

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 12 May 2011

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

The Speaker tabled, in accordance with section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled "Investigation into the solicitation of a corrupt payment by a Strathfield Municipal Council officer", dated May 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.01 a.m.]: I move:

That the business before the House be interrupted:

- (1) at 11.30 a.m. to permit the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Oatley; and
- (2) at 1.10 p.m. to permit the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Tamworth.

Yesterday I moved the suspension of standing orders to manage the business of the House today. As I indicated then, it followed full discussion with the Opposition, so I do not think there are any issues about it. I would like to ensure formally that there is a motion in place to bring on the various inaugural speeches that will be given today. By way of clarification I indicate that this morning two bills are likely to be considered in the next half hour. Then from approximately 10.30 a.m., subject to the timing of the members involved, we will be dealing with notices of motions. Whilst we will interrupt business at 11.30 a.m. and 1.10 p.m. as we are proceeding through the notices of motions, at the conclusion of the 11.30 a.m. inaugural speech by the member for Oatley we will return to dealing with notices of motions and they will continue until 1.10 p.m. Members involved in that procedure and those who wish to speak should be aware of those arrangements.

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

Motion agreed to.

CROSS-BORDER COMMISSION BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Richard Torbay.

Agreement in Principle

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.03 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

Today I am reintroducing the Cross-Border Commission Bill. To be accurate, it is the reintroduction of a bill that has been before this place on two previous occasions. That bill was introduced by the member for Ballina,

who is currently a Minister in the Government. I supported the bill on 1 April 2000, and in 2005 when he reintroduced the bill, and I indicated to the member for Ballina how supportive I was. It was a good bill then and it is a good bill now. The reason I have chosen to reintroduce this bill is that this is a critically important issue for those border communities; it is a problem that has not gone away.

In fact, the need to establish an independent and stand-alone cross-border commission is as strong now as it was in the past. The aim, as it was then, is to resolve the many issues confronted by communities on the New South Wales border with Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. At stake are the cost burdens that run into millions of dollars a year plus the massive inconvenience experienced by thousands of businesses and residents in these communities.

The proposed cross-border commission of New South Wales would consist of a chair and between four and eight part-time members appointed by the Premier. Commission members would be qualified to represent cross-border issues in the interests of consumers, business, farmers and local government. The members would be residents of New South Wales but, importantly, not sitting members of the State or Federal parliaments. This is a deliberate move to avoid politicisation of the issues and to promote solutions to issues with bipartisan support. Let us invest in the solutions rather than just talk about the problems. The commission would have the power to call witnesses, take evidence and undertake all other necessary actions to allow it to make regular recommendations to the New South Wales Parliament.

The commission would invite members of border communities to make submissions; conduct inquiries referred to it by the Premier or as the commission considers appropriate; identify issues to refer to the Premier; prepare an annual report for tabling in Parliament; and carry out other functions conferred or imposed on it by or under any Act or law. The bill proposes that the commission be a small, smart and effective body to address cross-border issues and recommend solutions, and that it be reviewed after five years. Issues that the commission would address, and there are many, include the anomalies in payroll tax, which varies unbelievably in each of the border States; duties that exist in some States but not others; the disruptions caused by daylight saving; variations in the formulae to calculate workers compensation premiums; differing licensing agreements—members have received many representations about licensing and other matters, including agreements for a range of licences such as those for the fishing industry; tax disparities; and the content of education courses.

These are legitimate concerns. They vary in just about every State and Territory on those borders. Of course, there are many varying rules relating to businesses. There are issues arising from weight limits relating to transport—I can see members nodding. There are also variations in electricity prices, and so the list continues. I could go on but I see members nodding and clearly there is support for what I am saying. The member for Clarence is still nodding, as is the member for Murray-Darling. Property and business owners have interests that in many cases straddle State borders. This is certainly the case in the north of my electorate in communities such as Tenterfield and many other border towns. School bus owners have conflicting schedules during the daylight saving period, occupational health and safety standards differ between bordering States, and licensing and registration of tradespeople differs, depending on where they are located. It can be a matter of whether they are across the river or across the road, particularly where there are many border communities such as in my electorate of Northern Tablelands.

When this legislation was last debated the member for Lismore pointed out when speaking to the bill that people living on the Queensland-New South Wales border have post office boxes in Queensland but live in New South Wales. I can certainly vouch for that. In communities like Mingoola, Bonshaw, Yetman and Jennings, and the border community within Tenterfield Shire there are people who have Queensland phone numbers and Queensland postcodes, but live in New South Wales. Indeed, they are constituents of mine in Northern Tablelands. When they ring for services they are told, because of the technology, "Sorry, you're ringing from Queensland", when their number flashes up.

They say, "No, we're not ringing from Queensland. We're ringing from New South Wales." They go through that time and time again in their attempts to get through to a terribly frustrating bureaucracy that does not understand the limits that border restrictions impose on people. The benefit of a cross-border commission would be that it would allow border communities to put all such issues on the table for discussion and resolution. Some cross-border arrangements already exist and work well. For example, cross-border arrangements are in place with policing. I know the member for Dubbo was involved in those arrangements when he was a police sergeant at Tenterfield in the northern part of my electorate. The commission could and

would present a very clear picture of what works, what does not work, the frustrations of creating barriers to the smooth running of business and community activities, the difficulties for individuals, and extra costs incurred just because of geographic location.

I urge the Government to support the bill. As I stated earlier, I openly acknowledge that it has been introduced at the instigation of the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast, Don Page. This is very, very important legislation. In conclusion I cite the most recent example that illustrates the need for this legislation. When floods hit Queensland, affected border communities in Queensland and New South Wales received different emergency service assistance. The rules and emergency services processes applying to support were a nightmare. Yesterday I gave notice of a motion calling for a review to ensure that natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements in New South Wales, which provide for a payment of \$15,000 for disaster relief, are brought into line with the payment in Queensland of \$25,000. Currently people who live across the road or across the creek from each other receive disparate payments.

People in dire circumstances, many of whom have lost everything, find the level of disparity incredibly frustrating. The Cross-Border Commission Bill 2011 is good legislation. I again acknowledge that it was instigated by the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast, Don Page. I am reintroducing this legislation because we do not have time to waste. I am confident that it will receive the support it deserves and that it will provide relief to the community. I commend it to the House.

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

The SPEAKER: Order! It being before 10.30 a.m. the House will now proceed with Orders of the Day (General Orders) and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices).

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Debate resumed from 6 May 2011.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.12 a.m.]: Prior to debate on the motion being adjourned, I stated the importance of New South Wales managing the development of our renewable energy industry in a consistent and positive manner. The hope of the people of New South Wales is that the Government will address environmental issues in a constructive manner by providing practical solutions rather than continuing the approach adopted by previous governments of more talkfests, more committees and more reports. Proper management of the environment demands positive outcomes. I state for the record that our entire community has the best interests of the environment at heart. Every person who lives in Australia knows that we live in a wonderful part of the world and that we should all play a role in maintaining the environment in the best way we know.

I have been proactive in taking environmental protection into account. My home is designed and equipped to be environmentally sustainable. My home uses minimal electricity and I capture every available drop of water for use in my home. We drink tank water—my family and I have done that all our lives—so that we do not draw on Sydney's water supply. We capture rainwater for use in our pool and we have a very small dam to supply water that is used around the house. If I took a straw poll of every member of the House and asked them how sustainably they live and the size of their environmental footprint, I do not think I would have too many people putting their hands up to being as proactive and positive as I am in undertaking measures to protect the environment. I go so far as to say that I have also embraced the use of a hybrid car, which not only saves me a small fortune on petrol but also represents a positive approach to reducing city pollution.

When I travel from the beautiful Hawkesbury electorate to Sydney, one of the first things I notice is the smell of pollution and the quantity of air-borne contaminants in Sydney. Unfortunately, people get used to that. They live with pollution and are used to breathing in contaminants daily. However, the simple fact of the matter is that the quality of air affects the health of many people and is linked to heart disease, emphysema and a range of other diseases. In spite of that, no government I have heard of has adopted practical measures to reduce pollution. All the Federal Government wants to talk about is ways of taxing the backside off people. The Federal Government is proposing to introduce a carbon tax that will tax the backside off people in this country. Irrespective of whether the tax takes the form of a carbon tax or an emissions trading scheme, it will take money out of the pockets of hardworking Australians, who also are expected to reduce the levels of carbon dioxide.

As I have stated on previous occasions, I am pleased and willing to undertake any measures that reduce pollution, but as we know carbon dioxide is not a pollutant. It is questionable whether the creation of carbon dioxide by human beings contributes to a significant extent of total carbon dioxide, thereby causing global temperatures to increase. The jury is well and truly still out on that issue. As this Parliament's delegate to the International Conference on Climate Change that was held in London in 2007, I asked why we are concerned about an increase in temperature when global temperature has been cooling since 1998. I posed that question to Professor Sir David King, who is a member of a climate change committee that is attracting enormous funding from governments throughout the world. His response to me was, "It is in line with our expectations." I thought I had heard all the lame excuses and diatribe from politicians throughout the world, but I thought saying that global temperatures were in line with his expectations was a pretty lame response which, unfortunately, does not cut the mustard.

