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 35**

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

**Noes, 42**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Hodgkinson	Ms Gadiel
Mr Souris	Mr Morris

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS****Financial Year 2007-08**

**Debate resumed from 27 June 2007.**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [12.07 p.m.]: I speak in response to the budget. As the shadow Minister for Finance, I will raise some of my concerns about the budget. As the member for Manly, I will raise issues that I believe the State budget should focus on in the next term. This budget has been dubbed the "lucky budget". It contains higher than expected investment returns and higher tax revenues. As we have a strong national economy the words "lucky budget" are apt. Headline numbers assume a surplus, but underneath there is a far more murky reality. The surplus is predicated on a number of assumptions: first, that the Federal Government will pay a spurious tax bill of \$400 million; second, that we can leave unfunded superannuation liabilities to future generations; and, third, that we can achieve expense reductions that have never before been achieved by the State Government over the past 12 years.

Looking at the budget as a company analysis, we can begin to see the picture. The Government received a tax windfall of \$1.16 billion, which included stamp duty of \$750 million, land tax of \$249 million and payroll tax of \$139 million—all windfalls. The Government continues to receive revenues for which it has not budgeted and has averaged more than \$1 billion over the past 12 years. That level of revenue is close to matching the total current State debt, which starts to bring into question the impact of this lost opportunity. In other words, would we need to borrow up to \$39 billion in three years if we had invested that money in infrastructure in the past 12 years?

In reviewing taxes, payroll tax stands out as the most destructive. Over the past five years it has increased by 35 per cent. The payroll tax rate in New South Wales is the highest in Australia, yet collections are expected to increase by a further 29 per cent, or \$1.6 billion, over the next four years. All other States are reducing this rate but the New South Wales Government does nothing other than talk about it. Whilst New South Wales has received nominal cuts to tax rates the material impact is very different. This Government congratulated itself on announcing reductions to land tax, but that reduction must be put into perspective.

Taking land tax from 1.7 per cent to 1.6 per cent means a reduction of \$43 million in revenue each year. However, this year the Government received \$249 million in unbudgeted land tax. In effect, over the

forward estimate period this Government will not even give back the bonus it received this year, so really there is no cut at all. It is time this State Government stopped tinkering with taxes and looked at comprehensive reform. Payroll tax inhibits business and must be tapered out and removed. The Government is patting itself on the back for abolishing nuisance taxes—mortgage duties and stamp duties on hiring, et cetera. However, we all remember that when the goods and services tax [GST] agreement was signed those taxes were supposed to go with it. The Government is congratulating itself on achieving an agreement that was signed many years ago.

The Treasurer awarded a 6.7 per cent pay rise to politicians, who will sit for the least number of days in living memory. I believe he is out of touch with the electorate. I question why I am receiving a pay rise after three months of being in my job. That would not happen in business. People in business have to prove that they are doing a good job and they have to be held accountable. Is it any wonder that there is scepticism amongst public servants whose pay increases have been limited to 2.5 per cent? Members should not be afraid to be held accountable for their performance at the same time as providing significant financial incentives to the public service to achieve efficiency gains. That equation is firmly entrenched in favour of those in Governor Macquarie Tower; it does not favour teachers, nurses, police or public servants, who do a fine job day in and day out.

The independent umpire who reviews pay rise requests for members of this House and for members of any other parliament must consider all those points. An independent umpire must determine whether a government is achieving efficiency gains and whether members are being held accountable for doing a good job for their communities, day in and day out. That must not be determined in isolation or linked predominantly to the consumer price index and other things. Members must be held accountable. As an example, using the shared services paper provided by the Department of Commerce—which was available on its website but which is now hidden—this Government has approximately 1,200 payroll clerks. The report shows that, when benchmarked against the private sector, only half that number of people would be required. If efficiencies are found in these processes and jobs can be done with fewer staff, those who remain should share in the benefits. That would help workers doing the job and it would result in the people of New South Wales receiving tax reductions.

**Mr David Harris:** What about the unemployed?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There are other opportunities for them. People should not be employed for employment's sake. If a job can be done with fewer people, that is the process that should be followed. Over the next four years the Government is projecting, on average, a 4 per cent increase in total expenses, despite expenses averaging at 5.9 per cent over the past four years. The Government's track record, which speaks for itself, seriously undermines the budget. If those expenses are applied to the forward estimates potentially we would have an annual shortfall of close to \$800 million. We have to question the Government's budget.

This State's balance sheet is strong but I want to focus on one element: unfunded superannuation. Unfunded superannuation might have its complexities but in essence it is simple. The State Government will have to pay a certain amount to public servants in defined benefit schemes upon their retirement. At the moment there is a \$17 billion shortfall. That unfunded liability will increase to \$17 billion over the next four or five years. The Government took advice from an actuarial report and made some assumptions. Three key assumptions are in its favour. The first is an investment rate return assumption that, according to industry, is at the high end of the market where it should be.

The Federal Government's investment rate return is 7.5 per cent and this Government's investment rate return is 7.7 per cent. This Government used a discount rate of 7.3 per cent, which is out of step with the discount rate of the Federal Government. The Federal Government conservatively uses the long-term bond rate of 6 per cent and every other State government, excluding Western Australia whose rates are unavailable, uses a rate between 5.7 per cent and 6 per cent. Accounting standards demand that governments use a long-term bond rate, which is akin to the 6 per cent being used by all the other States and the Federal Government. This Government—and I am not sure why—uses a rate of 7.3 per cent.

I have asked the Government to release the report and any briefings that accompanied it. This matter is important because the Government is grossly understating its unfunded liabilities. If the Government's liabilities are much higher and it is being prudent in its financial management it must make contributions to attack that gap. If it is not making contributions it is passing off the problem to future generations. Conveniently, under the new report, the unfunded superannuation liabilities are supposed to peak in 2011 or 2013, which is beyond the next election, and it is something we do not have to worry about. If we do not contribute as much as we were contributing, it means that we could use those funds for other purposes. The Government is parking the problem.

**Mr David Harris:** Like infrastructure.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Exactly, like infrastructure. I am asking the Treasurer to confirm whether that is what he has done. If the Treasurer used these funds for infrastructure rather than for superannuation he needs to come clean. That is a good example of financial engineering. The Government is deferring an obligation and using the funds for short-term capital gain, which for me is a big issue. The Government must own up to what it has done. The Treasurer, in his opening statement, proudly said, "I want to be known for prudent financial management." That means he will use the dividends today to reduce the liabilities of future generations. Clearly, the Government is doing exactly the opposite. It is taking dividends from future generations to create liabilities further down the track, and it is using them as headlines today.

If that is at the core of this budget I have real questions about it. The people of New South Wales should be given answers to that issue. It is at the core of the credibility of this Government and it is at the core of constituent concerns—constituents that the Government is supposed to be representing. The last issue I wish to raise relates to transparency and accountability. It has yet to be explained why the budget papers this year no longer include details of benchmarks, outcomes, programs or staff. The budget papers for previous years detailed the Premier's personal staff, but that no longer occurs. Details of State programs and benchmarks were included in the budget papers.

We must be able to obtain all those details from the State budget. Governments must be accountable. That information enables the people of this State to hold the Government accountable. It comes back to the productivity of members in this place. If we are asked to deliver a State Plan we should be held accountable. The Government should be held accountable. If it does not deliver the infrastructure that it says it will deliver—the \$12.5 billion that I believe is earmarked for this year—no Government member should receive a pay rise the following year.

**Mr David Harris:** That is why we have elections. People decide that at elections. That is why we got returned.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I agree. An election win is the ultimate reward for an Opposition that puts up a credible alternative plan. But in the intervening period there must be some accountability. The Government is good at making promises. It is good at highlighting long-term plans and then delivering very little. Remember Bob the Builder? We must have some parameters so that we can hold the Government accountable. If those details are no longer in the budget papers we cannot do that, and members will have no performance indicators. That issue must be considered. On that point I conclude my comments about the budget from a finance perspective. Look under the spin in the budget and ask where New South Wales is going. Our liabilities have been deferred and our debt is increasing. But the Government has received significant unbudgeted revenue. Increasing debt and the failure to deal prudently with our long-term liabilities is a recipe for significant financial problems in this State. I make that point in my first reply to the budget as shadow Minister for Finance.

The budget is silent about the Manly electorate. That is most disappointing for my constituents, and indeed for all on the northern beaches. The Government must look long and hard at transport services on the northern beaches. The Spit Bridge project—which is also known as the boondoggle project—was never going to happen. The Government took us for a spin. But the Government had a chance to redeem itself by spending the \$59 million on public transport on the northern beaches. The Coalition asked for the construction of a grade separation at the intersection of Manly and Sydney roads. We asked for a park-and-ride bus depot at Brookvale to cater for 400 cars and 100 bikes. We estimate that this will take 180,000 cars a year off that section of road, which is part of the solution to this long-running problem.

The Coalition asked for the priority construction of a grade separation at the intersection of the Wakehurst Parkway and Warringah Road. We asked for improved integration of bus and ferry services and for 60 new buses, which will attract people back to public transport. We want more people on the northern beaches to use public transport, but the services must be accessible and reliable. We want fewer people to use their cars. London residents do not leave their homes and hop into their Volvos; they catch the tube, the bus or British rail. We must provide public transport options for people on the northern beaches.

Turning to the environment, the Coalition asked the Government to prioritise closing the ocean outfall. It is a blight on one of the most unique and wonderful parts of the world. Closing the ocean outfall and using the water for recycling is a prudent way of attacking not only the water shortage but the blight on this wonderful place. Manly Lagoon and Curl Curl Lagoon must be cleaned up urgently. The Coalition argued that \$6.5 million

was needed to clean up the Hinkler Island channel in Manly Lagoon, which has been plugged with landfill for 40 years as a result of a Roads and Traffic Authority decision that has gone very wrong. It is time the Government took responsibility for that decision. The channel must be opened so that clear water can flow through it to prevent stagnation, which has caused significant pollution in the past 40 years.

The Government must take a strong position on North Head and oppose any future residential developments there. The community is unanimous about that. The Government handed the Quarantine Station to private developers but we want it to be included within the North Head Sanctuary. We call on the Government to expedite the timeline for building the northern beaches hospital. We need the hospital urgently, and we ask the Minister for Health and the Treasurer to make the construction of that facility their first priority in the next budget. We need a definitive timescale for the project, which the Government has not yet provided. The allocation of \$8 million next year seems a small amount in the context of the entire project. We ask the Government to take the project seriously. Services must be retained at Manly Hospital—which I will talk about this afternoon—until it is closed.

Turning to education, I will highlight three outstanding capital works at three fantastic schools in the Manly electorate. Balgowlah North Public School has made successive applications for a new administration-library block and car park. I am sure that the member for Wyong, who is a former principal, will appreciate the importance of investing in schools and keeping good schools running. Balgowlah North has been waiting seven years for its improvements, and we ask the Government to prioritise that work.

Manly Vale Public School has been asking since 1990 for an upgrade of its administrative block, including a student sickbay. Seventeen years is long enough to wait. The existing administrative block is a demountable, which was supposed to be temporary. The administration block has been on the department's capital works list each year since 1994, but there is never enough money. We ask the Treasurer and the Minister for Education and Training to finally make the money available in the next budget for that fine school. Manly Vale Public School also has significant occupational health and safety issues. Its library must be extended. I have been there, and it is very small. Anyone who loves education will know that the library is a critical part of any school. We ask that that work be prioritised.

Over the past decade Curl Curl North Public School has applied for four to six new classrooms, a new student toilet block, and a new staff administration area, which it is estimated will cost about \$3.5 million. In those 10 years the student population has doubled, but the school's infrastructure requests have not been answered. One of the great things about the northern beaches, and Manly in particular, is the influx of young families, who are warmly welcomed. But that influx has put a strain on local schools, which are crying out for new infrastructure. Curl Curl North is a fantastic school, and it needs as much assistance as it can get. Teachers at the school are forced to use the toilet during class time because the existing facility is not big enough for all teachers to use at lunchtime. That is not an appropriate way to run a school.

I highlight the capital works programs at Curl Curl North Public School, Manly Vale Public School and Balgowlah North Public School, and ask the Government to focus on them in the upcoming budget. We are most disappointed that the projects are not in the current budget because the schools have waited a long time. The budget also overlooks sporting facilities in the Manly electorate. Manly Oval has made a grant request for new lighting and Brookvale Oval desperately needs refurbishment.

**Ms Virginia Judge:** Get the council to pay.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The council has put in some money and now it is waiting for the State Government's contribution. The Manly Swim Centre requires refurbishment. It is a long-held dream in the Manly area to open a surf museum that will celebrate both surf lifesaving and surfing. We have the memorabilia, and a \$1 million grant has been requested. We ask the State Government to make that money available in the Year of the Surf Lifesaver, to preserve the history of lifesaving for future generations.

**Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO** (Penrith) [12.27 p.m.]: The 2007-08 budget delivered in this place by the New South Wales Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Costa, was great news for the families of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. At the March State election the people of Penrith sent me a clear message: better services, not job cuts. They want services to be improved and they want the Government to deliver on its commitments. Unlike the Coalition, Labor went to the last election with a series of reasonable, responsible and economically manageable commitments.

The Coalition's approach was reflected in the budget response of the Leader of the Opposition, which characterised his entire political career: lazy, boring, unoriginal, and sponged off someone else. The Leader of the Opposition attempted to hide the Coalition's costings before the last election, which had a major impact on the people of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. He cowardly backed out of the charter of budget honesty. He announced that the Coalition's commitments had blown out to \$9 billion just 24 hours before the polls, which did not give the people of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains enough time to develop considered opinions of the Opposition's policies. At the time the Leader of the Opposition blamed the photocopier and everyone else. But a few weeks later he dusted off comments from the 1980s by Nick Greiner, Peter Costello and the Federal Liberals and used them in his reply to the 2007-08 budget.

What has the Leader of the Opposition done since he became leader? What has he been doing for the people of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains? Clearly, he wanted to sell off public assets, and slow down the massive infrastructure upgrades that the Premier has fast-tracked. That is typical of this lazy Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition simply has not done his job. What about the infrastructure allocation announced in the budget? It is about 2½ times more than the Federal Government will spend in the coming year on infrastructure across the entire country. Infrastructure spending includes \$2.9 billion on electricity, \$1.9 billion on transport, \$657 million on health, \$617 million on education, \$202 billion on water, \$1.9 billion on roads, \$627 million on housing, and \$388 million on law and order. A range of new capital projects will be funded in the budget.

The budget is about delivering on the commitments and fulfilling Labor's promises to the people of New South Wales, who have entrusted us with the government of this State. As always, Health is the biggest spending item in the State's budget, at \$12.5 billion, which is up \$831 million, or 7.1 per cent. That includes an allocation of \$1.1 billion for mental health, up \$105 million, or 11 per cent. That shows the Government's commitment. It is in the State Plan to increase access to health care and improve health care outcomes, and the western region will benefit from that funding.

I am proud that the Lemma Government demonstrates by its budget that it is committed to redeveloping Nepean Hospital—a commitment made in the 2007 election. That redevelopment is the north block. Those who have been to Nepean Hospital know there have already been significant upgrades—a \$11 million state-of-the-art emergency department improvements to the cancer care centre, and improvements to the neonatal intensive care unit, including in the last budget a new neonatal intensive care bed. The north block redevelopment will give the block new theatres, an area for an intensive care unit, and about 60 new beds. Those who have visited Nepean Hospital know that there have already been two stages of redevelopment. This will be the third, and it is timely. This year's budget sets aside money for planning this major new project. In common with other members of this place, I will be looking very closely at future development of the site.

Regarding mental health, we have \$2 million for a psychiatric emergency care centre, which the new Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Paul Lynch, visited recently. We were also instrumental in obtaining support from the Federal Government for the new after-hours general practitioner centre at Nepean. This is a highly successful general practitioner clinic. It is located just underneath the emergency department, and is operated by the Nepean division of general practitioners. The Opposition spokesperson on Health misled the House when she said the general practitioner clinics were 100 per cent funded by the Federal Government. That is incorrect. If the member looks at last year's budget papers she will note that that budget contained funding for infrastructure improvements at Nepean Hospital to locate the general practitioner clinic at Nepean Hospital.

The Opposition spokesperson on Health also misled the House by failing to itemise funding by the State Government for information technology support for general practitioners who use the centre and also for the nursing support for that general practitioner clinic. The Opposition member also failed to mention that prior to the last election she opposed general practitioner clinics: she said they did not work. The centre is already making a difference for our local community. While out and about in the community, doorknocking and talking to parents, I have come across many people who have used the after-hours general practitioner clinic. It commenced operating in late November or early December 2006 and has been operating quite successfully after-hours for the community. It is highly regarded by those who require after-hours general practitioner services.

I commend the local pharmacist operating Blooms the Chemist in Penrith. She decided to operate for the same hours as the after-hours general practitioner clinic. So not only are the residents of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains able to access general practitioner services, they can also access pharmaceutical services if they need to do so after hours. I commend the Blooms the Chemist pharmacy for doing that. Well done.

The 2007-08 budget also committed to improving medical imaging and patient monitoring at Nepean Hospital. As a qualified radiographer, I commend the \$2.4 million allocated to fulfil that commitment for medical imaging and patient monitoring. It was interesting to read, however, that at the very time the Iemma Government has committed record amounts of funding to improving health care we read a news report telling members on this side of the House what we already knew: that the Howard Government is dramatically underfunding health care. The Caring for our Health report shows that the Federal Government is paying a smaller, and smaller, and smaller share of public hospital costs each year. It is paying \$1.1 billion a year less than was recommended by an independent arbiter.

Let us not forget about John Howard's abject refusal to fund dental health care, despite dental health care being listed in our Constitution as a Federal Government responsibility. Rarely does a week go by that there is not in my office someone wanting to speak about dental health care needs. Unfortunately, the Federal member for Lindsay, Jackie Kelly, does not even want to acknowledge these people. Her Government's failure to accept responsibility on this issue is shameful. I am proud that the Federal Leader of the Opposition, Kevin Rudd, is promising to reintroduce the Commonwealth dental health care scheme—not if, but when he becomes the Prime Minister of Australia later this year.

As a former teacher, before I entered this place education had been a passion of mine. I am proud to say that the 2007-08 budget continues the Government's proud tradition in supporting public education in New South Wales with an allocation of \$11.2 billion, up \$517 million, or 4.9 per cent. This year's budget includes funding for a range of activities or infrastructure improvements in Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. As previously mentioned in this place, the Penrith High School upgrade will include, but will not be restricted to, new drama rooms and science laboratories. I know the school community is excited about this multimillion-dollar upgrade. This is an issue on which I have worked very closely with the local school community, particularly the parents and citizens association. I commend them on their interactions with my office. I am sure they will be delighted to see that funding in this year's budget.

The Iemma Government has a strong record of funding schools in Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. Amongst its other major improvements is the \$3 million upgrade of learning facilities and a new school at Glenbrook Primary School, new school halls at Emu Heights Public School, Penrith South Public School and Lapstone Public School, and a new school library at Kingswood Park Public School as part of the refurbishment of existing school buildings. Well done to the Department of Education and Training for doing that as an in-house project.

Funding is also included in this year's budget for another of the major election commitments in the electorate of Penrith—a trade school for Jamison High School. Following successful trials in other locations around the State, including the neighbouring Colyton High School, the Iemma Government has committed to establishing a new trade school at Jamison High School. In my time as member for Penrith I have had a great deal to do with Jamison High School and its students.

In particular I should mention a former student, Samantha Dawson, who a few years ago topped her Higher School Certificate subject of design technology, and went on to become the Penrith Person of the Year in 2006. She is a former member of the Penrith Students Forum, which meets with me and discusses issues to do with youth and high school education. The Penrith Students Forum is made up of students from high schools in the Penrith electorate. This was another commitment we made during the election—to help the people of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains with their educational experiences.

We also made commitments to do with transport. It should be acknowledged that the Transport budget for 2007-08 is \$5.8 billion, up \$586 million, or 11.2 per cent. What does that mean for the people of the lower Blue Mountains and Penrith? It means there will be planning for an easy access upgrade at Emu Plains railway station. The railway station, located at the foot of the Blue Mountains, is the second busiest in the electorate of Penrith. It is used by people from Penrith, Emu Plains, Leonay and also the lower Blue Mountains. Planning for and completing that work will protect commuters from the elements and permit easy access for the elderly, the disabled and people with prams.

I know that money for investigation and future development will be money well spent. I also note that just outside the Penrith electorate funding has been allocated for easy access to Werrington railway station, which, once again, is a railway station used by public commuters. I note that the patronage of CityRail has increased quite significantly. Today, as I travelled on the train from Penrith to Sydney, I was aware of that increased patronage. I commend those who have made the effort to get on the train rather than get into their cars.

During the election the Government made a commitment to fix the dangerous intersection of Mulgoa and Jamison roads in South Penrith. For some time residents have raised their concerns about the intersection of these two major roads, which is currently serviced by a roundabout. Mulgoa Road is one of the two major roads into the City of Penrith from the M4. It bisects Jamison Road, which is an historic road. In the early part of last century it was used as an airport runway because it was straight and long. It is now a major road. Many people have spoken to me about their harrowing experiences on the dangerous roundabout, and a few have told me about the accidents or near misses. In the lead-up to the last election and in my last term in Parliament I circulated a petition and received overwhelming support for a roundabout at that location.

Surprisingly, I was out and about on the day that the former Leader of the Opposition was having a community meeting at Panthers when he said he would cut, rip, tear and burn the Roads and Traffic Authority and get rid of it on day one. I was surprised, because the Roads and Traffic Authority did the investigation that will result in the installation of lights for the people of Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. I am glad that on day one the Government, not the Opposition, was elected; otherwise the funding for the traffic lights would have been well and truly delayed, if not forgotten about entirely. The 2007-08 budget allocates funding for the installation of traffic lights at the intersection. I am advised that work will commence on the project in the second half of this year as part of a record \$3.6 billion Roads budget, an increase of \$300 million, which will provide a new roads infrastructure, and improved traffic management and safety.

Western Sydney is a big winner from the record 2007-08 Police budget. Some \$11.2 million will be invested in new police stations or upgrades to existing facilities in Western Sydney. Spending on policing New South Wales will rise by \$90.2 million, or more than 4 per cent, to \$2.27 billion. Western Sydney will receive a massive boost to police resources with \$6 million allocated for Fairfield police station and \$2.6 million for St Marys police station. Even though St Marys police station is not located in Penrith, the St Marys Local Area Command provides police services to the electorate of Penrith. Both the Penrith local area command and the Blue Mountains local area command deal with people who reside in Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. The \$2.6 million allocated for the St Marys police station will be welcomed.

As well as works to police stations, the Iemma Government will deliver on its election commitment to provide New South Wales police with \$1.062 million to purchase 10 mobile police stations, one of which will be located in the Penrith local area command. I look forward to delivering that mobile police station for Western Sydney, in particular for Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains. This is a further investment of about \$400,000 for police in fast-growing Western Sydney. It is a fantastic resource that will allow police to maintain a highly visible presence around shopping centres, train stations and other areas where crime hot spots have been identified.

I have referred to the record Education budget, which also contains initiatives of which I am unreservedly proud. Connecting Our Classrooms, which is a \$157.8 million project over four years, was trialled in Penrith schools. I have previously spoken about connected classrooms, which uses technology to connect classrooms in different schools to an interactive whiteboard to facilitate learning. The teacher is in one place but students can be on multiple sites. The teaching is live and it is broadcast in real time. The whiteboard is interactive. Prior to the election we were showing off for the Premier and demonstrated how connected classrooms work. Someone at Cranebrook High School wrote something on the interactive whiteboard and it appeared instantly on the whiteboard at Rooty Hill High School. By 2011 every New South Wales public school will have an interactive whiteboard and videoconferencing facilities and tools to enable the sharing of information in interactive environments. I commend the trial, which was based in the Penrith area, and, in particular, Francesco Molluso, the education director who has driven this interactive classroom technology [ICT].

The budget has allocated \$86 million to TAFE capital works, which includes projects for the Western Sydney Institute Blue Mountains-Katoomba campus and the Nirimba-Quakers Hill campus. A record \$531 million has been allocated in the 2007-08 budget to build and enhance school facilities and information technology, which I commend. More than \$20 million has been allocated in the Education budget over four years for the Climate Change initiative to provide water tanks to New South Wales Government schools. I look forward to working with schools in Penrith and the lower Blue Mountains to take up that initiative.

I commend the \$98 million allocated in the budget to maintain the water distribution network and the \$66 million allocated for recycling projects. The budget has allocated \$38 million to the Western Sydney Recycled Water Initiative Replacement Flows project, which will replace 10 billion litres of dam water each year for environmental flows from Warragamba Dam to the Hawkesbury-Nepean River for agriculture.

I welcome that announcement. The Penrith, Quakers Hill and St Marys sewage treatment plants will be linked up to the grid so that recycled water can be used for environmental flows. This is a commendable program. I commend the New South Wales 2007-08 budget to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury) [12.47 p.m.]: In responding to this year's State budget, I must highlight the electorate of Hawkesbury because, once again, the north-west has been sadly let down. It would not come as any great shock to residents in the area because for the past decade, perhaps the last 12 years, they have become used to missing out on vital funding from consecutive State Labor governments. The Rouse Hill development has resulted in an increase of 250,000 new residents in our area. It is sad that we have not been provided with appropriate services and infrastructure to meet that population growth.

Only the other day it was mentioned in the House that massive amounts of expenditure were going into Windsor Road. As everyone would be well aware, funding for Windsor Road came via that growing community through the Arterial Road Contribution Scheme, which was a scheme set up by the Greiner Government to pay for important infrastructure. Sadly, it is 10 or 12 years late. However, it is now close to completion and we commend the community of the Rouse Hill development area who have paid for that vital piece of infrastructure, which services not only their needs but also the needs of people throughout the north-west and beyond who use Windsor Road.

It is probably pertinent at this point to highlight just a few of the projects that the budget does not provide for and that the State Government has overlooked. The intersection of Hastings Road with Old Northern Road is a vital access link for residents of Glenhaven, Dural and beyond. The intersection is very dangerous and the installation of a set of traffic lights is essential. The intersection is a black spot and has been the scene of some serious accidents. Only a kilometre further on, the intersection with Glenhaven Road and Old Northern Road is a junction of State roads, it is also an access link or shortcut for people who travel from Glenhaven, it is also in need of a set of traffic lights. Both intersections are very important to the residents of the Hawkesbury but neither has been provided with funds for upgrading in the budget. I have brought this issue to the attention of the House on previous occasions, and I will continue to do so.

