

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 18 May 2010

The Speaker (The Hon. George Richard Torbay) took the chair at 1.00 p.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MONARO ELECTORATE SCHOOL UPGRADES

Mr STEVE WHAN (Monaro—Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Rural Affairs) [1.06 p.m.]: I highlight some of the fantastic work being undertaken in schools around the Monaro electorate, including investment in local schools and the wonderful work of teachers and students. At times we hear some negative publicity about the Federal Government's Building the Education Revolution program, yet schools in the Monaro electorate are a testament to the stunning success of that investment. All credit should go to the Federal member, Mike Kelly, who has worked very hard with local schools to deliver the project.

I was amazed when I tallied up the projects in the Monaro electorate. State Government investments have also been significant. The projects include food technology and science laboratory upgrades at Karabar High School; science laboratory upgrades at Bombala High School and Braidwood Central School; a security fence at Queanbeyan West Public School; and toilet facility upgrades at Delegate Public School, Jindabyne Central School, Karabar High School and Berridale Public School. Those upgrades and the many Building the Education Revolution projects comprise an investment of more than \$35 million in recent works in public schools in the Monaro electorate, which is a sensational investment in public education.

Some terrific projects are being undertaken with this funding. Recently I received information from Jerrabomberra Public School that tenders are now settled for work to expand its hall. The Building the Education Revolution-funded project will be in addition to the new classrooms to be constructed at the school. Since the Labor Government built the school, it has been incredibly successful, expanding well beyond its original projected enrolment. State Government-funded work has expanded the canteen and the administration facilities at the school—a fantastic investment and a demonstration of what can be achieved when Commonwealth and State governments work together. Mike Kelly should be congratulated on his role in this process.

Indeed, I am amazed that the Federal Opposition has called on the Government to halt these Building the Education Revolution projects that are so important to local schools. Cooma North Public School will receive new classrooms while Queanbeyan East Public School will see work commence soon on a new hall. Bombala Public School, Bungendore Public School and Braidwood Central School will have new classrooms constructed while Bredbo Public School will receive a new library. Some of the small schools particularly, such as Numeralla Public School, have told me how much they appreciate things like a new library. Each of the 21 primary schools in the Monaro area will receive something out of the Building the Education Revolution project, and with only a few exceptions they are extremely welcome in those communities.

Jindabyne Central School has some issues and I am working with the school community to resolve them. We seem to read about Berridale school in the media, but at the end of the day Berridale school will have its new library, which will benefit students for many years to come. It will be a valuable addition to the school

community. So, too, will be the new toilet block, which I managed to obtain funding for not so long ago after parents raised their concerns with me. Some fantastic facilities are being built as a result of these capital works programs.

Recently I visited a number of schools that are benefiting from the Connected Classrooms initiative. Interactive whiteboards and other facilities that are being delivered are enabling small and remote schools in particular to deliver education and to take advantage of facilities being offered at bigger schools. Those facilities link schools to other classes and break down some of the distance barriers—a fantastic result for schools in the Monaro electorate. Teachers at those schools are doing a great job: I constantly witness the great performance of every school. Next week I will attend a joint performance by Ando Public School and Bibbenluke Public School, which I am sure will be fantastic.

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending a performance of *Pirates of Penzance* by Karabar High School at the Q Theatre—a fantastic facility in Queanbeyan. That performance of *Pirates of Penzance*—in which my son was the pirate king and my daughter participated—was a sensational tribute to kids and to the efforts of teachers at Karabar High School, who devoted their time and effort into assisting students with singing and drama. That is symbolic of the commitment of teachers around the Monaro electorate at places such as Monaro High School, Jindabyne Central School and a number of other schools. Teachers are doing a wonderful job in ensuring the academic achievements of students and their all-round development in the arts, sports and all those activities in which we want our children to participate.

WARRIEWOOD SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater) [1.11 p.m.] I rise to inform members of the sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of Warriewood Surf Life Saving Club, which was formally established in February 1950. Founding members of the club include current life member Jock Mackay and Gordon Longley, father of the former member for Pittwater and lifelong Warriewood resident Jim Longley. For those members who do not know Warriewood Beach, it is truly one of Pittwater's hidden gems—a beautiful north-east facing strip of golden sand bordered by the imposing Turrimetta Headland. The clubhouse is one of the best on the beaches and its recent renovations are a testament to the hard work of many club members who laboured to produce a beautiful interior that proudly displays club history and capitalises on one of the best views in the world. Warriewood surf club has a reputation for breeding tough lifesavers. Perhaps that is because the first surfboat that was used by the club, kindly donated by then Bilgola surf club sweep and noted yachtsman Sid Fisher, was one of those gifts that made one wonder whether Bilgola was too keen about more competition on the waves. As Jock Mackay recalls:

The boat was in shocking condition. Its back was broken, and instead of a curve from one end to the other, in the middle it was flat, ribs broken and planks distorted and leaked like a sieve. The members caulked it and painted it but when we took it out in the surf it used to fill up in about five minutes. It eventually made great BBQ fuel.

And it certainly is good that Warriewood lifesavers are hardy—they have to undertake rescues at the notorious blowhole—which is sadly all too frequently the venue for injuries and even deaths. I remember one day as a teenager when a Canadian tourist jumped into the blowhole to his death—a story almost repeated too often. Over the history of the club many brave rescues have been undertaken around the blowhole, with Matt Hardman and Ian Fielding-Smith being nominated for the Hero of the Surf award after a rescue at the blowhole in the heavy seas that can wrap around Turrimetta headland in a southerly swell. Another club member Matt Potter went on to win the award for another spectacular rescue at the same spot, with the citation noting that the rescue was both heroic and efficient, and that Matt did not panic, despite the urgency of the situation. For people who have seen the boiling surf off Turrimetta head in a nasty swell this is very high praise indeed. More recently, Neil Dyer and Scott York were involved in another rescue at this dangerous spot.

Each surf club has its own strong identity, and Warriewood surf club has always been a very strong family club, with everyone looking after everyone else and the children being cared for by all. Local families such as the Mackays, the Kinseys, the Hustons, the Burgmanns, the Tilburys, the Dyers and so many others have all contributed to developing a special family feel to the place. It is no wonder that Warriewood is one of the largest nipper clubs in surf life saving today, including families like the Jollows, the Gallants and the Pipers. Warriewood has also played a role in leading the fight for women to become the vital part of the lifesaving movement that they are today. Maurie Segedin, a one-time president of Warriewood junior club, said:

In the late seventies, fellow nipper dad Ian Dose, and I would take our children down to Warriewood beach for Nippers. We had six daughters between us and back in those days girls weren't allowed to participate in surf lifesaving activities. It didn't take long for our girls to get bored just watching their brothers compete on the beach every Sunday morning. They were pretty upset about the unfairness of it as well. After all, they said, why should the boys have all the fun.

At the time I was President of the Warriewood Junior Club, so between Ian and I we strongly lobbied the SLSAA to include women in surf life saving. I'm proud to say that we were successful, thanks to our darling daughters.

Today Warriewood is stronger than ever, with more than 600 members, almost 120 of whom actively patrol the beaches and do what surf lifesaving is all about—vigilance and service, and making sure that our beaches are safe places for everyone in our community. I commend Warriewood Surf Life Saving Club for all that it does. I commend its terrific leaders, for example, people such as Matt Sheridan, the wonderful, strong president and leader of the club; vice-president Peter Byrne, who has the best emcee voice on the surf club presentation night circuit; club captain Beverley Tilbury; treasurer Lena Grahn; registrar Jenny Huston; secretary Vickie Dyer who needs a special mention as she is married to—and puts up with—Neil Dyer the board and ski captain; Nippers president Charlie Wiggins; inflatable rescue boat [IRB] captain Rick Harris, who put me through my IRB award a few years ago, which I am still trying to get over; training officer Dan Susko who has put so many kids through their bronze medallion and their surf life saving certificates; boat captain Dave Rees, whose son, Jayke, is a strong competitor; sponsorship captain Patsy Smith; and social committee captain Caroline Jollow, who does a wonderful job. In a recent publication Matt Sheridan had this to say about the club:

It's not the biggest club, it's not the oldest club and it hasn't got the most gold medals, but it does have some of the best people I have ever had the pleasure to meet, work and socialise with.

That says a lot about the club. Matt was somewhat modest when he said that the Club did not have the most gold medals, because some fabulous competitors are associated with the club—people like Sean Kenny, Nick Yakich and Jayke Rees. The club has a strong history in surfboats. I wish the Pontiac Chieftains, as the surf life saving club is known, all the best for its future. No doubt over the next 60 years it will bring even more success and pleasure to the many families of Warriewood who benefit so much from its great work.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.16 p.m.]: I thank the member for Pittwater for highlighting the work being done by this fantastic surf life saving club in his local electorate. The beach, which forms part of our Australian lifestyle, is something we all thoroughly enjoy in summer and it is something for which we are renowned around the world. However, with the beach come perils. Most Australians learn to swim at a very young age, but often our ocean with its currents is an unpredictable and scary place to be. Every weekend and during the week our lifesavers ensure that we are safe at our local beaches. I am happy to hear of the strong tradition amongst certain families who volunteer their time at weekends.

The member referred also to another important issue. In the 1970s it was rare to see girls and women as surf lifesavers. We have come a long way since then. Women and girls have been introduced to the lifesaving culture, and rightly so. I thank the member for highlighting the history in his local area. I commend all those locals in his electorate who give up so much of their time every week for such a worthy cause.

RAILWAY STATION UPGRADES

Mr ALAN ASHTON (East Hills) [1.17 p.m.]: I refer to an issue of importance to every member in this Chamber, that is, railways and trains. I am fortunate to have four railway stations in my electorate—one at Padstow, Revesby, Panania and East Hills. However, some electorates do not have railway stations, and that presents residents with a problem. There is much rivalry between the four railway stations in my electorate as it is not always easy to provide commuters with the same services. There is good news for Panania railway station: between June and October a new canopy will be erected at this old and almost heritage-listed railway station. Commuters at Panania railway station will be better shielded from the elements, specifically the sun in summer and the cold and rain in winter. This is part of the Government's \$5 million station upgrade Canopy 6 Program.

I congratulate all those other electorates that will receive these canopies, as they will improve customer safety and comfort at CityRail stations. This program has come to fruition as a result of a request I made about a year ago of the Minister for Transport and Roads, the Hon. David Campbell. Given all the work that had occurred at other railway stations, I did not want Panania to be forgotten. The Minister gave me an assurance that it would not be forgotten and this canopy is proof of that. These canopies will be an advantage to all those who are catching trains, as there will be less concentration of people in one area of the platform trying to board a train. Waiting times will be reduced and the number of slips and falls will also be reduced as customers will not be rushing to get on a train in an attempt to escape the bad weather.

Ten stations across the network will have these canopies erected, and I am thankful that Panania railway station is amongst that number. Many members will remember that after the holding of the Olympic Games rubbish bins at local stations disappeared—a worldwide phenomenon. Rubbish bins will now make a comeback, for which I thank the Minister and the Government. Each of the four railway stations in my electorate—Padstow, Revesby, Panania and East Hills—will receive new bins. People complain about our trains not being clean enough. Regardless of how many times people are asked not to eat or drink on the train and

leave their rubbish on the train, the reality is that if there is no bin on the station when they get off the train their only option is to carry their rubbish with them. However, a lot of people will not do that, and they simply leave their rubbish on the train.

RailCorp is installing 200 new bins at 100 Sydney CityRail railway stations. Each bin will include receptacles for paper recycling and general rubbish—these bins are in addition to the bins already at stations. While the new bins may be harder to find, they will allow for recycling, which is an added advantage and a good environmental measure. The rollout follows a recent pilot for recycling newspapers and paper at some railway stations during peak weekday periods. In addition, late last year RailCorp commenced a trial of "Safer by Design" garbage and paper recycling bins at Central railway station, with a view to putting bins back on some of the busiest stations to meet one of RailCorp's 2010 Customer Charter commitments.

The railway stations in my electorate, at least up to Revesby, will benefit from the Kingsgrove to Revesby quadruplication. The \$500 million project is well on track, so to speak. I take a big interest in what is happening there. I am particularly pleased that construction of the commuter car park at Revesby railway station is now underway. The old council car park at Revesby has been demolished, and the new commuter car park will provide all-day parking for many hundreds of cars, as well as some parking on the lower level for those who want to go to the shops, restaurants, and other places they need to go to in Revesby, such as dentists and the like.

The parking area above the Go-Lo store, which is located on the former Woolworths site in Revesby, is now fully available for people who wish to park there. The parking area had not been open for many years, but through my efforts and those of council, together with Woolworths, which still owns the site, the parking area is now available. I apologise to residents for any inconvenience at the moment; there will certainly be some dust and some noise, but the outcome will be tremendous.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [1.22 p.m.]: A tragic event happened at Ulmarra, on the Pacific Highway, on 11 February this year. I issue a plea to the Premier to answer four emails that the grieving parents of Nathan Zanuso, who was tragically killed on the Pacific Highway on that date, have sent to the Premier asking her for some kind of explanation for their son's death. I will quote from an article that appeared in the *Daily Examiner* of 17 May under the headline "Parents seek justice, Premier shuns them". The article reads:

As if the grief were not enough, the parents of Nathan Zanuso, who was tragically killed on the Pacific Highway in February, have been ignored by NSW Premier Kristina Keneally's office despite four emails asking for some kind of explanation for their son's death.

The emails explain how the 4WD ute driven by 27-year-old Nathan Zanuso, a rope-access technician well regarded for his safety record, was hit head-on by a B-Double truck which crossed the highway about 4.40 a.m. on Thursday, February 11 and how the young man died in a Newcastle hospital eight days later.

Leonie and Paul Zanuso, who live in the Victorian/NSW border town of Woodonga, asked the NSW Premier to explain why the highway had not been converted to dual lane despite massive bus crashes, coroner's recommendations and the hundreds of lives that have been lost over the years on the notorious roadway.

The first email, entitled Why?, was dated April 12, 2010, and the latest, entitled Silence is Golden, was sent last Thursday.

The response the Zanuso's did receive came from NSW Director-General David Swain who offered his condolences and promised to pass the letter on to Transport Minister David Campbell.

"A response from Keneally would have been nice," Leonie said. "It just shows that they don't really give two hoots do they?"

One can understand the grief these parents are going through. I have spoken to Nathan's father, Paul, on the phone. He said to me, "Steve, I think I am turning into an alcoholic, just through my grief. My wife, I think, is going through depression." There should be some closure here. I make a plea to the Premier to at least answer the four emails and to show some sympathy and compassion for these grieving parents. The highway is in dire need of a dual-lane carriageway.

It has now been 103 days since the mayors of the North Coast—the mayors of Ballina, Richmond Valley, Clarence Valley and Coffs Harbour councils—sent an invitation to both the Leader of the Opposition, Barry O'Farrell, and the Premier to inspect that stretch of the Pacific Highway. As has been said, the mayors were very disappointed when, a few weeks ago, the Premier simply sent Ian Macdonald to the North Coast for a 15-minute interview in Coffs Harbour council chambers. The mayors believe the meeting was far from

adequate. Indeed, as the local paper reported in a headline, "Premier's snub is simply not good enough: Mayor". The Premier's snub is simply not good enough for the North Coast mayors, and it is also not good enough for the Zanuso family.

Since the invitation was sent and since the death of Nathan Zanuso, eight more deaths have occurred on that notorious stretch of the highway. That does not include other accidents that have left people maimed and families destroyed. It simply highlights the need for the Premier to get out of Sydney, get out of looking for photo opportunities, and come up to the North Coast—where the really serious, hard end of politics is—to inspect the Pacific Highway and face the mayors who are concerned about this notorious stretch of the highway and the carnage that continues to happen there.

I also ask the Premier to do a simple thing: send an email back to the Zanuso's. Paramedics are continually on the highway dragging bodies out of vehicles. Wade Walker is one paramedic to whom I have got close over the years. Wade attended the scene of Nathan Zanuso's accident and he has taken this tragedy personally. He comes from the Albury-Wodonga area. Indeed, Wade had returned the young man's personal belongings to the family and had shed tears with them while they talked about this tragedy. Once again I implore the Premier to listen to this private member's statement and to reply to the Zanuso's emails.

Ms ANGELA D'AMORE (Drummoyne—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.27 p.m.]: I note the concerns highlighted by the member for Clarence. I take this opportunity to convey my personal condolences to the Zanuso family on the death of their 27-year-old son, Nathan. I think all members in this Chamber understand what this family is going through. As the mother of two young boys, I understand that we all have fears when our children are on the roads. I note that the member for Clarence has highlighted that four emails were sent to the Premier and that the family is quite distressed that they have not yet received a response. As we are in Parliament this week, it is important that I as a Parliamentary Secretary and the member for Clarence take the opportunity to go to the Premier's department to find out where these emails are, so that the appropriate response can be forwarded to the grieving parents.

The member for Clarence highlighted some concerns about the Pacific Highway. It is a long stretch of highway, and there are particular points at which we know accidents occur. As this is a sitting week and we are in Parliament, the member for Clarence has the opportunity as a local member to address these concerns personally with the Minister for Transport and Roads and with the Premier herself. I am sure the member will take up that opportunity.

JESSICA WATSON VOYAGE COMPLETION

Mr PAUL GIBSON (Blacktown) [1.28 p.m.]: We hear a lot of talk in our electorates and everywhere we go about the younger generation. The younger generation today is probably the most educated generation of all. People come to my office and say, "Look, you've got to do something about this school or that school because in some cases respect is not being taught the way it should be." I say to these people that I raised four children and put them all through school, but I never, ever, sent my kids to school to learn respect; respect must be learned at home. Each generation has done all it can to make sure the next generation is in a better position than it was in to deal with the problems of life. Sometimes we wonder whether that is the case.

Last Saturday we witnessed the arrival in Sydney, after an around-the-world voyage, of 16-year-old Jessica Watson. I know that after her arrival Jessica said in an interview, "I'm not a hero." About 99 per cent of Australians believe that Jessica Watson is a hero, and indeed more than a hero. She is an inspiration to each and every person—the young, the middle aged, and the elderly. Everyone admires what she has achieved. When she decided to go on this journey questions were asked about whether she was too young. Most people did not know the level of her sailing skills. They did not know the guts of this young lady. Television footage shows this little paddle-pop-size yacht bobbing around in a big ocean on waves 12 and 15 metres high. I would not go out there for love nor money, but Jessica Watson had the guts for seven months to do what she said she would do: She sailed around the world. By doing that she had to learn who she was and what she wanted out of life. She took on that journey.

I believe that journey will change this nation. It will bring this nation hope. If the Australian of the Year award this year is not given to Jessica Watson, there should be an inquiry. She showed great courage. This nation was built on the Anzac spirit and that is what she demonstrated for seven months out in the ocean battling the elements on her own. I have no doubt that she is a nation builder. History shows that every now and then people come along who inspire not only their family but also people they do not even know. Jessica has inspired

many people and after listening to her speak they feel they know her and they adopt her. She has done that for this nation. I congratulate Jessica Watson and all those other young people with ideas. I agree with Jessica's comment, "Go and follow your ideas. Once you have tried it only then will you realise whether you can do it." Jessica said that nothing is impossible. She is an inspiration to the whole nation.

In the time remaining I should like to tell a story of what happened to me last week. Last Wednesday night I set out on my way home, but my car broke down just outside Parliament House. The weather was not too good and I wondered what I was going to do. Two good Samaritans then came along, both dressed in suits because Parliament had just concluded. One was Chris Hartcher, the member for Terrigal, and the other was Chris Spence, a chap who worked for Chris. Before I could say "The NRMA" they had the bonnet open, Chris Hartcher was under the bonnet of my car trying to find the trouble and Chris Spence was underneath the car in his suit trying to find the cause of the problem. While I was standing there doing nothing they located the trouble and then got me on my way home. We hear a lot said about what happens in this Chamber with members name-calling and singing out at each other from time to time, but this was a good story of Government members and Opposition members working together for a good cause! I place on record my thanks to Chris Hartcher and Chris Spence for their help last Wednesday evening.

DANGEROUS DOG CONTROL

Mr MICHAEL RICHARDSON (Castle Hill) [1.33 p.m.]: Today I raise in the House an incident that took place in my street in West Pennant Hills on 6 May. A beautiful little cocker spaniel named Holly used to live across the road from us. She was 15 years old and was suffering from many of the same old-age symptoms that humans suffer, but she was much loved by her owners, Neville and Yvonne Bailey. Holly had a heart murmur so the Baileys did not walk her anymore. Her exercise was strolling from the garage around the corner—they live on a corner block—to the back gate when the Baileys came home in their car. On Thursday of last week Holly set off as normal to walk around the corner, but when the Baileys went to the back gate to let her in she was not there. She was lying dead on the nature strip with an American Staffordshire terrier clamped to her throat and its puppy jumping around excitedly nearby. Attempts by Mrs Bailey to pull the animal off using a harness it was wearing proved fruitless—as soon as she succeeded the animal raced back to its kill.

The dogs were quickly rounded up by The Hills Shire Council's dogcatcher and are now in the council's dog pound, but the damage had been done. As one can imagine, my neighbours are absolutely traumatised by the death of their much-loved pet. In 2006 the New South Wales Parliament legislated to amend the Companion Animals Act to control dogs that pose a threat to human beings and other animals. The provisions include new rules allowing councils to declare a dog dangerous if it has, without provocation, attacked a person or animal or has repeatedly threatened to attack a person or animal. The Act also declared a small number of dog breeds to be restricted—that is, unable to be sold, acquired or bred. These include the American Pit Bull terrier, the Japanese Tosa, Argentine fighting dogs and Brazilian fighting dogs. Any council can also declare as a restricted dog any other dog believed to be on the restricted list or a crossbreed of one of those animals.

A restricted or dangerous dog must be desexed, it cannot be under the sole charge of a person under 18 years of age, and it has to be kept in an enclosure made of brick, timber, iron or weldmesh, with a concrete floor. During the debate on the new laws, the banning of breeds was criticised by many dog owners and dog societies who claimed that it was impossible to differentiate between them, yet the Government's own dog attack report, published on the Department of Local Government website, does exactly that. It provides detailed reporting on dog attacks by council area and by breed. What breed consistently comes up number one on that list? The Staffordshire Bull Terrier and the related American Staffordshire terrier. Staffies, as they are colloquially known, accounted for 245 of the 1,122 attacks on people and animals—that is, 22 per cent—recorded in the January to March quarter this year.

In April, a Staffordshire bull terrier bit a seven-year-old girl in the face after she bent down to pat it at Kincumber on the Central Coast. The dog was taken by Gosford City Council rangers, who said it was up to the dog's owner to decide whether the dog should be destroyed. The Hills Shire Council's Charles Meader has a different view. He believes Staffies, particularly American Staffordshire terriers, should be restricted the same as Pit Bull terriers. The dog that killed my neighbour's dog had just moved into West Pennant Hills from Blacktown, but because American Staffordshire terriers are not classified as restricted dogs, no additional safeguards were required for the yard in which they were kept, nor is there a ban on breeding them. It was all too simple for the dogs to escape from the yard and go on their murderous rampage.

I guess the only comfort we can take from this incident is that it was not a small child who was attacked. The dog has been declared dangerous, so it will be subject to significant restrictions in the future and

may even be put down. However, if its owners move outside the Hills shire, their new council may lift the declaration, freeing the animal to kill again. Mr Meader says the law should be changed to make it impossible for another council to lift a dangerous dog declaration: A court might be able to do it, but not a council. I agree. Once a dog has carried out an unprovoked attack, as this animal did, it will do so again if given the chance. The Government needs also to declare all American Staffordshire terriers restricted dogs, and consider doing the same for the related Staffordshire bull terriers.

During the debate on the Companion Animals Amendment Bill in 2006 the member for Sydney claimed that Pit Bull terriers—which are restricted—are being imported into Australia as American Staffordshire terriers. The way to deal with this anomaly is to make American Staffordshire terriers a restricted breed. Former Premier Bob Carr once described Pit Bull terriers as "killing machines on a leash", while Charles Meader describes American Staffordshire terriers as "canine crocodiles". Mr Meader says that German Shepherds—used as guard dogs—have a jaw strength of 800 pounds per square inch while American Staffordshire terriers have a jaw strength five times higher at 4,000 pounds per square inch. Staffordshire bull terriers—like Pit Bull terriers—originally were bred in England to fight bulls. A bull would be put in a ring, tied to an iron stake, often in a pit, then the dogs were introduced into the ring with a view to immobilising the bull. One can imagine that massively strong jaws and an aggressive nature were essential characteristics for successful Pit Bull dogs.

Bull baiting and dogfights were outlawed in Britain 175 years ago. One really has to ask why in the twenty-first century people would want to keep dogs bred for no purpose other than to maim another animal? Plenty of other breeds are available as pets, working dogs or guard dogs. We have effectively banned Pit Bull terriers in this State—they have to be kept in special enclosures, are not allowed out without a muzzle and cannot be bred or sold. The Government should apply the same restrictions to American Staffordshire terriers as well as amending the Companion Animals Act to prohibit a council from lifting another council's dangerous dog declaration without reference to a court.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.38 p.m.]: This year I attended the Day of Mourning Service at Port Kembla. The Mission to Seafarers Chaplain David Masters led the attendees in a prayer to remember all those who have lost their lives or been injured on the job. The commemoration at the port was particularly pertinent as earlier in the month at Port Botany a terrible incident resulted in the death of Nick Fanos, a 49-year-old father of two. Nothing can turn back time or undo a family's grief. One reason I attended the Day of Mourning was to pay my respects to those workers who had been killed or injured while at work and also to give particular recognition to the ultimate price paid not just by the individuals, but also by their families who, through no fault of their own, have had their lives changed as a result of work accidents. The service was officiated by the South Coast Labour Council and the Maritime Union of Australia, and attended by various union representatives, including from the Transport Workers Union, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, the Maritime Union of Australia and others.