The Solar Bonus Scheme is good because anything we can do to reduce our impact on the environment is worthy of support. What we are discussing is a scheme that has been embraced by the community, which begs the question: Why has the community embraced this scheme? It is because electricity prices have gone through the roof? Failure by the former Government over 16 years to invest in required infrastructure to upgrade our power stations, poles and wires has resulted in a sudden increase in electricity prices to provide funding for investment in infrastructure. After electricity prices went through the roof, the Government implemented a Solar Bonus Scheme that was enthusiastically embraced by anybody who could afford eligibility. The cost to the State has been \$2 billion. When the former Government proposed a cut in tariffs from 60¢ to 40¢, in a three-week period there was an uptake resulting in \$500 million being paid in rebates. A cost of half a billion dollars to support a scheme by a State Government is unsustainable.

I support the solar energy scheme. I go as far as to say that as a member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (Climate Change), which led to my being a delegate to the conference in London in 2007, I know that many solar thermal initiatives have been presented by the CSIRO. Solar thermal power is a sustainable source of energy that can provide base load power. Although a proposal was put to implement solar thermal energy to operate the telescope, an educational facility and a 350-lot housing development in Parkes, solar thermal energy production was not supported by the previous Government.

One needs to ask: Why are we introducing expensive schemes that are not sustainable when there are things like solar thermal, which is recognised around the world as an easy way to back feed into our electricity grid to provide us with power for the future? Those issues need to be addressed. As I have said already, I appreciate the member for Northern Tablelands moving this motion. In another debate he said that we need solutions to issues rather than having just more talkfests about the problems. I could not endorse those comments more heartily. I believe, and hope, that the Solar Summit that was held last week, which was attended by the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary, who is at the table, will resolve this particular issue.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [10.17 a.m.]: I reiterate the point raised by the member for Northern Tablelands: operators and consumers who purchased or ordered solar panels on the basis of a successful application for a grid connection prior to midnight 28 April 2011 need the Government's assurance to proceed with installation and connection. The Minister needs to provide that certainty to consumers and operators. The motion of the member for Northern Tablelands is logical and reasonable. The House should note the Government's position on this issue when it was in opposition. The Solar Bonus Scheme passed through the New South Wales Parliament with support from the Coalition and The Greens. Both sides of the House agreed that the Solar Bonus Scheme was designed to accelerate the uptake of solar technology in New South Wales. Both sides of the House agreed that the scheme demonstrated our commitment to supporting renewable energy.

The Solar Bonus Scheme was introduced to reduce our dependence on and the need for the State Government to build more power plants. It was a generous scheme at first, and the uptake was fast, as the member for Hawkesbury just mentioned. Had this scheme not been so generous, the uptake would not have been so substantial. People need incentives to take up new schemes. I am an electrician and when I examined the scheme I thought, hang on, many years ago, before the introduction of this newer solar panel technology, it was a waste of time to put a solar hot water system on your roof because when the sun was not shining or the sky was cloudy, the panels received no sun and no electricity was being generated and the booster element was working all the time at the full charge rate, not the off-peak rate. I was one of the sceptics of the scheme. I queried whether solar technology had improved from the seventies and eighties and I was not prepared to take up the scheme.

However, on reflection, it was not a bad scheme. Had I examined the scheme in more depth and ignored the old technology because I thought it was a waste of time, it probably would have been a good idea to

take it up. Others who discovered that better and newer technology had emerged took part in the Solar Bonus Scheme. Of course it was a generous scheme. Once we realised it was being taken up at a massive rate, the tariff was reduced. This process was undertaken to save the Government the cost of building new generating plants. We know how much they cost. Anything that saves the environment and reduces our footprint on this planet, even if humans are increasing the planet's heating by 1 per cent, we should take action to reduce that 1 per cent. We cannot do anything about what the environment and planet is doing to itself, but we must address the problems we are creating.

The objectives of the scheme were achieved and it is appropriate now that the Solar Bonus Scheme be closed to new participants. Unless the O'Farrell Government is trying to fool the people of New South Wales—I hope it is not—it should follow through on its promise to be an honest and accountable Government, as it tells us every day. This House should be given that assurance, the community should be given that commitment and the minds of operators and consumers should be put at ease. I support this important motion of the member for Northern Tablelands and encourage the Government and the Minister for Resources and Energy to do the same. The people of New South Wales are waiting for an answer from this Government.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.22 a.m.]: I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this important motion before the House and for the opportunity to debate a matter of concern in communities across New South Wales, including those in his electorate and those of the member for Cabramatta. It is important to examine the essential problem when the Solar Bonus Scheme was introduced. The member for Cabramatta went to some lengths to explain how the original scheme was supported by both sides of the House. In fact, this side of the House did not oppose the scheme, which is an important distinction. The reason we did not oppose it was that we supported the idea of a gross feed-in tariff. However, the basis on which our support was given was for a far less generous tariff than the Government offered.

We believed, as we continue to do, that 60 cents over seven years simply was too generous; it changed the motive behind taking up the solar bonus feed-in tariff from an incentive to promote ecologically sustainable development to one of sheer profit. In doing so, it overheated the market and led to a boom and now a bust. The scheme simply was too generous. However, governments should be encouraged to experiment on the basis of sound evidence, modelling and research. After talking to the industry I know that the Labor Government failed crucially to talk to the solar industry before introducing the feed-in tariff. They are the seeds of the problem we face today. The industry would have shared its concerns, as it did with members of the then Opposition, that it believed the scheme was too generous and would lead to the boom and bust we now face.

Having set up a too-generous scheme and seeing the problems created, the Government then compounded its failure by failing to act when the problems emerged. When the review into the effectiveness of the scheme was concluded by the end of October the Government announced a reduction in the gross feed-in tariff, but in doing so failed to announce that immediately and instead gave three weeks grace. In that three-week period an extra 79 megawatts of capacity were signed up for, potentially costing the State an extra \$500 million. The Labor Government must be condemned for failing to act after becoming aware of the problems. Nevertheless, it is now up to the new O'Farrell Liberal-Nationals Government to fix them. In so doing, it is important to undertake the consultation the former Government did not. That was the reason for hosting the first Solar Summit last Friday, which the member for Northern Tablelands referred to. The Minister and I attended that summit.

I commend the industry for its clear and sensible presentation at the summit, particularly Matt Warren of the Clean Energy Council. He presented a clear case of the need to ensure a soft landing for the industry, but also a clear recognition that the Government has a responsibility to limit the impact of this scheme on the budget. Our scheme that was initially supposed to have cost \$355 million is now exposing the State to a liability of upwards of \$1.8 billion to \$1.9 billion. This leaves the incoming Government with a real problem that it is eager to fix as quickly as possible. Obviously, any proper fix requires proper consultation and proper deliberation. Those processes are underway. I assure the member for Northern Tablelands that the New South Wales government website has clear instructions for anyone concerned about the present status of applications. Applications submitted before 28 April will be processed; applications thereafter are subject to a two-month suspension of the scheme. I encourage customers interested in solar power to investigate it. The second solar summit will look at providing for a sustainable future for the solar industry, which everyone wants.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.27 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Cabramatta and the member for Pittwater for their contributions to the debate. As this debate has occurred over two sitting weeks and the Solar Summit has been well and truly underway

throughout that process, I remind the House that the motion called on the Minister, firstly, to clarify his announcement regarding the New South Wales solar bonus scheme, halting grid connections from midnight on 28 April and, secondly and very importantly, to assure the House that operators and consumers who have purchased or ordered solar panels on the basis of a successful application for a grid connection prior to midnight on 28 April can proceed with installation and connection to the electricity grid. The member for Pittwater responded to that point of my motion, and I thank him for that.

The solar industry is a very important industry. I am not critical of this Government as it has inherited administration of a very important issue that had been very poorly managed. There is no doubt about that. But, as the member for Hawkesbury said in his address, this is not just about costs; it is also about goodwill. There is enormous goodwill in the community, in the public interest and for the public good, to do what we can to enhance the environment. Let us not ignore that strong and powerful motivation in the community. To maintain that motivation it is important to keep their trust. Whether the Government botched it or not or whether the Opposition supported the scheme or not I do not think is all that relevant; clearly, the community signed up in good faith under the rules of the day. Operators purchased panels on behalf of customers who came to them acting in good faith under the rules of the day.

I have a fair bit of experience in public life, the private sector, and the higher education and other sectors and know that people think that a deal is a deal. When you act in good faith on a deal it is very important that the deal be honoured, regardless of who botched what at government level. The community must react to the rules of the day. If driving through a red light is illegal under the rules of the day drivers know those are the rules and that certain penalties are imposed for breaches of the rules. There was ambiguity in the Minister's comment on the website, which I note has been changed to give more detail and to clarify the Government's position.

However, the community's immediate response to the message that was initially placed on the website was: How does this affect me? Surely to goodness it was anticipated that that would be the first question that would be asked by a member of the public who in good faith signed up for solar equipment in order to support the environment and the community, and no doubt to reduce their power costs. In my view the last thing government needs to do is send out a message of uncertainty, a message that the community would interpret as government no longer supporting the solar industry. That would have a devastating impact beyond that on businesses.

I was pleased that the member for Pittwater acknowledged the presentation of the industry, a matter touched on by the member for Hawkesbury. I repeat what the industry said to me in correspondence that I read to the House. It wants the O'Farrell Government to: one, honour the 300 megawatt installed capacity cap and closure arrangements currently in place; two, immediately introduce post-Solar Bonus Scheme 1:1 parity for energy exported to the grid; and, three, through solar summit stage 2 design a sustainable fit with minimum 1:1 retail parity for energy exported to the grid. I was encouraged by remarks made by Government members that the industry had put forward a good, detailed and constructive position. I hope that will mean that a proper solution can be worked out. However, the purpose of the motion is to ensure that those who have signed up in good faith will know that government commitments will be honoured and that any impacts on business would also be taken into consideration in good future policy. I was pleased by contributions made by members on both sides of the House. I commend the motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence) [10.33 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) commends the Government's commitment to establishing Infrastructure NSW;
- (2) commends in particular its commitment to allocating 30 per cent of Infrastructure funding to regional New South Wales projects; and
- (3) condemns the former Government for ignoring regional New South Wales during its 16 years in government.