It is important to remember that both intersections not only serve the needs of people who live in the Hawkesbury electorate but provide a shortcut for people who travel to the M2 via Dural. Traffic delays increase daily and gridlock is common. Those roads are vital to the efficient operation of public transport, but buses are regularly stationary for extended periods at those intersections. Sadly, no funding has been provided in the State budget to alleviate those problems. Rural areas surrounding Glenorie and Canoelands have Crown roads such as Floyds Road and Chivers Lane and they are no more than dirt tracks. It is a State Government responsibility to maintain those roads. The State Government has permitted development in those areas, albeit rural-residential developments, but no-one is looking after the roads. It is not a council responsibility, but it is, rather, a State responsibility. This is yet another example of the State's failure to care for residents who live in those areas. It is vitally important for the Government to address its neglect and provide funding for improvement in roads in my electorate.

Transitways are part of my electorate—something for which I lobbied for many years. If a government allows 250,000 people to take up residence in an area, it must provide them with some form of public transport. It has taken approximately 16 years for the Government to recognise its responsibility, but transitways at least have been constructed and in a small way will serve to address some public transport needs. However, the transitways are listed as rapid bus transitways. I take issue with the word "rapid" because the Government neglected to install a public transport information and priority system.

For the information of Government members, I am referring to priority lighting at intersections that allows buses to travel rapidly through intersections, hence the term rapid bus transitways. The system has not been implemented on the north-west transitways, but it should be, if the Government is genuine about encouraging people to travel by public transport instead of using their cars. No good purpose is served by having buses waiting at intersections for long periods while hundreds of cars pass through the intersection. It should be the other way round: buses should be given priority access. The priority system should be installed on transitways. That also has been overlooked by the budget.

The Bells Line of Road proposal was a Coalition initiative in the lead-up to the recent State election but has been overlooked by the State Government. No funding whatsoever has been provided for improvement in that very dangerous stretch of road. I draw attention to the fatality that occurred at Kurrajong Heights as recently as last week on Bells Line of Road. The Government must make an investment in upgrading Bells Line of Road

for the sake of the many people who travel along it, including those who travel from western areas across the Great Dividing Range and down to the Hawkesbury on a daily basis to go to work. New Line Road in the Dural area is also a State arterial road and is a State responsibility. It carries a great deal of single-lane traffic and is gridlocked all day every day except between 10.00 p.m. and probably 3.00 a.m.. This is an extremely important route that is used by people who are travelling to the Hawkesbury areas and to some parts of the Hawkesbury electorate. New Line Road has also been sadly neglected by this budget.

The tolls paid by users of the M4 and the M5 are subsidised by the State Government whereas people who live in the north-western parts of my electorate pay four times to use the M7, the M2, the Lane Cove Tunnel and the Sydney Harbour Bridge—exactly as I do when I travel to Parliament each day. Hawkesbury families include children who need to access educational facilities particularly universities in various areas of Sydney. Because no public transport is provided where they live, they have to drive to Sydney. I draw to the attention of the House the plight of these students. A resident of my electorate, Linda Howard, told me only last week that her child had to pay more than \$300 in one month for tolls to be able to access educational facilities in Sydney. The Government should examine this situation with a view to providing a concession for families and students who are disadvantaged by a complete lack of public transport that forces them to take toll roads to access education.

The North West Rail Link has been the subject of many announcements. Sadly, as I have observed on previous occasions in this House, the North West Rail Link is becoming more like a ghost train every day because it tends to appear, as if by magic, immediately prior to an election, but as soon as the election is over and a Labor State Government is returned to power, as has been the case on the past four occasions, it disappears into the ether. The Government's promises are not to be believed, but this State certainly needs a massive investment in construction of the North West Rail Link. Once the rail link is constructed, together with transitways, my electorate will be provided with a semblance of suitable public transport. People who currently spend 55 minutes to an hour travelling down Windsor Road from places such as Parklea and Kellyville to Parramatta, a trip which should take a mere 10 or 12 minutes, will benefit from the provision of better public transport. The North West Rail Link will provide an alternative to private transport, but the people of my electorate do not want to hear any more fatuous promises as they have in the past. They need some real action and some Government investment.

People who live in the townships of Glossodia, Freemans Reach and Wilberforce have waited for years for the Government to announce the date of connection of their properties to a sewerage system, but that project has not been finalised. Indications have been given that funds are available for planning. The good member for the Federal electorate of Macquarie, Kerry Bartlett, managed to obtain funding approximately 10 years ago for an environmental impact study relating to the feasibility of constructing sewerage works. The study has been left on a shelf to collect dust. The State Government ought to move the project along because the provision of sewerage for the people of Glossodia is essential. Currently they are paying for sewage to be pumped out and pay \$2,500 a year for rates.

No owner of a residential property anywhere across Sydney would be happy paying \$2,500 a year in rates and not be provided with a proper sewerage system. People who live in the Labor electorate of the Blue Mountains pay exactly the same rates and are in exactly the same position, but they receive rebates for pump-outs. If that is the case, the people of Glossodia, Freemans Reach and Wilberforce are being severely discriminated against. If the Government takes even one day longer to implement a sewerage system for the people who live in those townships, I ask that a rebate be provided for those areas so that those people may obtain a reduction in rates.

A little bit further up the mountains, the lovely area of Bilpin has a wonderful preschool in the community centre. Some years ago, the centre received a donation of playground equipment. To the credit of the Department of Community Services, it provided the soft fall for that play equipment. Recently the department has declared that the soft fall is not adequate and has stopped children from using the play equipment. That is all well and good. However, the council checked the soft fall by applying a pressure test and has declared that it meets all council requirements and is safe.

Regrettably, the department will not allow children to use the equipment. The irony is that while other children can walk into the centre off the street and be allowed to use the community facilities, the preschool children are not being allowed to use it. All I ask is for the department to pick up the pieces and provide funds for replacement of the soft fall. The centre has written to the Minister for Community Services no fewer than four times and has received only an acknowledgement. The centre has had no proper response except an

acknowledgement letter, despite having made an approach four times, and has received no meaningful response from the minister. That is just not good enough. The Government and the department need to lift their game and provide the soft fall.

Infrastructure levies imposed on new homebuyers in that area are, sadly, restricting development. That levy is a further tax on those who paid for Windsor Road and the Rouse Hill treatment works. They are now expected to kick in for the train line although the Government has received billions of dollars in revenue from the Rouse Hill development area, and from stamp duty, excessive taxes and, of course, the proceeds of the sale of Landcom land. For many years the Government owned the majority of the land; it was the major stakeholder of land in the area. It has not returned that money it received for the sale of the land and now it has imposed an infrastructure levy. Those levies not only restrict people's ability to buy their own homes, it has imposed a severe burden on developers. Land is available in the area for the development of homes, but developments are not going ahead because of infrastructure levies.

The State Government needs to review those levies immediately. The removal of the levies would free up the housing market and allow development to proceed. It would minimise the imposition on homebuyers and allow them to purchase more affordable homes. The State Government believes that its removal of 0.1 per cent of land tax has given a great benefit. However, the Valuer General has increased land valuations to such an extent throughout the area that the 0.1 per cent reduction pales into insignificance when compared with land rates and other charges for property ownership in the Hawkesbury electorate. The council rates on my property increased 150 per cent because of the revaluation by the Valuer General. That is a problem: it is robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Hawkesbury City Council and Baulkham Hills Shire Council fund the Lower Portland ferry to the tune of \$300,000 a year. Recently that funding allocation was at risk. Members would appreciate that because of cost shifting over the past decade from the State Government to councils, the councils have budget constraints. As a result, the two councils had to reconsider whether they could continue to fund the ferry. I can understand that; everyone has to work under budget constraints. Fortunately the councils decided to continue to fund the ferry. However, further down the track, the ferry services at Sackville and Wisemans Ferry are the responsibility of the State Government. The Opposition calls on the Government to accept its responsibilities and assist the councils with even a percentage of the funding for the Lower Portland ferry, a wonderful service

Yesterday small businesses were discussed in the House. Throughout the Hawkesbury region thousands of small business operators have been crying out for relief from payroll tax. It is disappointing that the budget has not provided them with a cut in payroll tax. As I have said before, small business operators are the backbone of Australia. They provide 50 per cent of the country's employment, and my electorate certainly has no shortage of small businesses. Hawkesbury Hospital is not in my electorate, but it is certainly the hospital accessed by local people. In March 2007 13 per cent of patients in its emergency department were not treated in the required time. That is not an ambit claim on my part; that information came from the New South Wales Department of Health web site. The good doctors and nurses at Hawkesbury Hospital are struggling to provide services to the people. However, because 13 per cent of people do not receive treatment in the required time the Government needs to provide additional funding to that hospital. Some years ago my mother sat in Hawkesbury Hospital for 11 hours at night waiting for treatment. That is far too long for people who are seeking emergency treatment.

The Government has given no commitment for any future funding for a hospital in the north-west of Sydney. In that area there are between 250,000 and 300,000 people. Their roads and public transport needs have been neglected. Over the past decade I have lobbied hard for better public transport, and that has been forthcoming, but the health services need upgrading. I cannot imagine why a government would a hospital or a police station to those 250,000 to 300,000 people. There has been no mention of either a hospital or a police station to service the rapidly growing north-west or, indeed, the Rouse Hill development area. My electorate is the fastest growing area for housing in New South Wales. It is sad that many families with young children have to travel miles and miles to Penrith or Westmead to access health services. My area has been badly let down by the State Government and those needs should be addressed as soon as possible.

The tank rebates announced by the State Government are welcome. As someone who has lived on tank water all my life, I know that it is a great way to live. My family has never had to draw on Warragamba Dam for water. However, I ask the Government to extend the rebates to people who have lived on tank water all their lives. The Government may have a problem with that request, but I believe people on tank water are the true water harvesters in this State and, indeed, across the country. The Government has not extended the tank rebates to them, and I ask it to do so. The rebate would allow them to buy more tanks and thereby save more water.

Currently we are enjoying good rainfall, but as we have learnt over the past 15 years rainfall can be very scarce and we have recently suffered one of the longest droughts ever recorded in this country.

The Government has allocated \$2 billion for a desalination plant which I believe is completely unwarranted. It is certainly unpopular. We could achieve the same outcome with a mere 5 per cent of homes across Sydney being connected to water tanks. It has been widely claimed, certainly on the ABC, that if a mere 5 per cent of homes were connected to tanks there would be no need for a desalination plant or for a large water storage dam to be built over the next decade. I could deal with many other matters, but I cannot cover them all today. The small Ironbark Ridge Public School is a new school in the Rouse Hill regional centre. Children are attending the school while development takes place around the centre. The school needs to be serviced with footpaths and other amenities, but it is a sad fact that there is no funding for them. Annangrove Public School has demountable classrooms, which are always a risk. They are some of the issues for the Hawkesbury electorate that I wanted to put on the table in this debate.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Virginia Judge and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

*[Assistant-Speaker (Ms Alison Megarrity) left the chair at 1.08 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### **PARLIAMENTARY REPORTING STAFF**

**The SPEAKER:** I wish to advise members of the retirement in the upcoming recess of Greg Thomas, a senior member of the Hansard subeditorial staff. Greg will retire on 13 July 2007 after 24 years of service to the Parliament. Greg has made a valuable contribution to the accurate reporting of events in this House, and on behalf of members and officers of the Legislative Assembly, I thank Greg for his dedicated service and wish him and his wife, Maree, all the best for a healthy retirement.

### **LEADER OF THE HOUSE**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I wish to make a ruling in relation to the role of the Leader of the House and the sessional order pertaining to his role. Yesterday in question time the member for Murrumbidgee sought to ask the Leader of the House a question. The member asserted that the sessional order adopted by the House provided for questions to be directed to the Leader of the House. I accept that the sessional order provides that all standing orders that apply to Ministers apply also to the Leader of the House, including standing orders relating to questions seeking information. However, those questions must be confined to areas for which the Leader of the House is responsible, such as questions about the ordering of business before the House. The sessional order was adopted for procedural purposes to enable the Leader of the House to arrange Government Business and to move motions that cannot be moved by Parliamentary Secretaries, such as the motion for the adjournment of the House. Accordingly, questions directed to the Leader of the House should be limited to that extent.

As all members are aware, the purpose of question time is primarily to obtain information from Ministers. In accordance with the standing orders, and as noted in Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, questions addressed to Ministers should relate to the public affairs with which they are officially connected, to proceedings pending in Parliament, or to matters of administration for which they are responsible. However, the Leader of the House, in common with other Parliamentary Secretaries, does not have any government portfolio responsibilities and cannot be asked questions about matters related to the administration of government or public affairs to which those matters are officially connected. The question asked yesterday did not relate to the role of the Leader of the House and was correctly redirected to the Premier. If it is the wish of the House the sessional order could be amended to clarify the situation.

### **FILMING OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**The SPEAKER:** I advise members that I have authorised a film crew contracted to the Parliament to shoot footage before and during question time from several vantage points. The material being recorded will be used to update the parliamentary video available to schools and the public, and will be used by Parliament in association with education programs.

## REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** In the absence of the Minister for Small Business and Regulatory Reform, and Minister for Ports and Waterways, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Transport, and Minister for Finance will take questions on his behalf.

### MINISTRY

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I inform the House that on 27 June 2007 Her Excellency the Governor accepted the resignation of the Hon. Joseph Guerino Tripodi as the Minister for Small Business and Regulatory Reform. I also inform the House that on 27 June 2007 Her Excellency the Governor appointed the Hon. Joseph Guerino Tripodi as Minister for Small Business, and Minister for Regulatory Reform.

### QUESTION TIME

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#### SYDNEY CATCHMENT WATER QUALITY

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that history is repeating itself from 1998, when drought-breaking rains contaminated our water supply, why has the Premier failed to upgrade Sydney's filtration plants to remove cryptosporidium and giardia?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Yesterday I informed the House of the impact that recent rainfall has had on the quality of water flowing into Sydney's catchment. As I foreshadowed yesterday, our water experts and health authorities will continue to monitor the situation closely as it unfolds. This morning the Government received an update from the Sydney Catchment Authority, Sydney Water and NSW Health. I can inform the House that our world-class water treatment and catchment management system is performing exactly as it is designed to perform.

**Mr Chris Hartcher:** Boil the water!

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Coalition planned to do a lot more if it won the election—particularly to Prospect Reservoir—but I will come to that point a little later. The cloudy plume of water present in Warragamba Dam has settled somewhat from yesterday's observations. It is being monitored closely, as are the weather conditions anticipated around the dam region today and in coming days. I am advised that the Sydney Catchment Authority is able to draw the best-quality water from well above the plume's most turbid layer. But its position, like all other factors, is being monitored.

Quite separate from this, recent testing of water across the catchment has revealed important information in relation to the rain and inflows in other parts of the system, specifically the upper canal, which transports water from Sydney's southern dams on the Illawarra escarpment to the Prospect water filtration plant. A sample from this canal, which has been dry in recent times for maintenance, has returned extremely low levels of cryptosporidium and giardia. Let me stress that this is raw water in the upper canal. There has also been a recent test result showing one single unit of cryptosporidium, the smallest possible reading, in Warragamba Dam about 400 metres from the dam wall. Tests taken down stream show the water is cryptosporidium free.

I am further advised by health and water authorities that there is absolutely no reason for any concern in relation to these test results. In fact, this development is a natural consequence following the long dry and the soaking rains we have had. It is not unexpected that we will have similar very low readings like this present in the upper catchment over coming days as a result of the sudden downpours. The upper canal is an open sandstone structure, and it is positioned behind the filtration plants that clean and purify our drinking water before it is supplied to Sydney's homes. In other words, water flows from the canal into the filtration plants and is treated before it is supplied for drinking. I am advised that all tests after filtration show our water supplies are clear.

As we know, the heavy rain that we have seen across our catchments in recent weeks has caused soil, debris and nutrients to wash into the system. Three to four weeks of water supply is cascading into Warragamba Dam each day. We all wanted the rain, we prayed for it, and we got it. Now we need to manage the flow-on

effects. That means authorities are taking particular care to monitor water quality across the catchment and at the point at which it is distributed to homes and businesses. I am also advised that further water stapling is taking place today, and the catchment authority continues to work closely with Sydney Water and health experts. My colleagues Ministers Koperberg and Rees are being updated regularly on these proceedings. I am further advised that Prospect water filtration plant is performing exactly as it was designed to do.

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Three weeks worth of water?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Well, yes. "Three weeks worth of water." I am glad you made that observation!

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I am advised the filtration plant is performing exactly as it was designed to do, and built to do, as part of a vast network that is available.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The new \$50 million Prospect raw water pumping station provides a critical backup for any serious water quality problems elsewhere in the system. Other action taken since the outbreak mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition includes: a deep bed filtration system to provide an additional barrier and reduce contaminant levels; optimisation of coagulant dosing; introduction of online particle counters to more closely monitor performance; shortening of filter runs; improvements to the distribution system to prevent contaminants building up in pipes and hydrants; and a comprehensive continuous improvement package and introduction of quality assurance procedures. Sydney Water has implemented world's best standards of discharging water from Prospect filtration plant with a target of no more than 0.1 NTU, which is a figure ten times more stringent—

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** What does NTU stand for?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I will come to that. That is a figure ten times more stringent than the level for filtered water required by the Australian drinking water guidelines. Sydney Water publishes its test results daily on its website in the interests of full public disclosure. Sydney Water and the Government will continue to keep the public informed.

#### RAIL SAFETY

**Mr PAUL McLEAY:** My question without notice is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Transport. How is the Government delivering on its commitment to improve rail safety?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on the Opposition benches will remain silent while the Minister answers the question. I call the member for Wakehurst to order.

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** Safety is the Iemma Government's number one priority in public transport. That is what the travelling public expect, and it is what they deserve. The latest report from the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator says that at the end of March this year 89 per cent of Justice McInerney's Waterfall recommendations were closed with a further 2 per cent claimed for closure and being assessed. This means almost all the Waterfall recommendations that the New South Wales Government is in control of implementing are closed, or claimed for closure, and awaiting formal verification. That is good progress. It shows the Iemma Government is meeting its commitments.

Today I can update the House on the progress of three of the big-ticket recommendations contained in Justice McInerney's report. They are emergency egress, automatic train protection and train radios. This year the Iemma Government will spend \$36.5 million on progressing those three major safety initiatives; \$5 million will be spent to retrofit older trains for passenger initiated escape; \$16.5 million for the trial of automatic train protection systems on the Blue Mountains line; and \$15 million towards the development of a new digital train radio system. None of these solutions can or should be introduced without appropriate assessment. Accordingly, we took the recommendations, looked at what was working elsewhere and what the market could provide, established that we had the evidence backing our approach, and now we are funding RailCorp to progress these major safety initiatives.

Containing passengers in a train in the event of a serious incident was one of the most contentious issues raised by the Waterfall inquiry. Experts say that in most circumstances it is safer for passengers to remain inside carriages in the event of an emergency, to avoid being electrocuted by live wires or struck by other trains or other dangers beside rail lines. But in some circumstances, it may be preferable for passengers to get out—into another carriage, or outside the train. Justice McInerney recommended RailCorp replace its previous policy of "passenger containment", the policy that had been in place for a number of years. Following that recommendation of Justice McInerney, RailCorp undertook a thorough risk assessment before deciding on a new policy of "partial containment", the implementation plan for which was evaluated by the Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator.

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** "Partial containment" means that, in case of immediate danger, passengers have the means to exit their carriage along the train and, when appropriate, off the train. Passengers may also trigger the door release to exit the carriage, provided the train is stationary. In 2007-08 the Iemma Government has committed \$5 million to commence the retrofit of its fleet to comply with the new policy; 1,200 of RailCorp's existing trains with a lifespan beyond 2011 will be upgraded to meet the new policy, and we will ensure that all new trains being built also will comply with that policy. The program will include: on-board alarms to warn the train crew when the door release is activated; regular testing and monitoring of the door release mechanisms; and an education campaign for passengers on when and how to use these facilities, including signage and public awareness programs. The modification of carriages is a complex task. RailCorp has a variety of carriage types, and each of those will require a unique engineering solution.

Over five years we will retrofit the following rolling stock to allow for passenger-initiated escape: outer suburban cars, Millennium cars, our Tangara fleet, the C and K stainless steel sets, the Intercity V sets, the Hunter railcars and the Endeavour railcars. Justice McInerney also pointed the way towards automatic train protection [ATP]. Accordingly, in November we will trial a new automatic train protection system on the Blue Mountains line that is generations ahead of the track-side protection systems currently on the system. Under an automatic train protection system a computer will analyse the speed and braking pattern of a train, and intervene if it anticipates a train is about to pass a red signal. We have backed this trial with a \$16.5 million commitment in the 2007-08 budget. The roll-out of automatic train protection systems is anticipated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Three companies are now fitting out sections of track in the Blue Mountains and a train to see how the system performs. The trial provides extra peace of mind as another step forward in rail safety.

The Government has allocated \$15 million in the 2007-08 year to commence the new digital train radio system. The total project cost for the deployment of the system is likely to be more than \$200 million. Nothing comes cheap when it comes to major improvements to rail safety. RailCorp has determined that a GSM-R system will best meet the requirements of the CityRail network. Its commission will be scheduled towards the end of 2011. RailCorp has already purchased a spectrum that will enable a detailed design of the system, as well as adequate bandwidth for current and future voice and data requirements. The tender documentation is currently under development. It is envisaged that a request for tender will be released by November. The safety measures we are introducing are part of our commitment to a better, safer rail system based on a good set of transport policies. In contrast, the Opposition went to the election with no integrated transport policy at all. As we all know, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 14 March this year:

The NSW Coalition will go to the election without an integrated transport vision for Sydney, with Peter Debnam dismissing it as "not the No. 1 issue."

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

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** And on the same day the spokesman for Transport cancelled a high-powered policy lunch on this issue, the then Leader of the Opposition stumbled over his transport costings. Pressed to explain how much money he had set aside for his transport initiatives, Mr Debnam replied:

I don't carry the [costings] encyclopaedia around with me, and I am not going to.

The member for Willoughby said that the reason for the lack of a transport plan was tactical, "It's hard to do the costings." The excuse of the Coalition was that it was harder to do the costings, yet those on that side pretended they were ready to govern the State.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: Standing Order No. 129 relates to relevance. The question was about the Government's commitment to rail safety. If the Minister wants to go on about Opposition statements, press releases or the like then his side can ask a question about it. Without canvassing the ruling you made at the beginning of question time about what matters of public affairs fall under the Minister's responsibility, I ask you to draw the Minister back to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am sure the Minister was making only a passing reference to costings. The Minister will return to the answer.

**Mr JOHN WATKINS:** I was talking about costings. Who was in charge of Opposition costings at that time? It was one person, the current Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell. At least we now know what the "O" stands for: "Oh my God, he's lazy." Done and dusted.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. I am looking at the people in the public gallery and their doubt about the veracity of this House when a Minister so clearly canvasses the Speaker's ruling. The question was about rail safety, which I am sure the people in the public gallery are very interested in, not what might have happened 12 months ago.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. The Deputy Premier has concluded his answer.

### ABORIGINAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I direct my question to the Premier. If he is serious about achieving bipartisan support to deal with the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children in New South Wales, why did he allow Labor members in the upper House this morning to block a call for papers that would have allowed non-Government members to view documents relating to the "Breaking the Silence" report?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** That was hardly a call for bipartisanship, was it? The Leader of The Nationals might join other political leaders across the nation in a national effort to tackle a national crisis. The Leader of the Opposition in Canberra has offered the Prime Minister bipartisan support. The first State to respond to the Prime Minister's call to go to the Northern Territory, the first State to answer his request, was New South Wales. I relate the member's question to the one he asked yesterday, when he made the accusation that police officers in Bourke were putting children as young as two years of age in police cells at night in lieu of safe houses. The first point is that he knew that last year the Minister for Health announced \$800,000 worth of funding for safe houses and domestic violence support in the Orana Far West. Second, I inform the House that the Government has received advice from the Acting Commander—

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members on the Government benches will remain silent.

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** My point of order relates to Standing Order No. 129. If the Premier wants to provide a supplementary answer to a question that was asked yesterday, he has an opportunity to do so.

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

**Mr Andrew Stoner:** The question today is specifically about the Government's actions in blocking access to information about the "Breaking the Silence" report. I ask you to direct the Premier to answer that question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The member's question was about bipartisanship, but he has never shown any inkling for bipartisanship from the time he walked into this House, let alone on this issue that leaders across the nation are taking seriously. No-one is imputing the Prime Minister's motives because he has an election in five months. The State that responded first to his call for police was New South Wales. But the member discovered this issue only this week, not even this session.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** We have all sat here waiting for a question on the Health budget, the Community Services budget, the Disability Services budget, but no, the Leader of The Nationals discovered it when the story broke at the end of last week. He has the gall to talk about bipartisanship in this place after he misled the House yesterday on a question about two-year-olds in police cells in Far West New South Wales.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The Leader of The Nationals should not ask a question about bipartisanship; he should race out there and hold another press conference, as he did yesterday, to take leadership on behalf of the Opposition and show some bipartisanship.

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

#### AUSTRALIAN HEALTH CARE AGREEMENT

**Mr DAVID BORGER:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. Will she update the House on the Government's efforts to secure a better deal from the Commonwealth on healthcare funding?

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** I welcome this opportunity to inform the House of matters to be discussed in the forthcoming Australian Health Minister's Conference.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Premier to order. The Minister for Health will be heard in silence.

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** On 24 July health Ministers will meet in Sydney. The agenda for the conference includes a range of important issues for the delivery of health services across Australia. We will have the opportunity to deliberate on medical work force reforms, professional registration schemes, the regulatory framework for health information technology, and a number of other items. But the most important feature of the health Ministers conference is what we will not be discussing. We are not allowed to discuss the single most important issue for the Health portfolio in this country. The Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, is refusing to discuss the funding arrangements for the Australian Health Care Agreement until after the election.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call members of the Government to order.

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** There is no wondering why. On the weekend, a report titled "Caring for our Health" was released highlighting the failure of the Commonwealth Government in the area of health care.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order. I call the member for Murrumbidgee to order for the second time.

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** The "Caring for our Health" report details a complete absence of transparency when it comes to the Howard Government's performance on a range of healthcare indicators for which it is directly responsible. The report found that the Federal Government is underfunding our public hospitals by \$1.1 billion a year. Translated into patient care, that amount equates to 350,000 hospital admissions each year. That is a disgrace. Primary health care, for which the Commonwealth Government is directly responsible, also demonstrates the Commonwealth Government's failure. Over the past 10 years, the out-of-pocket costs for senior general practitioners have increased by 60 per cent. The report demonstrates the Commonwealth Government's clear failure.

I will put this matter into context. In 1975 the Commonwealth Government established Medibank and signed up to a funding agreement with the States on the funding for public hospitals, which established a 50-50 split. Successive governments basically adhered to this partnership until 2000. But the "Caring for our Health" report shows a massive decline in Commonwealth Government funding for public hospitals since 2000. At that stage the Commonwealth Government was contributing 50 per cent of the cost of running and maintaining public hospitals, but by 2005, the Commonwealth's share had slipped to 45 per cent and is still trending downwards.