The International Day of Mourning is also a day to remind workers and employees that safety at work should always come first; it is a powerful reminder of the importance of safety in the workplace. We all want our loved ones to return home safely every day from work. Workplace injuries and deaths bear a heavy social and financial cost and have a devastating impact on friends and family members. Also attending the service were a number of old union stalwarts, and when I say "old" I mean from days gone by.

Mr Geoff Provost: Old party members.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Not my party members, but union stalwarts such as Monica Chalmers, Neville Arrowsmith and Doreen Burrows. That reminded me of people who gave me, as a new young union official, so much help, support and guidance. Often when people associated with unions pass away—people who are perhaps not paid union officials or members of the Labor Party or the Liberal-Nationals Coalition—they do not get the recognition they deserve. The work of such people is not unnoticed but it is not recognised, and I want to correct that today for Mary Graham, a great stalwart for working people and unions.

I also want to place on record my thanks and appreciation to some of the people who guided me in my early union days, many of whom are now retired. It was a different time then but as a new, young union official I certainly needed a lot of guidance. They include: Bobby Graham; Ted Curran; John Hogan, with the Miners

Federation as it was known then; Arthur and Pauline Crow—Arthur represented the tug workers; Terry Tindale—who at that time represented the Seaman's Union; Steve Quin, who I have mentioned in this place before and who was a metal worker; Nando Lilley; and the wonderful late John Brierly.

When I started with the union movement Merv Nixon was the Secretary of the Labor Council; Terry Tindale was the Secretary of the Seaman's Union; Steve Quin was from the Metal Workers; Nando Lilley, John Briely and Graham Roberts were from the old Federated Ironworkers Association, now the Australian Workers Union; Bobby Graham, Ted Curran, Gary Wilton and John Hogan were with the Miners Federation; Teddy McAleer and Bobby Lorrie were from the Waterside Workers Federation, and Russell Wonson was a delegate for the Seamen's Union. The clerks at the Trade Union Centre included Monica Chalmers, Irene and Naomi Arrowsmith and Sue McGregor; Veronica Radocaj, the clerk for the Waterside Workers Federation; and Gina Wakeling, who worked for the wharfies credit union. I thank all of them for their investment of time in me and for the support I was given. I have not forgotten, and I will always appreciate, their efforts.

TWEED HEADS POLICING

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [1.43 p.m.]: I am 100 per cent for the Tweed. I have spoken in this House on a number of occasions about law and order and, in particular, about policing numbers in the Tweed. Currently there are 14 police officers on long-term sick leave and around 11 police officers on light duties—25 police officers that cannot use guns or put handcuffs on offenders. I have often referred to incidents of youth crime and the fear of locals in the Tweed to venture out onto the street.

Today I speak about promises the Government has made to the people of the Tweed about police. The Government needs to announce the location of the long promised new police station, along with a credible timeframe for establishing it. I draw the attention of the House to a document, put out in March 2007 and signed off by former Premier Morris Iemma, about a commitment to build a new police station in the Tweed, which stated:

It's part of our promise to back local officers with the powers, resources, personnel and support they need to protect the community and continue to drive down crime.

The headline of the *Daily News* of 13 March 2007 read: "You'll get more cops. Iemma's promise to the Tweed." Mr Acting-Speaker, I have news for you. The Tweed is still waiting for that police station! A police station is desperately needed in the Tweed, which is one of the fastest growing areas in regional New South Wales. In the budget for the current financial year some \$200,000 was allocated to planning for a police station but there is yet to be an announcement as to when and where the new police station for the Tweed will be built.

A number of public rallies have been held to protest the lack of policing numbers in the Tweed and the lack of cooperation from this Labor Government. It is clear that the Kingscliff station will go, but it is far from clear when and where the new station will be built. The Tweed's hard-working officers and long-suffering residents deserve a state-of-the-art centrally located facility in order to afford the community the best protection possible. The Government must locate the station where it will best function operationally and not where the cheapest land is. The document put out by former Premier Morris Iemma in March 2007 also stated:

The new facilities will include interview and charge rooms and house the latest DNA and CSI-style tools to investigate crime. The modern facility will not only support operational officers, but will provide a significant boost to policing for hardworking families in the region.

Once again another promise that has not eventuated! In the interim—in those three years—the poor hard-working families of the Tweed have suffered from youth violence, high levels of assault and high levels of domestic violence. The same answer often is heard time and again: We just do not have enough police officers out on the beat. Why? The answer: We do not have that police station. In that same document former Premier Morris Iemma referred to two new mobile police command vans, and of those we have been delivered one. The former Premier said:

These Mobile Police Stations [will] give Tweed police an even stronger presence around shopping centres and other public spaces in areas such as Pottsville.

Over the past three years I have asked seven questions as to when the second van will be delivered. The last two answers I have been given have said it has already been delivered. I have discussed it with our local police, the local superintendent and the local police association, and guess what? We have received only one mobile police command van. Yet another lie and yet another commitment to the people of the Tweed that has not been delivered.

The people of the Tweed implore the Government to honour its commitment. The Government of the day, the inept Labor Government, holds the chequebook. If the Government makes a promise to the people of the Tweed it should be able to deliver. We have been waiting for three years for a brand-new police station and we will see what is contained in this year's budget. That second mobile van is desperately needed. The crime rate in the Tweed continues to grow. We have been featured in newsworthy programs such as *Stateline*, and more are to come. The people of the Tweed are crying out. We have had enough and we want action. We needed that police station three years ago. We need a police station to operate twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

The people of the Tweed have just been advised that a brand new housing estate, with some 4,500 homes, is to be built adjacent to Kingscliff at Kings Forest. I am led to believe that will be approved by June this year. But we are still very short of police officers and equipment. We desperately need that second mobile police station. Rest assured I am 100 per cent for that police station and for the people of the Tweed.

CENTRAL COAST MARINE RESCUE

Ms MARIE ANDREWS (Gosford) [1.48 p.m.]: On 29 March I was honoured to be invited to speak at a dinner marking the occasion of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol, Central Coast Division, changing its name to Marine Rescue NSW. The volunteer coastal patrol was founded in 1937, making it the oldest marine rescue organisation in Australia. It was also the largest marine search and rescue group in New South Wales. The group was granted the "Royal" prefix by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in 1973. The Central Coast Division of the patrol was formed on 1 August 1971 on the Gosford waterfront, and in 1974 moved to a new base building. That new building was made possible through the Whitlam Government's Regional Employment Development [RED] scheme.

In 2001 the first jet-powered vessel, the *Spirit of Federation*, was launched; followed by the *Brisbane Water Lifeboat* in 2007 and the *Central Coast Lifeboat* in 2008. The main role of the coastal patrol is marine search and rescue. However, marine education plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of the boating community. I will mention a quote that I have taken from the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol:

Education is better than legislation, and those with knowledge and experience rarely have to be rescued at sea. Those with knowledge are better prepared and go to sea in safety.

This certainly applies to young Australian Jessica Watson, who returned last Saturday from sailing around the world and who, although aged only 16 years at the time, came home safe and sound. The Central Coast Division now has more than 100 members who volunteer to provide radio monitoring 12 hours a day from Monday to Thursday, and continuous 24-hour radio coverage from Friday to Sunday and on public holidays. Search and rescue crews are on duty or are on call 24 hours a day to operate the rescue vessels.

The Central Coast Royal Volunteer Rescue Patrol has a fine and proud history of marine search and rescue on the Central Coast. That is a role that I am sure it will continue as part of Marine Rescue NSW. Marine Rescue NSW was formed on 1 January 2010 and on the Central Coast consists of members of the former Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrols at Point Clare, Hawkesbury, Terrigal and Tuggerah Lakes, Terrigal Sea Rescue and Norah Head Sea Rescue. These organisations have been operated by very generous and dedicated volunteers, who between them have given many, many years of service to the Central Coast's boating community and to the community at large. These organisations have also come to the fore in other crises—for instance, during bushfires and storms.

I will recount a recent episode in which marine rescue received an urgent call at 3.30 p.m. on Mother's Day 9 May 2010. A hired launch was in trouble at Paddys Channel, Brisbane Water. The hire boat had strayed too close to an oyster lease and it struck a submerged post. The Central Coast lifeboat arrived 12 minutes after receiving the call—the unit was undertaking a training exercise at the time—and found the vessel with its stern submerged and six adults, including a pregnant woman and two children, on the cabin roof. Six were wearing life jackets. The wet and distressed families were transferred to the rescue boat, and some were treated for shock and hyperthermia. The families were taken to the hire company marina at Ettalong. Fortunately the hire company was able to retrieve its damaged vessel.

This episode just goes to show how vital Marine Rescue New South Wales is to the Central Coast community—a community that largely is surrounded by waterways. The establishment of this new organisation arose from the main conclusion of an extensive inquiry by Mr John Price, the former long-serving State member of Parliament and Deputy-Speaker. At the time of the announcement of the formation of Marine Rescue New

South Wales towards the end of 2008, the State Government stated that \$3 million would be provided towards establishing the new organisation, while maintaining annual funding of \$1.35 million during the transitional period. A further announcement was made that the Hon. Diane Beamer, who is the member for Mulgoa, would chair a facilitation group to begin the implementation of Marine Rescue New South Wales. I am confident that Marine Rescue New South Wales on the Central Coast will ensure continuation of the dedicated service of the volunteers, as has been the case in the past.

In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to Unit Commander Patricia "Pat" Fayers of the Point Clare base, who has done an excellent job in that leadership position over the past few years. To all the volunteers at both the Point Clare and the Hawkesbury bases within the Gosford electorate I say thank you for a job well done.

PORT STEPHENS FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens) [1.53 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House to the New South Wales Labor Government's many broken promises to the people of Port Stephens. It is not necessary to travel far in my electorate to see some of the monumental stuff-ups or failures that the people of my electorate have had to endure at the hands of the New South Wales Labor Government. The Carr, Iemma, Rees and Kenegally State Labor governments failed to deliver any major projects on time, or on budget—or if at all. Let me commence with the most recent bungle under State Labor—the long-awaited HealthOne clinic promised for Raymond Terrace.

General practitioners in Raymond Terrace and right across Port Stephens are flat out. Many have had to close their books and have waiting lists stretching for weeks. Prior to the 2007 election the Government announced it would build a HealthOne clinic in Raymond Terrace. Obviously, this was a very welcome announcement. It was promised that, to quote an answer to a question on notice, "Construction is expected to be completed by December 2011." But just last month the Minister admitted:

Construction of the HealthOne Raymond Terrace facility is expected to be completed by June 2012.

This five-year delay will more than likely get a whole lot worse. The Government has abandoned its original plan to lease a council-owned site in the centre of town because it was deemed too costly. Instead, the Labor Government bought a block of land in a residential zoning—a zoning that specifically excludes medical centres. We can only imagine the delays that will now arise from this ill-conceived plan when the development application is submitted to council. While I am speaking on the topic of health delays, the Nelson Bay ambulance station, which also was announced prior to the 2007 election, is non-existent. In May 2008, the Minister stated, "Completion of the new station is expected at the end of the 2008-09 financial year." Later, at the end of the 2008-09 financial year, the Minister stated:

"Once a suitable site has been identified and purchased, construction will commence."

Finally a site was found in Salamander Bay. The Minister stated in December 2009:

Construction of the new site is expected to commence in the first half of 2010 and completion of the new station is expected in late 2010.

The Port Stephens Council approved the development application for the Salamander Bay site in February 2010, but as we fast approach the end of the first half of 2010 construction has not begun. That is an absolute disgrace, given the current working conditions hardworking ambulance officers have to endure. Third on the list is Nelson Bay Road. Close to 10 years ago the New South Wales Labor Government announced it would widen the notorious Nelson Bay Road between Anna Bay and Bobs Farm. This is a desperately needed upgrade for an extremely busy road linking the Tomaree Peninsula to the rest of the country. But after a decade has elapsed, nothing has been done—nothing! Last year a question on notice revealed:

A construction timetable for the widening of Nelson Bay Road between Bobs Farm and Anna Bay has not yet been determined.

The local media had a field day with this piece of information. We in Port Stephens can only hope and pray there is not another fatality or serious accident on this stretch of roadway while we wait for this incompetent Government to get its act together, or it is voted out of office. The list goes on. The F3 to Raymond Terrace extension apparently has dropped off the Government's radar, despite the Government spending \$7.7 million on glossy brochures promoting the proposal. Construction of the Raymond Terrace police station, which was promised in 1999, is underway, but is a long way off completion and very unlikely to be up and running by the promised completion date of late 2010.

Since the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy was announced in 2004 there have been just two rezonings totalling 80 lots in the Port Stephens local government area. Eighty lots in six years is disgraceful planning, especially as the plan for 4,000 lots in North Raymond Terrace and the proposal for doubling of Medowie's population gather dust. Moreover, the Government continues to ignore environmental issues, such as the plight of the Myall River at Tea Gardens. It is true that the Government announced funding for the study into the problems in the river, but the project seems to be going nowhere. The future of the whole estuary system is at risk.

My Port Stephens constituents and I should be happy with our new Tourle Street Bridge and we probably would be if it had not been rendered obsolete the very day it was opened. The two-lane Tourle Street Bridge is a clear demonstration of the lack of vision of this Labor Government. Moreover it is a clear demonstration of the contempt in which this Labor Government holds the people of the Hunter. I look forward to some of these issues being addressed in the fast-approaching State budget. I know they will be with the election of a responsible government in 2011.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Mr PETER BESSELING (Port Macquarie) [1.57 p.m.]: Earlier this month Australians were asked to consider the significance of cardiovascular health through nationwide recognition of Heart Week. Recognition does not imply celebration. There is very little to celebrate when it comes to how we, as individuals, look after our heart on a day-to-day basis and how the level of heart-related health service infrastructure impacts upon our communities. That is particularly the case for those of us who live in regional areas and, more specifically, in the electorate of Port Macquarie.

The Heart Foundation tells us that cardiovascular disease is the term used for heart, stroke and blood vessel diseases. It is the leading cause of death in Australia and accounted for 34 per cent of all deaths in our nation in 2006. Cardiovascular disease kills one Australian nearly every 10 minutes. Cardiovascular disease is one of Australia's largest health problems. Despite improvements over the past few decades, it remains one of the largest burdens on our economy.

To reduce the number of deaths caused by cardiovascular disease and relieve the economic burden on both our heavily burdened health system and the broader community generally, it is vitally important that we consider ways to prevent heart disease from occurring, thereby reducing the incidence of heart disease, through support for healthy lifestyle choices and the provision of requisite patient care and treatment through continually improving efficiencies within our health system.

It is pleasing to see a shift in the way all tiers of government are now considering the funding of programs that will lead to broader community health benefits, but more needs to be done to provide adequate funding for infrastructure, such as, bike paths, share ways and footpaths. Significant funding allocated to these resources will have a huge impact on the everyday lives and attitudes of the health and fitness of all sections of our community. These decisions should not be left to the exclusive responsibility of local councils. It should be a priority for all levels of government, as a healthy lifestyle strategy is a key to reducing heart-related deaths.

The Port Macquarie Heart Support group has recognised this and is in the process of designing and constructing a "heart walk" at Port Macquarie Base Hospital for the enjoyment of all patients, including those suffering from other illnesses, such as, dementia. In relation to the treatment of cardiovascular disease, Port Macquarie is well served by our local surgeons, including the Director of Cardiology at the Port Macquarie Base Hospital, Dr Chris Alexopoulos, and cardiovascular surgeons and local advocates, Dr Kevin Alford and Dr Peter Kark. However, their support for community efforts for a cardiac catheterisation laboratory—cath lab—located at the hospital has so far fallen on deaf ears, and Port Macquarie remains the largest regional centre in New South Wales without a cath lab. For an electorate that has the highest percentage of residents over the age of 65, this is simply not good enough.

Based on the latest statistics available, there is a compelling clinical and economic case to begin construction of a cath lab at Port Macquarie. Figures obtained through local cardiologists and confirmed by the North Coast Area Health Service show that in 2009, 460 patients from Port Macquarie Base Hospital were sent to Sydney for angiograms. As at December 2009 air ambulance transfers between Port Macquarie and Sydney cost \$3,670 per flight. This represents a significant impact on the NSW health budget of almost \$1.7 million, a cost that is not only recurrent but will inevitably rise. This economic impact is compounded by the fact that local patients are being relocated to Sydney, away from their support networks. The economic impact does not take into account the costs imposed on visiting family members, nor the associated costs for individuals returning to

Port Macquarie. Furthermore, 30 per cent of patients who are transferred do not require surgery. In 2009 this represented a cost of more than half a million dollars in unnecessary transport, and this cost has only been contained due to the professional skill of the aforementioned cardiologists.

With an increase of 60 per cent in the amount of cardiovascular patients transferred to Sydney in 2009 over the 2008 figures, NSW Health simply cannot afford to continue this medical migration. If presentations continue to grow at this rate, in only two short years the annual cost of transferring patients to Sydney will be \$6.9 million. In comparison, the estimated cost for the construction of a new facility at the hospital is \$3 million. The time has come for NSW Health to invest in a cardiac catheterisation laboratory at Port Macquarie. The economic, clinical and social arguments demand it.

SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM SUPPORT

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [2.02 p.m.]: Standing Together Against Crimes of Sexual Assault [STACSA] Gunnedah Inc was formed in early 2002 and has continued to grow its membership since. It is a support network for non-offending families and friends affected by sexual assault. Previously known as the Daisy Chain Support Group, it became incorporated in 2004. Shortly after, STACSA Survivors was formed specifically for the victims of sexual abuse. Whilst STACSA and STACSA Survivors were founded in Gunnedah, a group now has been established in Tamworth, with another one being developed in Dubbo.

The organisation's objectives are: to provide support and encouragement to survivors and those affected by the impact of sexual abuse; to establish a network of groups nationally under the STACSA banner that will empower both survivors and supporters to rally together to lobby changes to the current Australian legal system; and to encourage a positive and brighter future for all members. The group aims to meet its objectives by educating the community about the issues of sexual abuse, as well as offering support to family members going through the emotional stages and consequences of disclosure. The group is a means of providing encouragement and support, as well as ways to help the community understand all the issues surrounding sexual abuse. STACSA does not directly provide counselling sessions. However, should an individual require help, the organisation is able to have sessions arranged through an external provider. Over the past eight years STACSA has played an interactive role in the community, with members talking at local schools and business and community awareness nights.

Why is such an organisation so important? In the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data on assault and sexual assault, Gunnedah is included in the New South Wales northern slopes. The average annual percentage change between 1999 and 2003 demonstrated that assault was up by 9.9 per cent and sexual assault rose by an alarming 24.4 per cent. Sadly, there is a significant lack of support for family and friends of those affected by sexual assault. The organisation provides support to these people, as well as vital support to the survivors themselves. STACSA believes that education is an essential tool in the prevention and awareness of sexual abuse. It hopes that the community will support its endeavours and that the services it provides will deliver much-needed outcomes. The organisation is providing a beneficial service to country and regional communities by delivering educational material, information and support services.

STACSA's vision is to create an empowerment centre where people can express themselves freely and without judgement. It would be a place of healing and a centre where everything is available for people affected by sexual assault, from counsellors to people teaching life skills and even nutrition, cooking and exercise. As a fundraising initiative for the centre, the group has organised a 13-day bushwalk of 220 kilometres from Barrington Tops through several national parks and State forests to the Myall Lakes-Tea Gardens-Hawks Nest area. Apart from the fundraising objective, the Body, Mind and Spirit Walk will provide walkers affected by sexual abuse with an opportunity to begin their journey to a more fulfilling, happy life by stepping through the barriers they confront from their past and taking positive steps forward to a bright future.

The Body, Mind and Spirit walk is scheduled to occur in late September-early October 2010, with an aim to raise \$100,000 towards the empowerment centre. This centre is a long-term goal for STACSA. With help and support from community and government, it is envisaged that the centre will open by 2014 and currently is undergoing detailed business and strategic planning. It believes that these planning activities are core to running a successful non-profit organisation and essential in achieving its objectives and mission statements. It recognises that the planning phase will require several months to complete and must be carefully developed by business people with an expertise in not-for-profit organisations. The forecast completion date is September 2010, when STACSA wishes to identify the key areas where the sponsorship funds from the walk will be spent.

The organisation acknowledges previous funding assistance from State and local government. It received \$15,000 from Corrective Services, which it has used towards equipment and the leasing of an office, where it holds support group meetings and community awareness programs. Gunnedah Shire Council granted \$500, while \$5,000 from the New South Wales Government went to the STACSA Tamworth Survivors branch and \$5,000 to the STACSA Gunnedah branch to design and develop a web site. The group is applying for further government assistance of \$50,000 to assist with the ongoing development of its business and strategic plans. It is passionate in pursuing support for victims and their families and helping them re-establish their lives. Sadly, there is a shortage of assistance for such people, particularly in regional and rural communities. STACSA helps fill that void. I urge the Government to support this group's wonderful initiatives in every possible way.

Private members' statements concluded.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Grant McBride) left the chair at 2.07 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Building and Construction Industry Long Service Payments Amendment Bill 2010
Casino Control Amendment Bill 2010
Registrar-General Legislation (Amendment and Repeal) Bill 2010
Workers Compensation Amendment (Commission Members) Bill 2010

CRICKET

Ministerial Statement

Mr KEVIN GREENE (Oatley—Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation) [2.18 p.m.]: Australia has an outstanding sporting reputation—a reputation that was strengthened on the weekend in the West Indies with the success of the Australian women's Twenty20 squad. That squad achieved outstanding success. In the team are six representatives from New South Wales, including the captain, Alex Blackwell, Alyssa Healy, Leah Poulton, Ellyse Perry, Lisa Sthalekar and Erin Osborne. The young ladies performed with outstanding skill; defending a total of six for 106, they managed to contain New Zealand, our well-known adversaries in international women's cricket, by keeping them to eight for 103. An outstanding bowling performance from Ellyse Perry, with three for 18 off four overs, and contributions from Leah with 20 and Lisa with 18, were amazing achievements in the context of the game. I congratulate those young ladies. I congratulate also our men's team, led by Michael Clarke from New South Wales, on making the final. Unfortunately they were unsuccessful. I take this opportunity to wish the New South Wales Waratahs well when they represent the State in South Africa later this week.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Leader of the Opposition) [2.21 p.m.]: I join with the Minister for Gaming and Racing, and Minister for Sport and Recreation in congratulating the members of the Australian women's Twenty20 cricket team, who are successful world champions. We commiserate with Michael Clarke and the boys for their failure to beat the old enemy. I join the Minister in wishing Phil Waugh and the boys of the New South Wales Waratahs every success. I add my hope that the Tigers will beat the Knights on Friday night in Newcastle.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: I inform the House that in the absence this week of the Minister for Police, and Minister for Finance, the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Rural Affairs will answer questions on behalf of the Minister.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.24 p.m.]

TRAFFIC CONGESTION

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My question is directed to the Premier. Given today's NRMA survey found 42 per cent of businesses were paying additional costs—as high as \$10,000—due to Sydney's worsening traffic congestion, and motorists are to be sluggish with the Government's monstrous new registration tax to pay for the \$500 million Rozelle Metro fiasco, when will New South Wales taxpayers stop paying for Labor's incompetence?

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: Traffic on Sydney's roads has increased by 46 per cent in the past 18 years. The New South Wales Government has a range of strategies to deal with that: better roads, more public transport, cheaper fares and becoming the city of cities. We have a \$100 million pinch point program for improving traffic flows at peak-hour congestion hot spots, and that includes lengthening turn bays, adding extra lanes on sections of roads, widening intersections, changing traffic light configurations and replacing heavily used roundabouts with traffic lights.

I am advised that completed pinch point projects include Campbelltown Road and Blaxland Road, Campbelltown; King Georges Road and Stoney Creek Road, Beverly Hills; the Princes Highway and Kingsway, Kirrawee; the Princes Highway and Heathcote Road, Engadine; Richmond Road and St Marys Road, Windsor Downs; King Georges Road and The Boulevarde, Wiley Park; and Warringah Road and the Wakehurst Parkway, Frenchs Forest. Major infrastructure investments include the M5 East, the City West Link, the Western Sydney Orbital, the Cross City Tunnel, the Lane Cove Tunnel and the Eastern Distributor. Upgrades to major roads include Victoria Road, the Great Western Highway and Parramatta Road.

The daily traffic task is actively managed by \$50 million in funding that has been provided for the operation of the Roads and Traffic Authority's Transport Management Centre. The Sydney Coordinated Adaptive Traffic System traffic light system developed by the Roads and Traffic Authority to manage traffic flow has been so successful that 138 cities in 24 countries around the world now use it.

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: We have invested in public transport, building the Epping to Chatswood rail link, duplicating the Cronulla and Richmond lines, undertaking the quadruplication of Kingsgrove to Revesby, providing an Inner West Busway, a Global Positioning System red light priority, new Metrobuses and, of course, the new MyZone fares. We are delivering nearly 900 train carriages and 1,450 buses. As part of our Metropolitan Transport Plan, we are building a city of cities.

COMMUNITY SECURITY

Mr NINOS KHOSHABA: My question is directed to the Premier. How is the Government supporting police to improve community security?

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: I thank the member for Smithfield for his question, and I note the support of the member for Bathurst. Today I had the honour of addressing the biennial Police Association conference on the Central Coast.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: We are supporting police in two of their biggest areas of concern. We are providing unprecedented laws that give police new powers to seize assets gained from crime. We are putting the burden of proof on criminals to prove that their wealth is legitimately gained or it will be gone. This will be a game changer in the fight against organised crime. After all, no organisation is able to operate without funding. With our policy of Hassle Free Nights, we are supporting the police in tackling the problem of alcohol-fuelled violence.