Before speaking to the motion I take the opportunity to acknowledge International Nurses Day and honour nurses across New South Wales for their hard work and dedication. Today is the 191st anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale in 1820, making this a most appropriate time to observe International Nurses Day. My respect and thanks go to all the hardworking nurses in this State.

I commend the Government on recently establishing Infrastructure NSW. This State is caught in a vicious cycle. Economic growth drives government revenue. However, New South Wales lacks the essential infrastructure to grow, and without growth there is no additional revenue for future infrastructure. Something needs to change, and change fast, and that change started on 26 March when the people of New South Wales voted for real change, enabling the Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government to restart the New South Wales economy and regain the reputation of this State as Australia's No.1 place to live and do business.

The Liberal-Nationals Government will establish Restart NSW, a capital fund to build essential infrastructure, including public transport and roads, and infrastructure to support people working in frontline services. The fund will have a specific mandate to grow economic productivity in New South Wales and a clear goal to lift economic growth in this State to above the national average. Restart NSW will fund projects such as public transport infrastructure. One of the projects in my area that had been on our wish list for years was closed down by Minister Costa: construction of the Casino to Murwillumbah light rail line. Major economic benefits will flow to the North Coast if the light rail line could be extended beyond Murwillumbah to the Gold Coast and join with Queensland rail.

The Gold Coast airport at Coolangatta is one of the fastest growing airports in Australia, servicing the massive tourism industry, including backpackers coming to Australia through the Gold Coast. A light rail line from Casino right through to the Gold Coast would have enormous economic benefits for the whole of the North Coast. The train would start from Casino and go through Lismore and Bangalow, through to Byron Bay, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah, and on to the Gold Coast airport. This would not only boost tourism but also open up opportunities for the more than 4,000 fares each week to the Southern Cross University. The extension would take pressure off the Pacific Highway as well as benefit the environment by keeping people out of their cars and off the road and instead using light rail.

Restart NSW will fund major upgrades to infrastructure to address urban road congestion, black spots and missing links. Federal Government funding for the Pacific Highway has been in the news this week. The Pacific Highway is a major infrastructure project, probably the most important and vital infrastructure project in New South Wales. In my eight years in Parliament representing the electorate of Clarence there have been about 90 deaths on the Pacific Highway, some 90 per cent of which involved head-on collisions that could have been avoided if there had been a divided dual carriageway.

Yesterday it was mentioned that in 1996 the former Labor Government had committed to providing a dual divided carriageway by 2006. That time passed; it then went to 2012, and in 2011 we have only about 50 per cent of that dual carriageway. So there is a lot of work to be done. It is vital that lives are not lost and families are not destroyed. The communities are upset. The loss of lives and carnage are an enormous cost to our economy and our valiant emergency service workers.

The Grafton bridge is another project that has been promised for some time. I still recall in 2003 the then Premier Bob Carr standing at the South Grafton Ex-Servicemen's Club and making an iron-clad commitment to build the Grafton bridge virtually immediately because the money was available in unallocated Roads and Traffic Authority [RTA] funding. The RTA people were running around, scratching their heads, wondering where all the money was. Bob Carr, in true Labor fashion, made a commitment that he knew he would never honour. I am pleased that the Deputy Premier has made a commitment to begin construction, hopefully in the first term. Planning is well on the way: at present, possible sites are being considered.

Our third point in Infrastructure NSW is economic infrastructure to address the economic competitiveness of New South Wales, including freight, intermodal facilities and water. At present two different business groups in the Casino area are looking at intermodal freight transport centres. If an intermodal freight transport centre goes ahead—I hope the project will commence shortly—that will have enormous economic benefits for the area and will take a lot of heavy vehicles, B-doubles and semi-trailers, off Summerland Way and the Pacific Highway and get them on rail, where most heavy freight should be transported. It is good to see businesses are working on that project, and Infrastructure NSW is happy to work alongside them.

Our fourth point is hospitals and health infrastructure. The Liberal-Nationals Government is on the front foot, having already announced hospital improvements at Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Bega. It has also

shown strong interest in Port Macquarie and Dubbo, where we are moving ahead. Grafton Base Hospital is in the final stage of a \$20-million refit from not the former State Government but the Federal Government. That will provide a boost to the area. The Grafton electorate has a local champion in Jim Agnew, who is a local health campaigner from Yamba. Before the election the Premier made a commitment that any petitions tabled in Parliament with more than 10,000 signatures would be discussed. Jim Agnew has obtained 11,000 signatures on a petition for a health clinic at Yamba, and that will be tabled in Parliament in the near future. I congratulate Jim and his hardworking team on securing those 11,000 signatures, which is no easy task. One does not get that number of signatures while sitting outside the local café on Saturday morning; a lot of work has gone into that.

Infrastructure NSW will also make improvements to the workplace for front-line workers, including police officers, teachers and nurses. As mentioned earlier, this is International Nurses Day. I am sure nurses will be happy to be recognised not only with platitudes but also with support in delivering the front-line services they provide so well. There is so much we need to talk about. Infrastructure NSW funding is not just for New South Wales generally; funding will be provided for the Regional Kickstart Fund, which is the next phase. That will build infrastructure, create jobs and bring people to the bush or to rural and regional New South Wales. A lot of work has gone into this.

The Coalition had some years to prepare for government. Indeed, as the Coalition was winding up the Labor Government was winding down. We stepped into the role ready for government and ready to rebuild New South Wales. Our election catchcry was "Make New South Wales No. 1 again". In the first two weeks of Parliament we have introduced some innovative and brave policies and legislation, with little opposition from Labor—we cannot expect much opposition as there are few Labor members in Opposition. I am sure members opposite will nod their approval because finally, after 16 years of doing nothing, they can see something starting to happen in New South Wales. They, along with Government members, will see the benefits of it.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [10.43 a.m.]: That was a brave but unsurprising contribution from the member for Clarence, my friend the Parliamentary Secretary, who shares a love of boxing with me. Let us look at the motion. It commends the Government's commitment to establishing Infrastructure NSW. So what? We could have 50 Infrastructure NSWs. The question will be: Where is the money coming from? I will get to that later. The motion commends in particular the Government's commitment to allocating 30 per cent of infrastructure funding to regional New South Wales programs. When I go through some of Labor's programs members will see that in some portfolio areas—I have not had the time to do the calculations—for example, capital spending in the Roads portfolio, the trend was always to spend about two-thirds of our infrastructure funding in rural and regional New South Wales. So crowing about 30 per cent of infrastructure funding going to regional New South Wales projects, at least in the Roads portfolio, would be a halving of the commitment. We will have to keep an eye on that.

The motion condemns the former Government for ignoring regional New South Wales for 16 years. What contributions did we leave rural and regional New South Wales in the last Labor budget? The Housing budget provided about \$367 million to deliver new housing in rural and regional New South Wales. In Labor's budget \$8.5 million of Fair Trading's community grants were to be spent in country areas; and in Corrective Services more than \$93 million would be invested in new correction facilities and upgrades to correctional centre security. Some \$544 million in the Water portfolio was allocated for water infrastructure, including management and pensioner rebates across rural and regional New South Wales. It also included \$30.4 million in the Murray-Darling Basin to improve sustainability and \$47.8 million to continue the successful Country Towns Water and Sewerage Supply Scheme.

There was \$14.2 million allocated to Tourism. In ageing and disability \$1.02 billion was allocated to support programs for older people, people with a disability and their carers in rural and regional New South Wales. That is the measure of a caring government. Funding for regional New South Wales in the Ageing and Disability portfolio increased by 9.3 per cent. Some \$3.5 billion was allocated for rural and regional roads, including \$1.5 billion for critical highways. Some \$972 million was allocated for Emergency Services, including \$13.8 million for 27 new fire engines for regional stations and 32 new staff for the Illawarra. In State and regional development \$90.3 million was allocated for regional jobs, including \$19.3 million for the Building the Country package and \$12.2 million for regional development assistance.

In Police, \$11.5 million was spent on eight world-class, brand-new police stations across rural and regional New South Wales at Tenterfield, Kempsey—I had the pleasure of cutting the ribbon with Commissioner Scipione in Kempsey—Walgett, Deniliquin, Parkes, Moree, Bowral and Tweed Heads. No Labor electorates there. In the Environment portfolio we spent \$1.36 billion to protect the New South Wales

environment. In the Lands portfolio we invested \$331 million, including \$162 million on employment and businesses in regional centres such as Bathurst, Newcastle and Wollongong, and \$30.6 million for refurbishments and upgrades to government buildings in centres such as Wollongong, Moree and Gunnedah. I could go on. Labor allocated \$4.4 billion for rural and regional health, including \$150 million for capital works and \$35.1 million for multipurpose health facilities. At the moment the Government is in the talk stage. In due course we will see whether the Government can walk the walk. Unless the Premier has the magic pudding that the Treasurer promised television journalists in the lead-up to the election, we will see where else he gets the money from.

This is a self-serving motion. During the election campaign the Premier promised to establish Infrastructure NSW. He said that it would be an independent body to determine future infrastructure spending in New South Wales. In other words, money would be put into the account of Infrastructure NSW and an independent arm's-length body—totally apolitical with no political considerations and with no direction from the Government—would determine projects on their merit before applying funds to those projects. The arm's-length person, that apolitical appointee, former Premier Nick Greiner, who does not have a very good record on infrastructure, was appointed to run that independent body.