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

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** The report shows that the Commonwealth Government is not a genuine partner in the funding of public hospitals across the country. It has been left to State and Territory governments

to pick up the difference. The Australian Health Care Agreement simply measures the performance of acute care hospitals. It comprehensively fails to address the reasons for the increase in emergency department admissions. It does not address the Commonwealth Government's own failure in primary and community care. In particular the Australian Health Care Agreement punishes the States for keeping people out of hospital. The agreement is fundamentally flawed both in the way it calculates the level of funding and in its basic premise which is to reward States and Territories for treating people in hospital. That is why today I was so pleased to hear from the Federal Labor leader, Kevin Rudd.

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

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** This morning the Federal Leader of the Opposition indicated that Labor is willing to renegotiate the terms of the Australian Health Care Agreement and work with the States on prevention and early intervention in health care, which is what clinicians around the country have been calling for. It is what both the State and Territory governments have been calling for and it is what the Commonwealth Government, particularly Tony Abbott, has routinely ignored.

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

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** The recent budget shows this Government investing a record \$12.5 billion in health. But most importantly it demonstrates a shift in the manner in which we will deliver healthcare services and a shift toward early intervention, disease prevention and healthcare services delivered at home and in the community. This new focus represents a concerted effort by the State Government to keep people healthy and out of hospital.

The States were forced to sign the current Australian Health Care Agreement under the threat of massive penalties from the Commonwealth. That agreement expires in June 2008. Since the current agreement was signed, the New South Wales Government's funding for healthcare services in New South Wales increased by 42 per cent compared to the Commonwealth Government's funding which increased by only 14 per cent. It is no wonder that Tony Abbott does not want to discuss this issue. It is no wonder he wants to shut down funding discussions and to try to keep the States and the Territories quiet. He does not want to discuss these issues because he does not want his reputation damaged in the eyes of the Australian people in the lead-up to the Federal election.

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

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** An average of 6,000 patients are treated every day in the emergency departments of New South Wales public hospitals. In the nine months to March this year, emergency department attendances across New South Wales increased by almost 74,000 people, or by 6 per cent compared to last year. New South Wales is not alone in its concern about the Australian Health Care Agreement. Health Ministers from every State and Territory have written to Tony Abbott calling for a discussion about the Australian Health Care Agreement to be added to the agenda of the Australian Health Ministers Conference. Tony Abbott has refused that request. He has refused because he is embarrassed, and his discomfort should be contrasted with the fresh approach adopted today by the Federal Labor leader, Kevin Rudd.

One would have thought that members of the Opposition would have learned a lesson from the consecutive trouncings they have received at general elections. Basically the people of New South Wales want to know that the State Coalition will stand up for them and stand up to the Commonwealth Government to obtain a better deal. But instead, all they do is laugh.

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

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** When it comes to ensuring that New South Wales is getting a fair deal from the Commonwealth Government, what do we hear from members of the Opposition? Deafening silence! The New South Wales Coalition is run, basically, by Canberra. The Coalition does not have independent policy initiatives. One would think that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who has been the shadow Minister for Health for a number of years, would be sensitive to the issues and be prepared to stand up to Canberra to get a better deal from the Commonwealth Government for our hospitals and our clinicians.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that she has already been called to order twice.

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** Instead, she has defended the decline in Commonwealth Government funding. It is a disgrace.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order.

**Ms REBA MEAGHER:** I invite the New South Wales Coalition to join me in calling on Tony Abbott to add to the agenda of the Australian Health Ministers Conference the most important issue to be discussed about health care in the lead-up to the Federal election. We should be discussing the Australian Health Care Agreement. In making that call, I look forward to support from the Coalition.

### **ABORIGINAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** My question is directed to the Minister for Water Utilities. Will the Minister now admit that he was the senior adviser to the former disgraced Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Milton Orkopoulos, who offended the Breaking the Silence task force members by dismissively and inappropriately describing those criminals sexually abusing Aboriginal children?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I point out that today marks the third consecutive day on which I have been asked, and answered, questions not related to my portfolio. Earlier today I received a phone call from Mr Jack Beeton. Mr Beeton is an Aboriginal elder who runs a youth farm on the mid North Coast, Linga Longa, which helps young people who have been abused, assaulted or otherwise neglected. Mr Beeton's work has been acknowledged locally and internationally. Locally he has been awarded the Rotary Club of Sydney CBD Community Service Award. Internationally he has been awarded an Unsung Hero Award by the United Nations in the Year of Dialogue Amongst Civilisations. His was one of only 12 awarded around the world.

Jack Beeton also demonstrated tremendous courage when he appeared on the ABC *Lateline* program last year and recounted his own experience of being sexually abused. No-one who saw that program will ever forget it. When I spoke with Mr Beeton this morning he told me that he was appalled at the way this issue had been politicised. He also offered the view that no-one had been more determined than me to address the issues raised in the "Breaking the Silence" report. He said that I should feel free to repeat this.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, which relates to relevance. While the answer may have been interesting, it certainly did not answer the question that was raised; it was a very specific question that deserved an answer.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will resume his seat. The answer was relevant to the question asked.

### **HUNTER AND CENTRAL COAST EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

**Mr FRANK TERENCE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Community Services. Will the Minister update the House on the assistance provided to Hunter and Central Coast families affected by recent storms and floods?

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** The member for Maitland will be aware, as we all are, of the terrible losses suffered by the people of the Hunter and the Central Coast as a result of torrential rain and flooding in the area. However, the devastation gave us the opportunity to witness tremendous acts of fortitude and community spirit, with neighbour helping neighbour and communities coming together to lend a hand. I am sure that members would agree that it is always inspirational to see the way Australians respond to the misadventure and tragedy that befalls them in their lives with such grace and stoicism. Nowhere has that spirit been more clearly demonstrated than by the staff of the Department of Community Services [DOCS] in those affected areas.

Many Department of Community Services workers suffered damage and loss as a result of the floods, but they put their emergencies aside to help others in the community deal with the losses and damage they faced. More than 170 departmental staff worked voluntarily through the first weekend of the flood along with our partner organisations including the Australian Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Samaritans, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the St Vincent de Paul Society and local councils.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! A number of conversations are occurring while the Minister is giving his answer. If members want to take part in conversations that are not related to the question or the answer they should do so outside.

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** Those selfless volunteers worked to provide essential emergency support including money for food, somewhere to sleep and dry clothes to wear to continue the clean up. In the height of the disaster, the Department of Community Services set up 16 emergency evacuation centres to provide a safe place for close to 1,500 people fleeing their homes. More than 1,540 calls for advice and assistance were made to the Department of Community Services Disaster Recovery Line and the State Government's Public Information and Inquiry line.

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

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** Although the flooding crisis is over, there are difficult times ahead for these communities as they face the reality of the devastation and rebuild their homes, their businesses and their lives. The role of the Department of Community Services becomes more important than ever in this recovery stage. So far we have helped more than 2,700 flood-affected families who have come into our Disaster Recovery Centres and doorknocked more than 6,000 homes offering help. We have distributed more than \$170,000 in emergency assistance from urgent cash handouts to food hampers. At the Wyong Disaster Recovery Centre alone, more than 1,900 food hampers were distributed.

Department of Community Services staff and volunteers have helped visitors to the centres, providing financial advice, counselling, accommodation, insurance assistance and practical measures such as how to replace documents destroyed in the flooding rains. While demand for assistance through the centres is winding down, we will keep the centres open for as long as the community needs help. And when the centres are no longer needed, Department of Community Services staff will continue to provide advice from local community services centres. It is typical of Australians that in the midst of their own problems many have found the time to express their gratitude for the efforts of Department of Community Services staff. One flood-affected Abermain resident, Tony Borrows, told his story to Department of Community Services staff. He praised their efforts in helping his family. He wrote:

My wife and I have had food dropped to our home, they have helped us get in contact with the insurance company, the local council and assisted us in completing complicated forms.

We have had four foot of water in our home and just having DOCS workers visit and support us as we recover from the flood has been so helpful—we are so grateful that we had them there during a really stressful and difficult time in our lives.

Tony and Jan Stark from the Central Coast took the time to write to the Premier. They wrote:

We are both aged pensioners who very carefully balance our finances between fortnightly pension days. The storm hit us at a time when we were battling with so many other financial costs ... when the storm struck we were without power, heating, water or toilet and shower facilities for five days. We had \$30 to last us until our next pension day which was 8 days away—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murrumbidgee will cease calling out.

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** The letter continued:

I phoned the State Emergency Centre and within an hour I received a call back from Alicia at the Wyong Disaster Recovery Centre. I explained that food could not be claimed on our insurance. Alicia arranged for a food parcel and cash to be delivered to us the following day.

We were amazed and overwhelmed at such compassionate caring people and will be forever grateful to all those who have assisted and relieved our situation at such a stressful time.

These are just a couple of the stories about the people we are helping and the Department of Community Services staff are helping, many of whom are still in need themselves. Clearly, Department of Community Services staff are heroes in the lives of many people in the Hunter and Central Coast region as they coped with the devastating floods. Whilst they work hard to help people get back on their feet, Opposition members do nothing other than talk them down and disregard their efforts. They even went so far as to call them failures and allege that they had failed to step up and support families affected by the floods. But that is no surprise.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order. The member for Terrigal will remain silent.

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** As I said, it is no surprise that Opposition members cannot recognise or support the good work being done by front-line staff in the Department of Community Services. They have no community services plan—

**Mr Andrew Fraser:** Point of order: If the Minister wishes to attack the member for Cessnock for his statement in the House last week he should do so by way of substantive motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Coffs Harbour will resume his seat. I remind him that he is on two calls to order. The Minister for Community Services will continue.

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** As I indicated earlier, Opposition members had no community services plan at the last election. Their only idea was to slash 20,000 front-line workers from public services, which would have cut 600 workers from the Department of Community Services.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** It's a disgrace!

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** I agree with the member for Lane Cove; that policy was a disgrace. The Opposition made \$29 billion worth of promises but it did not allocate one dollar towards supporting the vital work that this department does.

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

**Mr KEVIN GREENE:** Three months into the new term of this Government the Coalition has still failed to articulate any plan to protect the children of New South Wales from abuse and neglect. A change of leader has not resulted in any direction for the Coalition, just more of the same. Government members understand that people need time and assistance to rebuild their lives. We will continue to do all that we can to make these difficult times easier and to ensure that these people get the help that they need to put their lives back together.

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

#### ABORIGINAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** My question is directed to the Minister for Water Utilities. Will the Minister now admit that at a meeting discussing the need to undertake appropriate background checks of people receiving Aboriginal local heroes' awards, he confirmed the Government's lack of priority or commitment towards the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children by dismissively saying to task force members, "So now we are worried about kiddie fiddlers, are we"?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** During the time that I worked in the former Minister's office I was involved in a great many meetings and discussions about this issue and related matters. I have no idea which one of them—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Given the nature of the question it is appropriate that members of the Opposition listen to the Minister in silence.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I have no idea which of those meetings was referred to in yesterday's article or in the member's question. But I will say this: As I learned more about the extent and nature of the problems occurring in some communities, I was more and more appalled. I was sickened and disgusted by some of the stories I heard.

**Mr Chris Hartcher:** And what did you do about it?

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

**Mr NATHAN REES:** At times I felt frustrated and impatient with some of the advice being offered as I strongly felt what was needed was decisive action and a whole-of-government response. From time to time I may well have used colloquial language, including the term referred to. I probably also used the terms "grub", "low life" and other terms. These despicable animals that prey on children arouse strong feelings in me. It is my nature to speak directly. It is regrettable if my language bruised the sensitivities of any of the senior bureaucrats involved, but it was a measure of my personal disgust at what I was being told about the abuse of children.

#### WATER INDUSTRY COMPETITION

**Mrs KARYN PALUZZANO:** My question is to the Minister for Water Utilities. What is the Government doing to encourage competition and private sector involvement in the water industry?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I thank the member for her continuing interest in the supply and security of our water supply now and into the future. As all members would be aware, especially over the last few days, there is no single solution to securing the State's water supply. The solution lies in a range of measures. Earlier this week the Government announced another \$250 million for a massive recycling scheme in Western Sydney. We are harvesting stormwater in more than 70 projects across Sydney. We are achieving water savings through our rebates for rainwater tanks. And, in the case of Sydney and many other cities, desalination proposals are being addressed.

The policy and delivery framework for water cannot be delivered by just one agency or by government alone; it needs to be a partnership involving State and Federal governments, local councils, local communities and the private sector. The private sector is a great source of untapped, dynamic and innovative water supply solutions. The Iemma Government is the first and only State Government in Australia to have paved the way for direct private sector involvement in the delivery of water and wastewater services and infrastructure. Last year the Iemma Government introduced the Water Industry Competition Act to encourage and facilitate private sector involvement in the water industry.

Despite all the emotive claptrap from Opposition members on water, it is interesting that, when they went to the election, not one word in their policies on water dealt with private sector involvement; we simply got the Namibia plan. Increased competition in the water industry encourages the uptake of recycling projects. This is in addition to the Government's commitment to recycle more than 70 billion litres every year by 2015. Today I am pleased to inform the House of the next step towards increased private sector involvement in our water industry. The Government has released a public consultation paper for the regulations for the Water Industry Competition Act 2006. The regulations for the Act will deliver a comprehensive licensing regime, guaranteeing the continued protection of public health, the environment and consumer interests in the delivery of our water services.

Under the regulatory regime, a licence will be required for the construction, maintenance and operation of water industry infrastructure and the supply of water and sewerage services by means of a water industry infrastructure. The release of a discussion paper, stakeholder briefings and a public investigation into water and wastewater service provision by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal [IPART] will also occur. In the coming weeks the Department of Water and Energy will hold information sessions for all interested parties. Written submissions are invited during the consultation period. All of this will help in the development of comprehensive and robust regulations that will set up Sydney for future generations.

The consultation paper seeks comment primarily on the important issues of licence conditions for new entrants, water quality obligations, safe and reliable water industry infrastructure, ensured environmental protection, and sustainable water supplies. It will also cover consumer protection and any exemptions from the licensing regime. The Act provides a win-win situation for business and the environment, and business and environmental groups have both responded. Jeff Angel of the Total Environment Centre wrote to me in the following terms:

Under the right regulatory regime the private sector can play an important role in delivering water recycling services, which will be an essential component in building up our drought security and environmental sustainability.

Ken Morrison of the New South Wales Property Council also offered support by stating:

... the private sector will embrace the partnership opportunities which will open up as a result of this Australian first ...

The private sector can bring new ideas, capital and efficiencies to the water industry, which will assist in the management of what all members know is our most precious resource. The Iemma Government, through regulation, will ensure that public health and the interests of consumers will be protected under any private licensing regime. The Government is committed to implementing a suite of measures to secure Sydney's water supply. It is proud to take this step, which will inject further diversity into the water industry and water supply.

### COMMUNITY HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** My question is to the Minister for Housing. The Federal Minister, Mal Brough, is withdrawing \$13.25 million from the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program and redirecting it all to remote communities outside New South Wales.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members of the Opposition will remain silent. The member for Dubbo has the call.

**Mrs DAWN FARDELL:** As this will severely hinder future maintenance and purchases of all Aboriginal housing in New South Wales, what is the Minister doing to support New South Wales Aboriginal housing communities?

**Mr MATT BROWN:** I thank the member for Dubbo for raising this issue.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will come to order.

**Mr MATT BROWN:** This issue is a great concern to the Iemma Government, and the House should be aware of it. In his last Federal budget Peter Costello said that he would abolish \$13.25 million annual funding for Aboriginal housing in New South Wales and replace it with funding only for Aboriginal people who live in remote or very remote areas of the State. While I welcome any assistance for our indigenous population—which, by the way, at 140,000 people is the largest in the country—only 5 per cent of people live in areas identified as remote or very remote. This means that Peter Costello and his bean counters are ignoring 95 per cent of Aboriginal people in this State.

Mr Costello's not-so-bright idea is to shift funding from the \$13.25 million Community Housing Infrastructure Program, which is known as CHIP, to his brand-new Australian Remote Indigenous Accommodation Program, which is known as ARIA. No-one knows how much funding will be allocated to the new program. However, we are almost certain that the majority of Aboriginal people in the State will be disadvantaged by the change. The Premier just announced that New South Wales has been subjected to \$1 billion in funding cuts in the past three successive Commonwealth-State housing agreements. Let me put that figure in context: \$1 billion could be used to purchase 5,000 new homes.

If the Prime Minister has his way, these changes will have a significant impact on social housing in the State and on the social fabric of Aboriginal communities. The Minister for Fair Trading and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs can tell the House that the mainstreaming of Aboriginal people into services simply does not work. The effects of this decision will be felt particularly hard in places such as Dubbo that have growing indigenous populations. The Aboriginal Rental Housing Program is another major source of funding for the New South Wales Aboriginal housing sector, providing about \$18 million annually. It is a Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement program, which means that its future is linked to the renegotiation of a new agreement from July next year.

New South Wales stands to lose some \$32 million in funding if the Australian Government proceeds to fund remote areas only. Since 1998 the New South Wales Government has acquired an additional 990 dwellings for the sector, significantly improving the condition of its 4,200 properties. I advise the House that a joint response to the Community Housing Infrastructure Program review has been prepared by the New South Wales agencies and provided to the Australian Government. It asks that the Federal Government reconsider these reforms. I urge Opposition members to join us in lobbying Canberra for our fair share of funding for the Aboriginal people of this State. I assure the House, and particularly the member for Dubbo, that the Government will continue to advocate for a continuation of Australian Government funding for the Aboriginal housing sector in New South Wales.

### **SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE WORLD HERITAGE LISTING**

**Mr NINOS KHOSHABA:** My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the latest information on international news concerning the Sydney Opera House?

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Members will like this answer. Today is a momentous day in the history of Sydney.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** You're going to resign!

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I will not be doing a Utzon, no. Just moments ago the Thirty-First Session of the World Heritage Committee in Christchurch, New Zealand, decided to inscribe the Sydney Opera House on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Our Opera House now ranks alongside treasures such as the Taj Mahal, the ancient pyramids of Egypt—

[*Interruption*]

The member for Murray-Darling wants to bulldoze the Opera House?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Murray-Darling is best advised to keep quiet. The Deputy Premier will remain silent.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The member for Murray-Darling should assume the position he adopted on budget day and sleep. The list includes the Great Wall of China and the Great Barrier Reef. The argument was put and won. For decades the genius shone. For years we prepared the painstaking submission. The committee deliberated and then came the accolade to crown them all. The Sydney Opera House is acknowledged globally as a darling piece of architecture and a building that broke the rules. It is an experiment that left its mark—

**Mrs Shelley Hancock:** "Daring" not "darling".

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order. The member for South Coast will cease assisting the Premier.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** It is daring, but I said "darling". Such is my affection for this building. It is an experiment that left its mark on the twentieth century and became an icon. Today is about a building and the city that loves it. But it is also about a man named Jørn Utzon, who gave us such a gift and whom we can never repay.

**Mrs Shelley Hancock:** It is daring.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The member for South Coast can say that it is daring as well. We share in Utzon's triumph and offer our humble thanks to the great man. Without his genius the crown of the harbour would not exist. He inspired the teams of architects, engineers, builders and craftsmen who brought the vision to life, including Ove Arups Partners and Hall, Todd and Littlemore. It is 50 years since Utzon won the New South Wales Government's Opera House design competition. He was chosen from 933 architects from around the world to collect the £5,000 prize. He was 38 years old.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Generations of Sydneysiders since have wondered what inspired Utzon's design. Was it a piece of fruit? Was it the sails of a ship? Utzon has hinted that he drew on a range of ideas from ancient to modern times, including Mayan step pyramids and the floating roofs of Chinese temples. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 30 January 1957, the judges said:

Because of its very originality ... it is clearly a controversial design. We are ... however ... absolutely convinced about its merits.

After 16 years their faith was rewarded. More than 30,000 cubic metres of rock and soil were removed from the site. The construction of the shell structure took eight years and required quantum leaps in structural engineering techniques. It took three years alone to develop the specific—and special—ceramic tiles for the shells, which were manufactured in Sweden. The result was an urban sculpture that celebrates its harbour setting and welcomes the community. The building will continue to evolve and grow with the input of its architect.

My colleague the Minister for Planning, as then Lord Mayor of Sydney, had the honour of awarding the keys to the City of Sydney to Utzon. The following year he formally accepted former Premier Bob Carr's invitation to re-engage with the project and explain the principles behind his design. The Sydney Opera House is only the second World Heritage-listed site with a living architect, and it is the youngest cultural site on the list. In the 1950s Premier Cahill declared the Sydney Opera House would be a people's place, a fitting title for a building that attracts more than 4 million visitors each year and holds 2,000 live performances annually, making it one of the busiest performing arts venues in the world. The World Heritage listing will draw even more devotees to see one of the most dazzling buildings on the globe.

[*Interruption*]

**Mr Chris Hartcher:** Nothing to do with you, Morris.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** Doesn't that just sum up the Opposition, and especially the member for Terrigal! He finds the Opera House a bore and its World Heritage listing a yawn. That is how the people regarded the member for Terrigal and the entire Opposition on 24 March—a bore, a yawn. Better to keep them over there than entrust them with responsibility for the Treasury benches.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier will remain silent.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** As we near the end of this sitting of the parliamentary session they have done nothing to change the perception and judgment of the people on 24 March. Fancy doing that on one of the greatest days that this city will have—the day that its icon is placed on the World Heritage list.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier will resume his seat.

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** The member for Terrigal regards that as a bore. Is that not typical of a lazy, useless out-of-touch Opposition? It has learnt nothing from its election defeat. It certainly has not contributed anything to this parliamentary session. As we have seen in the past month and a half, the Opposition simply cannot understand the lesson that the people delivered to them on 24 March. It is a very simple message: Do some work!

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** I say: Don't just sit there, lazy and useless, reading the newspapers each morning and basing your parliamentary questions on what pops up in the newspapers. Take the lead, heed the message from the electorate on 24 March and do some work, craft out an alternative policy position—a credible alternative platform to put to the people in four years time. Coalition members might start by deciding where they stand as far as water is concerned. That would be a good place to start. They should also come up with something on infrastructure. As we saw on budget day, out came the criticism: You're spending too much on infrastructure. Then it was: You're not spending enough. Then it was: You're borrowing too much. Nobody knows where they stand on anything because they simply have not got a policy.

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

**Mr MORRIS IEMMA:** They do not have a policy because they are just too lazy to do any work. As their leader uttered back in 2000:

We've sort of set ourselves a timetable for the end of this year to get some bits and pieces together.

We are still waiting but, above all, the people are still waiting. I thank the official nomination partners, the New South Wales Heritage Office and, in a spirit of bipartisanship, the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Water Resources. In a continuing spirit of bipartisanship, I note that Mr Turnbull will be joining Mr Sartor at the Opera House in approximately 15 minutes to officiate at the Opera House to mark this wonderful decision. Most of all, I thank Utzon for his gift to the people of Sydney—the ultimate people's palace, the World Heritage listed Sydney Opera House.

**Question time concluded.**

## **YOUTH PARTICIPATION**

### **Ministerial Statement**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Youth, and Minister for Volunteering) [3.33 p.m.]: I am very proud to have been afforded the Youth portfolio. As Minister for Youth I want to create greater awareness of the contribution young people make to our society and foster a more positive portrayal of young people in the media and community. Most importantly, I want to support opportunities for young people to participate in society, and to create a space to hear their voices, aspirations, frustrations and stories. According to the 2006 census, there are more than 1.1 million people aged 12 to 24 years in New South Wales. That is more than 17 per cent of the population. But how often do we see them portrayed in a positive light? We are more likely to see young people portrayed as troublemakers. How often do we truly seek young people's views or involve them in decisions that affect their lives? Adults are often tempted to fall back on the old cliché that "young people are our future". It is as if they have no role in society or the economy until they reach a certain age. This is wrong.

Young people are active members of the community today. They work, they volunteer, they use government services. They rent flats, they buy cars, they attend schools and technical colleges. They need to feel

comfortable walking into a police station or community health centre to ask for help. Young people may be our future, but they are also our present. They are our sons and daughters, our nieces and nephews, and our grandchildren. They have the right to participate. And they have something valuable to offer—a fresh insight, a different perspective.

Providing opportunities for young people to participate in the development of government policies, programs and services is a key part of a representative and democratic society. The challenge is not just to listen to young people but to build their views into policy and program direction. That is exactly what the New South Wales Iemma Government is doing. Getting young people involved in government decision making is a cornerstone of the Youth Action Plan released in December 2006. I am pleased to say today the Premier has issued a Memorandum on Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation.

This is a direction from the Premier to the heads of all government agencies. It requires agencies to recognise young people's rights to participate in developing government policy, programs and services that impact upon them; promote respect by listening to young people's views and taking them seriously; build and maintain strong relationships with the young people that agencies consult with; provide young people with appropriate and timely information on government processes; build on young people's knowledge and skills; recognise young people's different situations and backgrounds, particularly those from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, from culturally diverse backgrounds, those with disabilities, in out-of-home care and from vulnerable or marginalised groups; organise participation processes that take into account the needs of young people such as training and transport; and encourage young people to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the participation processes.

Involving young people benefits the agencies that deliver services, the young people who use them and our communities at large. Our approach is in stark contrast to the Federal Government's myopic and regressive position. Over the past 10 years the Howard Government has abolished the position of youth Minister; defunded the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition, the national youth affairs peak body; and disenfranchised 18-year-olds who are not enrolled to vote. The Federal Government changed the electoral Act so that when Australians cast their vote in the next Federal election, thousands of young people will not get a say. Previously people had seven days to enrol once the election was called. Now the electoral roll closes at 8.00 p.m. on the same day that writs for the election are issued. In his 2 April press release the Electoral Commissioner Ian Campbell, said:

Around half of Australia's 18 year olds are currently on the electoral roll.

Only half! Voting is fundamental to our democracy and I encourage all young people to enrol. The New South Wales Labor Government takes young people seriously. It is clear the Federal Government does not. The Premier's memorandum is issued to make sure that the heads of all agencies and all portfolios take heed and include young people not only on advising on policy but on building their views into policy and program direction. I recognise young people in New South Wales.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [3.38 p.m.]: The Opposition looks forward to seeing the details of some of the proposals. We welcome anything that encourages the contribution of youth in society in a range of areas. I need to make the point that the Howard Government is making an unprecedented attempt to bring the youth of Australia into the electoral process right now. Locally a fantastic group called Kids with a Voice is doing something similar. The group gives kids the opportunity to have ongoing participation in the voice of their school. The kids at Balgowlah Heights, under the stewardship of Catherine Henderson, are identifying projects that they can undertake. The first project for these fourth-grade to sixth-grade kids is safety crossings for every school day. It is a fantastic opportunity for kids to make a difference. Although we talk about youth affairs and protecting our youth we have a gap, and it is online predators. I have raised it before and I will raise it again. I call on the Government to act. At the moment any person who is a registered sex offender can access the Internet freely and lure—

**Mr Alan Ashton:** Communications is a Federal responsibility, and you ought to know that.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** No, it is not actually a Federal responsibility. There is opportunity within State legislation—

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I am assuming that the member for East Hills is taking the issue seriously. But the question is: What is the Government doing about it? We are in the midst of bringing a group of people from the

information technology industry, child protection services and the police together to make recommendations about what we should do from a legislation point of view to close this gap. We will introduce legislation to that effect. We spoke about bipartisanship today and to me this is a bipartisan issue. If we are talking about youth affairs we should protect our children. I have three young kids about whom I am concerned because they could be lured, as could all the children out there, through the Internet by their friends. I encourage the Government to consider that. I look forward to reading the details of the Minister's response.