Our plan has powerful sweeping changes to tackle alcohol-related violence, including legislation that was introduced to the Parliament last Friday to provide the power to control opening hours, impose lockouts and

place service restrictions on any licensed premises. While we are currently applying those powers to five at-risk areas identified in our action plan, we can extend those powers under these laws, should they pass, to any area in New South Wales, and if that is what is required we will have no hesitation in doing so. This approach is coupled with new secure public transport options and new secure late-night taxi ranks to get people home safely. These public transport options are operating now.

It is the right approach, because it is about addressing the source of the problem rather than offering ways to clean up after the fact. As this legislation is currently before the House I will not detail the numerous powers that it offers our police officers to address this issue. However, I can contrast the Government's Hassle Free Nights approach with the approach offered by the Opposition. When the Leader of the Opposition was interviewed on 2UE Radio yesterday morning to discuss his "drunk tank" proposal the interview had not been going for a minute before he was asked the obvious question: Don't police officers already have this power? He was talking about his new sobering-up rooms—his "drunk tank" proposal—and he was asked whether police officers already have the power to detain people who are intoxicated. His answer deserves careful consideration. He said:

Firstly, they can't do it until such time as damage has occurred—

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: He went on:

... secondly there is ... an enormous amount of red tape and paperwork that's involved.

The first part of that answer is nonsense. Either the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the existing law, or perhaps he is misrepresenting it. Under part 16 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act—

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: —police already have the power to detain an intoxicated person who is behaving in a disorderly manner or in a manner likely to cause injury or damage to property, or who is in need of protection from self-harm.

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: In other words, these are the very people whom the Opposition claims its new laws will target.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: The Leader of the Opposition is interjecting as he always does and criticising front-line police. He sat emailing and twittering throughout the entire address of the Commissioner of Police this morning. He demonstrated not one shred of respect for the commissioner.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: Why is he announcing a policy that would introduce powers that already exist?

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: He mentioned police efficiency. He must be joking!

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked his question. He will pay the Premier the courtesy of listening to the answer in silence.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: The Leader of the Opposition is proposing a program that will require two paramedics and two custody officers to stand around each night while drunks sober up. That is his policy—a program that would tie up police and ambulance service resources. His program ignores successful measures already in place, and he calls that efficient. We want to see police officers out on the street, not babysitting

people who have had too many schooners. We do not need to look too far for examples of other jurisdictions that have trialled the Opposition's proposal. A similar approach has been trialled in the Australian Capital Territory. It cost \$1,232 per admission in the best four months. Overall, the cost is much more. For that money they could put drunks in the diplomatic suite at the Hyatt. They could have a 240 square metre luxury suite, a flat screen TV, a spa tub, access to the Ambassador Lounge and even free drinks.

However, there is an even more serious problem with the Opposition's ill-considered policy. We know that international data on incarceration and findings from Australian royal commissions and State inquiries demonstrate that locking up people, especially when they are drunk, comes at huge risk to the individual. I draw members back to the Leader of the Opposition's statement on 2UE. In his opinion, the problem with the current law is that it creates paperwork. He wants our police officers to have the power to pull anyone off the street even if they have not committed a crime and to detain them without a paper trail. The founder of the Liberal Party, Sir Robert Menzies, would be spinning in his grave at the idea that today's Liberal Party wants a police force with the power to rip people off the street without preparing any paperwork and to detain them without reason. That is not the Australian way and Sir Robert would be appalled.

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: He would not recognise the Liberal Party represented by members opposite. We will have laws to shut down alcohol mismanagement in the venues. This Government is introducing legislation that will enable police to shut down mismanagement in their precinct. The Hassle Free Nights approach attacks the problem at the source and it works with the police and local communities. It is the right prescription to tackle alcohol-fuelled violence.

MUDGEES TO BYLONG ROAD

Mr ANDREW STONER: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport and Roads. In view of the Legislative Council code of conduct, which states that members "must take all reasonable steps to declare any conflict of interest", during the time that the Minister has been lobbied for funds for the upgrading of the road between Mudgee and Bylong did Labor power broker Eddie Obeid declare his personal interest in the matter?

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: The first two questions from the Opposition today have been based on research done for articles on the front page of today's two daily newspapers. That is what we expect from the lazy members of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has his feet up on the couch in the belief that he will coast into government in March next year. Members opposite are incapable of doing any research or investigating any issue. They simply refer to the front page of the daily newspapers and formulate their questions.

As part of this Government's commitment to the maintenance and upgrade of regional roads, it has been running the Regional Roads REPAIR Program since the early 1990s. The program provides State funding for high-priority projects on regional roads on a dollar-for-dollar basis with councils. The objective of the program is to provide additional assistance to councils to undertake larger works on regional roads to minimise the long-term maintenance costs. I can inform the House that the Hon. Eddie Obeid wrote to the former Minister for Transport and Roads in May 2009 on behalf of the Mid-Western Regional Council about the Carwell Bridge along Bylong Valley Way. He was advised on 5 June 2009 that block funding had been allocated to the council to the value of \$2.2 million in 2008-09 and that no further funding was available. I am happy to table the letter sent by the Hon. Eddie Obeid in March 2009 and the response from the then Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Transport and Roads sent three months before I became the Minister for Transport and Roads.

Leave granted.

Documents tabled.

Separate from that, the story in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* mentioned Wollar Road, a regional road for which the Mid-Western Regional Council is responsible. I am advised that there have been no written representations made to me about Wollar Road by the Hon. Eddie Obeid, nor have I met with Mr Obeid or the Mid-Western Regional Council on this issue. Under the REPAIR program, the Mid-Western Regional Council has applied to the Roads and Traffic Authority for funding to extend the sealing of Wollar Road for an extra

1.5 kilometres next financial year, and council submissions under the 2010-11 repair program are currently being assessed. The criteria used by the authority to assess these applications include traffic route importance, freight importance, road standard and contribution to road safety.

I take this opportunity to point out the important work that members of both Chambers undertake to represent the needs of their constituents, local councils and community groups. Members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council play an important role in bringing community issues to the attention of Ministers. I regularly meet with local councils, members of Parliament and community groups to discuss issues within my portfolio that have a direct impact on them.

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I meet with councils and members of Parliament from all political parties and, indeed, a number of Independents.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Yes or no?

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

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: I thank the Leader of The Nationals for that interjection. The Leader of The Nationals will remember that I met with him and Nambucca Shire Council to look at funding for road repair works in his electorate, after he contacted my office on the council's behalf.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the House will cease interjecting.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: Indeed, the member for Manly will remember that I met with Manly Council based on a representation from him.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was very clear: In making these representations, did the Hon. Eddie Obeid declare a personal interest? The Roads and Traffic Authority must know that.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. That is not a point of order. The Minister has the call.

Mr DAVID CAMPBELL: That fake point of order just shows what a glass jaw members opposite have. I am happy to meet with members of both Chambers of any political persuasion, and I am more than happy to meet with councils and other organisations from around the State. I use those meetings as opportunities to understand local issues.

NATIONAL HEALTH REFORMS

Mr BARRY COLLIER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. What is the latest information on the national health and hospital network reform?

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I know that the member for Miranda is interested in health. He is a strong advocate for his local Sutherland hospital. New South Wales has long recognised the need for national reform with regard to health to deal with the challenges of the future: a growing and ageing population, the increasing cost of medical technology, and growing demand.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Murrumbidgee that he is already on two calls to order.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: At the Council of Australian Governments meeting last month New South Wales secured an agreement that will improve the financial sustainability of our health system and also, importantly, deliver better health outcomes for New South Wales families, the patients. In New South Wales we

will benefit from some \$1.7 billion over the next four years. Already we have seen the plan for the first instalment of those improvements delivered, with the announcement that 18 beds will open at Blacktown Hospital from early July. That is the first of many announcements to come.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting, including the member for Lismore.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: There is no doubt that the Council of Australian Governments agreement is complex and complicated. There is a lot to consider. There is a lot to be implemented. That is why the Government has established a high-level steering group to oversee the implementation of the historic reforms. It will be chaired by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It will report to me. It will involve the Director General of NSW Health and the Treasury Secretary. The group is responsible for progress in the pooled funding arrangements agreed with the Commonwealth, examining how the National Health and Hospital Network Funding Authority, New South Wales, will be established to enable funds to be pooled at the State level, looking at what structures are necessary to establish the local hospital networks in New South Wales, including the legislative and governance arrangements, and also considering how we can ensure that the local hospital networks will line up with primary health care organisation boundaries.

As I said, these are complex reforms. We will take the time to get them right. As we consulted in the lead-up to the Council of Australian Governments meetings, we will also consult now over the implementation of these proposals. Over the next six weeks the Government will consult on the implementation of agreed health reforms, including, for example, on the structure of the local health networks. Both the Director General of NSW Health, Professor Debora Picone, and I will meet with area health service advisory councils, clinicians, administrators, consumers and others regarding the health reform agenda and its implementation. We know that the Council of Australian Governments agreement provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make significant reforms to our health system. We are determined to make sure that the people of New South Wales see the real benefits that this additional funding and changed governance arrangements lead to.

While the New South Wales Government welcomes the historic reforms and is working actively to implement them in a way that delivers real benefits for the people of New South Wales, last week we heard from members of the Opposition in this place. We heard the extraordinary statement that the only thing the Opposition agrees with with regard to the Council of Australian Governments recommendations is related to the setting up of the local district health boards. Members opposite do not support additional funding, they do not support better outcomes for the patients of New South Wales and they do not support the reforms to aged care or primary care.

Quite clearly, the member for North Shore, the Opposition spokesperson for health, does not understand the Council of Australian Governments agreement and all that it delivers for the people of New South Wales. A closer reading of the member's comments last week demonstrate this is clearly the case. First, the member for North Shore told this House that the Council of Australian Governments agreement results in a loss to the State of \$8 billion from the current health budget. That is wrong. The Council of Australian Governments agreement provides benefits for the New South Wales community of \$1.7 billion over four years—not a loss of \$8 billion, but a benefit of \$1.7 billion over four years.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: This is over and above the funding and indexation that we will continue to receive annually under the national healthcare agreement. That is not the only mistake the member for North Shore made.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bathurst and the member for Manly will come to order.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: Secondly, the member claimed that we might be handing back 90 per cent of our GST. That is despite the fact that the Council of Australian Governments agreement, statements and the budget papers clearly indicate that is not the case. The budget was absolutely clear: the Commonwealth Government will finance its increasing responsibility for health care by dedicating around one-third of the GST, not 90 per cent. Thirdly, the member for North Shore claimed that a new Commonwealth health fund will be established in Canberra and one in New South Wales—two funds. Again, the member for North Shore was wrong. There is one fund.

Finally, to top it off, the member for North Shore claimed that the Council of Australian Governments health reforms will result in very little additional funding coming to the New South Wales health budget. Once again, the member is wrong. Of the \$1.7 billion that comes to New South Wales, up to \$1.2 billion is coming to the New South Wales health budget—directly to the budget—for extra beds, extra nurses and extra doctors.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for North Shore will come to order.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: If the member for North Shore and the Opposition are incapable of understanding the budget papers, if they are incapable of reading intergovernmental agreements, how could the people of New South Wales ever trust them with the complex business of running the health system? The simple fact is they cannot be trusted. They cannot get it right.

MUDGE TO BYLONG ROAD

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: My question is directed to the Premier. In light of her poor judgement in dealing with the former member for Penrith, what steps has the Premier now taken to ensure that Eddie Obeid has not used his office as a member of the Legislative Council and his standing as a powerbroker to his own personal advantage, or is this simply another vexatious complaint against a Labor politician?

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: First of all, I am advised that the road has not been sealed and no money has been provided to the council to do so. As it stands, members ordinary returns forms and discretionary returns forms do not require disclosure of family interest. In September 2006 the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics handed down its report on the review of the code of conduct. It recommended that clause 1, dealing with disclosure of conflicts of interest—

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The question was specifically in relation to Mr Obeid. It did not relate to the pecuniary interests disclosure form.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Terrigal will resume his seat. The Premier's answer is in order.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: As I was saying, in September 2006 the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics handed down its report on the review of the code of conduct.

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

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: It recommended that clause 1, dealing with disclosure of conflicts of interest, be amended to ensure that members of Parliament "avoid conflict between personal interest and the public interest". Currently the clause reads:

Members of Parliament must take all reasonable steps to declare any conflict of interest between their private financial interests and decisions in which they participate in the execution of the office.

The report said:

The Committee acknowledged that, as noted by the ICAC, the term "private financial interests" is too narrow. However, the term "personal interest" is extremely broad, encompassing a member's daily and family life as well as their political and professional activities, including membership of a sporting or environmental group, interests arising from being a resident of a town or area and personal interests, arising from being a parent, spouse, son or daughter, or of a nationality or indigenous heritage.

The report of the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics noted that the term "personal interest" was too broad. Who was a member of that committee? The members were John Price, John Mills, Clover Moore, Paul Pearce, John Turner, Kim Yeadon, Barry O'Farrell and me. The report also recommended that clause 1 of the code read:

1 Disclosure of conflict of interest:

Members of Parliament must base their conduct on a consideration of the public interest, avoid conflict between personal interest and the public interest and resolve any conflict between the two, as soon as practicable, in favour of the public interest.

That recommendation was not adopted by the Parliament. The current code of conduct was adopted by resolution of the Parliament. It passed the Legislative Assembly in May 2007 and passed the Legislative Council in June 2007. In each House the resolution passed without division.

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE

Mr DAVID HARRIS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education and Training. Will the Minister update the House on the review of the New South Wales School Certificate?

Ms VERITY FIRTH: Last week the Government announced that we had asked the Board of Studies to review the School Certificate. The School Certificate was introduced in 1965. We believe it is time to take another look at it so that it better reflects the major changes that have occurred in secondary schooling since its inception. This year the first change was made to the school leaving age since 1943. This means that students will now stay at school beyond the age of 16, until the age of 17, whether in full-time employment or in study. Students in high school are now engaged in community service, language studies, part-time employment and on-site work experience as part of their vocational education studies. The board will also look at whether including that information could be a more useful credential to provide to our students when they do leave school.

We will also look at whether we still need to test our students at the end of year 10. New South Wales is the only State in Australia that still has a mandatory test in year 10, and we will be happy to receive the advice of experts about this. The fact that the majority of students are staying on beyond year 10, as well as the introduction of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] and a new national curriculum, are all good reasons to look at ways to modernise the School Certificate. We understand also the importance of making sure that students completing high school still have a formal credential in their hand, but we want that credential to be relevant, modern and one that captures the true story of what that student has done at school.

The board will look at including what information would make it a more useful credential for students and consider what is an appropriate year 10 assessment. The review has received the unanimous support of all interest groups, but yet again the member for Murrumbidgee is right out on his own—he is a lone beacon. The best he could come up with was that this was policy on the run. He has pretty much put himself at odds with every major stakeholder in education, including Jim McAlpine from the Secondary Principals Association, who said:

I know principals for quite some time have been saying ... we need something that more explicitly indicates what students have achieved.

He has put himself at odds with Bob Lipscombe from the New South Wales Teachers Federation, who has backed our proposed changes. He said:

The important thing about the Certificate would be that it reflects what the student had achieved up to the point at which they are leaving school. At the moment a young person who leaves for employment say after six months of year 11 gets no further credential other than the School Certificate they were awarded in Year 10.

He has put himself at odds with Di Giblin, President of the New South Wales Parents and Citizens Association, who backed our proposed changes. She stated:

The review of the School Certificate is long overdue. It no longer fits our 21st century education system and we welcome this move.

Another reason it is timely to look at the School Certificate is that we are now looking also at a national curriculum. Last week the Federal Government released for consultation the draft curriculum for years 11 and 12. We are very enthusiastic about a national curriculum. We all know that in a country of this size it is wasteful and confusing to have eight different curriculums across eight different States. Having said that, we have to make sure that a new curriculum is as good as our existing curriculum in New South Wales. The Higher School Certificate is the jewel in the crown of the New South Wales education system. There is no reason to believe that the process will not produce a successful outcome, but I point out that under no circumstances will we compromise the high standards of our Higher School Certificate. We believe in a national curriculum but we do not believe in any curriculum.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: You have already done it.

Ms VERITY FIRTH: It is interesting to be shouted at, because while the Government is ensuring that New South Wales participates in the education debate, it is good that at last the Opposition has made yet another attempt at policy. The Premier mentioned this last week, but I thought it might be worth mentioning again. For those who did not see it—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting. I have extended a degree of latitude to members today, but I will not extend any more.

Ms VERITY FIRTH: At an education forum recently the member for Murrumbidgee unveiled what he hoped would be an attempt to get some credibility in the education debate. It is not actually a policy; it is more of a graph. It is entitled, "The Spectrum of Potential Student Trajectories". We were not sure whether the Opposition was talking about shooting students from a cannon! It looks a little bit like a dunce's cap when put this way.

Mr Malcolm Kerr: Point of order: Mr Speaker, you have previously ruled against the use of props.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Minister may refer to the graph, but she cannot use it as a prop.

Ms VERITY FIRTH: I should at least describe it to members. This is actually the Opposition's policy. It has a trajectory at one end, which says "Opportunity, Hope, Dignity". Then it has a downward trajectory, which says "Juvenile justice, Unemployment, Dysfunction". Underneath "Juvenile Justice, Unemployment and Dysfunction" are the logos of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. We thought that was an interesting coincidence. In fact, it shows an expression of truth in the Coalition's policymaking.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Ms VERITY FIRTH: This is a serious point. Opposition members may ridicule it. All the policy areas that are supposed to achieve these goals are blank.

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

Ms VERITY FIRTH: If anything sums up the Coalition's fitness for government it is this simplistic, empty graph—a motherhood statement disguised with incomprehensible jargon. However, I will attempt to decipher the graph for those opposite. Essentially, what it is saying is that school is important—an amazing, groundbreaking piece of analysis! New South Wales has the best education system in the country. It has the best education system because we have backed it with resources, passion and commitment. Indeed, New South Wales has one of the best education systems in the world. If this empty graph had been created by a first-year education student it would be pretty laughable; but it was created by someone who proposes to be the next education Minister in a Coalition government! The graph was created by a Coalition that is bereft of ideas and that is all about simplistic motherhood statements and empty rhetoric.

NEPEAN HOSPITAL STAFFING

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. When will the Minister get serious about addressing staff and bed shortages at Nepean Hospital given that just yesterday 50 patients were waiting to be treated in the 30-bed emergency department and 20 of them were waiting for ward beds so they could be admitted for further treatment—and one patient waited more than 38 hours?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. I simply point out to the member that the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] agreement provides for funding for some 500 additional beds for New South Wales. But the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not support that: she told the House last week—

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will allow the Deputy Premier to answer the question she asked.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition told the House last week that the only aspect of the Council of Australian Governments agreement she supported was that which related to district health boards. The Council of Australian Governments agreement provides for 500 beds over four years for New South Wales. It also provides for additional funding for elective surgery, it provides for additional funding to meet improved targets in our emergency departments, it provides for funding for four multipurpose services, it provides funding for improved primary care, and it provides funding for approved mental health services. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not support any of those measures: she told the House last week—

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. Government members will cease interjecting.

Mrs Jillian Skinner: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, which deals with relevance. The question was about the emergency department at Nepean Hospital and the patients who are suffering—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The Minister for Health has the call.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I simply point out that if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is genuinely interested in health reform in New South Wales, and is genuinely interested in improving health services in New South Wales, she might take the trouble to understand the Council of Australian Governments agreement. She might also take the time to read the Federal budget—

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition might also take the time to get across the detail of the 500 extra beds that we will get in New South Wales. She just might want to understand those details. It is relevant to health services in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for North Shore to order for the second time.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I am pleased that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has once again asked a question about Nepean Hospital because again it provides the opportunity for me to place on record our Government's strong record on investing in services in Nepean Hospital. Last week I gave the House some general information about the strong improvements we have made at Nepean Hospital. The hospital is unrecognisable from the hospital that we inherited when we came into office.

Today I want to outline some further improvements. For example, in 1995 Nepean Hospital employed 110 medical specialists and 95 junior medical officers. Today the hospital employs 204 medical specialists and 271 junior medical officers. The growth in the workforce has been matched by an investment in capital works. For example, in 2004 the emergency department was extended and refurbished at a cost of \$6.8 million. In November 2007 the psychiatric emergency care centre, adjacent to the emergency department, was constructed at a cost of \$2.4 million. In September 2008 the medical assessment unit was completed, at a cost of \$2.36 million. In November 2009 a further 12 acute beds were established in the emergency department to improve the flow-through of emergency patients. So there have been significant improvements at Nepean Hospital.

Nepean Hospital is situated in a busy, growing part of the State and a redevelopment is currently underway, jointly funded by the Federal and State governments. It is true that that redevelopment has constrained some of the current operations at Nepean Hospital. This is a short-term price we need to pay in order to get the benefit of this \$138 million redevelopment of Nepean Hospital. We will keep working hard to improve the performance of the emergency department at Nepean Hospital and improve the performance of planned surgery at the hospital. But we will also work with the Commonwealth, because we understand that that is what will deliver significant improvements for the health services of the people of New South Wales.

CYCLING

Ms TANYA GADIEL: My question is addressed to the Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport. How is the New South Wales Government promoting cycling as an alternative form of transport?

Mr DAVID BORGER: I thank the member for Parramatta for her question and for her interest in, and commitment to, building the Parramatta Valley cycleway. I am pleased to inform the House that last Sunday the Premier and I launched the New South Wales Bike Plan. It is a plan that will advance the cause of cycling and improve the safety of those who engage in this very worthwhile activity. We know that increasingly parents are getting their kids on bikes for health reasons, to ensure they keep active and lose weight. We also know that people are increasingly making the choice to use bikes because of their cost-effectiveness, and that more and more people in Australia are choosing to buy bikes.

The year, 2009, was the tenth year in a row in which bicycle sales outstripped car sales. To put this into numbers, in 2009 Australians bought more than 1,150,000 new bikes, compared with 937,000 cars. Cyclists are a growing community and one that the Keneally Government is excited to be working with. Indeed, I might say, the Premier is leading the way in this respect, riding her bike to work on many occasions.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr DAVID BORGER: The benefits of bike riding are clear: not only is it a great way to travel but it also keeps our air clean and our bodies healthy.

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

Mr DAVID BORGER: As a Government we are getting behind this movement with our plan to improve cycling infrastructure throughout the State. It is a \$158 million plan for the Sydney metro region, with an additional \$5 million a year, or \$50 million over 10 years, for regional areas, which is set to transform cycling in our State. It builds on our previous plan and will create hundreds of kilometres of bike paths connecting thousands of kilometres of existing paths. The plan will connect Sydney's key missing cycleway links in the Sydney metropolitan region with major district centres and activity generators together. It will fast-track off-road connections in a new program called the Regional River-City Cycleway Program.

In fact, this morning in the rain the member for Parramatta and I rode bikes around Parramatta Park to demonstrate how important the link from Parramatta Park to Sydney Olympic Park will be. At the end of the program people will virtually be able to ride the whole way between those two great parks without going onto a public road, without causing any traffic problems, and with a great deal of safety. The plan will deliver cycleway links in the Hunter. The members for Swansea, Charlestown and Newcastle are very excited about the completion of the popular Fernley Track, which creates a major regional cycleway from Adamstown to Belmont. In the Illawarra it will deliver cycleways next to the Princes Highway, firstly completing sections at Dapto and Albion Park.

The plan is not only about delivering cycleway links; it will also encourage children to get on their bikes again. As a young fellow growing up, like many other members, I rode to school, I rode after school and I rode to see my mates. That is not the case today for many people, particularly those who live in Sydney, but the plan will allow Bicycles NSW and other groups to undertake vital education so that children can gain confidence to ride bicycles. It will deliver a state-of-the-art website for cyclists to plan their bike journeys, and it will provide better parking and storage at major centres. The growing cycling community has embraced our plan. Richard Birdsey, the vice president of Bicycles NSW, welcomed the plan and said:

We've been working with the Government for some time ... and we're really starting to see the shift towards having bicycles as a practical alternative to cars, which is what we need.

In the interests of balance, I note that the shadow Minister for Transport is on the record as saying:

Many people want to consider the option of riding a bike and catching a bus or a train.

Those are good comments—I understand that roof racks are available for Honda motor vehicles. Sadly, the Leader of the Opposition does not share the view of the member for Willoughby. Unfortunately, the Leader of Opposition has shown no interest in the plan. His comments last Sunday revealed that the Coalition will devote approximately nothing to cycling infrastructure in this State. Whilst we have a very well-dressed shadow Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, the Opposition does not have a view on cycling matters. The Leader of the Opposition said as much last Sunday when he said that he thought his party may have a bike plan of some sort but he did not know the details from memory. Perhaps they are still in the photocopier!

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

Mr DAVID BORGER: We acknowledge that the Federal Leader of the Opposition has problems telling the truth or the "gospel truth" all the time, but he was right when he said in the *Australian*, "What's really needed is better biking infrastructure". I urge the Leader of the Opposition to embrace the views of his more enlightened colleague.

WINTERSUN FESTIVAL

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I direct my question to the Minister for the Arts. Why did the Minister claim yesterday to have secured the hosting of the Wintersun Festival for New South Wales when, in fact, it has already been injecting money into the local economy of New South Wales, given that it has been held partly in the electorate of Tweed since 1978?

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: I am so delighted to answer this question about the arts and creative industries. Mr Speaker, you might be interested in this answer because I know you are a great fan of rock'n'roll.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much!

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: I am pleased to confirm that Australia's largest rock'n'roll nostalgia event has been fully secured for regional centres across New South Wales from 2011. Events NSW projects that the Wintersun Festival will attract more than 60,000 visitors and inject \$25 million into the New South Wales economy every year. It is a shame Opposition members do not want to listen to the answer to this question, because this is such good news for New South Wales.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order No. 129, relevance. Clearly the Minister did not hear the question. The question was not about spruiking that New South Wales had claimed this major event, when it actually pinched it from another area of New South Wales; it was a question about the competence of the Minister and her department, not a question about the event itself.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear further from the Minister.