Mr Steve Cansdell: He is a genius.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: He might be a genius but he has not proved it so far and he is definitely not independent or apolitical.

Mr Steve Cansdell: What about Phil Koperberg?

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Phil Koperberg is a genius and his appointment was apolitical. I suggest the difference in credibility between Phil Koperberg and Nick Greiner is a yawning chasm. Apart from the bullying and the cowardice of the Premier, the pattern that is starting to emerge from this Government is to say one thing and do another. Already the Government is bleating about Commonwealth funding for the Pacific Highway and is starting to lie about that and to lie about a black hole. We know the *modus operandi* of the master, Nick Greiner. Late last year he said that in 1988 when he won government he announced policies before the election that would go down well with voters and other policies were kept in the bottom drawer. The master has now taught the apprentice.

The Premier has policies that he is taking from the bottom drawer and the first is the appointment of Nick Greiner. Nick Greiner and Infrastructure NSW are now a wholly owned subsidiary of the Premier. It is clear why Nick Greiner has been appointed to Infrastructure NSW: it will deflect attention from the Premier so when Nick Greiner devises a business model to toll roads, for example, that do not currently have a toll on them, to enter into new public-private partnerships, to lift tolls, to introduce time-of-day tolling, it will be Nick's problem and not the Premier's. The Premier will say, "Don't blame me. Infrastructure NSW devised that idea". But any announcement of the construction or the planning of a particular project will be done by the Premier.

All the bad news comes from Nick Greiner and the good news from the Premier. That is what the appointment of Nick Greiner is all about—Infrastructure NSW is a wholly owned subsidiary to deflect attention from the Premier. Let us look at Nick Greiner's record if he is to be held out as the guru of infrastructure. The M2, M4 and the M5 East were all built by the former Liberal Government. They are all good projects but if it is being suggested now that they need improving then the necessary implication is that they were undercooked, underdone, not finished properly and not planned properly. The airport rail link is another example—it cost \$900 million although it was claimed that it would not cost the taxpayers one cent!

Mr John Williams: Absolutely the best bit of infrastructure built in the modern era, Michael.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I would have to disagree with that one. Look at the Liberals record on the Pacific Highway: the former Labor Government spent the lion's share of funding—more than the Howard Government, if my memory as former roads Minister serves me correctly. Today the Commonwealth Government said it will hand out another gift, on top of the \$618 million for the Kempsey bypass, of \$750 million—shock, horror, recoil. Already the promises are starting to unravel. This Government was going to manage the finances properly and conjure up \$750 million that the former Labor Government wasted. The magic pudding was going to provide funds for infrastructure and already the New South Wales Government is

making excuses that it cannot find \$750 million for a road that does not traverse a single Labor electorate. The Pacific Highway, lock, stock and barrel, traverses Liberal and Nationals electorates. They are electorates of Government members, and already the Government says it cannot find \$750 million.

Mr John Williams: I think that is most roads! Do you want to correct that?

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: You haven't got Anzac Parade and you are not getting it!

Mr John Williams: We went close: you were scared.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I am still here. This is all froth and bubble. [*Time expired.*]

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.53 a.m.]: I commend the member for Clarence for moving this exceptional and important motion, particularly to the people of regional New South Wales. The member for Maroubra has a hide to talk about infrastructure after the record of Labor. Infrastructure NSW, with which the Coalition went to the election on 26 March, brought about the landslide victory to the Liberal-Nationals Coalition and the demise of the Australian Labor Party. Look at them all sitting over there! Infrastructure NSW is a great initiative of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition and is desperately needed. After 16 years of non-delivery by Labor, Infrastructure NSW will bring in up to \$5 billion, 30 per cent of which, or about \$1.6 billion, is earmarked, quarantined purely for regional New South Wales, which so desperately needs upgrading and construction of infrastructure.

We had 16 years of Labor neglect and Labor announcements. We heard the member for Clarence refer to the construction of Grafton bridge, something that was not delivered by the former Labor Government. It is a disgrace that \$500 million was wasted on the Rozelle metro by the former Government but not a sod turned. It is a disgrace that \$100 million was wasted on the Tillegra dam but not a blade of grass turned. And the Opposition is asking this Government what will it deliver and how will it do it. The former Government did not deliver anything for 16 years; this Government has a plan to make New South Wales No. 1 again. One of the key components is to improve infrastructure.

We had 16 years of Labor misleading the people of New South Wales, 16 years of incompetence, 16 years of mismanagement and 16 years treating the people of New South Wales, particularly the people of regional New South Wales, with contempt. My electorate encompasses two local government areas, one of which is Greater Taree City Council, which has a \$200 million backlog in roads and wooden bridges. During Labor's time in government it cost shifted down onto local government, which was already stretched to the brink. Now councils are in debt and looking at how they can be helped. This Government has the answer and has set up Infrastructure NSW to help local governments with their infrastructure needs. Whenever the Pacific Highway is cut in my area motorists travel along the Lakes Way. During the Howard years a nice piece of expressway was built north of Bulahdelah and the Howard Government offered the New South Wales Labor Government \$9 million to build a new gateway into the Forster-Tuncurry area.

Mr Daryl Maguire: What happened?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The State Government only had to put in \$4 million but it did not. It passed up \$9 million. What has been happening? People have been killed or seriously injured on the Lakes Way because the State Labor Government would not put in the miserly \$4 million. The Bucketts Way, which Labor Party members probably have never heard of and do not know where it is, is in the south of the electorate at a place called Raymond Terrace. The turn-off is just north of Raymond Terrace and the road goes around in an arc-shape and comes out at Taree. That is another route that people use when the Pacific Highway is cut and they want to bypass it. It is another road that feeds into the New England Highway.

Thunderbolts Way from the New England Highway hits the Bucketts Way at Gloucester, which enables people to go north to Taree or go to Krambach. We have just announced that we are going to do up the road from Krambach to Nahiab—the No. 1 priority of the Greater Taree City Council—so that people can get through to Nahiab and the Pacific Highway, and then go over to Forster or up to Taree. If people go to Gloucester, they can then head south to Raymond Terrace through wonderful places like Stratford on Avon, Stroud and Booral—another very important but dangerous road that is being damaged by the mine that has been approved in Gloucester. I could go on and on—

Mr Andrew Gee: Go on, we want more.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My electorate also has the Wingham Road—the road from Taree to Wingham—where only last year there was another fatality. I support the motion. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [10.58 a.m.]: I speak to the motion and congratulate the member for Clarence on bringing forward the very important topic of Infrastructure NSW; after all, infrastructure is central to driving economic growth in New South Wales. In the past we have faced an infrastructure crisis. Whether it is roads, rail, hospitals, schools or utilities, the people of New South Wales are entitled to much better than they have received for the past 16 years.

I note that in his speech the member for Maroubra wanted to list all of the expenditure undertaken by the Labor governments over the past 16 years. One would have expected significant expenditure; after all, the Labor Party was in government for 16 years. One would have expected it to spend something. The point is that there was so much wastage and so much embarrassment; so many projects were promised and not delivered; and so many State Plans in which infrastructure projects were identified but not delivered, like the CBD Metro. This was the message sent to the people of New South Wales. If, as the member for Maroubra suggests, so much of that infrastructure had been delivered effectively and efficiently and on time, Labor members would not now be sitting on the Opposition benches. The public were awake to the fact that the infrastructure crisis facing New South Wales had to be solved—and solved efficiently.

I am very pleased to support the O'Farrell Government's introduction of Infrastructure NSW, which will ensure that infrastructure projects are delivered according to need, on time and on budget. It will remove the political interests from infrastructure decisions. VicRoads has a similar system, but Infrastructure NSW will be based on Partnerships UK and Partnerships Victoria models. It will be overseen by an expert board and an independent chair. It will have a highly qualified professional chief executive officer and executive staff drawn from the very best of the public and private sectors. I am pleased also that the Premier has announced the appointment of former Premier and experienced company director Nick Greiner as the inaugural chairman of Infrastructure NSW. I also note that the member for Maroubra tried to denigrate Nick Greiner. Nick Greiner has been appointed because of his managerial expertise in this area. Trying to denigrate Nick Greiner will not go down well in this House. I fully endorse the comments of the Premier on Infrastructure NSW.

The Nationals sitting in the House love talking about the Pacific Highway and rural roads in their electorate, but as far as the Country Liberal group—the new member for Kiama, the member for Bega and me as the member for South Coast—will concentrate on the Princes Highway. We do not hear enough spoken about the Princes Highway. When I was elected to this Parliament in 2003 and then again in 2007 the Coalition had very clear plans about the Princes Highway. We took those plans to the electorate and were successful in delivering messages about the importance of upgrading the Princes Highway. We were joined at that time by groups such as the South East Australian Transport Strategy group, the PHocus lobby group, and the Southern Councils Group, and, of course, the NRMA, which has argued for a long time for an additional billion dollars for the Princes Highway upgrade.