### PRINTING OF PAPERS

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

That the following papers be printed:

Report of the Trustee of the Anzac Memorial Sydney for 2006  
 Report of the Department of Education and Training for 2006  
 Report of Southern Cross University for 2006 (Parts A and B)  
 Report of the University of New England for 2006  
 Report of the University of New South Wales for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of University of Sydney for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of University of Technology, Sydney, for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of University of Western Sydney for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of the University of Wollongong for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of the Parramatta Stadium Trust for 2006  
 Report of Harness Racing New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2006  
 Report of the Farrer Memorial Trust for 2006  
 Report of Charles Sturt University for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of Macquarie University for 2006 (Volumes 1 and 2)  
 Report of the University of Newcastle for 2006  
 Report of the Mental Health Review Tribunal for 2006

### OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

#### Reports

**Mr Speaker** tabled, pursuant to Section 78 of the Independent Commission against Corruption Act 1988, the following reports:

Report of an audit of the ICAC's compliance with section 12A of the ICAC Act 1988  
 Report of an audit of the ICAC's compliance with sections 21, 22, 23, 35 and 54 of the ICAC Act 1988

**Ordered to be printed.**

### PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

#### Membership

**The Clerk** announced, pursuant to the resolutions of the House on Thursday 21 June 2007, the nominations of members to the following committees:

- (1) Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change)—Michael John Daley, Andrew Raymond Gordon Fraser, Gerard Francis Martin, Robert James Murray Oakeshott, Karyn Lesley Paluzzano and Raymond Craig Williams
- (2) Standing Committee on Broadband in Rural and Regional Communities—Andrew James Constance, Phillip John Costa, David Robert Harris, Katrina Ann Hodgkinson, Gerard Francis Martin, Gregory Michael Piper and Steven James Robert Whan.

### PETITIONS

#### Pets on Public Transport

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

#### Pensioner Travel Voucher Booking Fee

Petition requesting the removal of the \$10 booking fee on pensioner travel vouchers, received from **Mr John Turner**.

### **Umina Coastal Sandplain Woodland Protection**

Petition requesting protection of all Umina coastal sandplain woodland and opposing any development of the area, received from **Ms Marie Andrews**.

### **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**.

### **Hornsby Palliative Care Beds**

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

### **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**.

### **Batlow Policing**

Petition requesting an increased number of police to address understaffing in the Tumut police patrol, resulting in Batlow police being unable to adequately service the community, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

### **Lake Mulwala Bridge**

Petition requesting funding for a new bridge over Lake Mulwala, received from **Mr Greg Aplin**.

### **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**.

### **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**.

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

### **Regional Broadband Internet Access**

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA** (Wollondilly) [3.44 p.m.]: Today the Federal Government is considering locking into a 10-year contract for inferior broadband access for regional Australia, which is why my motion should be accorded priority. It is most important that the House place on record its extreme disappointment with the Federal Government's broadband package and take up the fight to ensure the best possible broadband solution for regional New South Wales. Therefore my motion should be accorded priority.

### **Aboriginal Child Sexual Abuse**

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [3.46 p.m.]: There are few more important issues in the State than child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities throughout New South Wales. My motion should be accorded priority because, despite the rhetoric from the Premier, his actions or lack thereof have resulted in the issue becoming politicised in this place. I instance what happened to the author of the Breaking the Silence report, Marcia Ella Duncan, who was sacked by the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs without any explanation to the House. Last week's State budget effectively halved the Aboriginal Affairs budget. For some nine months there has been a total lack of action in response to the Breaking the Silence report. The former chief of staff to the disgraced Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, who had the report and sat on it for about six months, has been promoted directly to the frontbench. Today the Government directed its upper House members to deny the release of documents relating to the Government's response to the report.

**Mr Alan Ashton**: Point of order: The allegations the Leader of The Nationals just made about the new member are totally unparliamentary. The Minister answered a question he was asked today. The Leader of The Nationals is talking about certain promotions and things like that. It is highly unparliamentary—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The Leader of The Nationals may continue. I ask him to comply with the standing orders.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** This is especially important. The 10 electorates that have the highest levels of Aboriginality within New South Wales are all country seats. Members of The Nationals represent six of those seats. I can assure the House that the Liberals-Nationals Coalition is strongly committed to improving the lives of Aboriginal children in New South Wales. However, the Government continues to dodge debate, hide behind non-answers, and deny access to documents to cover up its lack of action or commitment to this issue. My motion should be accorded priority because today in this place the former chief of staff to Milton Orkopoulos, Nathan Rees, the Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Water Utilities finally admitted, after dodging the issues for three days, that he is the person who trivialised, and used an offensive term in relation to, this matter.

**Mr John Aquilina:** Point of order: Not only is the Leader of The Nationals delving into detail rather than showing why his motion should be accorded priority, but he is misrepresenting what occurred earlier in the House today. All members who were present in the Chamber would know, and *Hansard* will record precisely, what the Minister said. The suggestion by the Leader of the Nationals that the Minister was trivialising is factually incorrect, a gross misrepresentation, and a blatant lie.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I ask the Leader of The Nationals to confine his contribution to establishing why his motion should be accorded priority.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** This issue deserves to be accorded priority by the House. The Government's response to this issue was indicated by the Minister for Emergency Services in his admission today that when he was discussing background checks in front of members of the Breaking the Silence task force, he stated, "So now we're worried about kiddie fiddlers, are we?" Despite his mealy-mouthed excuses in the House today, I think any Australian would find that comment offensive.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order: I draw your attention to the ruling you made earlier. I suggest that the member is straying from the ruling. A minute ago he referred to something as a quote, but that was not a statement made in this place. He is deliberately attempting to mislead this House. The quote that he claims was made was not made during Question Time. He made that up.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough of the point of order from the member for Monaro. I uphold the point of order. I ask the Leader of The Nationals to confine his contribution to establishing priority.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The issue deserves to be accorded priority because what we have just seen from this Government are several spurious points of order being taken to shut me up, just as the Government has shut up debate on this issue. Aboriginal children in communities throughout New South Wales deserve better than that.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 43**

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

**Noes, 36**

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

**Pairs**

Ms Gadiel	Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Morris	Mr Souris

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**REGIONAL BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS****Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr PHILLIP COSTA** (Wollondilly) [4.00 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the roll-out of fast broadband access to the Internet is one of the most vital economic challenges facing New South Wales and Australia;
- (2) recognises that the economic future of many regional communities will rely on access to fast, reliable broadband at similar speeds as urban communities;
- (3) expresses its disappointment with the announcement on 18 June by the Federal Government of the Australia Connected program;
- (4) notes that the Federal Government's program will lock rural and regional communities into second class broadband for the foreseeable future; and
- (5) calls on the Federal Government to adopt Federal Labour's \$4.7 billion plan to establish the national broadband network in partnership with the private sector.

Access to fast and reliable broadband Internet has the potential to transform regional economies of New South Wales. Just as rail and road networks and the growth of airline travel have opened up regional New South Wales to economic opportunities, broadband has the potential to almost eliminate the tyranny of distance for those communities. When entrepreneurs are deciding where to establish their businesses, regional New South Wales will be on a level playing field with Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. When specialist doctors in the major teaching hospitals of the State located in large cities can have real time consultations with general practitioners and patients, high-speed broadband could be a life saver.

It is important to understand that fast broadband is not just about faster access to urban-based businesses through the web—although that will improve—it also allows small business to locate in regional areas and to have a global presence through the Internet. So this debate is not just about download speeds, or how fast information is delivered to a computer, it is also about upload speeds, or how fast information can get from a computer to the Internet. That is why the recent announcement by the Federal Government that it would opt for the lower-speed wireless option and not the high-speed fibre to the node proposals is so incredibly disappointing. I understand that high-speed fibre is up to 2,000 times faster.

Make no mistake: if this proposal stands in 10 years from now our regional communities will be poorer. Indeed, Australia will be poorer. Countless thousands of business opportunities will be lost to other

countries and Australia will increasingly become an economic backwater. Instead of leading the world's economy, Australia will be consigned to the status of a slow-bit player in the global economy. I will give the House a picture of some of the problems that rural and regional New South Wales is experiencing in accessing fast, reliable broadband. In my own area, high-speed broadband is not available to all. I cannot access fibre technology and wireless technology is very unreliable. I live only 100 kilometres from Sydney. Across rural New South Wales there are Community Technology Centres established to provide country people with access to technology and services. [*Quorum called for.*]

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

Many of those centres are unable to deliver video conferencing or large file data training modules because they do not have broadband capable of handling the loads. I could give many examples of that. One relevant program is the Department of State and Regional Development "Women in Business" program. More than 90 mentor-based programs have been delivered to businesswomen since 1995. Traditionally, women have had to drive to a regional centre to undertake the training. Currently they are piloting an EMentoring regional program that allows businesswomen in country towns to undertake the training locally via video conferencing. The program is being delivered through three community technology centres. Many more wanted to offer the program in their towns but were locked out due to their limited broadband capabilities. We need to deliver technology to our rural communities.

This problem will only get worse under the Federal Government's program, as small towns obtain access. When more people use the broadband system the slower it is. When more people access the system it slows down. There is no clarification on the type or quality of service rural people will get under the Federal Government proposal. Will it support real time video on demand? How competitive will the service be? Where is the guarantee that the wireless spectrum will not have to be shared? There seems to be a perception that people in the country only need high download speeds: we only want to look at the Internet. We do not want to interact, buy off the Internet or build virtual businesses, and we will never need to upload a large data file.

Limiting uploading capabilities will again result in a second-rate system for the bush. Many centres have to receive their teaching materials by post on a CD or DVD. The technology offered by the Federal Opposition will give a much better delivery of broadband. Broadband is not a new toy; it is enabling infrastructure just like road, rail and electricity. It opens up a new way of doing business, receiving education and training and enjoying leisure time. It is vital that New South Wales regional areas have access to the best possible Internet available—not the second-rate, cut-price system that is being proposed by the Federal Government.

Let us be clear about what is happening. If we are locked into an inferior process or program for 10 years the world will bypass us. The world will move on and our country people will have a system that is inferior to that of other competitors. We cannot allow that to happen. If it were not for the visionary plan of the Federal Opposition, led by Kevin Rudd, the Howard Government would still be sitting on its hands. The Federal Government, in a knee-jerk reaction, has now put forward a second-rate system. I have always been told that if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. The Federal Government's proposal is not the best option for people in regional New South Wales. We want to get it right: we should adopt the Rudd innovative plan and help our rural communities. We need to roll out fibre optics across rural New South Wales. We do not want an inferior wireless system that will give a much slower and unreliable system.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [4.08 p.m.]: I move:

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

this House:

- (1) notes the roll-out of the fast broadband access to the Internet is one of the most vital economic challenges facing New South Wales and Australia;
- (2) recognises that the economic future of many regional communities will rely on access to fast, reliable broadband at similar speeds as urban communities;
- (3) acknowledges the Federal Government's leadership on this issue;
- (4) condemns the Federal Opposition for its reckless plan to plunder the Future Fund, and
- (5) condemns the New South Wales Labor Government for its continual failure to debate issues of State responsibility in this House.

How true is that last point! Members of the Labor Party constantly move motions condemning the Federal Government but when they have to face up to State issues they do not want to debate them. Over the past three days the New South Wales Opposition has given notice of motions relating to debate on child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities but the Government voted against debating them on every occasion. The member for Wollondilly has moved a motion relating to the provision of broadband services. Every member in this place recognises the economic and social benefits of the Internet and the need for broadband access across the State.

Over the past few years the Federal Government rolled out its broadband service. Eight months later, after the Federal Government announced its Australia Connected project, Labor is playing catch up with its policies, which is what we would expect from Kevin Rudd's and Senator Stephen Conroy's fraudband plan. Since 2001 4.3 million homes and small businesses have gained access to broadband services and the average price paid by consumers has dropped by more than 64 per cent. In regional Australia an additional 1.3 million premises have broadband access as a result of the \$500 million or more in subsidies from the Howard Government. The Broadband Connect Program was first announced in July 2006 when the Federal Government called for industry expressions of interest for this funding. Labor's announcement came eight months later.

The key question for members of the State Labor Government, who are attempting today to prop up their Federal colleagues, is why Senator Stephen Conroy will not release all the details of his broadband plan, otherwise known as the fraudband plan. He will not do so because Labor's policy covers only 75 per cent of the Australian population. Let us contrast that to the Howard Government's high-speed broadband plan under which 99 per cent of Australians will have access to high-speed broadband and 100 per cent will have access to broadband under the broadband guarantee, which provides a \$2,750 subsidy. The Howard Government's plan also includes fibre to the node for all capital cities in major and regional centres.

Under Australia Connected no-one will miss out. It is intriguing that the member for Bathurst is not in the Chamber this afternoon. When matters relating to Telstra are debated he is usually in the Chamber, because of his large shareholding in the company. As he is the largest holder of Telstra shares in this Parliament—and in all Australian parliaments—I thought he would be here to protect his interests. The Federal Government's plan is fully costed and highly detailed. The Labor Party's proposal is to raid the Future Fund. That presents Kevin Rudd as nothing more than an economic vandal. He is willing to raid the Future Fund when the private sector is willing to pay for and implement broadband services and take on the risk relating to the provision of those services.

Kevin Rudd is raiding the Future Fund to present a rather cute policy that lacks detail. Let us compare the policies of the Federal Government with the policies of the Labor Party. I am pleased that the member for Bathurst is now in the Chamber to protect his pecuniary interests. Labor's plan will reach only 75 per cent of the population; the Federal Government's plan will reach 100 per cent of the population. The speed of Labor's plan is 12 megabytes per second, which compares with the Government's plan of 12 megabytes to 15 megabytes per second. The technology involved in Labor's plan is fibre to the node, which means that it is not practical for rural Australia. The Australian Government's plan is fibre, WiMAX and ADSL. The radius from each site is also relevant.

**Mr Steve Whan:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance and to an obvious lack of knowledge. The member for Bega does not seem to know that fibre to the node runs at 40 gigabytes per second, not the megabytes per second that he was talking about. There is no comparison between the plan that the Opposition is advocating, that slow plan for rural New South Wales, and the fast plan being offered by Country Labor.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Labor's plan provides a radius from each exchange of only four kilometres, which differs from the 20 kilometres—

**Pursuant to standing orders business interrupted and motion lapsed.**

### **SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Mr John Aquilina agreed to:**

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 25 September 2007 at 2.15 p.m.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Notices of Motions****General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.****PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS****ST AGNES PRIMARY SCHOOL, MATRAVILLE, 100TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.19 p.m.]: I congratulate St Agnes Primary School at Matraville in my electorate on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. Fortunately for my constituents, my electorate is blessed with a number of marvellous schools, but none are better than St Agnes Primary School. On Sunday I attended a Mass at St Agnes Church, which adjoins the school, to commemorate the school's 100-year anniversary. The Mass was well attended by members of the community. In fact, the church was packed—it was standing room only. Also in attendance were Cardinal Pell and my friend, Brother Kelvin Canavan, who, like me, was educated by the Marist Brothers—he went a little further than I did and became one. Following the Mass the community joined the school principal, Lorraine Adams, who kindly put on a morning tea, which was also well attended.

The school began in 1907 on land in Perry Street that was then part of the Bunnerong District. Priests from the Randwick church initially ran the school, but responsibility for running it later transferred to the Mascot priests. The modest timber school was officially opened and blessed by Archbishop Kelly on 20 January 1907 and commenced its first term on 28 January 1907 with only 52 students. At that time the school was located in an undeveloped area with few permanent homes. The one-room school catered for children of itinerant workers who lived in the surrounding sandhills and who were too poor to educate their children. I am proud of the working class beginnings of many suburbs in my electorate. Although they provided ample space for the children to play, the school grounds were primarily sand, with a creek running alongside.

The Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart from the Botany area ran the school and, together with the students, endured difficult conditions in the improvised classroom. Limited amenities and overcrowding meant that the teachers and students suffered sweltering heat in summer and freezing cold in winter. Windblown sand continually plagued the classrooms and windstorms undermined the foundations of the timber structure. In 1925 an attempt was made to improve the school building. However, in 1934 the first major improvements were made to the school's facilities with the construction of Wattle Hall, which was used by the Sisters as an additional classroom on school days.

From February 1939 St Agnes Matraville became part of the new parish of Malabar, and the steady increase in the school's enrolments over the years emphasised the need for a new school building. On 6 November 1949 the foundation stone of the new school building in Perry Street was blessed by Cardinal Gilroy. With substantial assistance from the local parish community and parents, the building was completed on 2 May 1951. The new school building also served as the church until the new church could be built. Before too long the then parish priest, Father Maurice Roche, decided that the Perry Street site was no longer a suitable location for St Agnes school. So in 1956 the church secured title to a vacant block of land on Bunnerong Road, with the intention of constructing a new and modern central school building. The school resides there still.

Interestingly, the vacant land was originally a sandstone quarry—that provided the materials used to build roads throughout Sydney. How the area has changed over the years. When the church purchased the land holes 10 metres deep had to be filled in order to level the site on which the church, school and playgrounds are situated. On 1 February 1959 Matraville was declared a separate parish and the parish priest, Father James Munday, planned to expand St Agnes school by purchasing additional land, adding further buildings to the school and building a separate church. In 1981 the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart withdrew from St Agnes and the first lay principal, Mr Bill Rooney, was appointed in 1982. He was succeeded by Mrs Jeanette Russell in 1993, followed by Mr Michael Reardon in 1999, Mr Steve Darcy in 2003 and Mrs Lorraine Adams in 2006. Mrs Adams is a terrific educator. She taught my son for a time at St Brigids Primary School, Coogee. I congratulate her and her predecessors, teachers and parents on the terrific job they are doing ensuring that the children in our area are the best educated in Australia.

## WILLOUGHBY ELECTORATE NATIVE BUSHLAND

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN** (Willoughby) [4.24 p.m.]: A defining characteristic of the Willoughby electorate is the presence of significant areas of native bushland. The community believes this is a wonderful asset. We are fortunate to live in close proximity to the central business district and yet enjoy the benefits of significant areas of native bushland. This bushland is fragmented throughout the Willoughby electorate. Some pockets are quite small but there are large concentrations particularly along the Lane Cove River and Middle Harbour. Some harbour foreshore areas have remained in the same pristine condition for thousands of years and are today as they were when indigenous Australians lived there.

Bushland is valuable to the community as a recreational, educational and scientific resource. It is part of our aesthetic natural heritage. The bushland in the Willoughby electorate contains rare plants and animals and archaeological sites. It also plays an important role in stabilising the soil and maintaining local land values. The suburbs of Castle Cove, Middle Cove, Castlecrag, Northbridge, Lane Cove, Chatswood and Chatswood West enjoy pockets and more substantial areas of bushland. I take this opportunity to thank those residents who have written to me indicating their interest in participating in community activities to preserve our bushland and in our Bushcare projects.

I commend the substantial Bushcare program run by Willoughby City Council. The program informs local residents about their rights and responsibilities in relation to natural bushland and gives local residents an opportunity to be directly involved in Bushcare activities. If we do not care for our bushland it will be vulnerable to weed invasion; an increase in the number of pests and feral animals; rubbish dumping, including weeds and other plant material; stormwater and urban run-off, including erosion; clearing for residential and development purposes; the removal of plant, logs and rocks; and fragmentation into smaller areas.

The community-based Bushcare program comprises volunteers who are supported by the council and who help to preserve council-managed reserves. These dedicated people have contributed a great deal to the community by maintaining the natural environment so that we can all continue to enjoy our natural surroundings. Through its work Bushcare shows us how we can help to restore nature. I know that many residents in the Willoughby electorate appreciate the fact that we can all play a part in maintaining the natural environment and preserving the benefits of our bushland. I will put on the record some advice from the Bushcare group that residents can put into practice to improve the natural environment. People can remove plants from their gardens that become weeds in bushland and replace them with local native species. They should not let their garden grow outside their property, not dump garden waste or other rubbish in bushland, control their pets so they cannot attack native wildlife, join a local Bushcare group, and learn more about the environment by participating in the many workshops, open days and seminars that are held.

In my electorate we are blessed to have many of Sydney's most beautiful bushwalking tracks. I was pleased to be present when the most recent track from Castlecrag to Sailors Bay was opened. It is just one example of the many bushland areas that members of the public can enjoy, depending on their level of fitness and expertise. There are both simple tracks and more difficult ones.

Willoughby and the Willoughby electorate have numerous bushland places that residents of the electorate and people from outside the area can enjoy. I commend the Bushcare volunteer groups for ensuring that residents are informed and that the local area is maintained. I thank also the many residents who continue to make an ongoing contribution, whether that is in their streets, in their suburbs or in the local area to preserve our natural environment and our natural bushland.

## CENTRAL COAST GIRL GUIDES

**Ms MARIE ANDREWS** (Gosford) [4.29 p.m.]: Last Saturday, 23 June, I attended the opening of the Central Coast Girl Guides Region Leaders Conference, held at Camp Chapman, in Somersby. This is an idyllic setting for a Girl Guides camp, and I was pleased that the camp was in such good condition following the recent horrendous storms on the Central Coast. The conference was well attended by Girl Guide leaders from all over the Central Coast. The Assistant Commissioner of Girl Guides in New South Wales, Sue Maple-Brown, was there to lend her support to the leaders. Sue complimented the Central Coast region on its organising skills and for its contribution to guiding within the State.

Helen Eggleton, who recently took over the reins as Central Coast Region Leader, despite personal hardships caused by storms and floods in the Central Coast region on the June long weekend, was there on

Saturday to give encouragement and support to the leaders. I commend Helen for her leadership. Sue Carr, former Region Leader, was also in attendance and was acknowledged for the outstanding job she had done over the 5½ years she held that position. Today I extend my personal thanks to Sue for a job well done. Sue and her husband, Terry, who has held many senior positions within the scouting movement on the Central Coast, have jointly made a significant contribution towards the development and promotion of young leaders within the Central Coast community.

In the course of the recent Leaders Conference, Junior BP awards were presented by the Assistant State Commissioner and the Region Leader to Michelle Seymour of the Kariong unit and to Eleanor White of the Point Clare unit. I am very proud to say that both of those units are within the Gosford electorate. I extend my congratulations to both Michelle and Eleanor, who have proven themselves to be very promising Girl Guide leaders for the future. It is my sincere wish that both Michelle and Eleanor will continue to be high achievers within such a worthwhile and internationally renowned movement as the Girl Guides.

The Central Coast is very fortunate to have a strong Girl Guide presence. My electorate of Gosford has units at Gosford, Point Clare, Kariong, Ettalong, Mangrove Mountain and Somersby. I commend all leaders of those units for the wonderful work that they do to help young girls in our midst. I am very honoured to be an ambassador attached to the Central Coast region. The Central Coast is also very fortunate to have an active Trefoil Guild. This guild comprises senior members of the Girl Guides movement, many of whom have been leaders of various units. Members of the guild continue to have an active role in the Girl Guides movement. I pay tribute to them all here today.

While I have this opportunity I acknowledge the wonderful contributions made by Lorraine Wilson of Kulnura and Kay Blomfield, who have held the position of Region Leader in the past. They continue to play a very active part in the Girl Guides movement on the Central Coast. The Girl Guides movement is a wonderful organisation. It promotes and helps young people in our city to go on to be high achievers, but above all else I think it gives them a great feeling of self-worth and encourages them to make great contributions to our community. They have been involved in very good movements, particularly on the Central Coast, in promoting the environment and assisting in the raising of funds for worthwhile charities. I pay tribute to all members of the Girl Guides movement on the Central Coast, and I particularly commend all those who have taken on a leader's role. I thank them for the time and effort they give to the movement. I wish them well for the future.

### **MULLUMBIMBY PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr DONALD PAGE** (Ballina) [4.34 p.m.]: The Department of Education and Training recently refused a request by Mullumbimby Public School to retain a demountable building. This is a matter of great concern to the school community. Mullumbimby Public School has requested the retention of the demountable building to facilitate the conversion of two small classrooms into one larger classroom with a storage room and withdrawal space for special needs students. The existing classrooms do not meet current size standards determined by the department. By retaining the demountable, the school would have two adequate teaching spaces which, by today's departmental standards, it does not currently have.

The Mullumbimby Public School is being disadvantaged under this Labor Government, which continues to promise more spending on schools but denies funding for older regional schools in particular. The department's current standard for new classrooms is 95 square metres. Mullumbimby Public School has only one classroom that meets this standard. The parents and citizens committee has offered to fund the cost of the conversion of the existing classroom on the basis that the demountable is retained. Though its request therefore involves no requirement for funding from the department, the request has been denied. This school has had no capital works expenditure or upgrades during the term of this Government. Surely it is time to give the school a break.

Moreover, by refusing this request the department is neglecting its responsibility to comply with occupational health and safety standards. Each of the small classrooms in question is currently accommodating 30 students, some of whom are special needs students, in a total area of 54 square metres, with no provision for storage space or withdrawal space. This is well below the 95 square metres standard that the department has now set as the minimum requirement. This means that there are 30 students in a room of inadequate size, with no space for them to store their bags and equipment. Instead, their already cramped conditions are exacerbated by having to provide space for cupboards and shelves for storage. The cramped conditions create potential hazards for both students and teachers in moving around the room. In addition, the special needs students have nowhere to withdraw to when they need a break away from the other students or require one-on-one tutoring.

Mullumbimby Public School is trying to maintain its enrolments in an extremely competitive environment. It is competing with the local Catholic school, a Steiner school, a Christian school and a Seventh Day Adventist school, all of which have good funding budgets and good school facilities. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult for the students and their parents and the staff and teachers at the school to take full pride in their school when they operate in the shadow of these good private facilities. The department has stated that it would consider increasing the existing teaching space at Mullumbimby Public School if the school's enrolments were to rapidly increase. This scenario is highly unlikely in the extremely competitive educational environment. In addition, the Byron Shire Council, whose policies determine development in Mullumbimby, currently has a moratorium on building in the area, which means population growth is extremely limited.