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: I am just getting wound up because this is such good news for the State. The Government has been working hard to secure this event exclusively for an initial three-year period but, not only that, we have an option for another three years. The agreement has been structured so the Wintersun Festival will be held in a different regional location every year to ensure that the economic benefits are shared around the State. It was my absolute pleasure to be in Port Macquarie yesterday to announce that it will host the event in 2011. It was a great morning for the Port Macquarie-Hastings region, and the news was wholeheartedly welcomed by the hardworking Independent member—he is nodding up there in agreement—who is so loved by his community.

Mr Geoff Provest: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order No. 129, relevance. I am 100 per cent for the Tweed—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for the Tweed will resume his seat. That is not a point of order.

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: That said, bids from other centres will be open for 2012. I am sure the members representing the electorates of Ballina, Coffs Harbour, Myall Lakes and Port Stephens will be lobbying hard to get Wintersun to their electorates—or will they take their cue from the so-called member for Tweed, I wonder? In case anyone here missed out on the confected outrage of the member for Tweed, he has been out there moaning, ranting and raving about New South Wales "poaching" the festival, from where? Queensland. Let us move past the whingeing of the member for Tweed and get to the very heart and essence of the matter. Barry McNamara, the director of the Wintersun Festival, put it best himself in the *Tweed Daily News* today when he said: "The NSW Government"—our Government—"has just jumped behind the event."

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease interjecting.

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: This side of the House is very supportive of the arts. Today's *Gold Coast Bulletin* said that what is on the table from Events NSW will be better for Wintersun patrons and allow the festival to grow. The alleged member for Tweed seems to be the last person in the House to understand what is actually going on. Jim Wilson, the general manager of Connecting Southern Gold Coast, today told the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, "I don't blame the organisers. The [Gold Coast City] council has a lot to answer for. They have been complaining about the Government not doing enough to help tourism but they are killing off everything themselves." Is that not a surprise? Gail O'Neill, the president of the Southern Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce, told the *Tweed Daily News* she had been expecting the announcement for the past six months. Most telling are the comments from locals posted on the *Tweed Daily News* online. "Jim's Mum" of Tweed Heads west said, "Heard Geoff Provest on radio with his usual negative views trying to gain a political advantage for himself"—who else—"Geoff Provest needs to put the interests of locals first and do less of his constant carping and deliver more services."

Mr Steve Cansdell: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Clarence wishes to take a point of order. I will be pleased to hear it.

Mr Steve Cansdell: Put us out of our misery and sit her down, will you?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Clarence should read the standing orders before he takes another point of order.

Ms VIRGINIA JUDGE: I am pleased I was asked this question. It raises the question: Is Geoff Provest the member for Tweed or the member for the Queensland Opposition?

BICKHAM COALMINE PROPOSAL

Mr FRANK TERENCEZINI: My question is addressed to the Premier. What has been the community's response to the Bickham coal decision?

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: The answer is overwhelmingly positive. The communities of the Upper Hunter have welcomed this decision. The Upper Hunter Shire Council wrote:

The decision by the NSW Government on this issue has not been taken lightly, with considerable expenditures involved from all parties in preparing and assessing the technical studies and reports.

It is a credit to the planning system that a robust process has been put in place to ensure the best environmental and planning outcomes for this application.

Fiona Simpson of the NSW Farmers Federation writes:

This is a win for our members in the Upper Hunter, this is a win for a NSW Government planning process that takes a long-term strategic view, and this is a win for the future sustainability of the Upper Hunter Region.

Many more letters have been received from individuals, groups and businesses welcoming this outcome. The Leader of the Opposition has taken a different view. On ABC radio he was quick to criticise me for even being in the Upper Hunter. He said:

The fact that Kristina Keneally is up there is simply to bask in the reflected glory of the Planning Assessment Commission.

This Government set up the Planning Assessment Commission process with no support from the Opposition. This Government passed the legislation that established the Planning Assessment Commission, with no support from the Opposition.

Mr Frank Sartor: Opposition.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: Indeed, there was opposition from the Opposition. This Government determined the terms of reference, selected and appointed the panel members, referred the Bickham proposal to the Planning Assessment Commission, and acted on its recommendations. Furthermore, this Government is amending the mining State environment planning policy to provide this community with ongoing certainty. The Leader of the Opposition was right: clearly, I had no place being there! His other comment on this decision was far more important. He said:

The decision of the Planning Assessment Commission is welcomed, a decision that was made independently on the basis of merit, but a decision that was nevertheless the right decision.

I will set aside his implication that decisions made independently and on merit are usually the wrong decisions. I am sure he misspoke. Perhaps he was having a Tony Abbot moment. There is no doubt that this is a glowing endorsement from the Opposition for the Planning Assessment Commission. It is a tectonic shift by the Opposition, which voted against the Planning Assessment Commission and has sledged the independent process every step of the way. The Opposition has been tying itself in knots on the issue of planning policy. We need look no further than the wit from Wakehurst, the member for Wakehurst, who told the *Manly Daily* on 20 October 2009 that an O'Farrell government "would overhaul the planning Act, tear up the controversial part 3A and scrap the recently established joint regional planning panels".

Where would the people of the Upper Hunter be without the independent Planning Assessment Commission process today? Where would they be without the State significant planning process under part 3A? Where would they be without the legal certainty that our planning system is providing? They would not have

had an independent and scientifically based assessment. They would have a local council without the resources or the expertise to mount a Planning Assessment Commission inquiry to try to hold back the legal and financial might of a coal company. How would that have worked out?

The Opposition promises nothing more than red tape and increased costs for local government. It does not provide independent certainty or independent assessment for the planning process. Its promise to get rid of joint regional planning panels will slow up the planning process. We only need look at the figures that were released today by the Minister for Planning. The Leader of the Opposition has undercut the member for Wakehurst, just as he continually undercuts the member for Manly. I look forward to his robust support in the future for independent Planning Assessment Commission decisions. I would hate to see another shift from the Opposition on this issue. The community of New South Wales could not take it.

Question time concluded at 3.24 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2009-10

Mr Steve Whan tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, the following:

- (1) Variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2009-10, arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Industry and Investment.
- (2) Variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2009-10, arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Industry and Investment.
- (3) Variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2009-10, arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Human Services.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Reference

Mr Geoff Corrigan, in accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), informed the House that the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety had resolved to conduct an inquiry into vulnerable road users.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Allan Shearan, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 6 of 2010", dated 18 May 2010, together with minutes and extracts regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 5 of 2010.

Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Allan Shearan.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by fewer than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

Northern Rivers Area Health Service

Petition opposing job cuts from the Northern Rivers Area Health Service, particularly Grafton and Maclean hospitals, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Northern Rivers Area Health Service

Petition opposing job cuts from the Northern Rivers Area Health Service, particularly Casino, Campbell and Coraki hospitals, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Maclean District Hospital

Petition opposing the sale of land adjacent to Maclean District Hospital, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital

Petition requesting the rebuilding of the Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Garrawarra Land Sale

Petition opposing the sale of land at the Garrawarra Centre in Waterfall, received from **Mr Malcolm Kerr**.

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital

Petition requesting funding for and the commencement of construction of a new Wagga Wagga Base Hospital in this parliamentary term, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Tumut Renal Dialysis Service

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

Tumut Hospital and Batlow Multiple Purpose Service

Petition asking that vital equipment be provided immediately to both Tumut Hospital and Batlow Multiple Purpose Service, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Wagga Wagga Respite Services

Petition requesting funding for a second respite house and the provision of accessible access to the existing respite premises in the Wagga Wagga electorate, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Alcohol and Drug Services

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

Relationships Register

Petition opposing any legislation for a Relationships Register and requesting promotion of marriage for de facto heterosexual couples, received from **Mr Daryl Maguire**.

Grafton Bridge

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

Grafton Bridge Site

Petition requesting the consideration of certain matters before the determination of a preferred site for a new bridge over the Clarence River at Grafton, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Hawkesbury River Railway Station Access

Petition requesting improved access to Hawkesbury River railway station, received from **Mrs Judy Hopwood**.

Bus Service 311

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

Religious Education and School Ethics Classes

Petitions opposing the proposed ethics classes and requesting continuation of the scripture classes, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell, Mr Thomas George, Mrs Judy Hopwood, Mr Malcolm Kerr, Mr Daryl Maguire, Mr John Turner, and Mr John Williams**.

Tuckurimba Quarry Expansion

Petition opposing the proposed expansion of sandstone quarry operations at Champions Quarry in Tuckurimba northern New South Wales, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Sutherland Shire Council Rates

Petition opposing the proposed infrastructure levy rates by Sutherland Shire Council, received from **Mr Malcolm Kerr**.

The Clerk announced that the following petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme

Petition asking for a review of the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme and indexation of payments to the cost of living, received from **Mr Steve Cansdell**.

Southern Highlands Hospice

Petition requesting a hospice for the terminally ill of all ages in the Southern Highlands area, received from **Ms Pru Goward**.

Coogee Bay Hotel Site

Petition opposing any redevelopment of the site bounded by Coogee Bay Road and Arden and Vicar Streets under part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, received from **Mr Paul Pearce**.

Retail Electricity Pricing

Petitions objecting to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommendations to increase retail electricity prices, received from **Mr Peter Besseling** and **Mr Peter Draper**.

Drought Relief Worker Job Protection

Petition requesting that the jobs of drought relief workers be protected, received from **Mr Greg Aplin**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Business Lapsed

General Business Order of the Day (General Order) No. 804 and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 805 to 822 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing Orders: Routine of Business

Mr JOHN AQUILINA (Riverstone—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.27 p.m.]: I move:

That on Wednesday 19 May 2010 standing orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) the taking of private members' statements in place of Government business prior to 12.30 p.m.;
- (2) consideration of the matter of public importance following the conclusion of the motion accorded priority;
- (3) consideration of Government business following the conclusion of the matter of public importance; and
- (4) the House to adjourn on motion.

Tomorrow at 10.30 a.m. a State funeral will be held at the Sydney Town Hall for the Hon. Jeff Shaw, a former member of the Legislative Council. Many members from both sides of the House would like the opportunity to attend his funeral. In order to facilitate attendance by those members I propose to change the routine of business of the House so that private members' statements will commence in the morning after the giving of notices of motions and then the House will commence Government business at about 12.30 p.m. until lunchtime. After the routine of business and at the conclusion of the motion accorded priority the House will consider the matter of public importance and then Government business until the House adjourns on motion at, generally, the usual time. I have discussed this with Opposition members and trust that these arrangements also suit their needs.

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

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Sobering-up Rooms

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyang—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.28 p.m.]: It should be recognised that there is a legitimate concern in the community about the behaviour of intoxicated individuals and related antisocial behaviour occurring in the community, particularly in certain areas of the State. It also should be recognised that members of our emergency services, including police, ambulance and hospital staff, are suffering abuse and injury from intoxicated individuals.

It is incumbent on us as a Parliament to examine ways in which to deal with these very real problems and implement solutions to address both the causes and the consequences of alcohol-fuelled destructive behaviour. That is why this motion deserves priority today. We should engage in informed debate about possible proposals and focus on whether they truly will make a difference or whether they are feasible. In seeking priority for this motion today I acknowledge that there is not a silver bullet to solve this issue.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wakehurst will come to order.

Mr DAVID HARRIS: In fact, the Government's response has been through a suite of initiatives aimed at both the point of sale and in dealing with the individuals. The new hassle-free nights legislation is an example of that, working with the sector to gain improvements. Bearing these things in mind, this motion deserves priority today because it is important also that we scrutinise closely any move to incarcerate members of the community in given situations, such as those proposed under the sober-up cells idea of the Opposition. In trying to cure one problem we have to be careful that we do not create a new and worse problem. The New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties is already expressing concerns about how a new clampdown of this kind would be carried out. The council's president, Cameron Murphy, told the ABC:

I think it's a policy that can be fraught with danger if it's not implemented properly. It requires a subjective judgement by police to assess whether someone is drunk or not. The last thing I think anybody would want is for this to become an excuse for people to detain people.

The use of sober-up cells also raises issues about front-line police and paramedics babysitting drunks when their skills could be better utilised. If accorded priority, this motion will examine whether the Opposition's initiative is a one-off, knee-jerk reaction or part of a structured suite of policy ideas such as those currently implemented by the New South Wales Government. This motion deserves priority because it is urgent that we debate all ideas and explore how plausible or otherwise policy announcements are, either from the Government or the Opposition, on controlling alcohol-fuelled behaviour in our community.

Clearly, we must determine whether this announcement was a carefully prepared and scripted remark and, therefore, a core Liberal policy or whether it was an off-the-cuff remark made with the knowledge that the Police Association conference was being held in Terrigal this week and the Opposition needed some sort of policy announcement. If it was the latter then the idea might be a non-core promise, along the lines of statements referred to by Mr Abbott: statements made during the heat of discussion are not necessarily reliable. The community has the right to know whether this is policy on the run. I urge members to support priority for this motion.

Traffic Congestion

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Leader of The Nationals) [3.32 p.m.]: Today we should debate traffic congestion. The drivers of New South Wales have had more than enough of this Government and its failures on roads policy. After 15 years of continued incompetence from this Government, the Sydney roads network is not coping and people right across New South Wales are paying the price. Just this morning an NRMA survey showed that Sydney's congested roads are forcing small and medium businesses to relocate and change their working hours just to deal with the worsening congestion. Last year the Auditor-General reported that traffic on Sydney roads had slowed to a crawl, with average travel speeds reduced to 30 kilometres per hour in the morning peak and just 41 kilometres per hour in the afternoon peak across Sydney's major travel routes. The Premier, who, yet again, turned up late for an appointment—this time it was the Police Association conference on the Central Coast—has confirmed it today.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Twenty minutes.

Mr ANDREW STONER: She has been late for many appointments, including a meeting with Frank Lowy last month. The member for Terrigal tells me she was 20 minutes late for the Police Association conference. If the Premier cannot avoid the traffic, what hope do the rest of us have? Sadly, the Premier seems to be more concerned about getting television news footage of herself riding her bike than fixing the State's road and transport problems.

This motion deserves priority because the blame for these problems and the gridlock on Sydney roads lies fairly and squarely at the feet of the State Labor Government. The Minister for Transport and Roads must be the only person in Sydney who believes that traffic congestion is not getting any worse in this city. That is the spin he has been trying to run today on radio and in the media generally. It simply shows that the Keneally Labor Government has given up on fixing traffic congestion in Sydney. After 15 years in government, State Labor has failed to build and upgrade roads across the network and has been unable to complete rail projects. Congestion now costs the New South Wales economy around \$3.5 billion every year, drives up the cost of business, and inconveniences thousands of motorists every day.

In the Penrith electorate alone there are far too many examples of congestion affecting the lives of residents every day. On the M4 westbound at the Roper Road exit, traffic can bank up for more than one kilometre in peak hour, which can cause accidents as drivers try to merge lanes. Another example of congestion is that drivers from Erskine Park, parts of St Clair and Capital Hill who want to join the M4 have to drive through the St Clair residential road network just to reach the M4. If State Labor had completed just a few of the road and rail projects it promised, our roads would not be anywhere near as congested as they are today.

The list of projects announced and then scrapped, or significantly delayed, beggars belief: the M4 East; the Rozelle Metro; the F3 to M2 link; the F6, which has been on again, off again under the Labor Government; the widening of the M5 is at a crawl, stuck in the seemingly never-ending stage of community consultation; and the widening of the M2 has been on the backburner for years and will now proceed thanks only to the determination of the private sector in a breakthrough with the Government. There have been literally billions of dollars of cost blowouts on projects such as the Pacific Highway, the Iron Cove Bridge and the Great Western Highway, just to name a few. That is billions of dollars that should have been spent on fixing the roads and public transport in this State.

The solution to the congestion gripping Sydney does not lie in just more roads. There is plenty the State Government can and should do to reduce congestion in addition to building and upgrading roads; for example, improving response time when clearing accidents and breakdowns, and fixing merging lanes and introducing better warning and advisory signs, not to mention improvements to public transport, which the member for Willoughby has been championing for many years. If the South West and North West rail links had been delivered, thousands of cars would have been taken off the roads.

When the Liberal-Nationals visit Penrith, doorknocking and meeting residents—in stark contrast to the Premier, who seems to be avoiding the area for as long as possible—we are getting the message that transport is the issue that people care about. It now takes Penrith commuters an average of six minutes and 40 seconds longer to get to work than it did in 2004. In total, Penrith commuters lose nearly 48 hours worth of time with their families each and every year—an entire working week—compared with 2004. Emu Plains has eight fewer peak hour services than it had in 2004, with 28 services lost across the Penrith electorate generally.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 47

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

Noes, 39

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

Pairs

Mr Daley	Mrs Hopwood
Mr Koperberg	Mr Roberts

Question resolved in the affirmative.

SOBERING-UP ROOMS

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.45 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) expresses concern at the Opposition's proposal to open sobering-up rooms in New South Wales; and
- (2) notes that a similar policy in the Australian Capital Territory cost an average of \$5,000 a person a night.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this issue and to discuss another example of an ill thought out policy from the Opposition. Again we have the Opposition trundling out a policy that barely skims the surface

of an important issue to the community. The Opposition policy shonks have done it again. They have put their heads together and come up with a policy that manages to raise more questions than it answers. I will canvass a couple of questions about the Opposition's so-called brainwave. If we are to believe that introducing sobering-up cells will magically solve all of our problems with regard to alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour, perhaps the Opposition can tell us how many people will be put in the cells, how many ambulance officers will be hired to staff them, how many police officers will be required to monitor them, how many administrative staff will be required, where the facilities will be built and how many cells will be required.

On the other hand, does the Opposition's plan involve throwing 10 or more drunken people into a confined space and hoping that they will all sleep it off? How much will the facilities cost to staff and to build? The Opposition, in its infinite wisdom, has failed to canvass any of these issues with yet another grand scheme that has been plucked out of the policy vacuum in which it operates. It has failed to provide answers to any of those questions. Perhaps the Government can help out and shed some light on how effective the Opposition's plan would be. This policy is yet another rehashed idea from another jurisdiction, just like the whizz-bang idea to stop graffiti was borrowed from California. The proposal to introduce sobering-up rooms is remarkably similar to a program trialled in the Australian Capital Territory that has proved very expensive and that has been extremely underutilised.

I will provide some of the facts and figures in relation to sobering-up rooms in the Australian Capital Territory. During a 19-month period two people per week on average were admitted to the facility at a cost of more than \$600,000. An independent report on the effectiveness of the scheme estimated that each admission to the facility cost taxpayers \$1,232. I am fairly sure that a room in the best hotel in Canberra would not cost that much. Perhaps the Opposition would care to explain why it thinks spending thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money to babysit a drunk is a good use of public funds. Perhaps members opposite can explain why removing a police officer and an ambulance officer from our streets to babysit drunks is a good use of their professional skills and time. [*Quorum called for.*]

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

When the Opposition is not thinking up harebrained schemes, its other favourite pastime is criticising the shortage of police and paramedics on our streets. Yet, the very policy it announced would require approximately six police officers and seven ambulance officers to run a single facility 24 hours a day, seven days a week—if it operates at all, which is yet another unanswered question. The Opposition must tell the community if it thinks that is the best use of police officers' and ambulance officers' time. I certainly do not think it is the best use of their skills. I want to see police officers on our streets preventing crime and bringing those responsible for crimes to justice. I want our ambulance officers on our streets saving people's lives.

While that side of the House has delivered this underwhelming policy, this side of the House already has laws in place that give police the power to detain people who are intoxicated. Part 16 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act provides that police can detain an intoxicated person found in a public place who is either behaving in a disorderly manner or in a manner likely to cause injury to the person or another person or damage to property, or who is in need of physical protection because the person is intoxicated. The Act also provides that intoxicated persons can be detained at a police station and can be released as soon as they cease to be intoxicated or until such time as they are released into the care of a reasonable person.

This side of the House has also instituted a range of strategies to tackle alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour. The recently launched Hassle Free Nights is a comprehensive action plan to curb alcohol-related violence in popular entertainment precincts. Under the plan, New South Wales police, local government, transport providers, licensed premises and local communities will work together on new initiatives to further reduce alcohol-related antisocial behaviour in entertainment districts across the State. That is what real policy is about. It is an integrated policy that works across the whole community, not another harebrained scheme.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter) [3.52 p.m.]: Having heard the member for Wyong, one has to wonder on what pretext this motion has been moved. Where are those opposite coming from, where have they been, who does their research? How the member for Wyong came up with all that idiocy, I have no idea. I make the point that the Government's motion refers to a cost of \$5,000 per person per night. I do not know what research has gone into producing that figure, but I have in my hand extracts of a number of reports, in particular

a report from the School of Social Work of the Australian Catholic University, Canberra campus, and the Ombudsman's report. Those reports indicate quite clearly that the Canberra trial should be continued. The Australian Catholic University's first recommendation is:

The sobering up shelter program continues and receives longer term funding.

Its second recommendation is:

The sobering up shelter continues in its current location.

On page 68, the report in question refers to the cost and clearly states:

If the Shelter operated at capacity (that is, 15 people per weekend), the cost would be \$406 per client, once again to the nearest dollar.

These quotes are evidence of the serious research undertaken by the Government. The Government's back-of-the-envelope rubbish is evidence of its lack of policy and lack of research, and its willingness to simply fudge the story. The Liberal Party and The Nationals have considered this policy. We are pleased to have the opportunity to debate it in this Chamber. We would like debate on this important policy proposed by the Coalition to move to more profitable and more serious ground. Obviously the Government does not have a policy and that is why it is now trying to debunk this one. This is a policy the Government could well adopt. It has adopted all our other policies; it should adopt this one. I move:

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

this House:

- (1) supports the Opposition's proposal to trial sobering up centres in New South Wales;
- (2) notes comments by former New South Wales Superintendent Ron Mason that the current Government's policy of dealing with drunk and disorderly people sees drunks walk straight out the door of the charity run place they are taken to; and
- (3) notes the rise in alcohol-related crime under successive governments since 1995.

It is important to give the House the full text of what retired superintendent Ron Mason, who is a decorated and admired policeman, said of the Opposition's policy today on radio 2GB:

It is practical. The current situation is that the police picks them up in the street, they take them to proclaimed places. Now these people don't have to stay there if they don't want to. They can just walk out the door. All we are doing is just moving the problem somewhere else. When I worked at Surry Hills we had a proclaimed place there and the police were regularly getting called back to the location because the people would walk out the door and were doing damage in the street or other violence.

That is the essence of the failure of the current arrangements. Successive Premiers have come up with proposals to deal with alcohol-related violence and youth binge drinking, and the antisocial behaviour that occurs at the same time. It is amazing to note that there are a number of cells in the network for the purpose of detaining people. Unfortunately they are simply not being used. The Government's totally soft approach is relying on an overbureaucratized system whereby the director general would undertake summary powers. We have had so many different proposals. A rewrite of the Liquor Act came into effect on 1 July 2008. We have seen Premier Rees' list of 48. We have seen the apparent preparation of a star rating system whereby licensed venues have a number of stars above the door according to how bad or good they are. That has been abandoned.

Now we have a ranking scheme that is working better than the previous schemes. It ought to be allowed to operate for some time. It has not completed its first six months. It is supposed to operate for six months, with a further three months for licensed venues to consider whether an assault is an assault and whether it will stand as a statistic. That scheme was not able to proceed any further because the new Premier arrived and launched another so-called policy that turned out to be a regurgitation of other policies, for example, tip-out powers. We already have tip-out powers. They were in the Act that began in July 2008. The powers apply to alcohol-free zones. Why are those powers not being used? Because a local government ranger on his own, or her own, or one or two police officers on their own approaching a group of people, seizing alcohol and pouring it out on the ground is a dangerous thing to do when the people in question are indisposed to the authority being imposed on them.

We are in a hopeless situation. The Government has no idea. It goes from policy to policy; reaction to reaction. The Opposition has put forward good policy that will work. Academic research, university research and the Commonwealth Ombudsman have all endorsed the policy, yet the Government merely comes up with a fictitious figure of what it might cost per night as the sole basis for attacking this policy.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [3.59 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wyong and I oppose the amendment moved by the member for Upper Hunter. Although the member for Upper Hunter made a lot of noise, he did answer one question that I was going to pose in my contribution, and I will come to that shortly. Public alcohol consumption, drunkenness and the enforcement associated with those issues are complex. The Sentencing Council appointed by the Government is the best way to continue to watch changing attitude and practices. In the 1970s, under the Summary Offences Act, it was a simple process.

Mr Chris Hartcher: When you were a copper.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Yes, when I was a copper. A person who was drunk in a public place was arrested, charged with being drunken, put in a cell and bailed out four hours later on \$1 bail. The bail was forfeited if the person did not appear at court.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lismore will come to order.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The Opposition's policy is a different version of that. However, we must accept that these days that simple, easy to enforce legislation would not address the magnitude of the problem of public consumption of alcohol and alcohol-related crime. As news reports and government reports have shown, the level of public consumption of alcohol and alcohol-related violence far exceeds the days when police just picked up the occasional drunk sleeping in the park or staggering home from the hotel and locked them up. The problem has become far more extensive and complicated.

The Opposition's policy smacks of a simple solution of just picking them up. Let us consider what is happening in places such as Kings Cross. Camera crews have turned up and taken pictures of hundreds of people who, in the 1970s, would have qualified as being drunk. Where could those people possibly be put? The Opposition's policy is mere window-dressing for the cameras. They would just pick up a few people, put them in sobering up rooms and that would be the end of the matter. However, it does not address the major problem. The Government is seeking to do that.