Prior to the election I was very pleased to join Premier Barry O'Farrell and the then candidate and now member for Kiama to announce that, if elected, this Government would commit \$74 million to the South Nowra duplication project, which will commence very shortly. That project will eliminate a major bottleneck in the South Coast electorate. We have also committed to delivering the Gerringong to Bomaderry Princes Highway upgrade—\$500 million worth of works, starting with the Berry bypass, over the next four years. I look forward to the delivery of all of these projects. They will be on time and on budget, overseen by Infrastructure NSW. For the first time, we will have efficient and effective delivery of infrastructure. We will not have embarrassment, we will not have projects promised and not delivered; we will have Infrastructure NSW focusing on infrastructure, not the bottom-drawer projects of the former Government, whose members find themselves on the Opposition benches because they did not deliver and did not focus on infrastructure.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.03 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion moved by a hardworking member in this House, a man like me who put forward cases for the previous Labor Government to consider, which it turned its back on. There is no doubt that regional New South Wales was not the focus of the previous Government; it was focused far too much inward. It was interesting to hear the contribution of the member for Maroubra—we will get that one next time. He was hanging by a thread. He knows what it is like to hang flapping in the breeze. The member for Coffs Harbour and I travelled through Maroubra, and we saw his face everywhere. He suddenly reinvented himself: "I'm here. I'm here! I haven't been

doing anything for you. You haven't heard from me for a long time, but come election day I'm here—I am your man." It was a very convincing presentation and no doubt, if you did not know the history of the previous Labor Government, you would think that what he presented was factual. The trouble is that it was all fiction.

The member for Maroubra referred to the former Labor Government's commitment to the Deniliquin police station. He made it sound as though police stations were being rolled out, in place and open, and that former Labor Government members were running around cutting ribbons. The other day I had a note in my diary from Brian Mitsch, the mayor of Deniliquin, to try to schedule a meeting with Mike Gallacher, the police Minister, to talk about the Deniliquin police station—that white ant-ridden, broken-down, decaying building that the police have been housed in for 16 years under Labor. Labor knew about the problems and announced today that it would do something about them. However, as we all know, the former Labor Government made announcements and put a budget together every year but all it did was roll the last year's project into the next year and the next year.

Mr Nick Lalich: Walgett, Deniliquin—all done.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! If the member for Cabramatta wishes to contribute to the debate he should do so in the appropriate manner.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: The former Labor Government was very skilled at using delaying tactics, and that is what they were. It would announce an infrastructure project, and the most money spent on it would be for the announcement. That was the money end of it. The former Labor Government would not get around to getting the job done, but it kept rolling out the announcements. In question time Ministers would get up and talk about the great things they were doing for New South Wales and the money they were spending on infrastructure—they re-announced various works. We were then on the other side of this House, begging for crumbs and getting a promise that was never going to be fulfilled. Communities knew the Labor Government had made those promises and on 26 March they decided they had had enough of promises and fake announcements.

The Labor Government was very good at fake announcements; it could get the community together, stir up enthusiasm and lift their status in the polls with an announcement. But the former Labor Government never delivered on the promise. There is no doubt that spending on infrastructure will always be a challenge for any government and I do not think this Government would ever deny it. The fact is I know that we are never going to make an announcement about infrastructure spending and not do the work. We learnt what happens if you do that: you get voted out en masse; you end up sitting on the Opposition benches with a small minority in this House and you never have a say again. The former Labor Government got rolled because the people found them out. Labor did it with every budget—the promises were made but not one of them was ever fulfilled—and the community found them out.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.08 a.m.]: It is a great pleasure to speak to this exceptional motion about Infrastructure NSW, and I congratulate the member for Clarence for moving it. I also congratulate Premier Barry O'Farrell. In the first 60 days of his Government he is living up to the commitments his Government made. It is fantastic that Infrastructure NSW has been established in such a short time—60 days and we are already doing something about infrastructure issues. We have appointed a wonderfully experienced person in Nick Greiner to head up the team. The Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, is also doing a wonderful job on infrastructure.

I speak from my experience in Parramatta. The Labor Government, through its ineptitude, failed Parramatta for 16 years. I doorknocked for months and stood at railway stations every morning from at least 6.30 a.m. until 8.30 a.m. and I observed how crowded the trains were. There were not enough trains to enable good hardworking people to get to their jobs on time. Standing at stations like Westmead I saw the trains were so crowded that there was no way people could get onto them. There were no lifts to get down to the platform, so people with prams, the aged, the elderly and people with disabilities could not get to the trains. Sixteen years of Labor failure has crippled the rail system. Even the promised trains have not been delivered and we still do not have a firm date for that.

One of the first things that the Coalition Government delivered on was a promise of \$600,000 to fund the loop bus. Parramatta City Council in its wisdom had been funding it for two years. For two years the Labor

Government refused to fund it. It is interesting to note that when the shadow Minister for Transport came out to Parramatta and announced the funding, surprise, surprise, two hours later the Labor Minister for Transport announced similar funding.

Mr Steve Cansdell: No-one believed them.

Dr GEOFF LEE: No-one believed them. The most interesting thing is that even though the former Labor Government would not fund it for two years, when the Opposition announced funding the Government suddenly found the money within two hours. It beggars belief the former Government did not want to fund it. The fantastic thing about Infrastructure NSW is that it is about prioritising, planning and cost-benefit analysis to say which infrastructure programs are right for New South Wales. There has been a lot of criticism of the Epping to Parramatta rail link. I say to constituents that I will fight very hard for the Epping to Parramatta rail link. We went to our constituents and said that we were going to build the North West Rail Link first. We have committed to that and we have already started the task force.

The Premier and the Minister for Transport went to Rouse Hill and announced the start of the task force within weeks of coming into government. Then we went to the electorate and said to people, "We will prioritise it based on Infrastructure NSW looking at the cost-benefit analysis." The wonderful thing about the Liberal-Nationals Government is that people respect the fact that we do not make promises we cannot deliver. They understood why we said, "We're not promising it if we can't deliver it." They accepted that and that is why we had such a sensational 24.9 per cent swing in Parramatta. We went to the people and told them the truth. We did not promise things that we could not deliver.

The people of Parramatta are looking forward to getting more infrastructure and to the construction of the Epping to Parramatta rail link, but they understand we are promising things in the overall context of when it can be delivered. Infrastructure NSW is a fantastic way of prioritising and planning things. I will talk to Infrastructure NSW about important projects such as the M4 East, to get the people of Parramatta and western Sydney moving so they are not stuck in traffic for hours each day. I again commend the member for Clarence for his motion.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.13 a.m.], in reply: I congratulate and thank members who have contributed to the debate. As an aside, the member for Myall Lakes had a 78.5 per cent two-party preferred vote at the last election; the member for South Coast had a 70 per cent two-party preferred vote, but she took that seat from Labor in 2003; the member for Murray-Darling received 78 per cent of the vote—that was a Labor seat as well; the member for Parramatta received a 62 per cent two-party preferred vote, with a 25 per cent swing, and that was a Labor seat. Then there was old landslide himself, the member for Maroubra, who got 51.5 per cent of the vote, just holding on to that Labor seat by the skin of his teeth. We used to call the member for Port Stephens "landslide", because he received 50.1 per cent, but now the vote in Port Stephens is 60 per cent. There were great contributions by all members.

I refer to the member for Maroubra's comment about what great work the Labor Party had been doing for the country, such as the country towns water and sewerage scheme, which was put in place by the Greiner Government on a dollar-for-dollar funding basis. If a council put up \$100 million then the State Government put up \$100 million. Now the contribution from the State Government to local government is less than 20 per cent, which makes it very difficult for smaller councils in rural New South Wales. Not only that, five years ago Michael Costa virtually put a moratorium on all applications until 2012. No applications were to be processed until then. That money was frozen and the Labor Government pulled it out for four or five years. Labor did a lot of talking, as it did in the lead-up to the last election, and made many promises over 16 years, but there was not much action. There was no policy, no direction, no credibility and, now, no members. It is amazing how it all goes together.

This debate is not about Infrastructure NSW and it is not about the whole State. The motion relates to Regional Kick-Start, which is a subprogram of Infrastructure NSW, and it is all about building infrastructure, creating jobs and attracting people to regional areas. Thirty per cent of funding for Restart NSW will be allocated to regional areas. Earlier the member for Maroubra said that the previous Government spent more than 30 per cent. I point out that the funding is above budget forecasts, in spite of the money that was wasted by the former Labor Government over the past 16 years. Labor just threw money into a big black hole, just like it threw away \$500 million on the Rozelle metro.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: How much?

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: It was \$500 million. That was nothing more than a diversionary tactic. The previous Government said, "Oh, Verity is in trouble. Let's throw in \$500 million." Not even a shovelful of dirt was turned on that project, as a member mentioned earlier. At a time when a former Labor member was caught doing naughty things to young boys and there were headlines about that everywhere, what happened? Bob Carr needed to change the headlines, so he decided to build a desalination plant with a \$1 billion loan. One billion wasted dollars later, the headlines did not change. That is just another example of waste.

[*Interruption*]

I must respond to the member for Cabramatta, who is speaking out. His electorate almost voted him out, but he managed to hang on to a very safe Labor seat, and I give him credit for that. That applies also to the member for Maroubra. The tide of change in Maroubra was almost a tsunami, but I think he just managed to keep his head above water. The great thing about the result of the 2011 State election is that for every sitting day over the next four years, Coalition members can look back with pride on the results of the first IQ test undertaken by New South Wales people in quite some time. They passed with flying colours in 34 previously held Labor electorates. That proves that the people of New South Wales are not as silly as Labor thinks. They may have been fooled for 16 years, but things changed at election time. The few Labor members who remain are trying to defend the indefensible. The Labor Party lost the 2011 election because the previous Government did not fulfil its promises of infrastructure to the people of New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO FORMER MEMBERS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [11.19 a.m.]: I move:

That this House expresses its appreciation for the service of those members of the Fifty-fourth Parliament who left at the last New South Wales election.