Public education desperately needs more support from the State Government in order to provide better learning facilities and outcomes for the children of this State. Students in the public education system deserve better. This Government's policy in relation to education is inequitable and favours the newer, more financially viable schools, while the older schools and the students who attend them are left out in the cold when it comes to funding. I believe public education is for everyone and should not disadvantage those children in the community whose parents are not able to afford to send them to a privately funded school.

It is a disgrace that this school community is so desperate for extra space that it is willing to raise the money to pay for the refurbishment itself. However, the department is still refusing to accommodate its request by allowing it to retain the demountable classroom, which is already on site. This proposal requires no financial input from the Government whatsoever. The department's refusal makes no sense, especially when half the school's existing classrooms are below the minimum standard that the department has set. This school community should not be so desperate for space that it is offering to pay for the work required to enlarge an inadequate classroom.

I am afraid that we are witnessing yet another example of this Government's Sydney-centric policies. This regional school, which is central to the Mullumbimby community, has been severely neglected for funding, having received no funding for capital works from this Labor Government. I am sure there are many more regional schools with a similar story to tell. This school is not asking for any more than it has already. It is simply asking to retain the meagre facilities it is managing to make do with. Is that really too much to ask of this Government? I call on the Minister to investigate the Mullumbimby Public School's case as I have outlined this afternoon and allow the school to retain the demountable classroom that is already on site.

### **TUGGERAWONG PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**Mr DAVID HARRIS** (Wyong) [4.38 p.m.]: I was honoured recently to attend the fiftieth anniversary celebration of Tuggerawong Public School, a vibrant local public school in the Wyong electorate that has an enthusiastic student population, enthusiastic and skilled staff, and a supportive and hardworking parent community. The school has a reputation for delivering quality educational, sporting and environmental programs. Tuggerawong School opened as a two-teacher school on 29 January 1957 with an enrolment of 44 pupils, 34 of whom had transferred from an overcrowded Wyong Public School and two from Kanwal Public School. Previously, local children had been transported by bus to Wyong. The local history the school put together shows that the opening of the school was regarded as one of the major steps of progress for the Tuggerawong-Wyongah district and was achieved by a small, but willing, group of men and women who canvassed for numbers, and cleared and fenced the ground through voluntary working bees.

The Minister for Education and Training, and Minister for the Central Coast, John Della Bosca, was the special guest at the event and gave a very passionate speech about the role that local public schools play in their community, as well as acknowledging the importance of good teachers in delivering quality education. Minister Della Bosca congratulated the school community on its support for its school. A number of local principals attended the celebration, lending their support. These principals were from schools involved in the Wadalba Schools Learning Community, a coalition of schools that feed into Wadalba Community School, who work cooperatively to promote quality education. School Education Director, Dr David Cullen, represented the Department of Education and Training. I know that he is very proud of the achievements of Tuggerawong Public School. The day was cold and wet, but the warmth generated by this very proud school community more than compensated for that.

The school choir presented two wonderful songs. It was an inspiring performance. Students and conducting teachers should be congratulated on their fervent performance in the cold conditions. Their voices melted away the cold as one became immersed in their delightful singing. The school dance groups, three in

total, entertained the assembled guests, students and the large gathering of supportive parents. The dance groups are currently performing in the Central Coast Dance Festival. The standard of their performances was commendable, particularly the kindergarten group that displayed a professionalism beyond their years as well as being extremely cute. Vibrant current Principal, Lesley Burch, delivered a poignant speech on the history of the school and its very successful programs. Lesley Burch is very committed to her community and this is shown clearly in the proud way she talks about her school. Former principal and former colleague, Judy Turley, spoke of her time at the school and how it had grown during that time. Mrs Turley was a popular former principal and very well respected amongst Central Coast principals.

Parents and citizens president, Kevin Dumpleton, also spoke of the wonderful contributions of parents, the hard work of students and the dedication of staff at Tuggerawong. He and the parents of the school must be congratulated on the support they give Tuggerawong School in delivering quality education through both fundraising and participation in school programs. Special congratulations go to students who received fiftieth anniversary awards presented by Minister Della Bosca: Kayla Aitkens, Jake Carey, Victoria Worsley, Ryan Evans, Patrick Hogan, Emelia Perry, Nyah Anderson, Lachlan Walker, Thomas White, Jacqueline Petryszyn, Angus Vos, Nicola Tudehope, Courtney Short, Mason Laksa, Meg Hughes, Cooper van der Wal, Sheridyn Dalton, Blake Sulfaro, Joshua Peters, Maddy Hogan, Emily Hodges and William Marshall.

Marg Dumpleton did an outstanding job with the official birthday cake. The finished product was incredible! A very special thank you goes to Mr Boulus for his work in organising the assembly. The two school captains, Will and Eden, did a masterful job as masters of ceremonies. They represented their fellow students with distinction. Librarian, Sue Hurley, had the library looking sensational with student work and a representation of the history of the school. An abundant luncheon was served, which was well attended by community members. It was a pleasure to talk to Tony Mills, president of the school council. The school motto at Tuggerawong is "participate with enthusiasm", which genuinely reflects the desire Tuggerawong Public School displays in encouraging everyone to be involved in the whole spectrum of school life. This was evident from student performances and parent participation in the fiftieth anniversary celebration.

The school community must be acknowledged for recovering very quickly from damage caused by the storms on the Queen's birthday weekend. Many houses in the surrounding district suffered damage from flooding, including the school. The community and the school worked very hard to have everything ready for the celebration. This is typical of the close Tuggerawong community and a tribute to all those involved. Tuggerawong Public School is a proud local public school. It has delivered 50 years of quality education to its community and it has an even brighter future ahead. Congratulations to them.

### MANLY HOSPITAL

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly) [4.44 p.m.]: I will speak about Manly Hospital. However, before I do, I remind members that I recently spoke of an unborn child who was due to come into this world with a high risk that she would survive no more than an hour or two. Her name is Zoe. She has been in this world for eight days. Last night I had the joy of being able to hold her. To hold someone who should not be here is a miracle in itself. I pay tribute to Zoe and her parents, who continue to fight with her.

I am very glad that the Minister for Health is in the Chamber to hear what I have to say about Manly Hospital. In my inaugural speech I spoke about the need for the Government to make it easier for those going about their jobs from day to day. We are here for support. The Manly midwives have a long tradition of helping those in need. In my inaugural speech I made clear reference to two midwives who helped not only to deliver our first child, Laura, and our second child, Kate, but also to save the life of my wife, who suffered a particular complication that put it in jeopardy. They deserve our support. The Government is not giving Manly midwives the support they deserve. No new money was allocated in the recent State budget for Manly Hospital. The staff at Manly Hospital continues to operate in conditions that are beyond belief. I have a letter from a person who worked at both Manly and Royal North Shore hospitals, which I will read on to the record:

For in excess of fifteen years Manly Maternity services have sat under a cloud, this cloud has changed formats on many occasions but a constant cloud it remains. From closing the unit to moving services up the peninsular changing styles you name it from every angle Area management have tried unsuccessfully to derail this fantastic service. Throughout the years the staff have rallied and triumphed over these issues. Staff commitment and community support have never waived nor has the quality of Midwifery care.

Now as we waited the interminable wait for our new Northern Beaches Hospital, the Maternity Unit itself as well as allied services is being allowed to deteriorate due to lack of funding and care by management. The building is old and thus needs

constant help the staff have never asked for a flash new facility just keep it well painted and maintained, [not an unreasonable request in a hospital] the other evening when I worked there was no hot water for the women to use in labour—

I hope the Minister for Health hears this. For most of the weekend women were in labour and giving birth without access to hot water—

(baths and showers provide great pain relief in labour and a lot cheaper and less risky than an epidural).

Equipment at Manly in the birthing Unit is second class compared to a unit like RNSH an example the infant resuscitators are 30 years old the only new one is in the nursery every delivery room has one at RNSH has one plus. Food is another issue after having a baby women are incredibly hungry not just immediately following the birth but breastfeeding requires food, good quality and amounts on a regular basis at all hours of the day and night. The women receive food in disposable containers with plastic cutlery of I am sure a lesser quality and quantity than they would receive if they were in our states prisons and if they don't it straight away it is taken away with very little else on offer other than maybe a piece of toast a sandwich if your really lucky

Why are women who have their baby's at Manly hospital treated like second class citizens to the women at RNSH (and many other Hospitals) why are staff being punished for providing high quality care by having to practise their profession and maintain high professional standards in sub standard conditions?

We are not asking for much. We are asking for the maintenance of the Manly maternity unit in a condition that reflects the excellent service the midwives provide. I ask the Minister for Health to join me at Manly Hospital to look in detail at every part of the Manly maternity unit and also to have a meal with me. I would like to share one of those Manly Hospital meals with her so that she can understand the issues that are being raised. The person who provided the letter is not political, but someone who is passionate about the two hospitals in which she has worked. She wants the best not for herself, but for the people she is trying to serve. Our role and the role of government is to support and facilitate services that day in and day out, in this case, the midwives provide. I challenge the Minister for Health to join me at Manly Hospital to observe first-hand the facilities, to see if she can prioritise investment in Manly maternity ward and, at the same time, to share a meal so that she can see what is being offered each day.

#### AUSTRALIA-VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

**Ms REBA MEAGHER** (Cabramatta—Minister for Health) [4.49 p.m.]: I support the Australian Vietnamese community's call on the Australian Government to ensure that the Australia-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue contributes toward concrete and irrevocable improvements in human rights in Vietnam. As the member for Cabramatta, I represent the single largest community of Vietnamese Australians in the country. Many within this community are victims of trauma and torture. Many have come to Australia to escape from a repressive and intolerant regime.

They have since become invaluable members of the local community through their enthusiastic participation in this country's democratic processes, through their many volunteer organisations that support the vulnerable within the community and through their contribution to the richness of Australia's cultural heritage. While they have made a new home here in Australia and while they have escaped their homeland, they have not abandoned it. Indeed, on Saturday 23 June the Vietnamese Community in Australia, lead by Dr Tien Nguyen nationally and Tri Vo in New South Wales, held a vigil night in Bankstown to pray for the freedom and democracy advocates in Vietnam. The purpose of the event was also to demonstrate to the many religious leaders, journalists, lawyers and others who have been imprisoned for their pro-democracy efforts that they are not alone.

Moreover, they were sending a very clear message to the people of Vietnam and the Vietnamese government that the great Vietnamese Diaspora are and will forever be vigilant in their demands for a free and democratic Vietnam. It is thus my duty as the State representative of Australia's largest Vietnamese community, a duty that I embrace, to give a voice to their struggle for democracy in Vietnam, and it is fitting that these concerns are given voice in the New South Wales Parliament—the oldest democratic institution in the country. In June 2001 I addressed the House on the issue of human rights in Vietnam and now, in June 2007, it is with a great sense of disappointment to relay to the House that reports of human rights abuses in Vietnam continue to emerge with alarming regularity. My call for the support of the House in this matter is no less important and no less urgent today than it was six years ago.

When I spoke in 2001 Father Nguyen Ly—a Catholic priest and prominent advocate for democracy in Vietnam—had recently been arrested for activities linked to the defence of free speech. He was subsequently released in 2004, due in part to an intense global campaign calling for his release. As I address the House today, it is with great concern that I report that Father Ly was arrested once again in March this year—again for his

pro-democracy activities—for which he has been sentenced to eight years in prison. In 2001 I also spoke of the detention of the Venerable Thich Huyen Quang Do of the Unified Buddhist Movement for his struggle for religious freedom within Vietnam. Once again I regret to report that today he remains in detention, with no promise of release.

While the government of Vietnam has made great efforts to liberalise and open its economy over the past 20 years, there is a concern that enthusiasm for economic reform has not been mirrored by an equivalent effort to open Vietnamese society to the forces of democracy and free speech. I have mentioned Father Nguyen Ly and Venerable Thich Huyen Quang Do: these are but two very prominent examples of victims of Vietnam's single-party communist regime. These two men are part of a much broader movement for a free and democratic Vietnam that is being championed both within its borders and from outside Vietnam.

Since 2002, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been engaged with the government of Vietnam in the Australia-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue. While this engagement presents an important opportunity for effecting positive change in Vietnam, questions remain about the efficacy, transparency and degree of accountability in this dialogue. Indeed, the Australian Vietnamese community points to the lack of evidence that these dialogues are leading to concrete change within Vietnam. Given Australia's increasingly close links to Vietnam in regard to trade, it is clear that we are playing an important role in Vietnam's economic development. It is also clear that such closeness places us in a valuable position to effect social change within Vietnam.

We cannot, in good conscience, commit ourselves to the expansion of the Vietnamese economy and at the same time shirk our responsibilities toward defence of the human rights of its citizens—rights that are a sacred and fundamental entitlement to all people everywhere. I call on the Federal Government to ensure that Australia-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue is more than a hollow symbolic gesture and to demonstrate, with clear evidence, that it is leading to real change within Vietnam. I urge the Prime Minister to raise these issues with the State President of Vietnam when he visits Sydney in September for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.53 p.m.]: Once again the Minister for Health and member for Cabramatta has displayed the advocacy skills she applies on behalf of her community, particularly on behalf of the Vietnamese people in her electorate. I congratulate her on her support for religious and political freedoms, which reflects her hard work and dedication to her entire community on a whole host of issues.

### **TWEED DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [4.54 p.m.]: I address the House on a fairly significant issue in the Tweed: development. The Tweed is one of the fastest-growing areas of New South Wales. Currently 40 per cent of the people in the area have lived there for fewer than five years. Sufficient development must be allowed to occur to accommodate population expansion. During the recent election campaign, I stood actively for community involvement in all future developments. At times that becomes very difficult to achieve. Active community consultation involves conducting proper meetings, allowing feedback between all key stakeholders, allowing plans to be viewed publicly and allowing the community to be part of the process, thereby creating community ownership.

In recent times there have been some very bad developments. The Cudgen bug farm was approved, but later the Land and Environment Court quashed the approval. Then the government of the day changed the laws to allow the development to go ahead. The Chinderah marina was the subject of an appeal to the Land and Environment Court, but not by a large corporation or wealthy landowners—by ordinary people. Katie Milne and Gail Turner contributed to meeting the cost, and ran chook raffles to raise funds. The appeal was supported by 27 community groups and the result was a positive outcome: the decision was overturned. There was also the Terranora quarry development. Readymix lodged a development application [DA] prior to the election, but immediately prior to the decision withdrew its application, only to replace it with an application for a megatonne quarry. The proposal involved 20-tonne trucks running every seven minutes from 7.00 a.m., including Saturdays, for six days a week. The proposal was simply unacceptable.

The State Government also tried to sell off the Jack Evans Boat Harbour land. The site is on Crown land and I intend to fight very hard to ensure that it remains in public ownership. There have also been concerns about building heights. A great deal of discussion has centred on State environmental planning policy

[SEPP] 71. To date, the relevant legislation has not been enacted. I call on the Government to finalise the process. In recent times concern has been expressed over a ruling by the Land and Environment Court that redefines the term "substantial commencement" of a development. The redefinition has enabled several developments to proceed, despite progress amounting to just a few survey stakes being driven into the ground without proper documentation by the surveyor. I find that totally unacceptable.

The significance of the ruling is that the placement of survey pegs on a site a number of years ago without accompanying documentation may now be deemed to be a substantial commencement of development. Currently there are hundreds of development applications applying to numerous sites in the Tweed—they are lying around like landmines. The decision has upset a number of people and it will result in the destruction of many environmental values that people hold dear. I for one intend to fight very hard to obtain a redefinition of the term "substantial commencement". Because all development approvals and reviews are dealt with in Sydney, the first time the local people find out about them is when an official announcement is made, usually in Sydney, and is reported by the local media. That is not true democracy but, rather, an attempt by certain individuals to take control of the future of the people of the Tweed.

When I say "the people of the Tweed", I refer to all groups, not only developers. I am talking about mums and dads and environmental groups with which I work very closely. Over the next four years I intend to hold the Government accountable for this process and I will try to work out a new way for development applications to be dealt with. I have heard a great deal of rhetoric concerning the State Plan and the notion of power reverting to local councils. Unfortunately, the Tweed has not had a local council for the past few years but instead has had a group of administrators, two of whom are based in Sydney. They fly in and fly out and do not really reflect the views of the local people. The views of local people need to be heard. I plan to use my time in this House to be an advocate for people from all sides of the issues.

Today I heard a great deal about a bipartisan approach being adopted in relation to a number of different issues, and I intend to take a bipartisan approach to a number of development issues in the Tweed. While I will nevertheless closely scrutinise the issues, more importantly I will endeavour to create an era of transparency in the planning and decision-making processes to allow local people, through me, to have a say, both here in Sydney and in the Tweed. I regard this as one of the greatest issues that the Tweed will ever face. The area is under enormous pressure from the expansion of population in south-east Queensland. The pressure will continue for some years and the issues must be addressed in a truly proper fashion.

#### **ALL LITTLE KIDDIES CENTRE ASSOCIATION INC.**

**Ms ALISON MEGARRITY** (Menai) [4.59 p.m.]: The Menai electorate has a high proportion of families with young children. The suburbs of Holsworthy and Wattle Grove have a great many families with one or more parent serving in the Defence Forces. On behalf of all affected families I draw the attention of the House to the uncertain future of the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. That organisation is composed of two self-contained and independently operating entities, the Holsworthy PreSchool and the Holsworthy Occasional Care Centre. Previously I have mentioned the prolonged and difficult lease negotiations between the Defence Housing Authority and the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc.

Members may recall that last year the association was offered two less than attractive options. However, worse was to come. In March this year the president of the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. received a letter from the regional manager of Defence Housing Authority informing her that it had decided to cease lease negotiations and would immediately proceed to sell the property. I made urgent representations to the Federal Minister for Defence. Last week I received a reply from the Minister's Parliamentary Secretary, Peter Lindsay, MP. Mr Lindsay pointed out that Defence had established a long day care centre, managed by ABC Corporate Care on the Holsworthy base.

Long day care is an extremely different service from that required by families who use the occasional care and preschool services provided by the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. Mr Lindsay said also that the number of Defence families using the services had declined, and that the Defence Housing Authority and Defence Force subsidy initially provided was now exhausted. As a result the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. would now pay a market rent of around \$90,000 a year. The letter inaccurately stated that the association had previously failed to exercise a three-year lease extension. He concluded by saying that in view of representations from and on behalf of the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. a new lease would be signed. The last line of his letter said, "I hope this information clarifies the situation for you."

I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence for replying. Unfortunately, his letter did not clarify the situation at all. Today I have become aware that the Defence Housing Authority is selling the site with advertisements to appear early next month. The new three-year lease will be a condition of the contract for sale, but the big question is: Where does this situation leave the families relying on the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. services? It will mean a new landlord with absolutely no direct connection to those families. Moreover, it provides no guarantee of any further use of the site beyond the three-year lease.

Local families and the people who run these services deserve far more consideration. Well aware that the Defence subsidy was time limited, the organisation had planned well to take this financial impost into account. The organisation has stood responsibly on its own two feet and is not asking for any other Defence Housing Authority assistance, despite so many Defence families using those quality services. Mr Lindsay wrote:

The DHA's main function is to provide adequate and suitable housing and housing-related services to members of the Defence Force and officers and employees of the Department of Defence, and their families, in order to meet the operational needs of the Defence Force and the requirements of the Department.

Surely members would agree that the Defence Force families need and deserve far more support than just a roof over their heads. In my time as the local member I have witnessed the stressful impact on families of long periods of overseas service by one parent, often in very hostile environments. One parent is left at home, not just to worry about their partner, but to single-handedly manage all the family's needs. In those circumstances the understanding and support offered by the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. is just as critical as the child-related services it provides.

The Federal Government is not short of a few dollars: It has a massive budget surplus and it could well afford to not sell the site. A substantial market rent will still be earned under the lease without the All Little Kiddies Centre Association Inc. It is a ridiculous distinction to point out that non-Defence families also use the service. The preschool is there for all families and certainly draws on State Government funding. We do not draw an arbitrary line in the sand about that. Importantly, the service has been providing a childhood educational service to our community for more than 40 years. It was originally located in Artillery Crescent, Holsworthy, until December 1994. As a consequence of the joint redevelopment of Holsworthy South by the Defence Housing Authority and Delfin, the land it occupied, was designated for housing. So it was relocated to a purpose-built childcare centre, where it is located today at 2 Lighthorse Parade, Holsworthy. As I have pointed out, the owners of the land and the building is the Defence Housing Authority. Given the amount of money that the Federal Government has at its disposal, which we have seen splashed about in all sorts of pre-election promises, the least it can do is call off this sale and relieve the uncertainty for many families in my community, both Defence and civilian.

I call upon the Howard Government to immediately abandon its imminent plans to sell the site and to support my community. However, the Federal Government also has a special and moral obligation to do everything in its power to support the Defence families who sacrifice so much for our nation. My community has suffered the loss of serving personnel overseas and I know the impacts upon families. The least we can do is support them and relieve the uncertainty and anxiety not just for local families, but also for the very capable and professional people who run these services.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 p.m.]: I acknowledge that the member for Menai has once again shown that she is a dedicated and hard worker for her electorate—at the last election her constituents were wise to re-elect such a tireless worker. I support her efforts in assisting with child-care services that are required, particularly by Defence Force families. I join with her in her call to the Federal Government to recognise that Defence Force families have a far greater need for much broader support. I support the member for Menai in stating that the Federal Government does not need to sell the site to raise funds; it has a huge surplus. I congratulate the member for Menai on raising, once again, the lack of investment by the Federal Government in these kinds of services.

#### **MR PAUL COUVRET**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA** (Davidson) [5.06 p.m.]: I speak in honour of Mr Paul Couvret of Belrose in the electorate of Davidson. Recently Paul was honoured by the *Manly Daily* as one of the 100 top contributors over the past 100 years in his local area, along with the local Federal member of Parliament, Bronwyn Bishop. Paul Couvret was a member of the Dutch Navy when he was taken prisoner of war in the Indian Ocean on 8 March 1942 at age 20. He was subsequently transported to Nagasaki in October 1942. On 9 August 1945 Paul

Couvret was working in the docks when an atom bomb exploded some six kilometres away. He dived under the ship and was protected from the flying debris.

He was then moved to Okinawa for a week before being transported, weighing only 44 kilograms, to Manila, where he spent three months. He was then repatriated to Holland after 18 months whilst serving in the Dutch Navy. At the end of 1945 he returned to Australia for six months to assist with the evacuation of prisoners of war from the East. The wharfies in Melbourne and Sydney black-banned the Dutch ships and he was detailed to load ships in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. The wharfies then lifted the ban on loading Dutch ships and he returned to Holland.

Paul Couvret's mother and father were killed during the war and he applied to live in Australia. He spoke four languages and in February 1949 arrived at the Cowra Migrant Centre, where he met his Hilja, who was to become his wife. They were both teachers and they taught the new migrants. They married in 1951 and had four sons. Paul taught at Cowra High School before moving to Lithgow and then to Sydney where he bought a house in Frenchs Forest in 1966. Paul then taught at Balgowlah Boys High School before being promoted to the role of deputy principal at Blackfriars Correspondence School, which had 400 teachers and about 40 clerical staff.

Whilst in Cowra, Paul was a member of Apex and he joined the Apex organisation in Sydney and became a district governor. He then joined Frenchs Forest Rotary and was the founding member of Belrose Rotary Club. He was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship and later a Sapphire Paul Harris Fellowship. Paul became a Warringah shire councillor in 1973, served until he retired in 1995, and was the shire president from 1979 to 1984. During his term as a councillor he oversaw long-term planning, which was very much an innovation in those days.

In 1998 Paul was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to local government, community and the services. He is also on the Order of Australia Medal Committee. Paul received the Centenary Medal in 2001. He is also the President of the Dutch Australia Association. This is of special interest to me as Holland was the birthplace of my mother. Recently Paul and Hilja were invited as special guests to have lunch with the Dutch Prime Minister and Prime Minister John Howard in Canberra. Paul is a fellow of the Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and has assisted in the provision of facilities for various sports in Warringah. He was on the executive of the Local Government Association and was also its vice-president. He was a member of the Airport Consultative Committee, which recommended Badgerys Creek as the second Sydney airport and he was also on the committee that recommended the third runway to be built at Sydney airport.

Paul spent a great deal of time and energy on the Northern Area Health People's Committee that recommended the building of a new hospital at Frenchs Forest, which we look forward to being built as promised. Paul has also been president of Wakehurst Public School and Davidson High School parents and citizens committees, and president of the Forestville Youth Club, all in the local area. Paul is extremely busy every week speaking about Nagasaki and promoting peace and the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Paul has dedicated his life to the community, by way of teaching and community service, and the interests of Dutch returned soldiers. People in the Warringah council area and in the electorate of Davidson are truly grateful to have such a distinguished and dedicated person as Paul Couvret as a member of their community. I congratulate Paul on a lifelong achievement of true community service to his neighbours. I am delighted to call Paul a constituent of Davidson.

### **MAI-WEL GROUP DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDER**

**Mr FRANK TERENCE** (Maitland) [5.11 p.m.]: I wish to inform members of an organisation in my electorate of Maitland that is helping many people with disabilities and has been doing so for round 47 years—a very long time by any standards. People in Maitland would be aware of the Mai-Wel group, which operates in the Maitland area. It is the largest disability service provider in the lower Hunter area. It is also one of the first disability support services to gain quality assurance accreditation. It employs 168 local people and it is totally focused on developing opportunities for people with disabilities, that is, enabling them to realise their individual goals for life. Access, integration and opportunity for all is the creed of the Mai-Wel group.

At present the Mai-Wel group provides services for people with disabilities in supported employment; supported residential living; employment recruitment and support; job skills training; respite services; day programs; and accommodation support programs. A number of businesses have been developed and operated by

the Mai-Wel group around the Maitland area employing people with disabilities and providing services to the community. Hunter Business Timesavers provides a range of promotional goods and services, being promotional products, packaging and assembly, mail-out services, printing and photocopying. Hunter Pace Setters, a timber and light engineering service, manufactures pellets, furniture, export crates and a wide range of metal fabrication projects.

Hunter Grounds and Gardens specialises in the maintenance of corporate grounds. A team of workers takes care of large gardens, including paths and window cleaning. The Enterprise Centre Security offers security-shredding services and keeps offices and office cars clean. Hunter Labour Force Solutions, a specialist employment service, caters for job seekers with a disability. The transition to work program focuses on employment skills and job placement, independent living and social skills, development and community access.

The employment opportunities and programs and services are demonstrated as follows: 103 people with a disability are employed as support employees by Mai-Wel; 185 clients are involved in the disability open employment service, that is, Hunter Labour Force Solutions; 21 school leavers participate in independent living, social and work skills development in the transition to work program; 66 people are supported in their homes or in the community by the staff of the Accommodation Outreach Program; and 33 people with high support needs entered the community participation program after leaving school where they participate in social and independent living skills development, and community integration.