I oppose the amendment because, on the latest statistics, in the Sydney region there were 2,000 fewer incidents of alcohol-related crime per year than previously. It is evident that police are controlling alcohol-related crime and police are not seeking any change. I respect the view given to the Opposition by a former police officer. That begs the question: Where did the Opposition's policy come from? They named former Superintendent Mason. The Sentencing Council—which comprises a former Supreme Court judge, police royal commissioner head, James Wood, Howard Brown from the Victims of Crime Assistance League, the State's senior prosecutor and a current assistant commissioner of police—monitors the situation on an ongoing basis. The Sentencing Council would be a more appropriate way of forming policy on alcohol consumption and related crime than anecdotal evidence given to the Opposition by a well-intentioned former police officer.

This is a complex issue. The issues raised by the member for Wyong about the cost of the scheme are valid. We have seen on news reports hundreds of people in Kings Cross behaving in ways not seen in days gone by. How many sobering up rooms would be required to make a lasting impression on this problem? This policy smacks of former Opposition policies, such as removing drivers licences from people who commit graffiti and one I vaguely remember about putting flags on police cars. The Opposition now suggests building hundreds of sobering up rooms just for Sydney alone in the belief that it will make an impression on this complicated drinking problem.

Mr Thomas George: In other words, do nothing.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: No, evidence suggests we are doing quite a substantial amount. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal) [4.04 p.m.]: As the member for Upper Hunter has pointed out, the very basis on which the member for Wyong has moved the motion—the cost factor—is in fact wrong. Studies by the Australian Catholic University and the Australian National University both show that. This motion illustrates one thing: just like last week's motion about the Leader of the Opposition crossing a picket line at Newcastle on a day when he was not even in Newcastle showed sloppy, ill conceived, ill prepared and lazy research, the figuring today by the member for Wyong shows the same sloppiness, the same indifference to detail, the same lack of factual basis. He gives a figure of \$5,000 in a two-line motion. The second line of the

motion refers to \$5,000. The correct figure, according to the university, is \$1,232. What does that say about the member for Wyong? I will leave it to the electors of Wyong to make that decision on 26 March 2011, which is racing towards us at a headlong rate. I speak to paragraph (3) of the amendment, which states:

- (3) notes the rise in alcohol related crime under successive governments since 1995.

I cite figures that are dear to the heart of the member for Wyong, the figures for the Central Coast. Alcohol-related violence has spiralled on the Central Coast under his watch as member for Wyong and under the watch of the other Labor members on the Central Coast. It rises at a dramatic rate. Domestic violence has gone up from 900 a few years ago to 1,292; non-domestic violence has gone from 1,500 to 1,700; assault police has gone up in the last two years from 84 to 124; offensive conduct has gone from 280 upwards, a rise of 10.7 per cent; and offensive language has gone up and continues to rise—they are all alcohol-related offences, each one of them.

The member for Wyong has been serving the constituency of Wyong since the resignation of the much-loved Paul Crittenden—"Bring back Paul Crittenden", the people say. When I knock on doors in Wyong, people say, "Why don't you bring back Paul Crittenden?", but I have to say, "No, we can't bring Paul back. We have to suffer from David. Even though we cannot get Paul back, we can replace David." That is the message they nod and think about. Under the member for Wyong alcohol-related violence rises, and rises dramatically. The member for Wyong attacks any solution or any proposal to overcome this problem. Where is his policy or ideas on reducing violence on the Central Coast? Where is his proposal to reduce alcohol-related crime on the Central Coast?

The member for Wyong comes into this Chamber having represented the seat of Wyong since March 2007. He does not have a single idea of his own to reduce the problem that Central Coast people face—that people around Wyong, Terrigal, Umina and The Entrance face especially on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Under the watch of the member for Wyong the number of police on the Central Coast has dropped. It was higher in 2003 than it is in 2010. There are fewer police now than when Labor took office.

Mr David Harris: Point of order: The member for Terrigal is once again misrepresenting the facts. Certainly he knows that there are now more police in the Tuggerah Lakes command. Indeed, they are over strength at the moment. The member for Terrigal continually talks drivel—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Wyong will resume his seat. The member for Terrigal has the call.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The member for Wyong has an opportunity to respond to the figures referred to during his reply to the debate. However, it is obvious that he is anxious to take up my time in this debate—in revenge for the quorum that was appropriately called when he was speaking. Madam Deputy-Speaker, I know you would not think ill of me because I would not do a thing like that. The fact is that the number of police on the Central Coast has reduced between 2003 and 2010—all on the watch of the member for Wyong. So when we go around Wyong we see that violence has increased, crime has increased, hotspots have increased, and police numbers have reduced. The solution of the member for Wyong is zero. The people of Wyong will justly pass judgement on 26 March 2011. When we knock on the doors of the people of Wyong they say, "We can hardly wait!"

Mr DAVID HARRIS (Wyong—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.09 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Upper Hunter and the member for Terrigal—once again, in his truly theatrical performance of very little substance—for their contributions to the debate on this important issue. The member for Upper Hunter asserted that the figures I quoted are wrong. If one reads the entire report, it says that the facility in the Australian Capital Territory was underutilised. Averaged out over the best four months of the program, it cost, \$1,232 per person to keep people in one of these sobering-up rooms. But averaged out over the entire 19 months of the program, it cost \$5,000 per person.

One asks: If this program was such a good idea in the Australian Capital Territory that it should be adopted in New South Wales, why was the facility not full all the time? The answer is: Because the program does not work; the police did not use it. The program is a white elephant; it is a set-up that costs taxpayers a huge amount of money for very little result. The member for Upper Hunter referred to the statistics, as referred to in the report, on the basis of the facility being fully used. But the fact is that the facility was not fully used, and that is why the program averaged out to \$5,000 per person. With regard to the statistics, we have to look at

the number of people and the total cost of the entire program over 19 months, and that is where the average of \$5,000 came from. We cannot look at the statistics in an ideal situation if the facility was full all the time, because it was not full all the time.

The member for Mount Druitt rightly spoke about the enormity of this issue and said it must be addressed using a multi-pronged approach involving many different policy initiatives across the whole of the community, including with regard to education, licensed premises, and law enforcement. The member for Mount Druitt knows through his background that there is not a silver bullet answer to this issue; it needs to be addressed taking into account a wide range of issues. However, the Opposition continues to put forward one-off, isolated ideas, and to say to the community that this measure will solve alcohol-related violence. We all know that it is not the answer.

The member for Upper Hunter said the New South Wales Government has no policy on this. Obviously he has not been listening recently, because the Hassle Free Nights action plan, which was introduced in the House recently by the Minister for Sport and Recreation, looks at all these issues in a holistic way. The action plan targets a whole range of areas, to ensure we address the entire problem—rather than little bits and pieces or simply the end product. The problem with the contribution of the member for Terrigal—and he has not changed since 2007 when I became a member of this place—is that he talks a lot but he says very little. What he does not know—because he spends more time in Sydney than on the Central Coast—is that I instigated a working party on antisocial behaviour, in collaboration with the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and police and councils, and that there is an antisocial policy working in the northern part of Wyong shire, in my electorate. That is a proactive response. That policy is addressing all antisocial behaviour, whether it be alcohol-related crime, youth issues or graffiti.

On Graffiti Action Day, when the Liberals were in the community saying they were going to establish a clean-up team and so on, I was cleaning the shops in San Remo—and there was not a Liberal Party person in sight in the northern part of Wyong shire! The Liberals say one thing in this Parliament but in the community they do a totally different thing. With regard to police, since I was elected in 2007 police numbers in the Tuggerah Lakes command have gone up, not down. Not only have police numbers gone up, we also have a mobile police station that was not there before, a brand-new police station being built at Wyong, in addition to the existing police stations. We have more police cars out on the road because more vehicles have been allocated to the command.

When the member for Terrigal talks about the Central Coast in this place he needs to refer to factual matters, rather than make things up as he speaks. He needs to look at the real statistics, the real information, and understand that there have been increases in police numbers right across the Central Coast. Once again, on this side of the House we have a holistic policy that targets all aspects of this issue. But on the Opposition side of the House we have one-off ideas that are plucked out of the air, even if they are not proven to work.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 47

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

Noes, 35

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

Pairs

Mr Daley	Mrs Hopwood
Mr Koperberg	Mr Roberts

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negated.

Motion agreed to.

**STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE AMENDMENT (VOLUNTEER CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL)
BILL 2010**

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

The SPEAKER: Debate on the motion accorded priority having concluded, the House will now proceed to Government business.

CHARTER OF BUDGET HONESTY (ELECTION PROMISES COSTING) AMENDMENT BILL 2010

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 12 May 2010.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly) [4.24 p.m.]: It is not surprising on a day when we are supposed to be talking about honesty and transparency in government that we have had anything but that from this State Labor Government in relation to the Charter of Budget Honesty (Election Promises Costing) Amendment Bill 2010. Whilst the Government is trying to force this bill through today, a couple of things are outstanding. The Opposition would have liked to have the opportunity to move a couple of amendments to the bill, but it could not produce the amendments in time. The Government has brought the bill on for debate without consideration of them. At the same time, a meeting is to be held next Thursday with the Auditor-General, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and me, on behalf of the Opposition, to negotiate this in good faith.

The Government is endeavouring to show the people of New South Wales that it is trying to keep the word of the Premier and it is trying to look as though it is being independent, but the truth is very different. When the detail of the bill is looked at it is clear that the Government is rolling away from the public commitment that was made by the Premier during a debate. Clearly, it is using costings for political purposes in the upcoming State campaign and, indeed, for each campaign thereafter. If the Government had supported the proposal in our bill the community could have had some confidence and trust in the costing for each campaign going forward, but it has disappointingly thrown that out the window today. I am disappointed because I believed this was a chance for historic reform. I believed that this State Labor Government had a chance, with the support of the Opposition through our proposal, to pioneer for other State governments, and the Federal Government, a way forward for community surety as to costings and election commitments.

As I said in the agreement in principle speech to my bill, the Government cannot promise a community a piece of infrastructure such as the widening of The Spit Bridge, which was to cost \$59 million—I will not go through each example I gave, but I will use the example of The Spit Bridge because it is the most pertinent—and less than a few weeks after the election tell the community that it would cost too much. In fact, it was evident that the Government had walked away from this proposal before the election, but it did not have the honesty to explain to the Northern Beaches community why it was not going to proceed. Indeed, the widening of The Spit Bridge was going to cost \$115 million to \$120 million—double the original cost projections. It is time we had an independent costing methodology and process used for New South Wales campaigns—the bill proposed by the Opposition provided that opportunity.

I will now outline the facts that have transpired to get us to a point where the Government has walked away from handshakes, agreements and good faith discussions that have been led by this side of the House. The Premier agreed on television that the Auditor-General would oversee independently costed election promises. The Opposition gave notice of our motion to the Parliament, which outlined that premise in December—well before that debate was undertaken—and introduced its bill shortly thereafter. Our bill was simple. The Opposition wanted to amend the New South Wales Charter of Budget Honesty (Election Promises Costing) Act 2006 to shift the responsibility for auditing the cost of election policy commitments from the New South Wales Treasury to the New South Wales Auditor-General.

Under our proposal, the costings of election policy commitments were going to be undertaken independently from Treasury with the oversight of the Auditor-General. They would certify announcements by the Government or Opposition that contained a funding commitment that was to be funded out of the 2010-11 budget or was an additional commitment. Our bill requires the Auditor-General to maintain a record of Government and Opposition promises, commitments and decisions that were made following the release of the 2010-11 budget; removes the pre-election period restriction so that election promises could be checked at any time, not 60 days prior to the State election; and provides access to Treasury officials on a confidential basis.

Treasury is an arm of Government. That is a matter of concern to the community. How can it be argued that Treasury retains independence when it is part of the Government? I am not maligning the individuals within the organisation; I am merely stating a fact and suggest that Treasury as an arm of government cannot be deemed independent. I have made that point previously and I have given various examples of our concerns about the use of processes to support Government in this whole sorry affair of ongoing costings. Our proposal was for an independent entity, not Treasury, to cost the election promises of both sides.

I negotiated with an officer of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Brendan Reilly. Again, I am not criticising him. I understand that he is carrying out instructions on behalf of the Government and the Auditor-General in good faith. The Opposition presented its bill and we were happy to open discussions on amendments to achieve community outcomes. Our bill provided that costings be undertaken by experts. In this way the community could be confident that independent experts had undertaken the processes and ticked them off. The costings must be done free of the political process. If they are not it is open to the Government of the day to overinflate or underinflate, depending on how it suits the Government's purposes. We indicated at the time that an independent entity free of political imperatives must undertake this process.

I attended a meeting to talk about our bill and how it could be constructed to suit the Auditor-General and the Government, on the back of the Premier's commitment. Unfortunately, the next port of call was that this bill came before the House. With the introduction of this bill, I reiterate, the Premier is walking away from her promise. The Premier has walked away from the statement she made earlier, "Absolutely, I would be delighted to have the Auditor-General undertake the costings." This bill does nothing more than maintain what is already in place, that is, Treasury undertakes all the costings. That is a matter of particular concern. The Opposition wants independent costings that are free of political imperatives and motives. I refer there to the behest of the government of the day, not the individuals involved.

The Government has also walked away from an opportunity to play a pioneering and historic role in providing independent and rigorously tested costings for the people of New South Wales. With independent costings, communities in my electorate and across the State, when confronted with policy and infrastructure announcements, could be confident that the Government will deliver because it has provided a true cost. With a rigorous and independent process, people will have the surety that the Government has the ability to meet its commitment, unlike the examples we have heard today.

The Opposition has proposed amendments to this bill. I apologise to Parliamentary Counsel, but the Government has given us no option. At the meeting we were to have on Thursday we were going to run through

the amendments to make sure that the Premier stuck to her word and introduced independent costings. Unfortunately, that meeting is not going to happen. We cannot support the bill before the House. Due process has not been followed. We have not had enough time or an opportunity to discuss our amendments. I indicate that the Opposition will move amendments to the bill in the upper House. The amendments reflect the spirit and essence of what we were trying to achieve in our bill on behalf of the community.

Under our amendments the Auditor-General and the independent financial consultant, not Treasury, will cost all policies. I clearly indicate to the House that we were trying to establish a historic process of independent costing free of political imperatives. We want an independent financial consultant. In this bill the Premier has put forward that Treasury will undertake costings on behalf of the Government and the Opposition. Under our amendments all new announcements from the budget onwards of both the Government and the Opposition are to be costed, not only announcements made 60 days before an election.

Why is the State Government so keen to reduce the amount of time available to prove costings on a rigorous basis? It would be in the State's interest that the costings are considered in due time and due process by experts. That is what our bill proposes. There is no justification for the process to be undertaken in a constricted or restricted timeframe. It is an ongoing process. We would happily commit to every policy that we provide from this point forward to be overseen by an independent financial consultant. In relation to our policy announcements, the community will know that we have gone through the costings with an independent consultant and the Auditor-General has ticked off on them. That is our proposal and we remain firm on that.

We want the Opposition and/or the independent financial consultant to have confidential access to Treasury officials to discuss costings of potential policy initiatives. Treasury would assist the independent financial consultant in relation to any concerns, inquiries or additional information to ensure that the consultant has all the information as it undertakes the costing of Government and Opposition election promises. Any Treasury officials contacted would sign appropriate confidentiality agreements. That is a standard practice that is consistently used in markets that deal with sensitive information. Clearly, Government and Opposition policy information is sensitive material. Therefore, we would seek confidentiality in that regard. The role of Treasury would be to provide information that the independent financial consultant required, or to assist the consultant in its inquiries.

Unless an independent financial consultant is at the core of this process it is nothing more than a ruse designed to make the Premier look as if she is going part way to keeping her commitment. The truth is that she has broken her promise. The Premier has walked away from her promise. The Government wants Treasury to do the costings; it does not want independent costings. That is not in the interests of the community. There is genuine disappointment in the community. This was a historic chance for the Premier to walk away from the politics of old—and this State Labor Government needs to walk away from the politics of old—and change the narrative to one in which she understands it is in the community's interest that an independent financial consultant, free from political imperatives, undertakes the costings. The Premier has walked away from that opportunity.

This is not a political stunt on our part. We have committed to this reform by our proposal. If we are elected to government we will support it. Today we have seen the Government in the raw. The underbelly position of this State Labor Government is, in Richo's words, "Do whatever it takes." This Government does not care about the community. It does not care about introducing a process that will improve the costings and budgets of the Government and the Opposition. All it cares about is getting back into power. If the State Labor Government controls the costings it can play the same old games: it can use the resources of Treasury to try to poke holes in every costing from the Opposition at every opportunity.

I support the rigour, but the rigour should be by an independent financial consultant. We should take the politics out of it and put the community first. There is an opportunity to improve this whole debate to a point where with each policy commitment that is made there is confidence in the community that it is costed properly and there is confidence in the community that we are moving beyond the politics of old. But, unfortunately, in walking away from the promise the Premier has walked away from integrity. The negotiations that have been undertaken in good faith in her office demonstrate that the Premier has no intent and no interest in keeping her word. The Government wanted this to go away so it could try to get out of the very nasty position in which it finds itself.

Again, I apologise to Parliamentary Counsel for not giving them time to peruse these amendments. I also acknowledge that the Government clearly had no intention of negotiating on this issue on Thursday this

week. It is nothing more than a stunt. This is a sad day for New South Wales because a historic opportunity has been lost. We will oppose this bill as it is being rammed through with breakneck speed with no consideration of good faith or process. The amendments that we propose today will be taken to the upper House and argued strongly and loudly for the benefit of the New South Wales community.

Ms LYLEA McMAHON (Shellharbour—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.41 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Charter of Budget Honesty (Election Promises Costing) Amendment Bill 2010. The costing of election promises is vital to the integrity of the election process. The Keneally Government supports the fair costing of election promises, and to honour the Premier's commitment made on 26 March the Government will add additional accountability to costing election promises. These reforms ensure there will be a high-quality and independent election costing process in place at the next election; they give the Auditor-General independent oversight of the costing of election promises; and they introduce a recognised financial consultant to work in conjunction with Treasury officials to cost Government and Opposition election promises.

These reforms will ensure that taxpayers have the benefit of a full and accurate independent assessment of the cost of each and every policy commitment as well as an assessment of its financial impact on the current budget and over the forward estimates. This bill provides for independent oversight by the Auditor-General of the costing of election promises made by the Government and the Opposition. The Secretary of Treasury will be authorised to seek a review by the Auditor-General of the cost of a publicly announced or proposed election promise and the aggregate budget impact statement for all publicly announced election promises. The Treasury costing of an election promise is to be undertaken in conjunction with a recognised independent financial consultant nominated by the Auditor-General.

The Auditor-General will be authorised to review the costing, prepared by Treasury and the recognised independent financial consultant, and the aggregate budget impact statement for all publicly announced election promises provided by the Secretary of the Treasury. The bill amends the secrecy provisions of the current Act to allow disclosure of election costing information to the Auditor-General and his staff, including the application of penalty provisions for any breaches of confidentiality. We know this is an issue that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Manly cannot agree on, so let me make it clear and simple: this bill will ensure there is a high-quality and independent election costing process in place at the next election. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.43 p.m.], in reply: The Charter of Budget Honesty (Election Promises Costing) Amendment Bill 2010 requires the Auditor-General to review Treasury costings of election promises and requires an independent financial consultant, nominated by the Auditor-General, to be engaged by the Secretary of the Treasury for the purposes of assisting the Secretary in preparing Treasury costings and budget impact statements. I am advised that the Auditor-General has indicated to the member for Manly that Treasury is the most appropriate agency to provide costings and not the office of the Auditor-General. It makes good sense. Clearly, Treasury is better placed than any organisation to make the costings because it has access to economic and statistical data and knowledge of what is going on in the economy with statistics and reports, et cetera. I am advised that Treasury has an onus to provide independent financial costings not only to the Government but to the Cabinet itself. The Auditor-General will sign off on costings prepared by Treasury.

Mr Mike Baird: Point of order: I just clarify that the Auditor-General is very happy with the amendments that we propose. What the Parliamentary Secretary is saying is misleading.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Wayne Merton): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY COLLIER: The Auditor-General has the capacity to provide an opinion on the methodology, assumptions and reasonableness of costings prepared by Treasury and an independent financial adviser. In effect, the Auditor-General could review costings prepared by Treasury and the independent financial consultant. With regard to the election costing process not starting until 60 days before the election, the costing of election promises over a long period would inevitably place public servants in a compromised position relative to their Ministers. Public servants would have access to information on policies being considered by the Opposition while at the same time developing policy options for the Government. This concern is minimised by restricting the costing period to 60 days prior to the election. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now agreed to in principle—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 48

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

Noes, 36

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

Pairs

Mr Daley	Mr O'Farrell
Mr Koperberg	Mr Roberts

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

APPROPRIATION (BUDGET VARIATIONS) BILL 2010**Agreement in Principle**

Debate resumed from 12 May 2010.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly) [4.55 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in this debate on the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010. It is hard not to reflect with some disappointment on the debate we have just

concluded in which the Government refused to establish an independent process to take the politics out of costing for community benefit. The Government has rolled over, broken promises and not honoured verbal agreements without a care in the world. It is now asking us to pass this bill. That demonstrates the culture at the core of this State Labor Government. One does not think of this Government when mention is made of fiscal discipline, integrity, honour and basic principles of good faith. This bill is yet another example of the Government's overspending, and not by a small amount. It has blown the budget by \$1.48 billion. Every dollar counts as we emerge from the global financial crisis. This Government's \$1.48 billion budget blowout is yet another demonstration of its fiscal management skills.

By pursuing such large amounts through this process the Government will be able to continue to spend without the appropriate scrutiny and transparency that is part of the budget process. That is the critical point. Of course, no-one argues that unforeseen circumstances arise that may require additional commitments to be made. However, this Government regularly uses the budget variations process to massage the annual budget. The picture that it presents in the budget is not a true representation of its financial situation. If the allocations in this bill had been included in last year's budget it would not have a projected a \$1 billion deficit; it would have been \$2 billion or more. The Government has understated the true figures, it has been caught out and the public is onto its game.

The purpose of this bill is to seek additional funds for recurrent services and capital works for 2008-10. I raised concerns with regard to the 2008-09 budget and it is beyond belief that the Government is still trying to tidy it up. This legislation seeks additional funds for recurrent services and capital works for 2008-09 and 2009-10. For the 2009-10 year it seeks a Treasurer's Advance of \$347,162,000, funds for recurrent services amounting to \$79,720,000 and additional recurrent services amounting to \$695 million. For the 2008-09 year—that is, in addition to the amount allocated in last year's budget—the bill seeks a Treasurer's Advance of \$222,488,000 and funds for recurrent services amounting to \$136,400,000. The total additional amount sought for 2008-10 is \$1,480,770,000. That is close enough to \$1.5 billion without appropriate scrutiny and transparency.

In the November 2009 half yearly budget review, the Treasurer said the deficit would be around a billion dollars at the halfway mark. We are not sure what the final budget day figure will be, but revenue has increased and so has spending. That has been a long-running trend. The Premier said the figures at the half-year budget review showed the Government had acted responsibly and prudently in cushioning the effect of the global economic crisis, but the truth is really the opposite. The Government is using this bill in an attempt to hide the real deficit by seeking and regularly using additional funds outside the budget process without the usual transparency and scrutiny given to budgets. This bill confirms that the real deficit that should have been reported on budget day is well in excess of that \$2 billion.

I will go through every item listed in this bill. Members of the Coalition will talk to portfolio-related items and will scrutinise some of those payments. The Nepean Hospital upgrade is a good example. Schedule 1 to the bill shows the Government needed an additional \$29 million for the Nepean Hospital redevelopment. There are two parts to this. Either the Government did not know about this redevelopment—obviously it did—or it is an additional cost blowout. Neither of those scenarios provides any comfort. Putting together a budget and not knowing there is a capital item worth close to \$30 million or that there has been a \$30 million blowout is an example of costs continuing to blow and no-one being held to account.

The Parliamentary Secretary or the Minister in reply can tell us about those funds. The Minister for Health talked about this redevelopment back in 1997, so why was it not included in the budget? Again it comes back to some of the costing processes we proposed. Rather than having an independent oversight of costings, was this amount shaved for budget purposes—that is, was the Government trying to inflate the bottom line so as not give the true scope of the deficit or, as the project has gone on, have there been overruns? Either way, the true state of New South Wales finances has not been revealed. If it were revealed today it would show that the State Labor Government has a culture of going about its business with a rampant lack of financial discipline.

Unfunded superannuation is particularly interesting. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to confirm this point. Schedule 1 to the bill reveals that the Government has put \$510 million into the pooled fund superannuation scheme. My understanding is that that money is part of the proceeds from the Lotteries sale. I seek confirmation from the Government in that regard. It is important that the Government make contributions towards its unfunded superannuation liability and its ongoing obligations, but the heart of the matter is the way the Government goes about its business. It has ignored unfunded superannuation. Until recently, when it changed its accounting standards, the Government happily used different accounting standards that understated

the true extent of its liability, which meant that it was not addressing the problems of tomorrow. That is a classic example of the way in which this State Labor Government goes about its business—forget about tomorrow; spend the money today, and the problems of tomorrow can be dealt with by the next generation.

Time has caught up with the Government. If this \$510 million that has gone into the superannuation scheme has come from the sale of NSW Lotteries, that means it is selling capital assets and putting the proceeds into current needs or operating budgets. That is against basic good management practice. The Government can explain what it has done and whether that is the case. There is no doubt that unfunded superannuation is a beacon that shines a light on the State's mismanaged finances, which stands in stark contrast to the Federal Government's and Peter Costello's management of superannuation. They identified the problems in relation to unfunded superannuation liabilities very early and used ongoing budgets to build a fund to match them. Rather than just leave them, they undertook fiscally responsible actions to address them. Either way, this State Labor Government has failed the State in relation to its superannuation.