I moved the motion to thank members of Parliament who left their seats after the recent election but who served New South Wales in an honourable and professional manner. Many of those who departed the New South Wales Parliament did so in a planned way and had an opportunity to make valedictory speeches. They included Coalition members Peter Debnam, Judy Hopwood, Malcolm Kerr, Wayne Merton, Michael Richardson, John Turner and Russell Turner, as well as 18 members from the Labor Party. I particularly acknowledge 18 Labor and three Independent members who contested and lost lower House seats on 26 March 2011 without having had the opportunity to formally farewell this place. I also recognise those who left seats in the upper House after years of dedicated service, including Reverend Gordon Moyes. Politics generally is an honourable profession. I am proud to represent the people of Davidson following a very solid result at the recent election. In a speech on 16 June 2009 the then Federal Treasurer referred to a Robert Menzies quote, which I believe accurately describes the political profession.

I believe that politics is the most important and responsible civil activity to which a man—

These days a reference to a man should be read as including women—

may devote his character, his talents and his energy. We must in our own interest elevate politics into statesmanship and statecraft. We must aim at a condition of affairs in which we shall no longer reserve a dignified name of statesman for a Churchill or a Roosevelt, but extend it to lesser men who give honourable and patriotic service in public affairs.

Instead of recognising those who provide honourable, professional and patriotic service, we all too often regard departing parliamentarians' political careers as failures. In that respect I was reminded by the member for Cronulla's inaugural speech of a quotation from British parliamentarian Enoch Powell. While Mark Speakman made an excellent speech and gave the often misquoted shortened version of that quotation, I will quote the accurate version:

All political lives, unless they are cut off in midstream at a happy juncture, end in failure, because that is the nature of politics and of human affairs.

Serving as a member of Parliament sometimes feels like a thankless task. However, we all should constantly aspire to statesmanship, statecraft and honourable service. While many local constituents no doubt are

appreciative of a hardworking member of Parliament's attempts to assist constituents and electorate causes, the media understandably is largely unforgiving of indiscretions, and the broader public is distrustful of our profession. The old adage of "rooster one day, feather duster the next" might particularly apply to many of the Labor members of Parliament who left their seats after only one term in Parliament. For six of them, that occurred despite their holding ministries for at least part of their first term. They are David Borger in Granville, Phil Costa in Wollondilly, Verity Firth in Balmain, Jodi McKay in Newcastle, Frank Terenzini in Maitland, and Phil Koperberg in the Blue Mountains.

As we know, Phil Koperberg resigned from Parliament and has been appointed to an important new role by the Liberal-Nationals Government. However, the other five former Ministers lost their seats at the 26 March election, perhaps unexpectedly, in a landslide result. Having provided dedicated service to the New South Wales community, they received no termination notice or redundancy payment. Indeed, such are the vagaries of political life, I suspect that some of the new members of Parliament on the Liberal-Nationals side of the House may depart at the next election in 2015, just as various new members of Parliament did at the recent election. Like those five one-term Ministers and other Labor members of Parliament who recently lost their seats, any new member of Parliament who may only serve one term also would receive no termination payment under current arrangements. I ask whether that is fair and in line with general standards in the community.

In the same way that the previous superannuation scheme for politicians was reformed to align it with community standards, I ask in a personal capacity why there should not be some type of termination payment for departing members of Parliament. That already exists for ministerial or electorate office staff who lose their job as a result of a change of government or a change of member of Parliament. While job insecurity may not be a matter of huge concern to individuals who are financially secure, it discourages less wealthy but highly talented people, who currently hold secure jobs, from risking a parliamentary career. Politicians, especially Ministers, generally are paid substantially less than those who perform comparable roles in the business community and those who work for parliamentarians in the public service.

While there may not be much public sympathy and while I appreciate that the matter of politicians' remuneration should be determined by the Remuneration Tribunal, I believe that consideration should be given to introducing a termination payment for members of Parliament who depart on standard superannuation arrangements, at least when they are forced from office unexpectedly. In the absence of such a measure, we can and should at least say thank you to parliamentarians who served well in this Parliament as members of the Fifty-fourth Parliament and who left Parliament after the New South Wales election on 26 March 2011. This motion endeavours to do that.

Pursuant to resolution, business interrupted for the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Oatley.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [11.29 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is my great honour to be here today in Australia's oldest Parliament to make my maiden speech to the House. Let me first congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election to this most important position in the Chamber. I am sure the House will benefit greatly from your guidance and leadership. I stand here as the representative for the people of Oatley, a dynamic, vibrant and multicultural community in which I had the privilege to be born and raised, and which, to my mind, represents the heart of modern Sydney. Encompassing the suburbs of Hurstville, South Hurstville, Hurstville Grove, Lugarno, Beverly Hills, Mortdale, Narwee, Oatley, Peakhurst, Peakhurst Heights and Penshurst my electorate is home to the people of Australian, Chinese, Greek, Macedonian and Middle Eastern descent and of all faiths, educational backgrounds and occupations.

Oatley predominantly is a suburban community with commercial hubs of dynamic small businesses and the buzz of Hurstville Chinatown. Bounded by the Georges River to the south, it also is a community conscious of preserving and improving the local environment. The name of the electorate comes from James Oatley Junior, son of a convict sentenced to transportation for life arriving in Australia in 1815. Despite his criminal beginnings, James went on to become a landholder, a farmer and a businessman. He fathered a son, also named James Oatley Junior, who entered this place as a parliamentarian in 1868 after a career as a farmer and an innkeeper. Another adopted son, Frederick Stokes Oatley, was a watchmaker and ultimately inspector of the local abattoirs.

The story of this family is like so many other stories of early Australian settlers; a story of triumph against the odds in a strange and unforgiving land. The hard work of early Australians like the Oatleys laid the

foundation of our great State of New South Wales, the State that was at the forefront of colonies and later the Federation. We all can take inspiration from the achievements of the pioneers and battlers of nineteenth century New South Wales. I am truly blessed to be able to stand here in this place and represent the community that bears the name Oatley. I have had the great privilege to call the community I now represent my home for all my life.

Born and raised in the St George area, home of the mighty St George Illawarra Dragons, I attended St Joseph's Primary School at Oatley, Penshurst Marist College and Kogarah Marist College before going on to study at university. My achievements until this point can be pointed squarely at the sound, quality education I received. I think all of us in this place recognise the important role that education and our teachers play in providing the skills set that young people in our communities need to live a full, prosperous and independent life. The importance of education is perhaps best captured by the thirty-fifth President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy, when he said:

All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talents.

As a small business owner and councillor for Kogarah City Council representing west ward since 2004 I have seen up close the challenges our community faces. On Kogarah council I successfully campaigned to upgrade Oatley memorial, lower the speed limit on Hillcrest Avenue, increase funding for local parks and reserves, clean up the Georges River and, of course, fight against inappropriate overdevelopment. I also worked closely with local schools, businesses and residents to provide better outcomes for the local community. It has been a pleasure to represent those members of the St George community on council for the past seven years.

Politics has an old saying: All politics is local. My time as a councillor has put me in good stead to champion the needs of my electorate. A need for better public transport and less congested roads, upgrading our local train stations, additional funding for St George Hospital, more funding for local schools and, of course, turning the Dharawal State conservation area into a national park to protect it from mining are all issues that were neglected by the Labor Party over the past 16 years. I will fight against inappropriate overdevelopment, thanks to changes to planning laws by Frank Sartor. By no means is this task easy, but to work for and deliver for my community is what drives me and will continue to drive me in this place.

The Constitution Act 1902 provides the best advice and foundation stone for all of us in this place "to make laws for the peace, welfare, and good Government of New South Wales". I intend to serve by that principle, which, by any measure, is a most noble aim. Perhaps those who now reside on the Opposition benches should have paid more attention to this particular tenet. Since growing up in the St George region I have had a passion and desire to serve and make a difference in my community, to put back what I have been fortunate enough to enjoy, and to help those less fortunate and disadvantaged in my community. I joined the Liberal Party, or the young Liberal movement, at 15 years of age going on 16, as the party that best represents the values that I hold dear and a belief in the basic rights and freedoms of all people, including the freedom of thought, worship, speech and association, along with equal opportunity and a government that minimises interference in our daily lives and maximises individual and private sector initiative and potential.

In the words of John Stuart Mill, one of the fathers of liberalism, a party of order or stability and a party of progress or reform are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life. To my mind, there is no better description of the Liberal Party and the role it has played in Australian political life since its formation in 1944. We are not a party of the privileged. Our founder Sir Robert Menzies created a party that has been fittingly described by former Prime Minister John Howard as a broad church. It is a party that governs for big and small, regardless of race, religion, sexuality or skin colour. Menzies, in his well-known series of speeches *The Forgotten People* in 1942, said:

The case for the middle class is the case for a dynamic democracy as against a stagnant one.

Whilst notions of class may have changed since 1942, the sentiment remains the same: the Liberal Party stands for all Australians and all people here in New South Wales. Perhaps there is no better representation of the broad and inclusive nature of the modern Liberal Party than my colleagues on this side of the Chamber and, of course, that side as well, as part of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. The O'Farrell Liberal team is a mix of people from all walks of life and backgrounds who offer the best opportunity to take New South Wales forward, and to restore its position as the number one economy in Australia, as a hub of investment and tourism and an attractive place to raise a family. The election on 26 March 2011 saw a significant number of people in New

South Wales vote Liberal for the first time; my electorate is no exception, with a swing of 14.9 per cent and a few days of nervous waiting on my part after doorknocking 11,000 households, attending train stations and shopping centres for six or seven months.