Mai-Wel is also a registered training organisation. In the past 12 months 109 students have completed, or are in the process of completing, qualifications in courses, including certificate III and IV disability work, certificate IV in front-line management, and first aid. The Mai-Wel group set itself a goal—to plan and construct a purpose-built centre to provide day care programs for its high need clients and also to provide respite for its carers. The centre would also be a venue for social activities and healthy lifestyle programs. Clients who are intended to use the centre would be those who are in need of long-term care. Last Saturday night, on 23 June, I attended a fundraising function organised by the Mai-Wel group—the third celebrity comedy debate at Maitland Town Hall. The purpose of the function was to raise funds for this purpose-built centre. There was an enormous turnout for that event—I would estimate between 400 to 500 people mainly from around the local area. It was a clear sign that the good work of the Mai-Wel group is recognised and supported.

I congratulate the Mai-Wel group on organising a successful event. I certainly support it in its new venture for the purpose-built centre. I will do all that I can to assist it in this regard. I congratulate Kevin Gordon, Pennie Kearney and Amos Mordue, together with all the other workers in the Mai-Wel group, the volunteers and its employees, for their tireless, unbounded dedication to helping those less fortunate in their community. On other occasions I have said that the sign of a good community is the extent to which its members assist those who are less fortunate. In the case of the Mai-Wel group, this organisation set out from the beginning to be totally dedicated to helping those less fortunate and to giving them a chance in life.

The Mai-Wel group is a forward-looking, enterprising institution with excellent business sense, coupled with a total commitment to those who are less fortunate. It has carved out a place as a service provider and it is a vital sign of a great community, for which all of us in Maitland are thankful. The dedication of employees, volunteers and staff is unequalled and they should be highly commended.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.16 p.m.]: It is easy to see why the people of Maitland elected the member for Maitland at the March election. Since becoming a member of Parliament he has referred to number of organisations and interests in his electorate. I congratulate the member for Maitland on bringing to our attention the work that is being done by the Mai-Wel group. It was interesting to learn that it is the largest disability provider in the Maitland area. I congratulate the organisation on its efforts and its ongoing work in service delivery. I look forward to future representations by the member for Maitland.

#### **MURWILLUMBAH DISTRICT HOSPITAL**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore) [5.17 p.m.]: This week we heard a lot from members about what this Government is doing for health services in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. On Monday and Tuesday this week we also heard rumours about cutbacks at Murwillumbah hospital. Those cutbacks have been denied. I place on record the concern of the community. The community has grave concerns about the future of Murwillumbah hospital. I have been informed that next week a public meeting will be held so that members of the community can express their disgust about what is happening. Yesterday I received an email that I would like to read onto the record. The email was sent to the Premier, to the Minister for Health, to me as the member

representing Murwillumbah, and the North Coast Area Health Service Chief Executive Officer, Chris Crawford. The email reads as follows:

It was with some concern that rumours swept the area today regarding the closure of the Children's Ward at Murwillumbah District Hospital. Confirmation was received on the Prime Local News bulletin at 6pm but only confirmed by NCAHS CEO Chris Crawford as a "review" of services.

That statement has been made by Chris Crawford on a number of occasions. The email continues:

I and many other local residents are fully aware that "reviews" are a good way of testing the water for permanent downgrading of facilities.

Perhaps the Premier and Minister need to be reminded of the enormous input of ordinary local people into fundraising for our hospital over many years. Maybe they need to be reminded of the fantastic community involvement in providing upgrades to buildings, plant and equipment. For example, in recent years the Children's Ward was completely rebuilt with funds raised by the local community; only 12 months ago a close knit group of family friends helped my daughter, Sarah, who had entered the Banana Festival and Harvest Week Queen Quest, raise \$13,000.00 for the Urliup Rehabilitation and Assessment Unit and more recently the community raised \$14,000.00 for the highly popular Charity Review Concerts ...

I had the pleasure of attending that concert. The email continues:

Over the next few days and weeks I'm sure claim, counter claim together with denial and counter denial will ebb and flow like the relentless tide. But one thing is sure. Many locals will protest very loudly if cutbacks to any services in Murwillumbah go ahead. I will encourage anyone to join the bandwagon, which won't be too difficult a task!

So my message to NCAHS CE Chris Crawford and other local bureaucrats is to think very carefully before taking a final decision to reduce services. The public outcry and protests have only just started. Hold on to your seats, there will be lots more to come. Locals won't take cutbacks to their health services without a fight!

I have been attending Parliament for the past three days but my telephone has not stopped ringing. People have contacted my office about the threatened cutbacks. It has already been suggested that three key executive positions, or part thereof, will be transferred to Tweed Heads. That is typical of the cutbacks that have been experienced throughout the North Coast Area Health Service. Services in children's wards in Casino and Kyogle have been cut and relocated to Lismore. The hospitals serve the towns in which they are located but people also travel for an hour or an hour and a half to receive treatment—and the Government is shifting services even further away to the coast. It is just not on.

People in country and regional areas are fed up with these cutbacks. Small country towns are losing services and jobs for the sake of centralisation at major hospitals. The chief executive officer said on Prime television the other night that the children's ward at Murwillumbah will not be closed, but that is totally different from what I have been told. There are six applicants for the vacant specialist obstetrician position at Murwillumbah District Hospital but they are not going to be interviewed pending a "review" of obstetric services at the hospital. The position had been vacant long before I came to represent Murwillumbah, yet nothing is said about it. I understand that those six applicants will not even be interviewed because obstetric services are under review. Murwillumbah District Hospital does a fantastic job, supported by community fundraising. The population of Murwillumbah is about 12,000 but the hospital services 30,000 people. I call on the Minister for Health to cancel the review of those services.

### **BRIARS AT GREENLEES SPORTING CLUB**

**Ms ANGELA D'AMORE** (Drummoyne) [5.22 p.m.]: The Briars Sporting Club makes a great contribution to our local community. From humble beginnings at the end of World War I, it has grown into the great club it is today. The Briars Sporting Club commenced in 1918. It is now in its eighty-ninth year and has a strong sporting influence in the inner west, with a sporting program including rugby, cricket, hockey, squash, netball and lawn bowls. In 2005 the Briars Sporting Club amalgamated with Greenlees Park Bowling Club at Concord. Today as Briars at Greenlees it has more than 1,700 members, with some 400 members represented in sporting activities. The Briars is noted for its strong junior development program, with teams in junior cricket and hockey competitions and a rugby development program for young boys from Concord and surrounding areas. The club continues to grow and to champion the ideals of amateur sport by giving young sports men and women the chance to be the best they can be.

The Briars at Greenlees motto is to develop, maintain and enhance club spirit and performance while meeting the expectations of its membership and retaining a sporting culture. Its vision is to be the community's preferred sporting club in the inner west, and the most successful. The club aims to foster and promote

recreational activities on the sporting field to members of the community. In addition, the club provides social facilities for after-game functions and other social occasions. Within this environment, Briars continues to play a pivotal role in sport in the community. The Briars Sporting Club holds an annual businessmen's and sportsmen's luncheon every year in Parliament, which I host, to assist in raising funds for its junior development program. This year we had the pleasure of having John O'Neill, the chief executive officer of the Australian Rugby Union, and Tracey Holmes as guest speakers. I thank them for their contribution on the day. I also extend my thanks to all the guests who attended the successful luncheon and gave so generously.

In May 2006 the Briars Sporting Club received a huge boost by securing \$157,000 from the State Government under the Regional Sports Facility Program to upgrade its hockey facility at Cintra Park at Concord. The Briars Sporting Club has managed the Cintra Park Hockey complex for the past seven years, and this grant will enhance the standard of hockey competitions that can be hosted in the inner west. The funds have been used to provide new hockey turf at the Cintra Park hockey complex, which will enable it to be used in elite competition by all hockey associations. This upgrade has ensured that players have a good playing surface, and will hopefully increase participation in the game. This wonderful complex was the training venue for teams in the 2000 Olympic Games, and we hope that it will be the home ground of many future Olympians.

The Briars Sporting Club also received \$20,000 for the installation of floodlights at Greenlees Park under the State Government's Capital Assistance Program. In 1995 the first women's hockey team was formed at Briars. Briars Women's Hockey Club has a total of eight teams competing in two excellent competitions: Sydney Women's Hockey League and the Eastern Districts Women's Association. The players range in ages from 12 to 55 years, and this diverse group has representative players at association, State and national levels. I congratulate Kasey Cocking, Ebony Barber, Jess Esslemont and Alison Bruce on their selection to the 2007 New South Wales team that will compete in the Australia Hockey League tournament. Alison Bruce was selected in the Australian youth team that travelled to New Zealand to contest the annual Rose Quaid trophy.

The year 2006 was the inaugural year for Briars Netball, and the two teams formed to compete in the Inner Western Netball Competition based at Cintra Netball Courts in Concord and achieved some fantastic results. I congratulate the netball teams on their great efforts. Briars Rugby was a founding club in New South Wales Suburban Rugby Union. This year the club moved into second division after winning the 2007 club championships. Briars Rugby Union has seen significant growth in the past two years under Chairman John Slender and his committee. In 2007 the club is fielding five sides from first to fifth grade, as well as under-19 and under-16 sides. Training has begun at Greenlees Park, under the expert eye of club coach John Picone and experienced coaching staff Mark Gudmunson, Hugh Carpenter, Lachlan White and Grant Hyde.

Fielding sides from first to fourth grades in the Sydney Municipal and Shires Competition, and a fifth grade side in the Metropolitan Cup, Briars Burwood Cricket has proved to be enormously successful. It has won eight club championships over the past 11 seasons. I acknowledge also the strong partnership that has been formed between Greenlees Park Bowling Club and Briars. It is great to see our local clubs coming together for the benefit of members and the community. The Greenlees Park Bowling Park was founded in 1950 and has come a long way since then. Greenlees Park Bowling Club is located in Concord, with three magnificently maintained greens and a functioning clubhouse that is home to approximately 750 members. Many of these members are actively involved in the running of the club, and work very hard. Greenlees Park Bowling Club is also extremely proud to be home to the Australian Club Four champions in 1998. I congratulate the Briars Sporting Club and Greenlees on the excellent contributions that they make to our community.

### GOULBURN WATER SUPPLY

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn) [5.27 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of members the issue of water and Goulburn. There can be no-one who has not heard about the problem with Goulburn's water supply—and the lack of it—and what it really means to live with drought. Despite improvements to the local Sooley Dam and Goulburn council's best endeavours, during the past eight years of terrible drought the city of Goulburn has gradually run out of water. Residents now live with level 5 restrictions, and have done so for two years. What is it like to live on level 5? I doubt that few in the House would know.

**Mr Peter Draper:** We do in Tamworth.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** There we go. However, residents of metropolitan Sydney could not imagine what it is like to live with level 5 water restrictions. It is true that Goulburn has had rain in the past few days, as we have seen on the news, but that does not solve our long-term problem. Sooley Dam now contains six

megalitres of water and Pejar Dam has three megalitres of water. The rest of the water has overflowed, flooding the suburbs and the Wollondilly River at a rate of one megalitre a day. Of course, none of it is being stored for the town's use and is instead going to Sydney. How long will the stored water last for Goulburn? That is a difficult question to answer as it depends on usage.

A comfortable amount of water consumption for one person is 350 litres a day. The people of Goulburn have lived on 150 litres a day—200 litres less. That means cactus gardens not roses, limited toilet flushing, no house painting, dragging washing water around the garden to water pot plants and a great many other measures that most of us would find a great hardship. Of course, washing one's car is completely out of the question, despite the dust. If people in Goulburn used 250 litres of water a day, they would have three years supply. If there were no participation over summer, there would still be three years supply.

However, it stands to reason that the Government must fund other options for a sustainable water supply for Goulburn. We can have an emergency pipeline; the Government has agreed to fund one. But we can also look at long-term solutions such as a commitment to long-term water movement from other catchments, which was the Liberal-Nationals proposal during the last election, or ensuring that Goulburn itself has a sustainable water supply—one resulting from better recycling of sewage, improved reticulation systems to reduce leakage, better capture of stormwater, and better storage along the Wollondilly and Mulwaree rivers in the form of weirs. If governments were prepared to fund those measures in country areas, a town like Goulburn would not have to come cap in hand to the State Government, after eight years of terrible drought, begging for a paltry emergency pipeline.

The town debated all those options for more than a year and maintained an open mind on the alternatives. The Goulburn Water Group was extremely active in promoting the recapture of stormwater, wetlands filtration and, of course, additional weirs. The council preferred the recycling option. Whatever the options were, the town knew it had to have a supply of water from elsewhere to get it through times like this when there just has not been sufficient rainfall to make any sense of talk about recycling or capture of stormwater.

I conclude by paying tribute to the people of Goulburn. No-one should have to live on level 5 water restrictions for more than two years, but the people of Goulburn have handled it with fortitude, grace and amazing discipline. Their dispassionate way of learning to live with level 5 water restrictions has humbled me, as I believe it has all who have visited this great city. It has made me proud to be elected as their member. I sometimes think that if they can do what they have done, so can we all. Helping them through some of the most difficult living conditions in New South Wales urban areas and, indeed, Australia has been one of my challenges as their local member, and one that I regard as crucial for the local member.

I am honoured to think that I have been elected to undertake the task of working with the people of Goulburn to help them retain a decent standard of living. No town deserves the pipeline more than Goulburn, which used to be known as the Queen of the South. When I was elected it was known as the Queen of the Drought. As the member over the next four years, I intend to continue to work with the people of Goulburn and with local, State and Federal governments to ensure a sustainable water supply for Goulburn so that this great city will once again be the Queen of the South.

### **KIDS OF MACARTHUR HEALTH FOUNDATION**

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields): [5.33 p.m.]: I recently attended the Annual Ball for the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation at Campbelltown RSL. The foundation was set up in 2000 by a group of local businessmen and Dr Richard Dunstan, a local paediatrician, to whom our community in the Macarthur owes a never-ending debt of gratitude. Kids of Macarthur raises funds to provide facilities and support for the children's unit in Campbelltown Hospital, now the Sydney Children's Hospital Macarthur Unit. This unit provides a very high standard of care to children in our area, and has close links with both the Sydney Children's Hospital and the Children's Hospital at Westmead, both of which rotate their junior and senior medical staff through that unit.

The Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation motto—"Our children, Our future"—says it all about the commitment of our local community to our children's unit. The Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation is now a major charity in the Macarthur, and I would like to pay special tribute to the current board: Paul Sinclair, the current chairman, Paul Wakeling, Barry Dickinson, Tim Bryan, Julie O'Keefe, Fred Borg, Melissa Cooke, Dr Richard Dunstan, Bruce Hanrahan, John Holloway, Amanda Larkin and Adam Seton.

The evening was an enormous success and raised \$165,000 for our children. Platinum sponsors are the Rotary Club of Narellan and Woolworths. The four major clubs in the region—Campbelltown Catholic Club, Campbelltown RSL Club, Ingleburn RSL Club and Wests Campbelltown—as well as Woolworths also make significant annual contributions. Gold sponsorships were provided by Bottlemart, Macarthur Tile Power and the Perich Group. The advocacy of the member for Camden, Geoff Corrigan, enabled the New South Wales Government, via Minister Meagher, to pledge \$35,000 towards an assessment centre and playground for children with special needs.

Dr Michael Freeland, the head of the paediatric department, gave the keynote address in which he discussed the history of paediatrics in Sydney. He pointed out that the major improvements in the health of children come from the building not only of buildings, but of societies, rather than from the work of doctors and nurses. Since 2000 the major sponsors of the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation have provided \$500,000 for our children's care. The current major project is a charity home being built at Mount Annan, the proceeds of which, when sold at auction on 11 August, will be given to the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation. Just as the first paediatrician in Sydney, Dr Charles Clubbe, asked for nothing for himself, just a fast horse to enable him get to his patients as quickly as he could, all those who work in our children's wards ask for only one thing: the equipment that the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation helps to provide. Visitors from other units in Australia and the world look enviously at the equipment that our community has provided for our children.

As the band played on late into the night—playing the only type of music worth hearing, that of the 1960s and 1970s—all present were able to consider Dr Freeland's sentiments that we live in an advantaged area, shown by our community's caring for our children. The ball organising committee of Denise McGrath, Melissa Cooke, Fred Borg, Amanda Ramsay, Robyn Jacobson, Julie O'Keefe, Sarah Scattergood and Elaine Wilson all provided a wonderful night. I thank the community of the Macarthur electorate for their generosity, and I commend the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation.

### **BEGA ELECTORATE RELAY FOR LIFE**

#### **BEGA CHEESE CONNECTING COMMUNITIES FUND**

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE** (Bega) [5.37 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the enormous community generosity and community spirit that is alive and well on the far South Coast, particularly in the Bega electorate. Many members would be aware of the Cancer Council's Relay for Life. Recently the far South Coast community hosted its first relay and it was a tremendous success. Thirty-eight teams from across the Bega Valley spent 24 hours doing laps of Pambula Sporting Complex. At the end of the day, as part of the magnificent event, \$73,000 was raised by the community. I was fortunate enough not only to attend the launch, opening and start of the event but also to have the opportunity to head down there at 11 o'clock at night and walk round the complex with a number of teams, including our local police and Pambula Public School teams. It was fantastic to see camped there people from the surf clubs, the Rural Fire Service, the schools and many community organisations, as well as members of the broader community who were there to walk the Relay for Life.

Aside from this being a fundraising event for the Cancer Council, the day was a chance to reflect on those who had lost their struggle with cancer, as well as an opportunity to motivate and support those dealing with the disease right now. Relay for Life is the world's biggest fundraiser, and the organising committee behind the event deserves special recognition, especially Greg and Robyn Whitby, who I understand are now planning the event for 2008. This event was incredibly motivational and inspiring, and the broader community would be enormously appreciative of it.

Corporations on the Far South Coast, such as Bega Cheese, are also involved in generous activities. Last week members might have seen on television the launch of the Bega Cheese Connecting Communities Fund. Until 18 November 10¢ from every block of Bega cheese sold will go to the fund. Bega Cheese opened the account with a donation of \$100,000. The result is expected to be in excess of \$600,000. Money from the fund will be distributed by the Country Women's Association in the form of grants to families across Australia who are battling the ongoing drought. This is an extraordinary gesture by Bega Cheese and the many farmers who own the cooperative. These farmers have also done it tough during the drought, but this month they have been lucky to receive good rain.

There is no doubt that dairy farmers in the Bega Valley have done it tough, and it takes some time after the first rainfalls for many farmers and their families to recover from the recent significant drought. These

farmers are making a contribution to the wider farming community beyond the Great Dividing Range through the Country Women's Association. The Bega Cheese management team has done a great job during the drought by supporting local farmers. As I indicated, its company is now spreading its generosity more widely. The Country Women's Association receives hundreds of applications for assistance every week. I hope that the funds from Bega Cheese will clear much of that backlog. Recently Bega Cheese donated \$17,550 to the Surf Life Saving movement in the Bega Valley, with clubs at Tathra, Pambula and Bermagui benefiting. I am hopeful that members in this Chamber will do their bit by buying Bega cheese when they are in the supermarket.

**Ms Linda Burney:** I buy Bega cheese.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I am pleased the Minister is doing that. When she purchases Bega cheese she will now know that she is contributing directly to the Connecting Communities Fund. The Relay for Life and the Bega Cheese Connecting Communities Fund are just two examples of the spirit and generosity of the people of the Far South Coast. This morning the latest census data confirmed that. The figures showed that that one in three people in the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla shire are involved in some sort of voluntary community work, compared to the average of one in five. It would be fair to say that without these free man-hours many services in regional areas, like my electorate, would struggle to survive.

### **BLACKBUTT RESERVE, WALLSEND**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.42 p.m.]: What path are we taking with our parks, playgrounds and reserves? Have we come to a halt? Clearly, things are dire for our reserves. Our increasing population brings bigger demand for housing, thus creating a great land squeeze. The cost of purchasing land for parks and their maintenance means that few reserves are established. Housing lots are diminishing and the salad days of playing cricket in the backyard are almost over. Too many children today spend their leisure time in front of the television. Obesity in our society is growing. We must treat with concern the increasing number of obese persons or obesity will become an Australian epidemic. Sadly, obesity leads to depression, doctors' bills and a withdrawal from society. Are we a people who disregard opportunities for good health in favour of focusing on unstimulating gratification? Conversely, we know that good health and fitness are important tools that fulfil basic human needs. Fitness makes us happy.

There is substantial evidence for the necessity to improve the health of our citizens. I am relieved to share with members the good news that in the Wallsend electorate Blackbutt Reserve is fulfilling that need. Opened to the public in the 1960s, Blackbutt lies in the heart of the Wallsend electorate and is known as the lungs of the city. It is here that one can experience the best of nature. Wildlife, such as koalas, kangaroos, emus, wallabies, wombats, and Australian birds can be observed in their natural surroundings. Situated in New Lambton and Kotara it comprises 182 hectares of ridge spurs and sheltered gullies. Fruit bats are protected and live here. They subsist in an exquisite rainforest walk and their habitat ensures the future regeneration of this special vegetation. For the fitness buffs, it has more than 16 kilometres of tracks, varying in challenges from short and gentle to long and hilly.

All this beauty was nearly taken away from us during the ferocious storms over the long weekend. However, there are some special stories of good deeds and good fortune that happened during this time that I want to share. On the Friday night of the storm Paul Metcalfe, the park ranger, fearing for the safety of the koalas, took them out of their enclosure and cared for them in his home. Fortunately, the spotted-tail quolls had been taken off exhibition for rest and recuperation just before the storm hit, because an enormous gum tree fell on their hut. After much hard work from Newcastle City Council workers Blackbutt reopened this week on 24 June and we all cheered.

When Newcastle City Council indicated that services to the reserve would be drastically cut due to a big budget cut earlier this year, the prospects for Blackbutt were dim. The death knell sounded for the wonderful wildlife exhibition. Robin Hood emerged in the form of the Blackbutt Support Group, which rallied to create contingency plans to keep the park open and, of course, it succeeded. This volunteer group has gone from strength to strength throughout the years of its operation. There are currently 30 volunteers, and 130 members of the support group, with more joining every day. Sue Milles takes the helm as the president, Brian Burns as secretary and Nell Wilson as treasurer. Volunteers range from 15 year olds to 70 year olds, demonstrating their many skills in assisting with food preparation for the wildlife, feeding the wildlife, collecting koala leaves, assisting with animal encounters with members of the public and park maintenance.

I must make note of the many long-serving volunteers: Noreen Chipperfield, mother Ruth Alder and daughters Emily and Liz, and June Jackson and her grandson Chris Tonkins, who gained an apprenticeship with

Newcastle City Council following volunteer work and work experience at the reserve. Peg Hargreaves, Moira Boettcher, Alan Wilson and John Giles deserve a special mention. On average the volunteers at Blackbutt Reserve work 10,000 hours per year, saving council \$20 per hour and \$200,000 per year. I am proud to live in an electorate that has such a unique facility right in its heart, a facility that provides vital components that contribute to the opportunity for our people to commune with nature. I say a very big thank you to the Blackbutt support group.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Youth, and Minister for Volunteering) [5.47 p.m.]: I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Wallsend and her recognition of the important work of volunteers and the role that nature reserves and wildlife play in the health and wellbeing of a community. She has made a great contribution in the short time she has been in this place. The Wallsend electorate is very fortunate.

### CHAFFEY DAM AUGMENTATION

**Mr PETER DRAPER** (Tamworth) [5.48 p.m.]: The "2007-08 Water Outlook for New South Wales" report released yesterday by Minister Koperberg showed the Peel River system had only sufficient water to meet 60 per cent of Tamworth's town water supply, 50 per cent of stock and domestic needs, and 50 per cent of high-security needs, but not enough water to meet the general security needs of Peel Valley irrigators. That has again highlighted the urgent need to invest in the augmentation of Chaffey Dam. I take this opportunity before the winter recess to call for a bipartisan commitment to make sure the funds needed to construct this vital piece of infrastructure are provided.

The enhancement of Chaffey Dam is critical to ensure a viable and sustainable future for Peel River irrigators, residents of the Tamworth Regional Council area and local business operators. As I have pointed out previously, the safety upgrade and augmentation of Chaffey Dam is one of the most important infrastructure projects in my electorate. Tamworth has been on level 5 restrictions and Peel Valley irrigators have had zero allocations simply because Chaffey Dam no longer has the capacity to store the volume of water needed to meet demands. If the Peel Valley irrigators are to have any future, and if we are to provide the water resources needed for an expanding population and growing industrial base, then the proposals developed by the Chaffey Dam reference panel must be implemented now. I am disappointed by the fact that recent doubts have been created in the minds of local stakeholders about the project's future. This project is essential and it must proceed without impediment. There has been a widespread dispersal of misinformation stating that:

The Lemma Government's failure to allocate a promised \$4.697 million towards the augmentation upgrade for Chaffey Dam in the state budget has shut the door.

This quite clearly is not the case. The circulation of reports of that type cause uncertainty in our community at a time when, at last, we have experienced some decent rain in the catchment, with the storage level in Chaffey Dam rising to over 21 per cent. Further rain is forecast, offering farmers some hope that this one in 100 year drought may finally be coming to an end.

On being alerted to a report that the Chaffey upgrade was allegedly in danger, I immediately contacted Minister Koperberg, who assured me of the Government's ongoing commitment to the project. On behalf of the community I thank the Minister for his assurance. I invite him to visit the electorate to meet with stakeholders and confirm, in person, the Government's position on this important issue. I was heartened by another report that, following discussions at the recent Nationals State Conference, it was indicated that there was "ongoing progress being made in attracting Federal funding to the project." However, the report went on to state:

Questions were asked of Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile during the Nationals State Conference, which highlighted that there may well be the possibility of funding for the upgrade.

Unfortunately words like "there may well be a possibility of" hardly engender confidence that hard cash will be provided, especially given the Federal Government's recent stance on the project. The lack of a Federal component for the enhancement is currently the only barrier to getting this crucial investment up and running. During the election campaign we heard many promises that a dam costing more than \$200 million would be constructed on the Barnard River, with massive pipelines to divert water into Chaffey Dam. There were also promises to provide \$14.5 million for Chaffey's upgrade. The Coalition's website indicated that the project would be funded from the Federal Government's coffers. However, today our community is still awaiting the \$6.5 million needed to secure water for local irrigators, residents and businesses. Should the Federal

Government assume responsibility for the entire Murray-Darling Basin, that may change the whole dynamics of this debate, so the irrigators, council, and all stakeholders, need to know where they stand.

Recently Tamworth resident Trevor Khan was elected to the Upper House representing The Nationals. I welcome his election and the contribution he will make for our community. I know he too is vitally concerned about our region. Following the promising statements from his party's State conference, I hope all local political representatives, including the Hon. Christine Robertson, representing Country Labor, Senator Sandy Macdonald, our Federal member, Tony Windsor, Mr Khan and I will be able to work together in a bi-partisan way to ensure that nothing holds up this essential project. I hope that Mr Khan and Senator Macdonald will join with Tony Windsor in taking the communities needs and desires to the Federal Government to make sure that the project does not become a political football.