As outlined in the Premier's favourite book *Unlocking Land Values to Finance Urban Infrastructure*, which is a fascinating read and which she identified a few weeks ago in an interview, it is contrary to general principles for the Government to take proceeds from the Lotteries sale and put them into capital expenditure. Not all of us would call that our favourite book, but she certainly did. It talks about land sales, but one can replicate land sales with capital sales because it is the same principle. The book warns governments against putting proceeds from land sales or capital sales into operating budgets. The Premier obviously did not get to that part of her favourite book. The public sector can say no, proceeds from the Lotteries sale have been put elsewhere but my understanding is that that is what they have been used for. Again, putting the proceeds of capital sales into recurrent or operating budgets is not sound financial management. If the Premier, the Treasurer or the Parliamentary Secretary can answer that question we will be the happier for it. We look forward to it.

The lack of financial discipline remains a chronic problem. All the items in the bill require questioning, but I will leave it to other members to go through them line by line. Last year the Government spent beyond its budget in the vicinity of about \$1.4 billion, and that cannot be blamed on the global financial crisis. For 15 years Labor has been spending well beyond its means. The 2006 Stokes and Vertigan New South Wales Audit of Expenditure and Assets Report commissioned by the Government, found that the Government has been running at about 1 per cent expense growth over revenue growth: It does not have the capacity to operate within itself. An appropriation bill again demonstrates the lack of financial discipline of this State Labor Government. The Auditor-General's report reveals last financial year the Treasurer blew his own expenses by nearly \$2 billion, including half a billion dollars he blew in a couple of weeks. If the Treasurer cannot control his own expenses what hope does he have of controlling the overall expenses of this State Labor Government?

In answers that we have submitted Ministers have admitted that they do not check their budgets monthly; that is outsourced to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. How can Ministers be held to account and take control of their own budgets if they are not even checking them or if they are not provided with a budget on an ongoing basis? It is not surprising that we are faced with an appropriation amount that gets up to \$1.5 billion hiding more than \$2 billion in deficit that should have been reported on budget day. Former New South Wales Treasury Chief Economist, Robert Carling, has been a long-term critic of this practice. He told the *Australian*:

Some of the things they've done are unfortunate in themselves. They've relied too much on tax increases and revenue raising, and not enough on reducing recurrent expenditure.

Yet again we see that example in this bill. The bill also exposes the Government's wrong priorities. I cannot stress this point enough. At the time of the last budget we were looking to the State Labor Government to provide some form of stimulus by doing something other than relying on the money Kevin gave us. Kevin's money was the Government's tick for its stimulus package, but in reality it did nothing. In the budget the Treasurer proudly introduced the New South Wales Housing Construction Acceleration Plan to much fanfare. It was worth about \$64 million and was described by the Premier and the Treasurer as a major economic stimulus.

Despite this the Treasurer said he was shutting down the program in December. He seemed to be overruled by the new Premier. We are not sure what happened but the Government had spent only \$12 million out of \$64 million as part of its stimulus response. The Coalition said that the stimulus response should be extended and the Government did that. Around March the Treasurer said about \$21 million had been spent on its major economic stimulus program. One should not forget the economic forecasts and challenges faced during the global financial crisis. For the Government to put such little effort into a major economic stimulus program shows that the State Labor Government is trying to pretend it is doing something when in fact it is doing very

little; indeed it is doing much less than it said it was doing. The bill shows that \$2.1 million of the allocated funds were spent on advertising for the Government's housing plan, such as a letter on the letterhead of the New South Wales Office of State Revenue from the Premier that was purported to be a serious policy response. Half a page of the letter was taken up by a photograph of the Premier—it is almost beyond words. The letter states:

Dear Property Buyer,

Congratulations on your recent property purchase. I am pleased the New South Wales Government has been able to help you through your 50 per cent stamp duty discount ... The important measure is just one of the ways the New South Wales Government is stimulating the New South Wales housing construction sector, supporting jobs and growing the State's \$380 billion economy.

The letter contains no details, other than the ways in which the Government is helping and a nice glossy photograph of the Premier. Residents who received the letter thought they were getting a parking ticket, but when they opened the envelope they saw a picture of a smiling Premier. This is an example of how our stimulus money is being spent. This bill was introduced because the Government has overspent on these types of campaigns. How is that in the interests of the people of New South Wales? They can get a photograph of the Premier from her website if they really want one. Why is the Premier's photograph on every one of these letters? Why is stimulus money being used to advertise the Government?

The community regards the State Government with cynicism because it has no financial discipline. It is all about the Government. The stimulus package was not aimed at turning the economy around. The Government made it look like it was trying to do something by sending out a nice glossy photograph, which was a big component of the cost overrun, and we are all supposed to stand and clap. But the truth is we are not clapping. This mail-out is an insight into the culture that is rampant in the Government's financial approach. After 15 years New South Wales taxpayers have had enough.

Other examples of the Government's lack of financial discipline will be revealed in the months to come, including the sale of electricity assets that is underway. Approximately \$200 million has already been spent on that sale. The market—bidders, experts and many within government and the public service—has rejected that model. But for some reason the Government is pursuing the sale. No firm timetable has been given as to when the sale will proceed, but up to \$200 million has been paid to consultants on that transaction—a transaction that has no support and that will not deliver the necessary reform. In many respects it will leave the State with many of the current risks. I turn now to the CBD metro on which around \$500 million has been wasted. A tenant who received \$20,000 compensation as part of the CBD metro project said:

This Government couldn't run a bath.

No truer words have been said. Another tenant said:

If I ran my business the way they do, I'd be sacked.

These tenants have received a cheque, but they say it was inflated and did not reflect the compensation that was due. The whole process has been flawed from beginning to end. I understand that the cost is \$1 billion, and it has gone well north of that. Someone said that they would not be surprised if, in due course, the amount of money wasted on the CBD metro is so significant that a royal commission is set up to look into what took place and what is being paid out. Such an investigation would be a drag on the State finances for years to come. They are sobering words. It is an example of the way that the State Labor Government deals with money, expenses and due process. It is happy to roll over. I understand that the conservative figure for the project now sits at about \$1 billion. The Auditor-General in Total State Sector Accounts for 2008-09 probably summed it up best when he said:

Significant and consistent overruns of budgeted expenditure have occurred at a number of large agencies. Action needs to be taken to better understand and manage these variances.

That advice should be heeded by the entire State Labor Government. The Treasurer should pick up on those words and instil some form of discipline across a Government that is running out of control, is not being held to account for waste—its deficit is much larger than is reported or its surplus is much smaller than is reported—and yet again, as we see with this appropriation bill, is happy to mask the truth by playing the appropriation game: stick it in the back pocket, come into Parliament, well outside the light of budget day and try to pretend all is right. Well, it is not. This is yet another example of how the State Government has lost the trust of the community of New South Wales.

Mr MATT BROWN (Kiama) [5.16 p.m.]: The member for Manly has predictably wheeled out the same lame argument that was wheeled out last year. Once again, the purpose of this longstanding legislation has been discarded in the interests of political pointscoring. The member for Manly ignores the fact that budget variations bills have been used in this Parliament for nearly 20 years. It is a key part of the annual budget process. As members are well aware, an advance is appropriated to the Treasurer for unforeseen and urgent expenditures that could not be forecast at budget time.

Predictably, the Appropriations (Budget Variations) Bill 2010 includes those details of expenditure from the Treasurer's Advance ensuring there is transparency and accountability. That is what the Government is all about—transparency and accountability. It is a process endorsed by the Auditor-General as well as the Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1. In the interests of this debate, members opposite would clearly deny vital investment in key areas. They would oppose the additional funding for the Government's Keep Them Safe program for child protection. I have heard members opposite argue for further expenditure. They are hypocrites to say the least.

Another additional funding program that the Coalition would oppose is life support equipment for swine flu, as well as emergency drought works for Lake Cargelligo. I would like to see them answer to constituents who want those emergency drought works. Members opposite have gone quiet all of a sudden. In fact, members opposite do not support funding for drought assistance programs across the State, essential firefighting equipment and an autism early outcomes unit.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: What rubbish!

Mr MATT BROWN: The member for Davidson said, "What rubbish". The member for Manly clearly indicated that the Opposition would not support this bill to make the appropriations for these very important projects that the Government supports. The Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010 is a key part of the annual budget process. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to deliver high-quality services, while adopting a fiscally responsible approach to budget management.

The bill seeks the Parliament's approval for the payment of additional appropriations in 2009-10 for which no provision was made in the annual Appropriation Act. One could not get more open and transparent than that. These appropriations include an additional contribution of \$510 million to the Pooled Fund Superannuation Scheme funded from the proceeds of the NSW Lotteries sale. This will ensure that the impact of the sale is budget neutral on a risk-adjusted basis. The Opposition again typically claims that this is economic mismanagement, but I am afraid the evidence does not support that flimsy argument.

The Government's track record, of which it is proud, is one of encouraging investment, protecting and supporting jobs, delivering a record stimulus package and, importantly, securing the State's triple-A credit rating following the worst year of the financial crisis. That is not bad, if you ask me. We should not forget that earlier this year the member for Manly said the State's triple-A rating sends a very clear signal to the market that things are well managed. I could not agree more. He said to Deborah Cameron on ABC Radio on 15 February:

The AAA is a very important sort of measure. It puts a discipline around Government. It is a very clear signal to the market that things are well managed.

The member for Manly acknowledges that New South Wales finances are well managed. However, members who listened closely to his speech would not have heard that. The fact is that New South Wales is well managed, both financially and economically. In contrast, the Opposition's track record is one of obstructing good policy and talking down New South Wales. Indeed, if there is one thing the Opposition is consistent about, it is talking down this State.

The most recent set of State final demand figures show that growth in private business investment in New South Wales over the past six months led the States by a distance. I will list State by State how much higher the December quarter private business investment was compared with private business investment for the June quarter. In Victoria private business investment was up \$580 million, in Western Australia it was down \$328 million, in Queensland it was down \$1,117 million, and in New South Wales it was up \$1,405 million. That is more than \$1.4 billion in additional private business investment in New South Wales compared with the figure for the previous six months, but we do not know anything about that from members opposite; they do not want to talk about it. We simply hear from members opposite silly, juvenile comments without any substance whatsoever.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Wayne Merton): Order! The member for Kiama has the call. He does not need the assistance of Opposition members.

[*Interruption*]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Wayne Merton): Order! Members will behave themselves. The member for Kiama has the call.

Mr MATT BROWN: Mr Acting-Speaker, thank you for that learned ruling. The New South Wales figure for additional private business investment is almost a billion more than that for Victoria, at a time when investment in Queensland and Western Australia is going backwards. Yet Opposition members see this as something to avoid talking about. They should celebrate our strength. Thanks in part to the New South Wales Government's supportive initiatives, the New South Wales unemployment rate is at 5.8 per cent as at April 2010. Since its peak in March last year, the New South Wales unemployment rate has fallen further than that of any other State. On a trend basis, New South Wales employment has grown for 13 consecutive months and the number of full-time jobs in the State has grown for six consecutive months. However, there still remains a lot more work to do, and we are taking decisive action to support jobs in New South Wales. That is why we are investing a massive \$65.5 billion in job supporting infrastructure, to support up to 165,000 jobs each year over the four years to 2012-13.

Ms Noreen Hay: That's fantastic.

Mr MATT BROWN: I acknowledge interjection of the member for Wollongong, because it is fantastic. This Government will deliver the full stimulus package as it promised. Yet the Opposition wants the stimulus package rolled back. Members opposite need to ensure they make themselves accountable to their communities.

Mr Geoff Provest: Point of order: I ask you to draw the member for Kiama back to the leave of the bill. This debate is about the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Wayne Merton): Order! I am certain that the member for Kiama was making a passing reference. I ask him to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr MATT BROWN: The practice of introducing further appropriation bills has enhanced accountability with regard to the expenditure of public money from the Consolidated Fund. These expenditures, as outlined in the various schedules to the bill, are all important and worthy Government measures. The member for Manly asserted that the Government has not introduced stimulus measures. I can count dozens of them just off the top of my head. I cannot imagine that any member opposite would not spend his or her Community Partnership Program funding—

Mr John Williams: That's one. Give me two.

Mr MATT BROWN: There are also huge capital works right across the State. In my electorate of Kiama, the South Coast Correction Centre is one of the most important pieces of infrastructure to assist the local economy during the global financial crisis. We heard a pathetic argument from the member for Manly when he referred to a photo of the Premier on a letter. I have heard of the pot calling the kettle black, but one cannot go to Manly or the North Shore, or to the website of the member for Manly or his paraphernalia, without seeing photo after photo of him. That the member for Manly has the gall to say that the Premier puts her photo on a letter is the height of hypocrisy. It simply demonstrates how pathetic his argument is with regard to this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [5.26 p.m.]: I have been in this place for three years, and once again this reminds me of what the Government is all about in two words: overspend and underperform. The Government seems to be able to do that very, very well. I am waiting for the time—it has to come—when the New South Wales Government will not ask for this funding. I think the bill is a way of not bringing this into the budget. When the Government handed down the budget it knew full well that there was a bit of a way out for it in the future. My greatest concern is that this is in a year when the Government has had some great windfalls, and opportunities to rake a bit of money off the Federal Government—with the stimulus package and the Building the Educational Revolution—to put money into the State coffers, to offset some of its costs. That is a one-off windfall.

We have the opportunity in housing. Once again, the Federal Government tips in the money and the New South Wales Government has an opportunity to rake off a good share of that funding. These windfalls would have offset this \$1.4 billion, but that did not happen. What happened to that money? That windfall income is over and above what the Government budgeted for last year, but it has flushed that funding down the drain as well. It is absolutely amazing. During the entire period while all this is happening, we have a Premier who is more focused on running around the countryside having photos taken, putting out a glossy magazine—

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: I ask you to draw the member for Murray-Darling back to the leave of the bill. This is not about photographs of the Premier or anybody else in the Parliament; it is about the Appropriation (Budget Appropriations) Bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Murray-Darling will return to the leave of the bill

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: You may correct me, Mr Acting-Speaker. That glossy brochure that the Premier put out cost nothing. What did the Government spend on that glossy brochure?

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order relates to the failure of the member for Murray-Darling to deal with the leave of the bill and the fact that the member has taken the opportunity to bandy around criticisms of a Premier who is being photographed out there in this State working—which is what Premiers are supposed to do. The member for Murray-Darling should take his example from the Premier, get out there and do some work himself.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! I ask the member for Murray-Darling to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I still want the member for Wollongong to tell me where the money came from for the glossy brochure. Did that come from outside the Government coffers?? What about the Learjet? Who paid for the Learjet?

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: The member for Murray-Darling is now talking about Learjets. What next? Will the member for Murray-Darling please return to the leave of the bill?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! I again ask the member for Murray-Darling to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: We are talking about a variation in the budget. We are talking about the Treasurer asking for more money. It is as simple as that. The Opposition wants to know where the money went. The Government is making the point of letting the Government know that somewhere along the line these things cost money over and above what was budgeted for. Where did I see in the budget that the Premier was going to do a tour of New South Wales in a Learjet, or have some photographs taken and then send a glossy brochure out to all the constituents? Tell me about that because I need to know.

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: For the fourth time, I ask the member for Murray-Darling to return to the leave of the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: So we do not need to find another \$1.4 billion? Is that what the Government is telling me? This is an absolute fallacy. This is about the Treasurer requesting another \$1.4 billion to top the show up. Do you understand that? It is as simple as that! What I am asking is: What about the waste? What about the money the Government has wasted? We have seen the waste from the CBD metro, which could have paid for all the roads in my electorate in bad need of sealing to be sealed—the Government has been lobbied for that for years. The CBD metro was an absolute waste of money and now the Treasurer is seeking a top up. If the Government wants to keep wasting money, the Opposition will continue to make it accountable.

The Opposition wants to know why the Treasurer now wants more money when we have seen money wasted and sent down the drain by the Government. The Opposition has seen windfalls by the Government and the opportunity for the Government to take on revenue that was not accounted for in the last budget. Money has

been pouring in, but where is it? Where did that money go? On top of that money, the Government now wants another \$1.4 billion. This is an utter and absolute disgrace. We have also seen the rush to a national health reform. In the four years I have been a member of this place the Government has spent its time whining about the GST distribution and the way it was allocated to the States. Then the Government goes and trades it off on a health plan that really has not been costed. No-one really understands the health reform plan. That job has been done too quickly for anyone to really know how it will work.

This Government continually puts its hand up about a shortfall. I want to see the day that this Government, if it is so dammed good at managing the job, does not need extra money and that the budget balances out or in some situations a surplus is achieved. If there was ever going to be a surplus in the budget, this year provided the opportunity. There were so many windfalls for the Government this year, so many opportunities to increase revenue, yet still it is in the same old tired position because every one of those windfalls was wasted. Those windfalls were spent on some crazy notion or in some way to get the Government re-elected. But the fact is that every one of those promotions has done nothing about getting the job done for the people of New South Wales.

The polls have clearly stated that the people of New South Wales are not seeing the benefits of the expenditure by the Government. The money has not been spent in the right place. The job has not been done correctly. If the Government had been done the job correctly the polls would reflect that, but they are not. The Government has continued to waste money and pour money down the drain. The Government continues to return here every year for a top up to the budget. Each year we hear the Treasurer come to this House and tell us what a great budget he has delivered. The budget is then sold in the press as the greatest thing, yet it has never produced a result. In fact, we seem this same old tired situation repeated year after year.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.35 p.m.]: The contribution of the member for Murray-Darling comes as no surprise. The member for Murray-Darling stood before the House and said that he has been a member of this place for four years. He was elected in 2007 and it is now 2010. I suggest that he go and find his other hand and start counting again. The Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010 is a key part of the annual budget process.

Mr John Williams: Three budgets!

Ms NOREEN HAY: You said you were here for four years—it is in *Hansard*.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! Members will not engage in debate across the table. The member for Wollongong will be heard in silence.

Ms NOREEN HAY: It demonstrates the Government's commitment to deliver high-quality services, while adopting a fiscally responsible approach to budget management. The bill seeks approval by the Parliament for the payment of additional appropriations in 2009-10 for which no provision was made in the annual Appropriation Act. The Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010 demonstrates the Government's commitment to high-quality services. As members are well aware, an advance is appropriated to the Treasurer for unforeseen and urgent expenditures that could not be forecast at budget time. This bill includes those details of expenditure from the Treasurer's Advance ensuring that there is transparency and accountability. I suggest the member for Murray-Darling read the bill. He might then be able to fathom what the Treasurer is seeking to do.

This process is endorsed by the Auditor-General and General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1. For the benefit of Opposition members, let me take them through some of the services funded by this year's bill: stage 3A of the Nepean Hospital redevelopment project and Blacktown clinical simulation facility; the Keep Them Safe initiative for child protection; life support equipment related to swine flu; emergency drought works for Lake Cargelligo; the Anzac War Memorial Trust; the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme; an autism early outcomes unit; fire fighting equipment; the Wayside Chapel; drought assistance programs across the State; additional funding towards Commonwealth elective surgery targets; the Yellow Rock Priority Sewerage Program; and funding for community sporting and recreation grants.

The Opposition sat silently when funding to hospitals and health was reduced under the Howard Government. It refused to support the Labor Government when we sought to get the \$3 billion that was being ripped off by the Howard Government on the GST distribution. It said not a word. In saying that, I am responding to comments made directly by the member for Murray-Darling, who repeatedly asked about

photographs, Learjets and everything except what is dealt with in the bill. I entirely support the comments of the member for Kiama. He said that those opposite continually seek to talk down New South Wales and to dump on the achievements of this Government.

It is unfortunate that in the spirit of cooperation the Opposition does not support this proposal, which will ensure that funding proceeds to worthwhile community organisations. The items in this bill demonstrate the good work undertaken by the Government during the financial year. The unforeseen expenditure shows the commitment the Government has made on behalf of the people of New South Wales to look after the less fortunate among us. That might sound strange to the Opposition. The Government wants to look after those who have struck difficult times. At times, due to mitigating circumstances or unforeseen health issues, people need assistance. This proposal today will ensure that funds flow through and those worthwhile causes get the assistance they need. The practice of introducing further appropriation bills has enhanced accountability of the expenditure of public money from the Consolidated Fund. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [5.40 p.m.]: The purpose of the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010 is to appropriate additional amounts for recurrent services and capital works in the 2009-10 and 2008-09 budgets. For 2009-10, in addition to the combined \$440 million that was provided for in the mini-budget, the amounts requested are Treasurer's Advance \$347 million, recurrent services \$79 million, and additional recurrent services \$695 million. For 2008-09, the amount requested for the Treasurer's Advance is \$222 million, and recurrent services, capital works \$136 million. That adds up to a grand total for 2008-09 and 2009-10 of \$1,480,770,000, which is a significant amount of money.

The Government has overspent its budget again. As a result, it has been forced to request approval from the Parliament for additional funding. The fact that departments require this level of additional funding beyond their original budget indicates ongoing financial mismanagement by each of the respective Ministers. The lack of financial discipline is worrying, as it is a recurring trend. Last year the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2009 showed that, once again, the Government spent beyond its budget in the vicinity of \$1.4 billion. This is a matter of concern. The communities of the State's 93 electorates are looking for an increase in the level of services—more police, better roads, and improvements to schools and hospitals. As members know, I often raise in this House the lack of police numbers in the Tweed.

In schedule 1 on page 18 of the bill, under the heading "NSW Police Force", it states, "Funding for above strength officer numbers—\$26 million". Whoever writes these budgets is not in touch with reality. The Opposition is in touch with reality because we talk to the local people. Whenever I have raised the issue of police numbers in the Tweed, I am told by the Minister for the Police that we are over strength and have more police than we need. In the cold reality of day, our hardworking men and women and families have to wait from 20 minutes to three or four hours for a police response. The Police Association of New South Wales claims that we need another 20 police on the beat. Yet the official line is that we are over strength, and schedule 1, page 18 of the bill, shows that \$26 million has to go to fund above strength officer numbers. Obviously, there is a major flaw in the financial budget. Those police are needed. They should not be called "above strength".

Page 27 of the bill, under the heading "Land and Management Property Authority", refers to the Tweed River Entrance sand bypass project. Since its inception, the project has cost the New South Wales taxpayer in the vicinity of \$55 million to \$65 million. The project was meant to keep the Tweed River free of sand, but it is not working. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction from the boating community and the surfing community. It has virtually destroyed the famous D-Bah—Duranbah—which is listed in the top five surfing locations in Australia. The project is not working, yet another \$791,000 is being churned into this bottomless pit. The failure to rein in expenditure cannot be blamed on the global financial crisis. I have heard that many times from a variety of Premiers. I have been in this House for just over three years and I have already gone through three Premiers. This practice was occurring before the global financial crisis.

As the shadow Treasurer, the member for Manly, said, the Government's own inquiry, the New South Wales audit of assets and expenditure report in 2006, shows examples of poor financial discipline. There was \$500 million scrapped on the metro and \$200 million has been spent so far on the sale of the State's electricity assets. That \$500 million, which was reported and analysed in the *Daily Telegraph* some months ago, could have provided another 1,000 extra police, 900 extra nurses, 800 extra teachers, 140 extra buses, or an upgrade of the helicopter in the Police air wing. The list goes on. On many occasions in the House I have referred to the shortage of police numbers in the Tweed. Another 1,000 police would have made an enormous difference throughout the State. Once again, it would seem there is gross financial mismanagement. The budgets do not match reality. The budget is here, reality is there, and there is a big gap in between.

Every parliamentary session the Government says it got it wrong and asks for another \$1.4 billion. It says it will get it right next time. As the shadow Treasurer said, it is a recurring process. New South Wales has many great small businesses. If small business owners ran their businesses in the same way as the Government does, they would not be in business. It is not the Government's money, and it is not the Treasury's money. It is the taxpayers' money, the hardworking people of New South Wales. This bill endorses the gross financial mismanagement of the Government. The hardworking people of New South Wales know that their money is being frittered away and not being spent on the delivery of services. They are very upset. In my electorate and on the streets of Sydney the taxpayer is extremely upset about the grossly inept financial management of the running of this State.

I am particularly concerned about the bill referring to "above strength" police officers. We do not have above strength police numbers. Obviously, the allocation of police officers has been done on a political basis. The electorates on the north coast—Tweed, Lismore and Port Stephens—want more police. But they are not being allocated in the budget. The former Minister for Police told me that it was not his problem because the Treasury never gives him enough money. The needs of the people must come first, particularly in relation to areas such as policing. Once again, I am and always will be 100 per cent for the Tweed.

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [5.48 p.m.]: That was a bizarre contribution from the member for Tweed. As a relatively new member, he would not understand that when the Coalition was in government it cut budgets. This Government has consistently increased its budgets in all portfolio areas. The member talked about the non-delivery of services in his area. That says more about him as a local member. In the electorate of Kogarah for the last 11 years that I have been the local member, we have had a brand-new police station and lifts in 23 railway stations at a cost of \$6 million each. All of my schools have received a new school hall or gymnasium, one school has been completely redeveloped and another is undergoing a complete redevelopment.

At the hospital we have built a brand-new mental health unit and a brand-new psychiatric ward. We have built the toll-free M5 East. Back in 1999 when I first ran for the seat of Kogarah the Coalition was saying that it would put a toll on the M5. It was this Government that was able to deliver the M5 on time and on budget to make my electorate a much better place to live. There are no longer trucks back-to-back from the Grand Parade to Kingsgrove. To say that in the past this Government has had mismanagement and has not delivered for the community is absolutely ridiculous.

We acknowledge that there is always more work to do and there are always more services that will be needed but, for the information of the member for Tweed, government is not like running a business. We have to care for the needy and the disadvantaged; it is very, very different. Therefore, unforeseen things happen and that is why—

[Interruption]

At the end of the day, there is no cutting of budgets. Members on the other side of the House cannot say the former Coalition Government did not cut a budget, did not run down a hospital or did not close a hospital. Look at Howard. In 11 years he ripped the guts out of all of the budgets. In my time as Minister for Housing he took \$850 million out of the Housing budget. What Opposition members have said is absolutely ridiculous. The Opposition disagrees that we needed \$29 million for the Nepean Hospital development and the Blacktown clinical simulation facility; \$13 million for elective surgery; \$22 million for drought assistance programs; and \$1.24 million for an autism early outcomes unit. To say that those things are a waste of money and that we should cut back on funding for them is ludicrous.