My area has not had a Liberal representative since 1999, although at that time the seat was known as the State seat of Georges River. Names and boundaries may come and go as seemingly artificial barriers, but the principles for which I stand are consistent and my commitment is genuine. I put to the people of my community that their faith in me has not been misplaced. I am sure some of my peers in the ministry have seen already the fruits of my energy, enthusiasm and advocacy after a number of ministerial representations and letters to them, along with meeting and ministerial visit requests for my community. I want my colleagues to see firsthand the challenges the St George community faces, to hear from locals the issues that concern them and how they think an O'Farrell Government can help improve their daily lives by reducing cost of living pressures, reducing hospital waiting lists and reducing time spent waiting for a train or on the M5.

Already I have written to the Premier about holding a Community Cabinet in my community and hosting the Georges River Community Awards presentation later this year. Within my electorate, as with many others throughout this State, there are individuals and families who are finding it hard to make ends meet. That is why in partnership with St Vincent de Paul, Narwee Salvation Army and Mission Australia we have launched a winter appeal so members of our community can play a part in assisting those most in need by the donation of clothes and blankets. This goes a small way on my commitment to social justice and helping those less fortunate.

I would like to conclude by placing on record my sincere thanks to a number of people. The first is the previous local member, Kevin Greene, and his wife Frances because ultimately, as Adla and I realise, politics is a partnership, and both Kevin and Frances have given great service to my community over the years. I wish them all the very best. This election saw the election of many Young Liberals and friends, a new generation, people like Gareth Ward in Kiama, Mel Gibbons in Menai and Matt Kean in Hornsby. I would like to thank former Young Liberal Presidents Andrew Constance, the Minister for Disability Services and Ageing; Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Transport; Don Harwin, President of the New South Wales upper House; Catherine Cusack of the Legislative Council; Councillor Shane Mallard; and Senator Marise Payne, all of whom have supported, encouraged and assisted greatly on my journey to this Chamber as the member for Oatley.

As a community-focused member of Parliament, I want to thank a number of community groups that I have had the pleasure of being involved with over the years. They include the Oatley RSL and Community Club as a former director; St George Lions Club; St George and Sutherland Shire Business Enterprise Centre; Mortdale Community Services; and the school councils of Oatley and Mortdale public schools where I served as a community representative and saw firsthand the great work done in our public schools. I was a former chair of St George Relay for Life and a strong supporter of the local Neighbourhood Watch and the creation of the first men's shed in the St George community. All of those organisations do a great service to my community and there are many more organisations and charities like them. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

I would like to thank John Ajaka, MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads, and Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC, President of the New South Wales Liberal Party. I thank as well my campaign team, people like Betty Taylor, Terry O'Brien, Brad Row, Bruce Morrow, Dan Simpson, Jackson Haynes, Tim Feng, Dong Dong Yang, Helen Reid, Penny George, Matt Cross, Louise and Justin De Domenico, James Boland-Rudder, Chantel Taylor, Alice Barnett, Brendan Lyon, Adam Mazzaferro, Abdallah Elmir and Ned Mannoun for their help. I thank Hussein Awada, Gus Balloot and Rami Abdullah, along with Robert Boulos, Peter and George El Khouri, Peter Ristevski, Steve Tiricovski and Warren Hudson, along with Robert Tregenza and Doug and Deborah Williams.

I would like to thank Jack Jacovou and my fellow local councillors like Andrew Istephan and Sam Elmir. I would also like to thank members of the State Executive of the Liberal Party Michael Photios, Trent Zimmerman, David Begg, Kelly Knowles and Nick Campbell, as well as my staff Patrick Seveque and Christian Dunk. I would like to thank Bishop Kevin Manning, former Bishop of the Diocese of Parramatta, Reverend Father Peter Williams, Vicar-General of the Diocese of Parramatta, who is here today, along with Reverend Father Dave Hume, and former parish priest at St Joseph's at Oatley, Father McCarthy, for their guidance and support over the years.

I would also like to thank the shadow Ministers, now Ministers in the O'Farrell Government, who supported me throughout a tough campaign, including Mike Baird, Chris Hartcher, Mike Gallacher, Pru

Goward, Brad Hazzard, Don Page and Robyn Parker and also Scott Morrison, Federal member for Cook, along with Craig Kelly, the Federal member for Hughes, for their support during the campaign. I would like to pay particular tribute to Joe Hockey, shadow Treasurer in the Federal Parliament, who provided me with the opportunity to work and learn in his office for five years. It served as a great experience for me to cut my teeth and develop my political skills and passion to work with someone who is just as passionate for his electorate of North Sydney.

Of course, great thanks must go to the man who has ably guided all of us in this place to the historic result on 26 March, the Premier, Barry O'Farrell. Barry was an effective Opposition leader and is now even more effective as Premier. His leadership has breathed new life into New South Wales, and all of us here and in the community will continue to benefit from his sound policies and approach to making this State number one again. I owe him personal thanks for the five trips he made to my electorate during the campaign, and I do not doubt the difference his presence and energy made to the campaign. I thank Con Hindi, Deputy Mayor of Hurstville, and Miray Hindi for their ongoing support and loyalty. I remain indebted to you both. Miray was an outstanding candidate for the State seat of Kogarah and would have been an even better member and representative of that neighbouring community.

I would like to thank my father, Alfred Coure, for his ongoing love and support on the campaign, along with his wife Mary Anne. I would like to thank my brother Paul, who has been able to set up polling booths at every election that I have contested at 1 o'clock or maybe 2 o'clock in the morning, and of course his wife Rebecca, for their ongoing friendship and support. To my brother John and his girlfriend Benita, who live in Dubai and were able to vote using iVote, thank you. Those two votes were greatly appreciated, winning as I did by only 400 votes. To my uncles and aunties who assisted greatly on the campaign, along with my friends, it was all greatly appreciated. To my in-laws Sam and Jamal Abraham, my sister-in-law Patricia and my niece Emily, thank you for your support during the election and beyond.

I also want to thank those who are not here today, like my grandparents, who are no doubt looking down from heaven. I want to thank them for their love and guidance, along with my late mother, Mary Coure, who has always inspired me to be the best. My mother was the most generous and kind person. She gave me the greatest encouragement to follow my dreams. It was an honour to be sworn in using her Bible. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Adla, a Five Dock high school teacher whom I have known for over 15 years; we have been together ever since. We met through the Young Liberal Movement and she has been my strongest supporter and confidante, and to her I say thank you.

TRIBUTE TO FORMER MEMBERS

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt—Opposition Whip) [11.51 a.m.]: Opposition speakers support the positive motion moved by the member for Davidson to recognise former members of this Parliament who, for various reasons, left at the election. I listened to the member's contribution, thinking that debate on the motion provided him with an opportunity perhaps to have a dig at members who lost their seats or, for whatever reason, left the Parliament. I must say that I found little evidence of that. His contribution is more or less generally supported by me and others. To talk about the contribution of former members who left the Parliament at the election, I need more than the 10 minutes allocated to me because many members left the Parliament, not only from Labor but from all sides of politics. If we had a substantial debate on this subject we could talk for a few minutes about each member and recognise not only their fantastic performance as a member of Parliament but their commitment to their electorate and the like. However, as I said, time will not allow me to do so.

Perhaps not all the members who left at the election had an opportunity to make a valedictory speech. However, I sat through many speeches by members, who had a great opportunity to recognise their role and service in the place. Many Labor members retired at the election. The election result meant the pain of defeat for some good members caught up in the tide of political change in this State. On many occasions I have spoken about a few members in my area who lost their seats, for example, Allan Shearan in Londonderry and Ninos Khoshaba in Smithfield. This political tide was the reason we lost the election. It was certainly not a reflection on the members, both of whom worked tirelessly and hard for their constituencies.

Restricting myself to the time limit, I point out that on my re-election to Parliament I took up two positions previously held by two Labor members. Firstly, after the election I became the Labor whip, following on from the former member for Bathurst and Government Whip, Gerard Martin. Gerard was elected to this place

in 1999, and he followed Mick Clough, another member who was a passionate, no-holds-barred advocate for his electorate, as was Gerard. Gerard was a strong supporter of not only his electorate of Bathurst but, in particular, Lithgow where he served as mayor on the local council.

I watched Gerard both in the Parliament and in caucus. Although I may not have agreed with every position he took, I was impressed with his determination to put across his view on many issues. I joined with all caucus members in holding Gerard in very high esteem. Following the 2003 election Gerard Martin was elected as the Government Whip. The current trend seems to be to number them—I think he was the twenty-first Labor whip since about 1902. His experience as a mayor allowed him to fit into the role with ease. If members were on time, wore their buzzers, did their duty and generally pulled their weight in terms of working on legislation and speaking on bills, they had a good relationship with Gerard Martin as a whip. Of course, it was the opposite if members did not do so.

On one occasion I incurred Gerard's wrath when I had the audacity to change a question to the then Minister in relation to World Youth Day—something that caused a murmur in this place. As a result, I was banned from asking a question without notice for about 12 months. I have forgiven Gerard for that. As the Opposition Whip, I am honoured to follow a man of such high integrity and such a highly regarded person. Secondly, after the election I filled the unofficial position of Father of the House. I remind members, especially the member for Penrith, that that does not mean I am the oldest member of the House. It simply means that I have had the good fortune and luck to be a member of the Legislative Assembly longer than any other member here. I collected this honorary title at the election upon the retirement of John Aquilina, the then member for Riverstone and the Leader of Government Business. I understand that the position of Leader of Government Business is now held by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure New South Wales.