The upgrade and enhancement of Chaffey Dam is immensely important to the ongoing wellbeing and future development of our district. It has been estimated that a \$6.5 million contribution by the Federal Government to the Chaffey Dam augmentation will deliver an asset valued at up to \$250 million, based on current water prices. To my mind, that certainly looks like a very good investment. I reiterate that the issue of Tamworth's future water security must be approached in a non-partisan way. Action needs to be taken immediately.

### NORTHERN BEACHES PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater) [5.53 p.m.], by leave: I wish to draw the attention of the House to the urgent need for improved palliative care services for patients in Sydney's northern beaches, and in particular at the Mona Vale Hospital in my electorate of Pittwater. The way we deal with people who are entering the final years, months and weeks of their lives, is a fundamental measure of a civilised society. It says a great deal about the type of society we have created. We should always be striving to ensure that people facing death are treated with the utmost care, dignity and compassion. Society and, therefore, government must be responsible for providing the facilities to make that possible. I believe that we are currently falling well short of that, and I would like to draw the attention of the House and the Government to that situation.

Mona Vale Hospital in my electorate of Pittwater is a vital healthcare facility. It is the only major hospital that is immediately accessible from the peninsula. It has provided generations of local people with health care. People regard Mona Vale Hospital as their hospital—local, familiar, friendly—and that makes it the obvious location for palliative care facilities to serve the area, so today I call for an urgent upgrade to those facilities. Dedicated staff at Mona Vale Hospital currently provide an excellent service, but they are able to care for only a small proportion of the terminally ill patients who could, and should, be able to access that care.

Currently Mona Vale Hospital has just four palliative care beds—a woefully inadequate number. But that is the headline figure; the story that lies behind it is even more worrying. These beds are not exclusively dedicated for the care of terminally ill patients. They are located in a general medical ward and are made available for palliative care only when they are not needed for a medical ward patient. This position is clearly not sustainable. I know of one case of a 75-year-old lady who has to take a two-hour return journey on public transport to visit her terminally ill husband because he is being cared for not at their local hospital in Mona Vale, but in Greenwich. This is just one case. Without doubt, there are many others. Today I call for the number of dedicated palliative care beds at Mona Vale Hospital to be increased to 10. This is the minimum required to be able to provide an adequate standard of care in the Pittwater area.

The newly-opened John Doran Clinic is also at Mona Vale. Last month I was privileged to join members of the local community, the Ladies Auxiliary and staff and volunteers from Hope Healthcare's Northern Beaches Palliative Care Service for the opening of this facility. Located in a building affectionately known as The Cottage, the John Doran Clinic will give palliative care patients the option of an appointment with their specialist at The Cottage as an alternative to a visit being made to their own home. The naming of the clinic pays tribute to Dr John Doran, who worked tirelessly to establish palliative care services on the northern beaches. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of Hope Healthcare, which has now been providing palliative care for 100 years—and long may it continue.

The John Doran Clinic is an excellent facility, but it is able to cater for only a small proportion of the total need for palliative care. At the moment there are 160 outpatients requiring palliative care on the northern beaches, yet the John Doran Clinic was opened just a few short weeks ago. It is staffed by two doctors who are shared with another facility at Manly plus two full-time nursing sisters and one part-time nurse. They are

dedicated, caring professionals who do wonderful work, but there is the need for so much more. Today I call for an immediate commitment to extend this facility at Mona Vale to create, in effect, a proper day-hospital to care for terminally ill patients. This could be achieved for relatively little cost and with no impact on the public purse. What is needed is a modest extension to the existing building to allow for the addition of two clinics, a bathroom and shower.

The cost of these works is estimated at just \$270,000 and the money is already available. It was raised thanks to the extraordinary dedication of Cora Adcock of the Ladies Auxiliary, who was the driving force behind the Hospice Trust Fund. The money is there and Hope Healthcare wants the expansion to go ahead. The Northern Sydney and Central Coast Area Health Service should now facilitate this vital work as soon as possible. Because of the lack of facilities for palliative care, people who are terminally ill are too often left with only one stark choice—to go home and die. That is not good enough. In a civilised society, we must care in a civilised way for people who are facing death. I fear we are currently falling well short of that. I pay tribute to the many dedicated staff who work in this area, and I ask that they and their patients be given the facilities they need and deserve.

**Private members' statements noted.**

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

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

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed) [5.57 p.m.]: I have given a great deal of thought to my response to the budget and I have listened intently to the contributions made by the previous speakers, both in favour of the budget and against it. As all honourable members know, during a vigorous debate last night a great deal of criticism was laid at the feet of the Federal Government in relation to various issues. Before I deal in detail with the effect of the budget on the Tweed electorate, I will make some comments on fiscal management by Federal governments. I grew up in Sydney and lived here for a long time. I was married at a very early age and had a mortgage. Unfortunately, I went through the Federal Labor era under the Hawke-Keating Government and paid 18 per cent interest on my home loan.

I assure the House that it was extraordinarily tough, especially when the then Prime Minister was dashing around in Italian suits and collecting French clocks. The high rate of interest had a fairly dire effect on my family because it limited what I was able to provide for them. At that time, both my wife and I were working and all our money was spent on paying the mortgage and feeding the children. I make those comments to illustrate the point that budgets are very important and that the responsibilities inherent in budgets are also very important. I am 100 per cent for the Tweed. This Labor Government budget is 100 per cent against the Tweed. The budget not only fails to fund the Premier's Tweed election promises, but also fails to provide sufficient funding even to maintain current levels of Government-funded services in the Tweed.

Recently in the media I have been accused by the Premier of being a relatively new kid on the block, and I guess I am. However, I was taught that if you promise something, that promise should be delivered. The Premier won the election, and I congratulate him on that. He made promises, but he did not keep them. The people of the Tweed should not be held to ransom. The Premier said, "Oh well, Geoffrey, you have to understand that I was speaking of a four-year cycle." I am talking about election promises for police stations, which are needed now, not in four years. That need has become critical.

When I asked the Premier about this in question time, he told me that I failed to understand that the Government has four years to keep its election promises. The Tweed residents who were promised a new trade school in Kingscliff, a new police station and a community health centre in Pottsville, are not satisfied with that explanation. When the Premier made his secret visits to the Tweed in the run-up to the election, he said he would deliver those services if Labor were re-elected. He did not say, "I'll sit on my hands for 15 months and then I might do something."

The Premier also promised Tweed residents that a re-elected Labor Government would deliver, "better services, not cuts". Yet all we have seen since 24 March are cuts, cuts and more cuts. Labor cut one of only six coronary care beds at Tweed Heads District Hospital. Labor cut the funding that Queensland gave it to buy compensatory habitats to make up for the environmental impact of the C4 roadway, known as the Tugun

Bypass, on the New South Wales side of the border. Labor has just tried to cut the guts out of Murwillumbah District Hospital by attempting to close the children's ward and giving up on recruiting an obstetrician. Labor has cut and run on the Pacific Highway upgrade at Sexton Hill, allocating less than 1 per cent of the required funding in the budget.

Labor cut Tweed Neighbourhood Watch and the Tweed Safety House programs. Yesterday I attended a meeting at police headquarters with representatives from Neighbourhood Watch. The police congratulated the local residents and the volunteers on the way they run their programs, saying that it was one of the best examples of Neighbourhood Watch that they had seen. Yet, that program is to be pulled apart. It is a crying shame that when people try to make their community a safe and better place they do not have the support of the Government.

Labor cut the Tweed's only rail service. In my inaugural speech in this House I outlined the key issues that I have been fighting for on behalf of the citizens of the Tweed. I put forward practical and affordable solutions to the problems in the Tweed. I realise that there is not unlimited money and that there are great demands on those funds. We have had many problems in the Tweed that have been caused by the failure of the Carr and Iemma governments since 1999 to listen, to understand and to act on the concerns of Tweed residents. The number one issue in the Tweed is the Sexton Hill upgrade of the Pacific Highway. The Government's proposed B-doubles option B will be a nightmare for Tweed residents. Community option C, prepared by Rod Bates and his team of experts, is a much better option for local traffic and the environment. The encouraging thing about option C is that the price tag and the time it takes to build are roughly the same as option B. Unfortunately, the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Government are not listening. The budget should have funding for an independent evaluation and costing of both options and the money to get started.

Tweed Heads District Hospital is blessed with hardworking and caring medical professionals. Unfortunately, they are let down by financial neglect and inept management from Sydney and the North Coast Area Health Service. It was revealed earlier this year that patients assessed as requiring medical treatment at our hospitals are often left to wait in the corridors for up to 48 hours. The budget should allocate explicit funding to fix the problems at Tweed Heads District Hospital. Instead, the Government has cynically attempted to all but close Murwillumbah District Hospital, which is outside my electorate but which services the Tweed community. If it were not for the strong intervention yesterday of The Nationals candidate for the Federal seat of Richmond, Sue Page, the Government may well have got its way.

The Premier promised a new community health centre for Pottsville, but there is not a penny in this budget for that project, nor any mention of the project. God help the Tweed if we get an Iemma-type Labor government in Canberra later this year. Labor closed the Tweed's only rail service three years ago, the Murwillumbah to Casino rail service. The Government claimed it could not afford to operate the line. At the same time, it boasted about spending billions of dollars on CityRail in Sydney. On the old figures for that rail line, the subsidies were less than the amount that the Government is currently paying for CityRail. The budget should have included funding to introduce a commuter and tourist light rail service and to start planning the extension from Murwillumbah to the Gold Coast in conjunction with the Queensland Government. Currently—and I hate to say this—the Queensland Labor Government is getting on with the job. It already has plans and rail reserves to bring the rail line down to the airport at Coolangatta. I applaud the Queensland Government for that; it has shown some foresight.

The Government made all sorts of policy-on-the-run promises about Tweed police services just before the election when Tweed officers threatened industrial action. They threatened to strike because of the lack of numbers. We were to get extra officers, a new police station and a new mobile command unit. Needless to say, none of those promises has been kept in this awful budget. The best we get is that Sydney occasionally lets us borrow one of its police cars during the peak tourist season. The Tweed Police Association representatives have told Tweed media that they were conned by Labor. We need at least 25 additional officers to open the Murwillumbah and Kingscliff police stations 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and we need five additional highway patrol officers. Our highway patrol officer numbers have not increased for 15 years, while our population and traffic on the highway have more than doubled.

Tweed schools are missing out on Labor election promises and they are missing out on the minimum funding they need to operate safely. Tweed River High School needs about \$4 million in urgent maintenance funding, not for any expansion, but just to bring it up to standard. It has received only a fraction of that money. Banora Point High School needs about \$200,000 to implement the Government's plan to extend the school from year 10 to year 12 over the next two years. Once again, only a fraction of that money has been provided. There

are currently year 10 students at Banora Point High School, and they need to go to year 11 next year. We need funding for that.

Kingscliff Primary School is great school with great teachers and supporters. However, it cannot get money to fix its toilet block, which would be condemned if it were commercial premises. The school has had a temporary toilet block for nearly four years. The former Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, visited the school and commented on the smelly toilets. The students are forced to use substandard facilities. The budget should have provided enough funding to maintain Tweed schools. Ideally it should have included planning funding for a new high school at Pottsville, which is right off the radar, but I intend to keep fighting for it.

Public housing is in crisis across New South Wales. The problem is particularly acute in the Tweed, where there are many pensioners. In fact, pensioners in the Tweed face an 18 to 20 year wait for public housing, compared to nine years just across the border in Queensland. However, pensioners in 20 units at Yarra Court in Banora Point are being evicted by the Labor Government. That is right! The Department of Housing is forcing those elderly people out on to the streets. Those people, almost all of whom would qualify for the public housing list, are being evicted by the Department of Housing to make way for people on the public housing list. This is Labor bureaucracy gone completely insane. How much more pain and confusion is the Government going to inflict on those Banora Point pensioners who I am privileged to represent? They are elderly people and twice they have been given misinformation about their proposed eviction date.

I turn now to the Tweed environment. The Government made a big play of its environmental credentials in the Tweed campaign, in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to get Greens preferences to save my embattled Labor predecessor. I have already mentioned Labor's Tugun bypass compensatory habitat rip-off. Labor also promised \$10,000 for a management plan for Duranbah Beach, which is listed as one of the top five surfing beaches in Australia. Needless to say, that money is not in the budget. The balance between necessary development and the environment is a difficult one in the Tweed. There are no local checks and balances on developers in the Tweed since Labor sacked the elected council and took over its planning powers. Labor bureaucrats in Sydney now approve developments and the principal criterion appears to be how much a project will put into the State Government's coffers. That is why Sydney Labor foisted upon us bad developments, including the infamous Cudgen bug farm, the expanded Chinderah marina, which has now been stopped by the courts, and the sell-off of the Jack Evans Boat Harbour.

The budget should have included funding to protect our river and restore local democracy to the Tweed but, once again, we fail to see any reference to it. I might be the new kid on the block, but I would really like to see some transparency and some figures in the budget so that the people of the Tweed know where they are heading. The incredibly frustrating cross-border problems that cause such needless headaches for families and small businesses on both sides of the border have never been of much interest to the New South Wales Government. Sadly, daylight saving is one of the issues that causes not only social problems but also financial loss to many businesses, which are held up in the time warp. Unfortunately, in recent days there has been a move to increase the amount of daylight saving by another four weeks. Once again, that will create many problems in the Tweed electorate.

Before the election the Labor Government picked up on The Nationals policy of creating an independent cross-border commission, which recently resulted in Premiers from both Queensland and New South Wales signing a memorandum of understanding. I asked a question on notice about the terms of reference for that cross-border commission. I received a response, but guess what? The Government is still working out the terms of reference. Too much time has passed; this issue has been around for years we need action now. The Government's response was pathetic and at this stage amounts to an arrangement to share a taxi rank at the airport. That is the gist of discussions concerning the cross-border commission.

In conclusion, this is a terrible budget for country New South Wales. The Premier boasted that the Government was back in the black, but budget day for my constituents in the Tweed was nothing to celebrate. I repeat my invitation to the Premier to visit the Tweed and meet real people with real problems rather than relying on advice from bureaucrats more interested in protecting their own positions than offering impartial advice. This week the Premier told me in question time that he thinks the Tweed is a beautiful part of New South Wales. He went on to say many times that he would visit it.

The Premier and any other Ministers are more than welcome to come and talk to the locals. The member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Wollongong are more than welcome to visit the Tweed at any

time. It will probably be a little warmer than it is in Sydney at the moment. Why does this Government treat the Tweed with absolute contempt? I would like to sit down with members of the Government and work through these issues. The Tweed must be recognised but, more importantly, it must be recognised through the allocation of resources. The people of the Tweed want to enjoy the lifestyle that is being enjoyed by people in Sydney.

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn) [6.13 p.m.]: The Iemma Government's budget held few surprises for the Goulburn electorate and a great many disappointments. The Premier's boast that the budget reflects a strong commitment to country New South Wales was demonstrated to be a travesty. No such commitment was made to my electorate. The Premier told us that this year a record \$3.69 billion would be spent on rural health services and facilities, but despite local fundraising and a clearly demonstrated need, not a single cent has been allocated to upgrading the children's ward in Bowral hospital. Chief executive officers of the Sydney South West Area Health Service have given assurances, but some 2½ years since the BDCU Children's Foundation began raising community awareness and fundraising, absolutely nothing concrete, literally, has been done to the ward.

It is still a sleep-out, an enclosed verandah attached to an adult ward, overcrowded and with limited space for parents to remain overnight, which is now normal practice in other hospitals. "Too bad", says the Minister for Health. It is not where she lives—in Coogee—so apparently it does not matter. In the scheme of the total Health budget, \$3 million is such a pitifully modest amount of money. If the budget papers are to be believed, nothing is about to happen any time soon. That is particularly galling when I have had two conversations with departmental health officials when the urgency of this upgrade has been acknowledged. It is disgraceful that this Government continues to ignore the public concern and the obvious necessity of upgrading the children's ward.

Children who are ill and require oxygen have to be moved from their beds to access these facilities. The ward is depressing and inadequate. Thank goodness for the professional and dedicated staff who do not appear to be affected by these conditions. The foundation has raised around \$100,000—money that local people have been happy to give for an important cause, but obviously not important enough so far as the health Minister is concerned. Local people have no intention of putting their trust in the Iemma Government in the hope that, one day, completely out of the blue, it will suddenly deliver a refurbished children's ward. We will keep on and on about this issue. We will not miss an opportunity to make sure everyone knows that of the \$3.69 billion spent on rural health services and facilities not one cent was earmarked for the children's ward.

The Treasurer also announced that over \$5 billion had been committed to commuters, but will a single dollar of that amount be spent in replacing the local rail services savagely cut by this Labor Government? Will any of the billions of taxpayer dollars to which residents in the Goulburn electorate contributed be used to fund a feasibility study into the electrification of the line from Campbelltown to Goulburn? Or what about straightening the winding track north of Mittagong that adds at least 20 minutes to the journey? So far I have received nearly 300 replies to a survey that I distributed in the Goulburn-Mulwaree local government area, in which I asked specifically about rail and bus services from Goulburn to Sydney.

Some people are so furious about the service that they attach letters detailing their concerns. They make comments such as "frequently delayed", "filthy", "disgraceful", "unreliable", and that is only a start. Someone made the comment that it seems as though the Sydney to Goulburn service is deliberately being allowed to run down. Given the Government's refusal to do anything other than cut and slash services, perhaps that person is correct. I am waiting to hear from the police Minister about the number of police who have been removed from the Camden and Goulburn local area commands and detailed for involvement in security operations for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Sydney in September 2007.

Meanwhile, vandalism in the Southern Highlands is becoming a weekend sport. Shop windows are smashed on a regular basis. People complain that they do not see police officers on the beat or highway patrol officers on local roads. So how much of the \$2.7 billion can we expect to see in the Goulburn electorate? The police Minister recently suggested to me in this place that I would welcome the announcement of funds for the commencement of planning for a new police station. Indeed I do, albeit with reservations. No doubt our hard-working police who are stationed at Bowral police station would have welcomed the refurbishment, or a new police station, when it was first mooted back in 2004.

The Treasurer of the day proclaimed that Bowral police station was flagged amongst the stations identified as "the highest priorities for replacement or refurbishment". Since that time nothing has changed for Bowral police station. Now, three years later, we have another Minister suggesting that I should welcome "funds for the commencement of planning for a new police station at Bowral". Perhaps he will understand my

cynicism. I will hold my praise until, and if, the final product is delivered. It was not delivered last time. Will this turn out to be more bluster, more bells and whistles, but no actual money spent or action taken? What is the point of building a new police station when there is no commitment to staff it adequately anyway? When it comes to spending taxpayers' money, there is always something to spend when the Government believes it will earn votes. This brings me to the white elephant, known also as the desalination plant. I received an email today from someone who I think sums it up precisely:

... please let it be known that I do not want a desalination plant. I don't want a big one or a small one. I want 100% stormwater harvesting. So please keep up the pressure. If the Lemma Government can't manage the stormwater then let them give it to someone who can. No stormwater or sewerage should be going into our oceans or waterways to be wasted.

Nicely put—and it is certainly not an isolated message. Why have the Premier and his cohorts not heard this loud refrain? Water from the drenching rains of recent weeks has been pouring out to sea, literally gushing down stormwater drains. And what is the Government doing to harness that water? Its answer is a desalination plant that will cost some \$2 billion! The Government should be supporting water recycling and stormwater harvesting instead of pouring taxpayers' money into a desalination plant with dubious environmental credentials.

The New South Wales Coalition in this place mentioned domestic rainwater tanks some 10 years ago. The Premier of the day publicly derided the idea along with stormwater harvesting and then went on to offer a financial incentive to customers of Sydney Water to install domestic rainwater tanks. In typical fashion this Sydney-centric Labor Government did not offer the incentive to those who were not customers of Sydney Water and only now, with much trumpeting and hurrah, the budget notes that this incentive will be extended across New South Wales. I will be looking out for the application forms and the information package. I invite the Minister to send some to my office so that I can distribute this much-needed subsidy around my electorate.

A briefing to Wingecarribee Shire Council last night from the New South Wales Department of Commerce has muddied the water even more—if that is possible—in relation to the Wingecarribee to Goulburn emergency pipeline. Wingecarribee council was told the pipeline, which is promised in the budget, will now deliver 7.3 megalitres of water at a cost of approximately \$50 million—well below Goulburn Mulwaree Council's own estimate of between \$55 million and \$65 million. But with the rain of previous days filling Sooley Dam—which is Goulburn's main dam—the people of Goulburn and I are seeking an assurance that the Government will retain the \$20 million pipeline contribution promised in the budget. A heavy flood will not turn the region around forever.

Goulburn is in a drought-prone area and it is only a matter of time before that emergency pipeline is needed again. Goulburn cannot be allowed to be in such dire circumstances again. The cost to Goulburn of servicing the \$10 million that the city is required to contribute to the pipeline is a significant impost on ratepayers. Specifically, it will involve an increase in water charges of \$65 per ratepayer each year and a levy of \$130 per ratepayer to pay the interest on the loan. This will be a heavy burden for many low income and retired residents in Goulburn. The Lemma Government should ensure that assistance is available to help people who might experience additional financial hardship because of this impost.

The Upper Lachlan shire has been waiting patiently for \$710,000 to complete the sealing of the Oberon to Taralga-Goulburn Road. There is a mere 5.35 kilometres left to seal but a hunt through the budget papers revealed no funding. At a meeting the council had with the Minister for Roads in early June it was assured that the funding was available. Of course, the question remains: When will it be made available? With the recent rain washing dirt roads away and causing potholes the size of craters in roads, sealing the remainder of the Oberon to Taralga Road has become more urgent than ever.

The Government's lack of commitment to the people of my electorate, and indeed to the rest of New South Wales, in the area of climate change is also a significant issue that must be raised. The \$310 million commitment over four years sounds good on paper but is not new money. It is rebadged old money that the Government could not spend from the energy and water savings funds. There is no reference to the Climate Change Fund in the budget papers and there is little reference to the detail of how this fund will be delivered. We have had to wait for a separate bill to find that out—even though the Government has been talking about it for weeks in Parliament as a way of filling in time. The people of New South Wales deserve to know the details about what the Government is doing to combat climate change. To me, the most logical and transparent place to do that would be in the budget. The people of New South Wales also do not know when they can expect to see these programs.

The Government says, "Sure, the rainwater tank rebate and the solar hot water service rebate begin on 1 July." But that is this Sunday! Where are the forms? Where is the advice to water supply companies? Where is the promotional campaign? As usual the Government has put no effort into administration or actually delivering on a promise; there is just spin. The Government waited until the dying days of this session to push through the Climate Change Fund legislation, but it had months to put in place the administration of these schemes and, since no new moneys were involved, the lack of legislation and the lack of a budget were no barriers. What disgraceful public administration! I know this because of the hundreds of telephone calls to my electoral office and from the conversations I have had with my Coalition colleagues. They tell me how many people are phoning their offices, inquiring about the rainwater tank rebate scheme, how it will work and where they can pick up the forms on Sunday. Yes, we all know the scheme will begin on 1 July because the Minister told us so several times in this Chamber. Surely this is not a case of the Government being misleading.

The \$310 million commitment over four years is not even generous by the standards of the revenue that the Government is now harvesting from environmental taxes. Some \$337 million will be collected in a single year from one waste levy in 2010-11. Let me make it clear: The New South Wales Government, touting its environmental credentials like it was the inventor of the environment, will collect \$310 million in one year from one waste levy, yet its commitment to climate change is \$310 million over four years. This is proof indeed that the New South Wales Government's commitment to addressing climate change is nothing more than its usual patting down of environment groups and community concerns, with no determination to get out there and do the job. Spending money is not that hard except when it comes to this Government spending on services and supports for regional New South Wales. If the Government is really committed to demonstrating its environmental credentials it might return to the hypothecation of environmental levies to environmental projects, as it tried to do once before and failed miserably.

The Government's lack of commitment to bettering New South Wales is also evident in my second shadow portfolio of Women. In the budget media release the Minister for Women welcomed "policies and programs designed to support New South Wales women". The Minister then went on to list programs that already exist, such as Girl Savvy, Lucy Mentoring and the grants to local councils for International Women's Day. What about additional support for domestic violence services and women's specialist services in the community sector? Where is the detail to say how the funding for victim support and counselling will be spent? Where is any mention at all of action on pay equity? That is Labor women's favourite subject—at least it is when they can do nothing about it.

The reality is that this budget has little to offer for women in New South Wales. A State Government that offers only lip service to the problems faced by women wheeled out the standard rhetoric with no substance and no action. Since 2000 women in the New South Wales public sector have consistently earned \$6,000 less on average than their male counterparts. That issue could have been addressed in the budget. Despite the fact that more women than ever before are working, wages for women in the New South Wales public sector have remained well below those of their male counterparts for the past five years. The Minister's list of key initiatives for women offers programs that encourage leadership, independence and success but it fails to cut to the chase and confront the issue of pay equity—the very basis of equality in the workplace.

I of course applaud women's independence and success, but what a slap in the face for a woman to achieve both and then get to the public sector only to be told that she cannot earn as much as her male counterpart. The public sector should be leading the way in this area and setting an example. This issue should be driven by the Minister for Women and it should be in this budget. This budget is a grave disappointment to the people of Goulburn and country New South Wales as a whole and a missed opportunity for this great State.

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping) [6.33 p.m.]: This budget does very little for the Epping electorate. Epping is becoming the road and rail junction for northwest Sydney, but what benefits does that bring to the residents of the electorate? The Government proclaims, and the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Transport skites about, how much money is being spent on the Chatswood to Epping rail link. The Deputy Premier says he is doing a lot for Epping. He also skites about the money being spent on the North West Rail Link.

Epping is being treated like the late Jim Cairns claimed he was being treated by the media over his friendship with Juni Morosi: we are getting all the blame and none of the benefit! In the case of Epping, that is a true statement, because the people of Epping are getting very little benefit from the Epping to Chatswood rail link or the North West Rail Link. What is the benefit to Epping of having a thousand cars a day clogging the roads leading to Epping station, then parking in suburban streets for a radius of more than a kilometre from the station, all day, every week day? Commuters are parking in front of driveways and on footpaths.

Having a brand-new railway station complete with lifts and escalators that regularly break down, and a steep staircase to replace a functional 30-year-old bridge and ramp that helped the frail-aged, the handicapped and mothers with prams—now destroyed by the Transport Infrastructure Development Corporation, with the express permission of the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Transport—has left the citizens of Epping in a poor state. How are they to safely cross Beecroft Road to Langston Place? They are reluctant to catch the lift because they are scared of getting stuck in it, and anyway they cannot get in the lift at busy times of the day. And they cannot go up the stairs because they are at such a steep incline.