This bill is a long-standing legislative measure that ensures an annual appropriation to the Treasurer's Advance to cater for unforeseen and urgent expenditures that could not have been forecast at budget time. We are running a State and these things can happen every year. We do not know where things will go wrong or where things will happen. This Government is able to address those issues and fund those necessary resources. These expenditures, as outlined in black and white in the various schedules of this bill, and described by my colleagues today in this place, are all important and worthwhile Government measures.

Members opposite know full well that the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010 is a key part of the annual budget process. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to transparent reporting and accountability to the Parliament. It is not always possible to see Parliament's authority in advance for unforeseen and urgent expenditure. The bill sets out the many and varied ways that the Government is investing in the State's future. It is imperative that governments remain accountable for their spending and that budget processes

remain transparent. The practice of seeking parliamentary approval for supplementary funding has become an integral part of the annual budget process and is endorsed by the Auditor-General as well as the Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1.

As it stands, the bill provides an account to Parliament on how the 2008-09 Treasurer's Advance has been applied towards recurrent and capital expenditure. The bill seeks appropriations of around \$347 million in adjustments to the Treasurer's Advance, and I outlined what projects that includes. They are very important projects that require that funding and costs be set out in black and white in the bill. Furthermore, in accordance with the Government's commitment to use part of the NSW Lotteries transaction proceeds to strengthen the State's balance sheet, \$510 million has been allocated as additional super contributions.

The additional 2009-10 funding has the objective of reducing the employer contribution growth rate and is an economically responsible way of managing the funds made available from the Lotteries transaction. This is the best long-term investment for the State. What it means is that we will be \$75 million better off over the next 10 years and \$620 million better off over the next 20 years by taking this decision. That is because we expect a higher return—about an extra 2 per cent a year—by taking this path and putting the proceeds of the billion-dollar transaction to their best use.

The transparency of this budget process and the accountability of the Government for its commitment lie in stark contrast to that of the Opposition. The last time the Coalition was in government it cut funding, and the last time the New South Wales Coalition's Federal colleagues were in power they slashed and burned. This Government has acted swiftly to protect jobs and encourage investment in New South Wales during the worst of the global financial crisis. While the Government has remained open and transparent about its policies, its expenditures and its plans for the future, the Opposition has provided the public with precious little information about how it intends to fund its extravagant promises. The Opposition says it will fix the problems of the world; there will be no additional taxes and no additional ways to generate income. However, will it be able to fund anything anybody wants?

The Opposition's laziness, ineptitude and inability to understand how to run the State has led this side of the House to get up and argue for the need for this bill to pass this House. The Opposition's commitments are all over the shop. The Opposition is committing everything to everyone and I think the community is a wake-up to it. The Opposition does not have any coherent policies; it does not provide an alternative because it thinks it is just going to fall over the line at the next election and it does not have to do anything.

Mr Brad Hazzard: You'll be very lucky to be there.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: We will see.

Mr Brad Hazzard: You will be very, very lucky.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: I think that is said every four years, and I am still here.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! The member for Wakehurst will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate. The member for Kogarah will be heard in silence.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: We should just wait until the election. The only people arrogant enough to try to forecast the outcome of the next election are members on the other side of the House.

Mr Brad Hazzard: We are forecasting your seat.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: I think you have made your point. Let us just wait and see.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! The member for Wakehurst should take the advice of the member for Kogarah. The member for Kogarah will be heard in silence.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: As usual, they are just lazy interjections designed to try to distract me from my speech. I am hitting a nerve here. It exposes the ineptitude and laziness of the other side. Members of the Coalition think they will wake up on the Sunday following the election and they will be in government. The people of New South Wales will demand more than just slippers and wet hair at two o'clock in the afternoon after they have just had their noon shower to look at the other side as an alternative government. There is a long

way to go yet. While this Government still has a lot of work to do, we also have a lot to be proud of. This bill is presented to ensure that both Parliament and the people of New South Wales have the opportunity to scrutinise government expenditure. It is about finding an appropriate balance between accountability and flexibility in public finance management. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.58 p.m.]: The Government has yet again overspent its budget, this time by more than \$1.4 billion. As a result, the Government has been forced to request approval from this Parliament for additional funding. It indicates ongoing financial mismanagement by an incompetent Labor Government. The comments made by previous speakers warrant rebuttal, and I will briefly rebut them before making a few points. The member for Kogarah outlined expenditure on a number of projects in her electorate. I look forward to some money being spent in my electorate when the Coalition is elected to govern next year.

Some of the measures in this bill do have merit. However, they should have been budgeted for in the normal budgetary process. That is the main point the Coalition is making: Where there is appropriate expenditure the Government should budget for it. Like the member for Kogarah and others, the member for Kiama suggested that budget variation bills are part of the normal, everyday, expected, routine process of government. They are not. One need go back only as far as 2007 to find a financial year in which no budget variation bill was introduced. This lazy Government is now relying on budget variation bills. That is not acceptable and it is not standard. What happened in 2007 so that the Government did not need to patch up its shoddy budgetary process?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Frank Terenzini): Order! Government members will remain silent.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: It was the only full financial year in which the Hon. Michael Costa was Treasurer. As much as members opposite might not like the namesake of the Minister for Water, and as much as they forced him out of Parliament, he did understand budget management and the importance of spending only the funds available. Unfortunately, this Government now does not understand that basic principle. That is little wonder when it has no member on the front bench or the back bench who has any experience of running a substantial private sector business or a public company. I am happy for members opposite to give me the names of just two Government members who have that sort of experience. I do not think there is even one, but I am happy to be corrected.

The member for Kiama spoke about employment. However, he led with his chin because for 54 of the past 55 months the unemployment rate in this State has been higher than the Australian average. We now have the highest level of unemployment of any Australian mainland State. That is not something of which members opposite should be proud. According to the Government's own figures, in addition to the \$500 million we lost on the CBD metro, we lost at least 2,000 jobs.

Despite the Government saying that there would be no redundancies last year as a result of the global financial crisis, this bill indicates that there have been unbudgeted redundancy payments. As the bill shows, the Department of Attorney General and Justice, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education and Training and other departments have had to make redundancy payments. This Government has broken its promise not to make public servants redundant, but it wonders why this State's unemployment rate is the highest of any mainland State and it has consistently trended above the Australian average. We have hung on to our triple-A rating but, with a more than \$1.4 billion budget variation and a very shaky electricity asset sales process, it will not be long before the rating agencies question it.

After more than 15 years of hard Labor this State does not suffer from a lack of revenue; it suffers from a lack of confidence in how this Government manages available resources and delivers basic public services to the long-suffering residents of New South Wales. The people of New South Wales are entitled to ask why the Government has consistently—with the exception of 2007 under the stewardship of Treasurer Michael Costa—failed to properly monitor and control expenditure. The Government's appropriation bills reflect its financial mismanagement and its attempt to avoid the scrutiny that attaches to the normal budgetary process. This appropriation bill seeks a variation of more than \$1.4 billion. That cannot be called a small miscalculation; it represents substantial financial mismanagement.

The Government has adopted either a deliberately misleading or a sloppy approach to the budgetary process. It has either misled the public and this Parliament about its intended expenditure knowing that it could legislate its way free of more intense scrutiny or it was very sloppy in calculating the expenditure required to honour its promises and to provide services in the first place. Either way, that is a very poor reflection on an

already underperforming New South Wales Labor Government. It is as stale after four four-year terms as a four-day-old piece of toast. I suspect that that is what members will be after the next election—burnt, stale toast. This State requires a greater focus on proper financial management, disciplined spending and a genuine commitment to eliminating waste and mismanagement; that is, it needs a new government that budgets more effectively than this Government has.

The Government should not have to come to Parliament bowl in hand begging for more money from the people of New South Wales. During this term of government it has been revealed that members opposite have wasted \$18 billion. That is a huge amount; it is equivalent to about one-third of the annual New South Wales budget. The waste includes \$113,000 spent on artwork grants by Communities NSW. I will not detail the amount, but huge amounts have been wasted by the Department of Education and Training in its management of Building the Education Revolution projects. There is a big question mark about exactly how much has been wasted.

A 17 November 2009 media release indicated that salary overpayments had been made by the Department of Human Services; a 15 April 2009 media release indicated an almost \$500 million blowout on the Royal North Shore Hospital redevelopment; and volume 6 of the Auditor-General's 2009 report indicated salary overpayments of \$1.6 million in Industry and Investment NSW. It is also estimated that the parliamentary recall for the electricity privatisation legislation cost \$1 million. The Hon. Ian Macdonald spent \$150,000 on entertainment in 2009 and the unnecessary desalination plant cost approximately \$1.9 billion. Excessive overtime payments of \$40 million made by the Department of Justice were revealed in volume 8 of the Auditor-General's 2009 report and the 2008 report indicated a JusticeLink blowout of \$17.9 million.

In multiple departments there has been rental for luxurious offices at a cost of \$200 million. In planning and local government, according to a media release of 15 December 2009, there is unleased property of \$3 million and the Wollongong council corruption in 2009 cost \$1 million. In the Department of Premier and Cabinet there is the buyout of 30 Clarence Street Sydney after the CBD metro was already to be canned, costing almost \$25 million. There is the Davina Langton payout, again, of \$100,000. According to the Auditor-General's performance audits for 2007 and 2009 there is government advertising of \$100 million in each year. Excessive rent for the Governor Macquarie Tower was estimated by the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 14 April 2009 at \$20 million. The Graeme Wedderburn payout cost \$135,000. The Labor by-elections in 2008—Jemma, Watkins, Meagher—cost \$1 million.

According to a media release of 24 September 2009 media management cost \$1 million. Office refits cost \$780,000. Overexpenditure occurred on the Parliament House gatehouse, which cost \$1.6 million. Private jet travel by the Premier into drought-affected areas, which has been ably and appropriately highlighted by the member for Murray-Darling, cost at least \$31,000. The cost of public servants employed post the staff freeze was \$20 million, contrary to the Premier's guidelines. There is the super department restructure cost of \$15 million. The cost of having unattached public servants was \$46 million per annum, and we still see them. That was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2009. Unjustified travel by Minister Tripodi, as reported in the *Daily Telegraph* of 12 May 2009, cost \$290,000. Unnecessary parking spaces at Governor Macquarie Tower during 2009 cost \$1.4 million. In the transport and infrastructure portfolio there was the CityRail corruption in 2009 costing \$28 million. The Cronulla branch line blowout cost \$238 million.

Mr Barry Collier: It also blew out in 1939. You people did nothing about the duplication. The member for Cronulla just complained.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: It blew out on your watch. The difference between the New South Wales and Victorian grants from the Federal budget due to poor submissions on rail and metro cost \$3.4 billion. The Epping to Chatswood/Parramatta rail link blowout cost \$1 billion. The Great Western Highway budget blowout cost \$1.5 billion. The Iron Cove Bridge duplication blowout cost \$100 million. The north-west bus transit way blowout cost \$120 million. The north-west rail line blowout, comparing the Action to Transport 2010 and the Metropolitan Transport Plan, cost \$6.35 billion. The outer suburban carriages budget blowout, detailed in a media release of 24 March 2010, cost \$745 million. The Pacific Highway dual carriageway upgrade blowout cost \$1.5 billion. The Parramatta bus/rail interchange blowout cost \$125 million. The disparity between cost and value of the Queanbeyan government service centre, according to the 2009 Auditor-General's Report, volume 6, cost \$10 million.

The Roads and Traffic Authority move from the central business district to North Sydney, detailed in the *Daily Telegraph* of 13 April 2009, cost \$23 million. The station refit due to oversized trains, reported in the

Daily Telegraph of 19 May 2008, cost \$20 million. The current expenditure on the cancelled CBD metro project is at least half a billion dollars. According to an Opposition freedom of information inquiry of 17 October 2009, taxis for rail workers from 2007 to 2010 cost \$4.2 million. Taxi fares for stranded commuters from 2007 to 2009 cost \$90,000. The Tcard project blowout cost \$100 million. Again, according to the Auditor-General, the IT licence system blowout cost \$23 million. Uncollected fines in the year 2008-09 cost the Treasury \$62.4 million. I could keep on going but the items I have mentioned total over \$18 billion. It is little wonder that this Government has to come cap in hand for more money. And it has the audacity to tax us more for marine craft, vehicle registrations and property transactions. It mismanages our money. It is bad and it has to stop.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst) [6.13 p.m.]: I want to add a few words in relation to the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010. I listened intently to Government members arguing energetically and vociferously that such a variation bill is entirely normal practice and utterly acceptable. It is extremely disturbing for the people of New South Wales that current Labor members think that a budget variation bill is acceptable. Indeed, they argue with almost no reservations and no embarrassment that it is normal. It is neither normal nor acceptable practice for a government to conduct itself in this way. It certainly has become the practice under a succession of State Labor leaders. That certainly was not the case when I first came into this place.

It is extremely worrying because how you manage a budget is eventually how you deliver services to the people of New South Wales. That is the reason, hopefully, that members on both sides come into this place—to ensure that services are delivered appropriately to the people of New South Wales. I was not intending to say anything on this bill until I heard what was going on in the Chamber with some Labor members of Parliament. I consider them colleagues but they are on the other side and I think they are very wrong on this. While I was listening to them talk and arguing the unarguable I was listening to the news. I saw it reporting that our roads are jammed and that people are fed up and are leaving Sydney because the Government is not managing the budget and ensuring that the roads we need are being delivered.

Immediately after that I heard a new concept that in all my years in Parliament I have never heard in the context of Sydney public transport. It was the train crush. People on the trains in Sydney in peak hour were saying that the Government should be embarrassed about what they are going through each day during the so-called peak hour, which they also pointed out has become peak hours. Some of these things are inevitable if population increases of the sort that have happened, and we expect to happen continue, but only in circumstances where a government fails to recognise that the infrastructure needs of our city and State are changing and fails to budget appropriately for those infrastructure needs.

This bill makes a budget variation in the sum of roughly \$1.4 billion. If we need to consider whether this variation is based on a normal process or a competency process one only needs to consider that two of the major expenditures of waste in this recent period have been \$500 million that was spent on a CBD metro that the Government knew in its heart right from the word go was never going to be delivered—and certainly members of the Liberal and National parties and many in the business community were saying was not a sensible outcome—and the Government wasting \$200 million trying to sell electricity assets. The \$700 million was in two areas, so roughly one half of all the variations contained in this bill have been wasted on just two projects. That is a massive level of incompetence.

It is time that some members who were elected in more recent years reconsidered what they say in this place to justify the unjustifiable. It is for sound reasons that we have an open and transparent process that has developed over many years with regard to the budget. I acknowledge that there are limitations but there are efforts to have a budget process that can be investigated, challenged and looked at. With these now regular appropriation budget variation bills none of that happens. They enable governments to hide the truth.

A few years ago the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran a series of articles called the State of Secrecy. Nothing has changed; it is just that we do not talk about it now because it has become the accepted way of doing business in this State. I say to Government members that I do not know what will happen next year. I dread the thought that we might actually see them back in government, because if they think such bills are a normal and accepted practice of running government, they certainly are not. When I hear about the failings of infrastructure in this State I have a dread that unless the budget is approached in a far more professional manner than it is currently approached then the Government will have no capacity to deliver infrastructure in its remaining period. Indeed, any government that adopted similar processes may have problems in delivering infrastructure. We need to get the budget processes right.

Finally, I add another brief comment: this approach to lumbering the community with these add-ons along the way, with little explanation, is fundamentally unacceptable. I do acknowledge that there are some essentially critical and good things that the money will be spent on, particularly the \$29 million for Nepean hospital and expenditure on other hospitals and public services. However, that should have been part of what the Government determined at the commencement of the period, not so late into the period. When I hear members opposite lecture the Opposition about how they have reduced State debt and done wonderful things for the State I wonder why we do not have an amazing capacity to deliver infrastructure. Then I remember that when Nick Greiner and the Coalition left government each of the major government trading enterprises, including EnergyAustralia, Country Energy, Integral Energy, TransGrid and many more, had either nil debt or next to no debt. Now, some 16 years later, we have billions of dollars of debt that has been transferred from the immediate obviousness of the budget documents to the off-budget sector, that is, to those State government enterprises.

To the Labor members of Parliament who do not recollect that or do not know anything about it I say that the circumstances have certainly changed since Labor came to office. I am not saying that Labor governments do not do some good things—the member for Hawkesbury expresses concern at that statement—occasionally even Labor gets it right, but in managing the budget and economy of this State and maximising capacity to deliver services to the people of this State, Labor has been a disaster. Also, unfortunately, we now have a Treasurer who cannot count and a Premier who does not know that the Treasurer cannot count.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore) [6.23 p.m.]: I speak on the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010. The objects of this bill are as follows:

- (a) to set out the recurrent services and capital works and services for which the "Advance to the Treasurer" appropriation was expended in the 2009-2010 and 2008-2009 years, and to make the necessary adjustments to the appropriation for each of those years,
- (b) to appropriate the following amounts from the Consolidated Fund for recurrent services that were required by the exigencies of Government in accordance with section 22 (1) of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*:
 - (i) in relation to the 2009-2010 year—\$79,720,000,
 - (ii) in relation to the 2008-2009 year—\$136,400,000,
- (c) to appropriate an additional amount of \$695,000,000 from the Consolidated Fund for certain recurrent services and capital works and services for the 2009-2010 year.

Various members have bandied many figures and made other comments on the bill. Each and every one of us has to run a budget in our lives and, sadly, when we overrun our personal budgets we cannot go somewhere and say, "Could you just top it up for me?" However, it has become the accepted practice in Parliament. I believe it shows a lack of financial discipline. Indeed, this recurring trend of the Government is worrying. Last year the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2009 showed that the Government was in the vicinity of \$1.4 billion over budget.

I have difficulty explaining to my constituents why the Government requires additional money when it does not fulfil the promises that it makes. I well remember getting leave from Parliament to travel up to Lismore with the then Parliamentary Secretary for Health, the member for Kogarah. She briefed the community on the building of the hospital. Stage one was to be a mental health unit, stage two was to be a cancer unit and stage three was to be the rebuilding of the hospital. Stage one has been completed, stage two is underway, with the building almost complete and services to commence in about a month's time, but there is no plan for stage three.

Perhaps this project should be included in next year's budget variations bill. I note that other programs have been included in the bill: it appears that may be the quickest way for the hospital to be rebuilt. The Government again has overspent its budget and as result has been forced to request approval from the Parliament for additional funding. The fact that departments require this level of additional funding beyond original budget amounts indicates ongoing financial mismanagement by each of the respective Ministers.

I cannot believe that some of these items were missed during the normal budget process. For example, how could the Metropolitan Water Plan review be overlooked? Has that just come to light since the mini-budget was announced? The bill refers to "Rental payments to the State Property Authority resulting from restructure of office properties". Any businesses that are undergoing restructuring must be included in the budget for the next year. Has the Government only included it because this has just happened in the last month? Page 28 of the bill shows an allocation for a major symphony concert at Parramatta Park that is an annual event, so why was this item not included in the budget? I accept that additional amounts are reasonable.

The bill also refers to the upgrade of the emergency department of Port Macquarie Base Hospital. The decision on that upgrade should have been known at the time of the last budget. Did something break down overnight and need to be fixed the next day? For years many hospitals have been deteriorating but the Government has done nothing. The failure to rein in expenditure cannot be blamed on the global financial crisis, as this was the practice before the global financial crisis. It was identified in the Government's own inquiry in 2006 entitled "New South Wales Audit of Expenditure and Assets Report" by Vertigan and Stokes. This is a reflection of the Government's poor financial discipline, a point members on this side of the House have sought to make. For the New South Wales Government to ask for a further \$1.4 billion in funding simply emphasises its poor financial discipline. I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury) [6.30 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to debate on the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010. I will pick up from the member for Lismore's comments in relation to why the House is debating the bill. It is because of the failure of the Government, and particularly the Treasurer, to be able to balance their books. That is it, end of story. This is a typical bill that we need to debate after every budget because the Government cannot balance its books. As the member for Lismore correctly pointed out, we as families or we as businesses do not have the opportunity to simply say, "Can you please top up the bank balance with another \$1.4 billion, because we have run over budget, we have not been able to manage our finances." The point that needs to be made here is that the people of New South Wales continually ask, "Where is the money going?" The people of this State continue to be hit in the hip pocket. Whether it is through electricity price increases or increases in the cost of car registration, they always seem to be picking up the pieces of the New South Wales Government's failures. But they would like to know where the money is going.

I raise an issue that was brought to my attention by a family in Rouse Hill. It is an average family with two young children, both currently going to school. They raised with me the current cost of the yearly budget. It is virtually a snapshot of the cost of living for many of the people across New South Wales. The cost of living to this family currently is \$74,000 per year. I thought that was an extraordinary amount of money, especially given the current basic wage, which I think is below that amount. One starts to ask oneself: How do families across New South Wales survive and how do they balance their own budget? It must be very difficult for them. Within the budget of this Rouse Hill family there was nothing extraordinary. There was no extravagance, certainly no spending that one would look at and say, "This family could rein in." They were not going out; they were not having nights out. I recall that a figure of some \$500 per week was quoted for the cost of their mortgage. I think that would represent a mortgage of about \$300,000 to \$350,000, depending on the interest rate, which is certainly not a large mortgage by any means. I would think that would be the average mortgage at this time.

The family went on to say that they were paying registration, insurance and a green slip on only one vehicle. The husband has the benefit of having a company vehicle, and therefore they are only paying for one vehicle. In itself, that is quite out of the ordinary in Rouse Hill; most families in Rouse Hill would be two-car families because of the lack of public transport in the area and they are hit hard with the costs associated with the running of their vehicles. The Rouse Hill family I have referred to went on to refer to the cost of insurance premiums for their vehicle. Then came the shock of the cost of electricity. They are currently paying an average of \$700 per quarter for electricity. Those bills have almost doubled in the past three to four years, which is a significant increase. The cost of water bills has also increased significantly. At \$700 a quarter, this is where families really start to wonder how they are going to make ends meet. These costs go up and they add considerably to the families' budgets.

I had a look at the Rouse Hill family's budget. The family had only costed \$1,000 for holidays this year for all four family members. They have even gone to the extent of having a camping holiday. It was the cheapest holiday they could afford; they could still take the children away and enjoy themselves for a couple of weeks, and the entire cost of that holiday was a mere \$1,000, which is certainly not extravagant. The family listed the cost of presents. As I said, this family had gone into detail to ensure they highlighted all the costs they were incurring. They costed birthday and Christmas presents at around \$2,500. When I first looked at that I thought that it was a lot to spend on birthday and Christmas presents. But when one takes into account that the two children would have birthday and Christmas presents, mum and dad would probably have a birthday and Christmas present between them, and presents would be bought for the extended family, \$2,500 becomes a realistic figure and certainly not an extravagant figure.

When one looks at all the insurance costs, registration costs, electricity and water costs, the cost of the mortgage—which is probably the most significant cost each week—one comes up with a total of \$74,000,

which is the current total budget for this family that lives in Rouse Hill. The family also has to pay council rates and other costs associated with the cost of living. But that is an extraordinary amount of money. This average family in Rouse Hill is paying dearly. But what is happening with their money? People are saying to me, "What is the Government actually doing with our money?" People get extremely upset when they see things like the inner-city metro, which has been flagged as major infrastructure at the cost of around \$500 million, but not a shovel-full of dirt was turned on the project. When governments waste that sort of money, we will see the cost of family budgets increase to cover those costs. But we should never inflict those costs for waste. That is where this Government has failed.

Over the past 15 years the Government has failed to manage its finances appropriately, to implement the infrastructure that these people, especially those who live in Rouse Hill, need. The Government has wasted money on projects such as the Tcard, the geotechnical works and environmental assessment regarding the North West Rail Link—a project that has been scrapped, then re-announced, then scrapped again. The Government has spent a lot of money on its advertising campaigns—to tell us it was going to give us a North West Rail Link, then it was not going to give us a North West Rail Link, and then advertised it once again. Who can ever forget the photos on our television screens of Vic Larusso flying around in a helicopter, spruiking the benefits of a North West Rail Link? All those projects have been lost to those people, yet the people of Rouse Hill continue to pay through the nose for money that is wasted by the State Government.

I raise another issue regarding infrastructure about which I have asked questions in this House in the past. I refer to the North Richmond Bridge. This is a piece of infrastructure that is needed right now. We have traffic jams for hours on end in the morning and afternoon for the people who travel from my electorate, through North Richmond and across the North Richmond bridge. The Government has allowed development to take place in that area, and it also now proposes to allow another potentially 2,000 blocks of land to be developed in the North Richmond area. That area cannot sustain the traffic that is there already. That traffic travels through the Londonderry electorate. However, the member for Londonderry has done absolutely nothing to raise the importance of that issue—

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: I understand the member for Hawkesbury is talking about an area in his electorate, but it is beyond the scope of the bill to criticise another member of this place. He should do so by way of substantive motion. I ask you to direct the member to return to the leave of the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Diane Beamer): Order! The member for Hawkesbury will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: The point I was making is that no funding has been set aside for that important infrastructure. The North Richmond Bridge is not in my electorate; as I said, it is in the Londonderry electorate. The need for that infrastructure is absolutely vital for that community at this time. However, all the good people of my electorate as far up as Bilpin, Berambing, East Kurrajong, Comleroy, Tennyson and Blaxlands Ridge, need to utilise that piece of road and that bridge. If the Government had not wasted so much of its money and financial opportunities, the money could have been found and those people would now be driving across a four-lane bridge, which also would have opened up opportunity for further development. The proposal for an additional 2,000 homes in that area is unacceptable while the North Richmond Bridge needs upgrading.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck) [6.40 p.m.]: I follow many members from this side of the House to contribute to the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010. I read with some shock that the total amount for recurrent services and capital works in 2008-09 and 2009-10 will be in excess of \$1.4 billion. For the Government to overspend its budget by that amount and, as a result, be forced to seek approval for additional funding above and beyond the original budgeted amounts demonstrates ongoing financial mismanagement by the respective Ministers in this place. As the shadow Treasurer and member for Manly has said, the lack of financial management in this place is really worrying. It is a recurring trend: Variations have been required in successive budgets, which demonstrates that the Government is spending beyond its means.

This year the Government has overspent again; it needs another \$1.4 billion outside of the budget process. Examples have been given this evening of that poor financial discipline, including the \$500 million wasted on the scrapped CBD metro and \$200 million spent so far on trying to sell the electricity assets. It is very worrying that so much taxpayers' money is being wasted in this way. Some of the relief packages contained in this bill could easily have been budgeted for, such as the drought assistance measures—which we would encourage—and transport subsidies. Some others are a little worrying and I ask the Parliamentary Secretary in reply to give us more information about them. For instance, the number of rental payments to the State Property

Authority from the various government departments that are listed in the bill is worrying. What does "Rental payments to State Property Authority resulting from restructure of office properties" in the amount of \$335,000 to the State Emergency Service relate to? Which properties? Where are they?

Mr Barry Collier: Which page are you referring to?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I am referring to page 26 of the bill. Under the Department of Human Services the grant for the Keep Them Safe program is needed. I imagine the \$3 million grant to the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, including essential safety upgrades, is also needed. The Jenolan Caves are a great tourist destination close to my electorate. It is interesting that under the Premier, and Minister for the Arts, the recurrent services appear to be almost totally for Sydney-based arts projects, and once again not so much for the many disciplines under arts for rural communities, which are so desperately in need of additional funding. I recently met with the Cowra Art Society, which is pleading with the Government for more thespian visits and other performing arts concerts, ballets and cultural experiences in the Cowra area. That group would appreciate any support it can get from the Government. The bill does not appear to provide a lot for rural artistic endeavours—once again it is Sydney, Sydney, Sydney.

The bill contains several examples of government departments that have made rental payments to the State Property Authority resulting from the restructure of office properties, which are worth multimillions of dollars. We need an explanation from the Government as to where those offices are to be relocated. The bill will have a stimulatory effect on the economy, but once again we have seen the Government unable to rein in its spending and unable to budget properly. I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to explain how \$2,309 is to be spent in this Chamber for the replacement of the Legislative Assembly broadcast system and office equipment. That is a lot of money and I would be interested to know about the breakdown of that amount. This bill is a clear example of the Government's failure to monitor spending and I, as so many members on this side of the Chamber have done, condemn the Government for its lack of expenditure control.

Mr WAYNE MERTON (Baulkham Hills) [6.47 p.m.]: I speak to the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010. Unfortunately, the Government has had to come back to the Parliament, which seems to be a regular occurrence, to seek a further advance to balance the books, as it were. This has happened on many occasions during my time in this House and until there is a change in government I guess this regular event will continue. Tonight we are being asked to approve something like \$1.48 billion outside of the budget process—a substantial sum of money in anyone's language. That \$1.48 billion, assuming it is not opposed by the Coalition—and I understand that to be the situation—will be passed by the House without having to go through the regular budget process and, I would suggest, with a reduced level of accountability.

The people of north-western Sydney are very concerned about the overall waste of this Government. In 1998 the people of north-western Sydney were promised the North West Rail Link. It is now the year 2010. If that link were going to open, the first train would be pulling into Castle Hill railway station within the next seven months. The reality is that not one sod of earth has been turned, not one sleeper has been laid, and the rail link will not operate. We are now promised a rail link that will start in something like 2017 and be completed some years later.

The Government has wasted \$500 million on the ill-founded dream of creating a CBD metro. It is one of the reasons we are debating this bill. It was an unwanted child, tragically not even supported by many of the council areas through which the metro was to pass. It was unwanted and unloved by residents. Yet the Government, with an almost obsessive zeal and determination, proceeded with the planning of the metro. The metro faced a similar fate as the North West Rail Link and was scrapped. Someone has to pick up the tab and pay compensation to the many people whose lives were placed in a state of irregularity, possibly permanently, and those who suffered because of the Government's decision. People were forced to move out of their premises and re-establish their businesses elsewhere.

This wilful neglect on the part of the Government was of its own making. There was no consultation. The Government was obsessed. It cared little about what people thought. It has now cost the State \$500 million, and that is probably not the end of the story. That is the figure we are aware of at the moment. Probably additional bills will be introduced for more money. At the moment it is \$500 million, half a billion dollars, one-third of the amount for which the Government is seeking approval. One-third of the amount sought, \$500 million, was lost on the CBD metro. Another failing of this Government was the \$200 million spent so far on the sale of the State's electricity assets—another loss. Those two figures, \$200 million for the sale of the State's electricity assets and \$500 million wasted on the scrapped CBD metro, represent 50 per cent of the amount for which the Government is seeking approval.

The Government enters into proposals without any proper consideration and as if there is no tomorrow. It acts as though the day of paying for these projects will never come. Of course, it has come. That is why the Government comes back year after year seeking more money. If the Government were a corporation it would be bankrupt. It would be in liquidation and would have had a receiver appointed some time ago. The Government is living on credit. Very much like its federal masters, it is living on borrowed money. It shows no accountability and it comes back to the Parliament asking for money to prop it up.

While some of the projects are admirable, one has to query why they were not taken into account in the initial planning of the budgetary estimates. The Opposition is not opposed to funding for worthwhile projects. We are pleased with the additional funding for the Nepean Hospital project and the Blacktown clinical simulation facility, as well as the allocation of funding for front-line firefighting services. However, that is not the point. The point is that the Government has not properly planned its projects. There has been economic mismanagement on the part of the Government. Unfortunately, if the Government is returned to power next March, this will happen again, and it will continue to happen. There must be accountability. When the budget is brought before the Parliament, to the best of the Government's efforts it should spell out the whole picture. If it happens once it can be considered an accident. If it happens often, it is neglect, ineptitude and a lack of accountability.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.54 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Manly, Kiama, Murray Darling, Wollongong, Tweed, Kogarah, Davidson, Wakehurst, Lismore, Burrinjuck and Baulkham Hills who spoke in this debate. Each year, through the appropriation bill, the Parliament makes an advance available to Treasury to meet unforeseen expenditures. This bill gives the Parliament the opportunity to scrutinise payments, as details do not appear in the original budget. However, I am advised by the Treasury that the amounts in the Treasurer's Advance component do appear in the budget. This bill reports on how these funds are spent. The figures are incorporated into the budget, so far as the Treasurer's Advance component is concerned. We are exercising transparency and accountability in the budget. If we add to this the \$500 million spent on superannuation, this comprises the bulk of expenditure that we are debating tonight.

It is important to note that this practice has been endorsed by the Auditor-General, as well as the Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1 in its report on appropriation processes. In addition to the Treasurer's Advance, the bill has been compiled to satisfy the statutory provisions relating to section 22 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983. The Treasurer may, with the approval of the Governor, determine that amounts shall be paid for contingencies of the Government from the Consolidated Fund in anticipation of appropriations by the Parliament. This is not out of the ordinary. It is a key part of the budgetary process. As members are aware, it is not always possible to seek Parliament's authority in advance for unforeseen and urgent expenditure. Provisions have been established for such situations. The member for Manly seems to believe that the Government has a crystal ball and can foresee everything. Not many people saw the global financial crisis coming, except perhaps some unscrupulous bankers in New York.

Since its introduction on 1 July 2009 the Housing Construction Acceleration Plan has provided important stimulus to the New South Wales housing and construction sector. So far, more than 3,300 New South Wales home buyers, investors and empty nesters have taken advantage of the scheme, purchasing newly constructed properties worth more than \$1.4 billion. The scheme has put more than \$25 million worth of stamp duty back into people's pockets and, more importantly, it has stimulated \$1 billion worth of jobs supporting construction activity—jobs for builders, plumbers, architects and more. As the member for Manly well knows, the building and construction industry has a huge multiplier effect. It is a leading sector of the Australian economy. The member for Manly said that the economy should be run like a business. That is not possible. The member well knows the concept of the paradox of thrift. Keynesian economics demonstrates you cannot run an economy like you do a business.

The member for Murray-Darling seems to have a surplus mentality. I also say to him that an economy cannot be run like a business. The member for Hawkesbury and the member for Davidson want a balanced budget all the time. If we followed that idea we would follow depression economics, which Keynes overturned in the 1930s. This State has a longstanding commitment to fully funded superannuation liabilities by 2030. This commitment is incorporated in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. In response to the member for Manly, the \$510 million of the unfunded superannuation is the proceeds of the NSW Lotteries sale. We are applying the proceeds of the NSW Lotteries transaction to superannuation because it is the best long-term investment for the State. It has a high return; it is as simple as that. The bottom line is we are putting the proceeds to their best and most sensible use. It is sound economic management at its most straightforward. On average, we expect to earn

2 per cent more a year. We will be \$75 million better off over the next 10 years and \$620 million better off over the next 20 years by taking this decision, going down this path and putting the proceeds of the \$1 billion transaction to its best use. It is another example of strong economic management by this Government.

The member for Murray-Darling asked what the money has been spent on. I draw his attention to schedules 1 and 2 to the bill. In response to the member for Murray-Darling, the Commonwealth's Nation Building funding was stipulated for specific programs, mainly housing and education. It was, indeed, a great stimulus. That money cannot be redirected into emergency drought assistance or some of the important measures identified in the bill, such as, child safety, emergency services and health care. The money in this bill is set aside for unforeseen and urgent funding. It is supported by legislation that has been adhered to by both parties for nearly 20 years. It is important to understand that the superannuation allocation is a large percentage of the appropriation, \$510 million. This could not be budgeted for because the sale of NSW Lotteries had not been completed at the time of the budget. Business asset sales are not figured into the budget until after the completion of transactions.

In relation to the queries from the member for Burrinjuck about expenditure in the Arts, the State Emergency Service and the housing sector, at this stage, with all due respect, I can only refer the member to the Ministers responsible and ask that she seek their advice on those issues. The bill demonstrates this Government's commitment to high-quality services. The bill is part of the annual budget process and confirms our fiscally responsible approach to budget management. The bill has been compiled to satisfy the statutory provisions relating to section 22 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

COAL MINE HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2010

COURT INFORMATION BILL 2010

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT (DEVELOPMENT CONSENTS) BILL 2010

TREES (DISPUTES BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS) AMENDMENT BILL 2010

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

PRINCES HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [7.00 p.m.]: When I was elected to Parliament in 2003 a focus of the Coalition campaign for the seats of Bega, South Coast and Kiama was the Princes Highway. In that year and during the 2007 election campaign the Coalition presented very detailed, costed and achievable plans for much-needed upgrading works. Between 2003 and now, many individuals and organisations have lobbied for improvements to various sections of the highway and have taken a strategic direction for the overall length of the highway. The Princes Highway is a vital vehicle and freight corridor for industry, business and tourism on the South Coast.

I wish to pay tribute to some of those organisations. The South East Australian Transport Strategy has lobbied for many years and has consistently released strategies to stimulate and facilitate investment and transport infrastructure in south-eastern New South Wales, eastern Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory region. Its current election policy strategy document includes policies on ports, transport, timber bridges, rail projects and, pertinent to this discussion, a focus on specific Princes Highway projects. The PHocus lobby group

and the Southern Councils Group—representing local government from Wollongong to the Victorian border—have consistently argued for highway upgrading. Today it launched an online forum, in conjunction with the NRMA, to invite feedback on the Princes Highway and to ensure that the voices of communities are heard.

In addition, we have seen strong campaigns for Princes Highway upgrades from all local media outlets, including the *Milton Ulladulla Times*, the *South Coast Register*, the *Illawarra Mercury* and other regional newspapers, and all local television and radio stations. All these groups have lobbied and worked hard for Princes Highway upgrades, whether in specific locations or as a result of accidents or highway closures, and all collectively should take credit for what has been achieved. But there is more to do.

The Princes Highway provides the only transport access to numerous South Coast villages and towns. When the highway is closed due to vehicle crashes or because of bushfires there is no other access for residents to their homes or for vital goods and freight deliveries. Princes Highway closures are not uncommon and in the past, thousands of residents and businesses have become completely isolated when the highway is closed. Whilst it will never be possible to provide bypass options in all locations, it is possible to ensure that the highway is upgraded to a standard that encourages investment in the area, particularly in the tourism industry. The member for Bega and I have spoken many times in this place about the need to plan for progressive Princes Highway upgrades.

I raise the issue this evening as a matter of public importance because currently virtually all work has ceased on the Princes Highway following the completion of the Conjola Mountain deviation works. Due to poor planning by the New South Wales Labor Government and announcements made only according to election cycles, the Government has failed to plan ahead again to ensure works are progressively rolled out. There are countless projects of a minor nature that could be undertaken currently, and certainly major projects that have been in the planning process for a long, long time could be started tomorrow if there was the political will to do so. Works such as the highway duplication at South Nowra would resolve a heavily congested section of the highway, which is regularly gridlocked, and would provide access to many businesses at South Nowra.

The Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade will duplicate the highway in many locations and remove many of the dangerous curves and bends and, most importantly, bypass the town of Berry. That project has been on the drawing board for more than 15 years. I look forward to the commencement of the projects in the next few months. I pay tribute to the Roads and Traffic Authority for its consultation with respect to the South Nowra project and its willingness to listen to the community with respect to issues such as the Flinders Road access. The Roads and Traffic Authority has worked hard on that project and I share its frustration in not being able to begin the project.

Also, I draw the attention of the House to the tragic accident that occurred at East Lynne in January this year in which three members of the Bridge family lost their lives. Shortly after this horrific tragedy I wrote to the Minister for Transport and Roads asking for a thorough investigation into the site at East Lynne where this accident occurred. I received many representations about the nature of the road at that location and I asked for a safety audit. By 3 May I had not received even an acknowledgment of my correspondence. It is unacceptable not to receive even an acknowledgement of correspondence and I was forced to write once again. I have received now only an acknowledgement, with no outline of what kind of work has been done on identifying problems at that intersection.

Just today another dreadful accident north of the Shoalhaven River Bridge resulted in the closure of the highway for southbound traffic for many hours, with no alternative route. This follows an undelivered promise in 2003 to undertake a feasibility study into a third bridge crossing and various other promises, including by the member for Kiama who has now entered the Chamber—albeit rather late—to deliver the North Nowra link road. If the North Nowra link road had been delivered and traffic was able to travel north we would not have the frustration and perhaps driver error, as occurred today at Illaroo Road on the Princes Highway.

Much has been achieved. I have publicly given credit to the Roads and Traffic Authority and this Government for works such as the Conjola Mountain deviation. But there is more to be done and this Government does not seem to have any direction when it comes to the Princes Highway. The Government needs to make representations to the Federal Government, as it urged the Opposition to do when John Howard was in government, because the current Federal Government regime has failed to recognise even the existence of the Princes Highway. In contrast, the Howard Government was committed to assisting in upgrading works and blackspot funding, contributing \$34 million to the North Kiama bypass, \$15 million to the Forest Road to Jervis

Bay turn-off, and \$10 million towards the Conjola Mountain work. We need works such as those to be extended. I am sure that the member for Bega will talk about projects in his electorate that have been in the planning stage far too long. I call on the Government to plan for projects and proceed without further delay.

Mr MATT BROWN (Kiama) [7.07 p.m.]: I am pleased to talk about roads because the New South Wales Labor Government has delivered enormously for the people of New South Wales. It was interesting to hear what the member for South Coast said today. In the agreement in principle debate on the Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2010, Opposition member after Opposition member said, "Cut spending." But all we ever hear from the member for South Coast is, "Spend more." According to the member for South Coast, the Government simply throws money and roads appear. Nothing could be further from the truth. The South Coast community will not be fooled by this rhetoric time and again. Community consultation has taken place, commissions of inquiry have been undertaken, land purchases have been made and some pretty spectacular pieces of road have been built. For example, I refer to the North Kiama bypass—what a wonderful piece of engineering, what a wonderful road and what a wonderful asset for the South Coast.

While that was being built this Government was planning for the obvious next stage; that is, the Dunmore to Oak Flats section. That was completed at a cost of \$120 million—provided by the State Government—and it was opened last year. What a wonderful piece of road that is. It links the North Kiama bypass through to the Oak Flats interchange with a dual carriageway to just before Gerringong. A host of other important roadworks to the south are also underway, including the upgrade of intersections at Jervis Bay and St Georges Basin and the widening of the bridge over Currumben Creek. The member for South Coast talked about the Conjola Mountain upgrade and the northern distributor extension. They have been opened since October last year. While all of this and the construction of Main Road 92 has been happening, the Government has conducted significant community consultation about the Gerringong to Bomaderry road. For the first time we now have a clear alignment for that stretch of road.

What did the Opposition do about that stretch of road when it was in government? It did flimsy feasibility studies. That is worse than nothing. It offered a few options and told the community to talk about them. It would not make a decision about which option to pursue; in fact, it did nothing. The member for South Coast talked about political will. I am pleased that I have that political will. I take projects like that to the community and consult extensively to reach a decision about the best road alignment. The next stage is to work out the best entry and exit points to each town. Of course, that involves more community consultation.

The community is pleased with that process. It does not subscribe to the Coalition's approach of saying, "Just build the road." My communities want to be consulted about the alignment of roads and to know how they will affect their lives and businesses. They see the Opposition's calls as juvenile, silly and naive in the extreme. The Leader of The Nationals, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for South Coast and other crazy Liberal Party members who visit the area always say, "Just build the road." Before a road can be built we must know what needs to be built, buy the appropriate land and obtain approval. The road can be built only after those things have been done.

The projects that have been completed demonstrate that this Government delivers infrastructure on the South Coast. We understand the importance of the Princes Highway: It is a vital link from Sydney to southern New South Wales. It has been the most important issue I have dealt with as the local member and I am passionate about it. It is one of a number of projects—and not only in my electorate—that I am proud to see completed. I mentioned the \$58 million upgrade of the Conjola Mountain section of the highway. The Government has initiated a host of other projects up and down the coast. They demonstrate that this Government is totally committed to improving the Princes Highway.

For instance, the Government invested \$24 million in safety improvements and the building of four lanes on the Princes Highway between Forest Road and Jervis Bay Road. That project was completed in November 2008 and it is much appreciated by motorists travelling south of Nowra. The Government has also spent \$30 million on the upgrade of the Princes Highway and Lawrence Hargrave Drive. The southern curves at Pambula have been realigned and work has also been done on the Pambula bridge. I could go on and on about the many projects completed by this Government.

The last major road upgrade before the Labor Government was elected was when Neville Wran and Barrie Unsworth presided over the Kiama bypass. As soon as Nick Greiner was elected, all roadworks ceased. We all remember that the Coalition Government stopped upgrading roads and closed down hospitals. Members opposite cannot be trusted to deliver roads because that requires spending money. We have just spent the last

hour and a half listening to Coalition members saying that they are sick to death of Labor governments spending money on infrastructure and services, especially in regional New South Wales. That is a shame. This Government has now extended the Gerringong to Bomaderry project. This week I announced that stages one, two and three will go ahead. That is a fantastic project and it is moving forward. The hoo-ha that members of the Opposition are creating has no substance whatsoever.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega) [7.14 p.m.]: That performance from the member for Kiama was absolutely pathetic. He talked about history and road projects. He has said many times over the years in this place that the Princes Highway should be a road of national importance and that the Commonwealth Government should fund it. Now that Rudd has been elected we never hear him say that the Commonwealth Government should make a contribution.

What is most disappointing about this Government is that it has just been involved in completing a project at Mount Conjola but it has not made any plans for the next upgrade of the Princes Highway. As a result, no major works are now underway on the highway. That is despite a recommendation from the State Coroner in 2008 that a 15.1 kilometre stretch of the highway between Victoria Creek and Dignams Creek be realigned. That section of the highway was the subject of a coronial inquest. However, the Government's best effort was to allocate funding to Dignams Creek and to ignore the 15.1 kilometre stretch between the two bridges. It failed to act on the State Coroner's recommendations. That is shameful. The member for Kiama did not even bother to acknowledge that the State Labor Government is refusing to act on those recommendations.

South East Australian Transport Strategy Incorporated [SEATS] has put together an election policy document for 2010-11 designed for politicians of both political persuasions at the Federal and State levels to examine and to comment on. One of the key recommendations is that State governments should develop network improvement plans based on 5-, 10- and 20-year horizons. That makes sense for the community, which wants to know what upgrades are planned for a highway on which people are losing their lives and in many instances being maimed for life because of its condition. This Government has not developed any comprehensive Princes Highway plan. The Government should have instructed the Roads and Traffic Authority to develop such plans given the high number of fatalities. In some years the number of incidents on the Princes Highway has been greater than the number on the Pacific Highway, despite the fact that it is half as long and does not have the same traffic volume.

The SEATS document makes a number of recommendations about the duplication of the highway at South Nowra at an estimated cost of \$70 million, the Victoria Creek realignment, which is estimated to cost \$30 million, and the Dignams Creek realignment, which is estimated to cost \$45 million. SEATS has not included the need for realignment of the highway between Victoria Creek and Dignams Creek. On some sections of that road one can see the pick and shovel marks made when it was built during the Second World War. We are talking about a road built in the 1940s that is catering for today's traffic.

It is important to recognise the fact this State Government has made no contribution toward the work being undertaken on the Bega bypass. The Federal Labor member is now caught between a rock and a hard place because he promised to build the bypass. He has only committed \$30 million; he is short some \$25 million, believing that his State Labor counterparts are somehow going to find those funds. I have news for Dr Kelly: That money will not be forthcoming from the State Labor Government so he will need to ensure that the rest of the funding is made available so he honours his commitment to the people of Bega to start construction of the Bega bypass prior to the next Federal election.

The other part of the Princes Highway that has also been identified by the South East Australian Transport Strategy is south of Batemans Bay. Some \$40 million has been identified as being needed there to realign sections of the highway between Batemans Bay and Mogo, again another treacherous stretch of the highway. Sections of the highway between Pambula and Eden are also in a perilous state. I congratulate the member for South Coast on moving tonight's matter of public importance. This is a vital debate that the State Government thinks will go away. It will not. Many more projects need to be built on the Princes Highway.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast) [7.19 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Bega and the member for Kiama for contributing to the debate this evening. The member for Bega has a deep understanding of the issues in his electorate and the projects that have been on board for many years. The member for Kiama, in his rather aggressive and intimidating fashion, accused us of all sorts of things and—perhaps because he turned up late—missed the point of the whole debate. The point of the debate was not to criticise what has been done. I said many times in my contribution tonight that significant projects had been completed, for which I gave credit to the State Labor Government and the Roads and Traffic Authority.

The point of the debate that the member for Kiama missed was that we should have been consistently and strategically planning for medium- and long-term projects along the Princes Highway so we could have avoided what has happened now; that is, an absolute stalling of anything happening on the Princes Highway. People are asking what is the next project? Why is South Nowra not up and running? Why not Gerringong to Bomaderry? How long have we been talking about that? It is not just me and it is not just the member for Bega who have been calling out for some of these projects to be commenced. It is the organisations I have paid credit to tonight—organisations like the South East Australian Transport Strategy, like PHocus, like the local newspapers, like radio, like television—all of whom have combined to ensure that works are commenced, and are supportive of works when they are completed, as I have been tonight.

The member for Kiama talks about the Gerringong to Bomaderry section of the Princes Highway and the fact that yesterday or today he announced that this project would be in three stages. Goodness me, Blind Freddie could have seen that the project would have been divided into three sections, but that does not indicate when this project will start. Part of the Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade includes the Berry bypass. The Berry bypass has been on the books now for more than 15 years. As I said, many constituents in Berry indicate that it has been talked about for upwards of 20 years. Of course, at the moment nothing is happening.

Even though the route for the Berry bypass has been decided, trucks are still lumbering through the beautiful town of Berry. People have had enough, they are fed up in Berry, and the member for Kiama seems unable to do anything else but talk about how complex the project is and how complex the planning process is. We know that, but as I was 16 years on Shoalhaven council, and chairman of the works and finance committee for much of that time, I know how long it takes to plan some of these routes, gazette them, purchase the land and complete the planning and consultation process. But it does not take as long to get to the stage where we can commence works.

I am in no way suggesting just get out there and build the road. That was an infantile contribution from the member for Kiama. I recognise that these projects are complex and the planning for them is complex. But the consultation for the South Nowra duplication project was completed many months ago. It is not a complicated or complex section of the highway to duplicate. The road corridor is wide enough to start work tomorrow but, as usual, we have to wait for an election cycle. We have to wait for the member for Kiama, seemingly, to sign off on some of these projects.

It was not appropriate for the member tonight to take personal credit for the North Kiama bypass. The former Federal Government contributed \$34 million to the project, as it did with another project he mentioned, the Forest Road to Jervis Bay turnoff, and Conjola Mountain, all of which was contributed to by the Howard Government. Since then nothing has come from the Rudd Government, despite numerous calls from Government members in this House telling us to pick up the phone and talk to John Howard. We did, and so did the member for Gilmore, and we got action from John Howard. But Government members in this House have been unable to influence Kevin Rudd to acknowledge that the road even exists. I sometimes wonder what the Prime Minister does these days. Rather than stuff up building programs and insulation programs he should be concentrating on delivering investment in infrastructure. We know what the former Federal Government did.

Ms Noreen Hay: It did zero.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK: It committed itself to the Princes Highway. The member for Wollongong, in saying zero, is misrepresenting the facts, as she has on so many occasions. In reply to the member for Kiama, who really did not say much except to try to take personal credit, credit must go to those who contributed to the planning of those projects and the planning for them. Of course, that is not just the member for Kiama; it is all the organisations and individuals I have referred to in my contribution tonight on the Princes Highway.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.24 p.m. until
Wednesday 19 May 2010 at 10.00 a.m.**