Do they have to walk another 125 metres across a rough footpath to a pedestrian crossing? That is almost impossible for those with a walking frame or in a motorised wheelchair. The Government, and particularly the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Transport and the bureaucracy of his ministry, deserve the strongest of condemnation for their lack of care and attention to those people of Epping. They failed to consult these people, then stubbornly refused to reconsider pleas to retain the old bridge and the concourse at the station.

Another area in which the Government has shown its callous disregard for the residents of the northwest and motorists who use Epping Road and the Gore Hill Freeway is in its contracting with the builders of the Lane Cove Tunnel to close two of the three lanes on Epping Road and close some adjoining roads so that motorists will be funnelled into the Lane Cove Tunnel, which remains unfiltered and thus a health risk through exposure to the fumes for drivers and passengers who use the tunnel, and for neighbouring residents who are exposed to polluted air emitted from the stacks.

Residents of the northwest, including Epping, who travel to and from the city each day are being bitten by the tolls that are being imposed—up to four times going in, and up to three times on their return. Some motorist will pay a total of \$29.32 a day, plus parking fees, to come into the city. Of course, those living in the western area of Sydney get the advantage of a cash-back system. They get back \$2.20 if they travel on the M4 and get back \$3.80 if they use the M5. The people of Epping and other parts of the Epping electorate get no refunds. Admittedly M4 and M5 motorists have to pay the 10 per cent in GST on the tolls. However, people in the Epping area are paying up to \$29 a day in tolls. That is discrimination.

If cash-back was not available for citizens who use the M4 or M5 because of their race, because of their sexual preference, or because of their transgender or marital status, or because they have a disability, or because they have carer responsibilities, or because of their homosexuality, or their age, or because they have HIV-AIDS, that would be unlawful discrimination. So why are the people of the northwest suffering this discrimination that the people of the west do not suffer? Why do we have to pay more if we travel from our area to the same city, being voters in the same State and taxpayers who pay tax in similar amounts? This Government has done nothing to rectify this injustice. I assure the House and the electorate of Epping that in my term as member for Epping I will fight this discrimination. If the Coalition is elected at the next election, as I expect it will be, it will be one of my achievements to have that discrimination scrapped.

The Coalition will not impose these discriminatory fees on the west. We will not discriminate against any of the people of this city. The cash-back system applies to the people of the west, who are said to be poorer—even though they may have more disposable income or cash in hand than do many who live in the northwest, particularly those who have to pay all these transport tolls and various other amounts. However, the people of the northwest are missing out badly because they do not have a similar scheme.

I come to a number of specific ways in which the Epping electorate suffers as a result of the budget. Before the election, along with the much-heralded announcement that Maxine McKew would be a candidate against the Prime Minister, came an announcement that after many years of inaction the New South Wales Government would build a school hall at Epping West Public School. The Opposition also announced that it would build the school hall. The Coalition did not have a chance to renege on its promise—it would not have done so because it was committed to it; it was a first priority for the electorate of Epping—but this Labor Government has reneged on its promise.

There are no funds in the budget for the Epping West Public School hall. This is despite the fact that the parents and citizens association has raised \$300,000 over the past seven years to help pay for extra facilities in the hall. And it is despite the fact that the State Government would be up for only a small portion of the cost of the hall, because the Commonwealth would supply the majority of funding. However, unless the State puts in its 15 per cent or so, there can be no hall. That is what has happened. Before the election this Labor Government promised to build that new hall. As it were, they seduced the school community. The principal wrote to the parents of the children saying: This is what the Government has announced; isn't it wonderful? But they have got nothing. The school community has no idea when they will get this hall, if ever.

Andrew Tink, my distinguished predecessor, fought for years on this issue. He sent petitions to this House containing thousands of signatures. What was the Government's response? It was to use the names and addresses in those petitions to write to those people and promise them that the Epping West Public School would get its hall! What has happened? Nothing. They will not get their hall. That promise has been broken. Epping, because it happens to be a Coalition held seat, gets nothing. In contrast, the Ryde electorate has had spending of several million dollars on schools in that electorate in the last year or so. That is because the State Government was prepared to put its money in to help the Ryde schools and get the Commonwealth benefit. Epping West, which raised \$300,000 towards the cost of its hall, gets nothing. I do not know how that will help Maxine McKew, who lives in the Epping West area.

Cheltenham Girls High School also has been let down. It was promised an upgrade, but not one dollar has been allocated in this year's budget for completion of the upgrade project. Last year we were told that that upgrade would be completed in 2008. Now we are told it will be 2009—but not one single dollar has been allocated to this worthy project. The poor girls of Cheltenham Girls High, many of whom supported me during the campaign—and made great fun of the fact that I was on the stations regularly handing out things to them and others—are made suffer again. They are forced to wait while Michael Costa crows about his budget surplus—a surplus achieved by depriving the students of Cheltenham Girls High School.

What has happened with Epping Road? Many in the electorate of Epping and elsewhere use Epping Road. What has the Government spent on Epping Road improvements? It spent \$25 million to keep Epping Road open for the election, so motorists could go through the tunnel or along Epping Road. Now the Government will funnel traffic into the Lane Cove Tunnel by closing off lanes on Epping Road, leaving one lane instead of three on each side, along what is already a congested stretch of road.

Pennant Hills Road is part of the national highway and an extremely important piece of infrastructure. How much money has been allocated in the budget for spending on Pennant Hills Road? Nothing! Another inquiry into Pennant Hills Road is underway. The Government, despite the recent history of tunnels, wants to put a tunnel under Pennant Hills Road. The Cross City Tunnel was a fiasco. The M5, which the Government has to fit with filtration because of the problems it has caused, was also a fiasco. But the Lane Cove Tunnel has no filtration. The residents of the area would prefer a road across the Hawkesbury so that trucks can get to Sydney West by another route, which would certainly save time. At the moment Pennant Hills Road in peak hour is like Belfast during the Troubles: people will not go into their front yards, they will not go out of their front gates and they will not answer their front doors. They do everything from the back door because out the front it is too noisy and too dirty as a result of the thousands of big trucks that rattle along Pennant Hills Road each day threatening ordinary commuters who use it.

The budget has not allocated enough money to finish the Epping to Chatswood rail link, despite promises that it would be completed by this time next year. When the rail link was originally promised it went all the way to Parramatta and, on estimates, would cost nearly half as much as it is going to cost. Now it goes only half the distance for practically twice the price, and it is running two years late on the original estimate. Many people in Epping cannot see it being finished by 2008 the way the Government has undertaken the project. The Government is not allocating funds to finish it in the current budget. Not one extra car parking space along the Epping to Chatswood rail link has been included in the project. Optus offered to fund thousands of car parking spaces for its new premises at North Ryde, but the Government cut it back to 1,000 saying that people would come by public transport. But people do not come just by public transport. They come by car because public transport is not always available. To use public transport you have to park your car in the streets of suburbs like Epping.

Not one dollar has been allocated in this year's budget for the North West Rail Link, a vital piece of infrastructure that was supposed to be completed by 2010, which will not be completed until who knows when. The varying estimates are 2015 or 2017. Seed money has been allocated for work on some plans, but that should have been done in the past few years. After all this time the Government has flip-flopped, changed its position and, as a result, failed to deliver for the community. My communities are in an uproar because of the Government's failure to properly consult and to choose a route that has least impact on the enjoyment of one's home in our area. A meeting will be held tonight at the Epping Heights Public School. Last week I attended a similar meeting at the same venue with 200 angry people. They raised valid concerns about the impact of the North West Rail Link on their properties and the depths at which the Government is tunnelling. Their concerns must be addressed. You cannot say, "We've saved Cheltenham and we've saved Beecroft because we are not going to quadruplicate the northern line. We are going to put a tunnel between Epping and Cherrybrook."

However, the Government then decided that the tunnel would go under streets in Epping, Cheltenham and Beecroft at levels that may well cause noise and shuddering to properties, and will certainly reduce their value. The Government must address these concerns. The committee has been given until some date in early July to make submissions to the Department of Planning, but that is just not long enough. The Government only announced it about three weeks ago and it has allowed only one month for people to put in their submissions, expert statements and information as to why the plan is undesirable and why there are better options. I ask the Minister for Transport and Minister for Planning to extend until at least August the deadline for submissions so that the voices of members of the local community who are affected can be heard. It is not as if the Government could not get it right. It has had years, yet it still cannot process the plan with proper consultation.

The Ryde Hospital, in the Ryde electorate, which impacts on the Epping electorate, has received \$4.5 million for an upgrade, which is welcome news. But the allocation reveals another one of Labor's election porkies. During the election campaign the Deputy Premier and member for Ryde, Mr Watkins, promised \$5 million to revamp Ryde Hospital, but that figure has been reduced. The Government has imposed an ambulance station on top of the child care centre in the grounds of the hospital, which will cause all sorts of difficulties for those who send their children to that centre. It is not good enough. Ryde Hospital has been understaffed and under serviced for many years. When I see the Government spending the money I will believe it.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] is the only organisation in the Attorney General's budget that has had its budget cut. Even though the budget papers say it has been cut by at least 3.3 per cent, which is \$3.2 million, it is actually more than \$5 million. This is all part of the Government's plan to cut the number of experienced and expert Crown prosecutors. The Government wants to run the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions more cheaply. It is trying to dumb down the prosecution area. It is trying to get as many pleas of guilty as possible in the local courts so that it can keep people out of jail or incarcerate them for a lesser time so that it do not have to build more gaols. But the community will not accept this because people want to be protected from criminals. They want criminals who have committed serious crimes to get the punishment they deserve.

If the Government were serious about getting the best results in the criminal justice system it would properly equip the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions so that the best prosecutors could be recruited and retained. You do not get the likes of March Tedeschi, QC, or Margaret Cunneen for nothing. The futures of such high-calibre, able and experienced prosecutors in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions are in jeopardy. The Premier has said he believes that tenure is antiquated. There are 94 Crown prosecutors, of whom only about 80 are permanent. The others are acting in the position, wondering and looking over their shoulders to see whether the Government will cut out their positions. They should be given tenure. If it is antiquated for prosecutors, is the Government admitting that it is also antiquated for judges? Does the Government think that independence in the criminal justice system is antiquated, that we do not need it? A member of one of the predecessors of this Government was Rex Jackson. Corruption created the need for an independent prosecutor. Governments wanted to distance themselves from the smear of corruption.

The Government set up the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It gave the Director of Public Prosecutions life tenure and continued the Crown Prosecutors' tenure, which they have had for 175 years. But now the Government is talking about cutting it out. Why would it do that? One wonders. One of the Government's senior Ministers is facing a committal hearing. What will the public think if the Director of Public Prosecutions is on a time contract and Crown prosecutors are only acting in the position or are also on a time contract? What does the Government think the public will say about independence or the need to ensure that the criminal justice system remains pure to protect the community from political interference? I say the public will reject it. The Government is trying to use spurious grounds by suggesting that the Patrick Power matter could have been handled differently to try to justify cutting the position of the Director of Public Prosecutions. If that is the case let us meet that challenge. Let us get the public to say whether it wants prosecutors on contracts who can be sacked at will. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon) [6.53 p.m.]: I enjoyed listening to the comments made by the member for Epping. I wish him a safe trip to the public meeting in his electorate that he plans to attend, and I hope that he gets through the toll. Tolls are an interesting issue in the context of the budget. We do not have any tolls in the Barwon electorate. In some cases we do not have any roads, either. I am not sure whether the people of my electorate would be prepared to pay tolls and pick up some of the accompanying infrastructure.

I will make some general comments on the budget but most of my comments will be directed toward an examination of allocations that affect my electorate of Barwon. In the past week there has been a great deal of

discussion about the relationship between the State and Federal governments. That is a matter that is discussed on a daily basis in rural and remote electorates that rely on the State Government to provide services. However, increasingly my electorate seems to be relying more and more on our Federal counterparts to meet some of our needs.

It is interesting to note that when revenue disbursements were made to the State, increased funding was based on a commitment or intention by the States to reduce State taxes. The fact that we live in the highest taxed, most overly managed but underserviced State in the country is cause for considerable concern. The bleating about this State not receiving its fair share of revenue distribution from the goods and services tax reflects a poor understanding of the historical context in which the Federal Government made a commitment to all the States in the 1930s based on need. The fact is that all States receive revenue from the goods and services tax, but over the next three years at least, this State will enjoy an additional \$1 billion from the distribution of goods and services tax revenue.

I should also point out that this State will continue to receive ongoing windfalls, not just from distribution of goods and services tax revenue but also from continual collection of taxes and royalties. The topic of royalties generates considerable discussion in the Barwon electorate as mining industry operations continue to expand in places like Cobar, Nyngan and Narrabri. A few years ago the population of Cobar was 3,000 and it is now approximately 5,500. Despite the Barwon electorate contributing approximately \$48 million in royalties this year to State Government coffers, it does not have an obstetrics unit. I will deal with that issue in more detail later.

A matter that the mining industry approaches with a considerable degree of seriousness is a proposal for a number of mining companies to combine and withhold royalty payments to the State Government because of the inadequacy of infrastructure support in rural and remote areas. At the outset of my term as a member of this House and throughout my term, I will call on the Government to upgrade infrastructure facilities for the Barwon electorate. I also will introduce members of the Government to managers of Australian and overseas mining companies who will explain to the Government that they are unable to attract staff to isolated places because of the lack of infrastructure and commitment by the State Government to providing services in the area—despite record windfalls produced by the area in mining royalties.

Endeavours to attract young families to the Barwon electorate are based on the salaries that are paid by mining companies. People who live in Cobar or Nyngan and who want to have a child are faced with the difficulty of having to travel more than 300 kilometres to obtain obstetric services. That is plainly not acceptable. Emerging communities such as Narrabri, where coalmining continues to expand, could have the opportunity to get onto the front foot with planning for road and rail infrastructure and services. A local council suggested that a percentage of the royalties derived from the area should be retained and returned in the form of infrastructure and services.

The heavy culture of taxation and compliance is no more evident than in day-to-day grassroots experiences. Recently I spoke to a local electrician who was one day later than the 30-day licence renewal period in paying his fee and was told he would be charged \$150 for late payment. That really annoyed him. He is sick of regulation and sick of compliance. He said that there are other occupations he can pursue, so the State has lost another electrician. Western New South Wales had approximately 100 weighed loads during the 2005 wheat harvest, which was the first harvest that central New South Wales had had in four years. As people were carting wheat from their properties to silos, they did not always know how to measure the weight of their loads—it is a bit hard to weigh loads in a paddock when there is no weighbridge handy—and they are being fined for incidents that occurred over 18 months ago. That is unacceptable because it is purely revenue raising and it reflects the heavy-handed culture of taxation and compliance that exists in this State. It is very difficult to do business in this State compared to other States in Australia.

As a new member of this Parliament, I eagerly awaited budget announcements, given the number of projects that were discussed in Barwon and in neighbouring electorates. There is considerable interdependence between electorates given that Barwon is the most isolated electorate, if not the largest electorate. Murray-Darling is the largest electorate, but the two electorates combined cover 60 per cent of the State. Barwon is the only electorate that does not have base hospitals so we rely on hospitals in adjacent electorates. For that reason I was interested to know what infrastructure will be provided to adjacent electorates, particularly in relation to health facilities and services.

Each time I searched for budget information that I wanted to convey to my constituents, an interesting electorate came up. Not many people know that we have a new electorate named "various". Whenever I went to

check on the funding, much of it was attributed to "various". I undertook a search on "various" in relation to the Barwon electorate and I discovered that in the 2007-08 budget's infrastructure allocations, "various" comprised 112 projects with a total budget of nearly \$1.3 billion. Barwon's infrastructure projects for the coming year amount to approximately \$25 million. I know that there is more to the "various" allocations, but to drill down and find out what "various" means has taken a bit of doing. Even some Ministers I have spoken to about some of the projects relating to that usual electorate known as "various" were unable to give me any answers.

That tells me and financial sector professionals throughout this country that the New South Wales budget is akin to a commentary. It is the least transparent of any budget presented in this country, and that is a matter that should be addressed. Barwon physically covers 30 per cent of the State. Infrastructure and services are the main issue in my electorate. As far as the Barwon electorate is concerned, the main project that has repeatedly appeared in budgets and is again highlighted in this year's budget is the Moree bypass. Well over 10 years ago, at the very beginning of lobbying for the project, I was involved and I know that funding has been sought from the Federal Government. The State Government has the contract to manage the project. What initially began as a \$28 million project has blown out to cost \$56 million. That tells me as well as many of the people who live in my electorate and adjacent electorates that the current Government really struggles to control expenses and manage projects.

We know that considerable amounts of Federal funding have gone to other States for roads. The people of my electorate carefully note allocations associated with roads. Funds are being diverted to other States because the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority and the State Government do not have the required level of project management ability to implement the projects and spend the funds wisely. New South Wales needs those projects and is entitled to receive them, but the fact is that although this Government bleats about funding that is not forthcoming from the Federal Government, the reality is that it would not matter how much funding came from the Federal Government because this Government cannot manage projects properly and there is no confidence that this Government would apply the funds efficiently and achieve a good outcome.

During this first session of this new Parliament I will watch closely to see whether the commentators, who have said that we will probably end up with half the projects at twice the cost, are right. It is a great cause of concern that the Government cannot deliver in a timely manner on some projects, and that needs to be addressed. The Opposition has given notice of a bill about country rail services. It seeks to redress the inequity of charging pensioners a \$10 booking fee for a train trip, that is, if a train is available. Hopefully, the bill will get a good run. One pensioner group constantly tells me that the elderly cannot get on and off buses all the time; they need a reliable train service. This State needs decent rail infrastructure, but there has been no commitment to CountryLink services at any meaningful level. Having met the Minister for Transport and introduced Narrabri Shire Council representatives to him, I look forward to the safety upgrade of the Baan Baa rail crossing. Unfortunately, there has been a fatality at that location.

One of the main items of capital expenditures for Barwon is the Narrabri Hospital, for which the Government has allocated \$1.6 million. It is a victory for the community. In the recent election campaign the Labor candidate gave a commitment on behalf of the Government to supporting that program to the extent of \$40 million or perhaps \$50 million. That commitment has already been discussed with the Minister for Health. Multipurpose service facilities have been built or are nearing completion in Nyngan, Tottenham and Dunedoo. That is another victory for the community in its efforts to gain more effective health service facilities in country areas.

I look forward to the upgrade of the Coonamble multipurpose service facility, about which the Labor candidate also gave a commitment. We need to speed up the delivery of that upgrade, because I am advised that parts of the present facility do not meet fire and safety standards. Aged care residents are living in a dysfunctional facility, dialysis units are set up on covered-in verandahs, and other parts of the facility have been closed. I have met with the Minister and discussed that upgrade with her. It is a phase four facility and needs to be completed in this term of Government. I look forward to that happening.

One reason why areas such as Walgett cannot attract police is because there is no adequate housing. In years gone by most police who were posted to country areas were single men, and most of the accommodation was single men's quarters. That is not the case today. Most of our Police Force are younger, family people and need appropriate accommodation, which is a basic need. I admire the work they do, and they should be supported. One way to do that in rural areas is to provide appropriate housing. There is no allocation in the budget for that, unless it is listed under "Various". Over the next few years I will push for that accommodation.

I turn now to law and order, a matter we have discussed this week, the role of the Department of Community Services and the protection of young people. Today I spoke with the Minister for Community Services about the Bourke community safe house. That project has been on the drawing board for a couple of years. The problem is not so much a financial issue, it is more about licensing and regulation compliance and giving the responsibility for meeting some of their needs back to the local communities. Despite that, funding for it should be reflected in the budget. It is unfortunate that the Government has not adopted the recommendations of the "Breaking the Silence" report. One key recommendation of the report is that we should engage community-based groups to provide some of the services that the Government either will not or cannot provide.

The Department of Community Services has a problem attracting staff. However, there are alternatives. The Government does not need to control everything, because there are members of the community who will take up that challenge. That is certainly the case in Bourke. I have found that on some occasions the more the Government intervenes, the more remote and worse the outcomes are. We need to turn that around. We need a re-empowerment model for the Department of Community Services, safe houses and the needs of our indigenous communities. As I said, it is not so much about money, it is about process and reform. A good budget should reflect reform, and there was no major reform in this budget.

I turn now to the environment. Money has been allocated to the Riverbank project, which involves water buybacks. There was no community adjustment funding for places such as the Pilliga or Gwabegar for the forestry readjustment that has taken place. Money is available and it needs to be let loose to back projects that can create real employment and help take up the slack in places such as Barradine, which has 35 per cent unemployment, and Gwabegar, which has 95 per cent unemployment. Money has been allocated for satellites and for catchment management authorities.

One of the big issues for Barwon is inland rail, which is again a Federally funded project. The State Government has not made any comment about the fast rail line between Melbourne and Brisbane. That sort of infrastructure will benefit my area, and we need the State Government to work with our Federal colleagues to make sure that happens in a timely way. The same applies to road and broadband funding. In 1995 the Coalition had a new dams policy, but we have heard no major announcements about water infrastructure for the capture and storage of water. That is a weakness in the budget that needs to be addressed. There is a proposal to run a gas line from central Queensland to the Hunter, which would benefit my area and would pick up on stranded assets. Companies such as Eastern Star Gas need to come on board.

I am concerned about hospitals and preschools in my electorate. In Barwon in the past 10 years 10 obstetric units have been closed. That is not acceptable. Previously there were 73 rural obstetric units in New South Wales; that is now down to 33 units. It is all about cost cutting, not about service delivery or about improving the quality of life for country people, who need to travel for up to five hours to have a baby delivered. That is not acceptable in a modern-day society. It is costly and stressful. I would like to see that turned around in my time as the local member.

The Greater Western Area Health Service is struggling to meet the needs of residents. Local people need to rely on outside providers and must partner up with our city cousins. The services of the Isolated Patient Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme are centralised. It is costly to access those services, and we have an ageing population who need better facilities. Prior to coming to this place I was involved with preschools. The *Australian* newspaper recently stated:

Preschools are the glaring omission in the NSW budget, which fails even to mention the word despite the state having the lowest proportion of children in preschool education in the nation.

We have 800 community preschools, many of them in Barwon. On average the preschools get \$74,000, a cost per student of between \$30 and \$40. There are 100 Department of Education and Training preschools, and they average about \$240,000, with a cost between \$2 to \$5 a day. Only 60 per cent of preschool age children in New South Wales receive a preschool education. More than 90 per cent of preschool age children in other States receive preschool education. That reflects a lack of vision and commitment to early intervention, words we often hear mentioned by the Government in relation to meeting the needs of our young people. There is still a long way to go, but I will certainly fight for Barwon and make sure that we get our fair share.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Andrew McDonald and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 7.11 p.m. The House resumed at 9.28 p.m.]*

## PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER

**The SPEAKER:** I report 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:

That this House directs the President to join with the Speaker 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.

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:
  - (a) in the case of advice given under clause 1 (a), sought to rely on the advice of the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser; or
  - (b) 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 to the Legislative Assembly informing it of the passage of the resolution.

Legislative Council  
28 June 2007

PETER PRIMROSE  
President

**CHILDREN (CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS) AMENDMENT (PUBLICATION OF NAMES) BILL 2007**

**CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (SPEAKER) BILL 2007**

**CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) AMENDMENT (ASSISTANCE IN FOREIGN CRIMINAL MATTERS) BILL 2007**

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

**CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AMENDMENT (LOCAL COURT PROCESS REFORMS) BILL 2007**

**JUDICIAL OFFICERS AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

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

**BROTHELS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.**

**Consideration in Detail**

**Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.**

*Schedule of the amendments referred to in message of 28 June 2007*

No. 1 Page 3, Schedule 1 [1], lines 6 and 7. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

*brothel* means a brothel within the meaning of the *Restricted Premises Act 1943*, other than premises used or likely to be used for the purposes of prostitution by no more than one prostitute.

No. 2 Page 6, Schedule 1 [3], proposed section 124AB (1), line 30. Insert "Subsections (5) and (6) extend to any such proceedings in relation to all brothels within the meaning of the *Restricted Premises Act 1943*," after "brothel".

No. 3 Page 10, Schedule 2 [4], lines 16–19. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

**[4] Section 17 (2A)**

Insert after section 17 (2):

(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2), one complaint may be sufficient to warrant the making of an application in the case of a brothel used or likely to be used for the purposes of prostitution by 2 or more prostitutes.

**Motion by Mr John Aquilina agreed to:**

That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed to.

**Legislative Council's amendments agreed to.**

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

**ENERGY AND UTILITIES ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (CLIMATE CHANGE FUND) BILL  
2007**

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.**

**Consideration in Detail**

**Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.**

*Schedule of the amendments referred to in message of 28 June 2007*

No. 1 Page 5, Schedule 1 [3]. Insert before line 1:

(b) approve the funding of community grants from the Fund, being grants awarded on the basis of their merit in advancing one or more of the purposes referred to in section 34F, established through a competitive selection process, and

No. 2 Page 5, Schedule 1 [3]. Insert after line 13:

(3) The Minister is to produce an annual report detailing fund allocations and programs and anticipated benefits, by reference to key performance indicators, to be achieved in advancing any one or more of the purposes referred to in section 34F.

(4) The annual report is to include an evaluation of the effectiveness of each program as it is completed under the Fund.

(5) The annual report is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 6 months after the end of the financial year to which it relates.

(6) The Minister is to publish each annual report so as to promote, to the NSW public, schemes, technologies and processes that address climate change and to inform the NSW public about consumer choices and procurement decisions.

**Motion by Mr John Aquilina agreed to:**

That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed to.

**Legislative Council's amendments agreed to.**

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

**FAIR TRADING AMENDMENT (FUNERAL GOODS AND SERVICES) BILL 2007****Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.****Consideration in Detail****Consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments.***Schedule of the amendment referred to in message of 28 June 2007*

Page 3, Schedule 1 [1]. Insert after line 30:

**60ZB Review of Part**

- (1) The Minister is to review the effectiveness of this Part and any information standard prescribed under this Part.
- (2) The review is to be undertaken as soon as possible after the period of 3 years from the date of commencement of this Part.
- (3) A report on the outcome of the review is to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 12 months after the end of the period of 3 years.

**Mr JOHN AQUILINA** (Riverstone—Leader of the House) [9.30 p.m.]: I move:

That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed to.

Mr Speaker, I acknowledge your patience and the patience of many members of this House, the Clerks and everybody else in enabling us to proceed in a felicitous and expeditious way in dealing with legislation during the session. I also thank Hansard for their tolerance and patience.

**The SPEAKER:** I thank all those who contributed during this session.**Question—That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.****Motion agreed to.****Legislative Council's amendments agreed to.****Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.****The House adjourned at 9.32 p.m. until Tuesday 25 September 2007 at 2.15 p.m.**

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