John Aquilina was only about one year older than me. Prior to entering Parliament he had a successful role in local government—I never held that against him; I did not go down the local government route—being elected as the mayor of Blacktown at the age of about 22 or 23 at the 1977 council elections. He was in the Blacktown branch, I was in the Rooty Hill branch; our political lives and activities paralleled each other. At the 1981 election John Aquilina was elected for the seat of Blacktown. That election was the third win under Neville Wran but the second landslide win for the Wran Government. John rose through the ranks quickly. He was elected to Cabinet in the last term of the Wran-Unsworth Labor Government. Upon entering Parliament, I was marched through that door by John Aquilina and the former member for Seven Hills to be sworn in before the Speaker at the time.

I have many memories of this place and my parallel career with John Aquilina—not to mention Bob Christie, the former member for Seven Hills. John's service of some 30 years is too extensive to fit into a 10-minute speech, but his role as a shadow Minister for Education during those dark education years of the Greiner-Fahey governments made him a prominent member of this House within not only the Labor movement but also the broader community. He was elected as a Cabinet Minister upon the election of the Carr Government in 1995. He went on to hold a couple of other portfolios and, Madam Speaker, was one of your predecessors as Speaker in this House. During his time here he represented the electorates of Blacktown and Riverstone—a seat I had held previously. He ended his time here as Leader of Government Business.

I recognise some of the former members to which this motion refers and I had to have a formula to choose a few members whose duties I have a role to continue in this House. The member for Davidson raised the important issue of the role of local members, how they are perceived in the community, how they are sometimes treated by the media: as local members we provide much of the information that the community and the media bag us with from time to time. The comments of the member for Davidson about the role of a local member are valid and should be taken on board. His references to members who will not be as fortunate as I am in serving for so many years should be taken on board by the tribunals, authorities and the Government.

I do not have time to read out all the names of the former members—some of them are good friends—but I wish them well. Recently I went to a farewell for Marie Andrews on the Central Coast. She is well regarded by the local constituency. It is great that the former member for Parramatta, Tanya Gadiel, has taken up a position with the Parramatta Mission, just as the former member for Campbelltown, Graham West, is working with the St Vincent de Paul Society. The former member for Bankstown, Tony Stewart, is now working with Father Chris Riley. They did not aspire to be members of Parliament for the glory and after leaving this Parliament they are still serving their communities. They are only an example of the many members who have left this place through retirement or losing their seats at the election only a few short weeks ago.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [12.01 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Davidson in appreciation of former members of the Fifty-fourth Parliament who left after the last New South Wales election. Last weekend I returned to my electorate, as many other members returned to theirs. The Albury electorate is the gateway to New South Wales from the south. I attended—this is the role of a member of Parliament—five community functions over that short period between sittings. At the second Albury Scout Hall extension I made a speech, presented a community service award and then formally opened the building, along with those people who had been involved with it. The scouts function brought together not only local people from the region as a whole—the Gang Show that is held in Albury represents scouts and guides from all over the region from both north and south of the border—it also brought people from Sydney who were not familiar with the local proceedings and local community leaders.

One individual said to me at the end of the function, "Ah, you must be one of the survivors. It is good. I was unhappy to see so many people not returned, people at the last Parliament who didn't deserve to go." Fortunately, I was taken aside by others who wanted to talk about community matters and not politics. That certainly was not the place to talk about politics but it showed me that there was resentment for those who had left and not had the opportunity to make a farewell speech, as is so often the case at an election. To put that into perspective I refer to the blog of Antony Green, the ABC's election analyst. In December he said:

The 2011 NSW election is set to see a record number of MPs retire from the Legislative Assembly, and depending on the result, could also see a record number of new MPs ...

How right he was. He continued:

So far 24 MPs have announced they will not re-contest their seats at the 2011 election, 17 Labor MPs, 5 Liberals and 2 Nationals. There are also 3 Upper House Labor's MPs retiring, and a 25th lower house MP seems certain to pull the plug ...

This is the highest rate of retirement since 1901, when 25 MPs also did not re-contest election. The high rate in 1901 was due to 18 MPs having been elected to the first Commonwealth Parliament earlier in the year.

There were 125 members of the Legislative Assembly in 1901 compared to 93 today, so proportionally the rate of retiring MPs is much higher at the 2011 election.

Later Mr Green said:

With the result of the 2011 NSW Election almost complete, let me make a first draft at history by publishing the post-election electoral pendulum ...

With 69 of the 93 seats in the Legislative Assembly, the O'Farrell government has the largest majority in NSW political history. The Coalition's victory eclipses the previous record of the Wran Labor government, which won 69 seats in a larger 99 seat Assembly in 1981.

As previous speakers have observed, some members who planned their retirement had the opportunity to make valedictory speeches to reflect on their time in this place and the work of a member of Parliament. In particular I refer to Phil Koperberg, who said:

Things moved uncharacteristically quickly today inasmuch as my ashes are not even cold and the Serjeant-at-Arms presented me with my former member's badge—now there's efficiency for you.

In that respect Mr Koperberg was reflecting on the efficiency of the staff of the Parliament, the way in which it operates and the job that they have to do but there is nothing clearer to a member that his time is coming to an end than to be presented with that badge. That is a reflection on the retiring members who planned their retirement and had the opportunity to make their speeches and thank their constituents and the staff in this place for all the work and all the time that they have spent making their job more efficient and more pleasant. He reflected at the time on Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* and quoted:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness ...

He quoted extensively to reflect on his time as a parliamentarian. He also said:

Being elected to Parliament by one's constituency to represent them is probably one of the greatest privileges afforded to anyone. I cannot think of a greater privilege that a community of peers can bestow on one another than to say, "Go to that Parliament and represent us, and do the best ..."

I thank all those people from both sides of the House for their work in the House for the Fifty-fourth Parliament. I wish all incoming members a great future here.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [12.06 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution on the motion moved by the member for Davidson. Everything I have heard in the contributions so far is true. We are enormously privileged to be in this place, which is a very strange workplace. It is unstructured. I think those members, particularly the vast number of them opposite me, in their first couple of weeks will be wondering just what they got themselves into. It takes a while to get used to working in this place with its lack of structure, particularly those who have come from workplaces with a boss and a structured day. But it is a very privileged position to be a member. It is a hard job. One of the things that makes it difficult is the fact that people tend to expect miracles from politicians. They do not understand that there are constraints: they want everything now. They want super-human efforts, which we all try to deliver. Despite the political differences that occur in this place that accompany political life I do accept that every person who has been elected and will be elected in the future to this place, almost without exception, does so for the right reasons.

The fact that members have to reapply for their jobs every four years and go through the tribulations of an election, regardless of the margin in their seat, adds to the idiosyncrasy of the life of being a politician. I listened with interest to the contribution of the member for Davidson about severance payments and the remuneration of people who go into public life, and I think we need to have a discussion about those things. Certainly there was a public view that the former superannuation payouts for members, particularly those who could walk straight out the door and access the money regardless of their age or length of time in this place, were too generous, but I do think that the current remuneration and superannuation for members of this place needs to be looked at and we need to have a discussion about that. I pay homage to those members, particularly former members on the Labor side of the Chamber, who were not re-elected.

We did set ourselves up for the high tide that came in and there were some members who I think really did, in all objectivity, deserve to get back, but the tide that we made them battle was simply too high. One of those was the member for Monaro, Steve Whan—with all due respect to the current member for Monaro and congratulations to him on his election. Steve Whan was a bloke that I think you would say was a very formidable and ferocious political operative. He gave as good as he got in this Chamber, and I know that he had some terrific clashes with you, Madam Speaker, and the member for Bega—I enjoyed those—and I will miss him.

The SPEAKER: I will miss him too.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I hope Hansard gets that—the Speaker will miss Steve Whan.

The SPEAKER: I will miss the clashes.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I am going to print that, frame it and send it to him. He was a good fellow, universally accepted as a good bloke, and I think there would have been more than one person in Monaro who went to the ballot box on 26 March and with great regret found themselves forced to vote against a bloke that, in other circumstances, they would like to have seen continue as their representative. Steve was a Monaro local, the son of Bob Whan, a former member for the Federal seat of Eden-Monaro. His contribution to the Labor Party, to Country Labor, was formidable.

You only have to go on line to see the many achievements and positions that he held in the party and the positions that he held in this place—Minister for Small Business, Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Primary Industries, Parliamentary Secretary to various Ministers and various positions on the Public Accounts Committee. He would tell you that his greatest achievement was that he just got the pleasure of serving the people of Monaro. He was vastly successful in two areas in his electorate: health, where he can take credit I think for \$160 million announced for Bega hospital, which I know he worked very hard with Mike Kelly to achieve, and education—schools and hospitals. Progress in education and health were the greatest achievements he managed to pull off for the people of his electorate. On behalf of members of the Labor Party and also, I am sure, all members in this House I thank Steve Whan and congratulate him on a sterling career. We hope to see him in this place again.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.11 p.m.]: I acknowledge that the member for Davidson has brought this motion before the House to thank those members of Parliament who are no longer serving with us. There is no doubt in my mind that members of Parliament come to this place with good intentions. We have different philosophies and share different views but ultimately we are all here because of our communities, and we are here to advocate on their behalf. We do it in different ways. We form many friendships over the years, months or days that we serve, depending on electoral cycles, but every four years we have to go through the job

application process—difficult for all of us—and in the end there will always be members who lose their seats and there will be members who retire, for whatever reason. A number of members on this side of the House have retired. I think it fitting that this motion has come before the House today when we are in the midst of inaugural speeches and welcoming new members in what was a landslide for the Liberal-Nationals Government.

I first acknowledge two retiring members, Wayne Merton and John Turner, who came to this place in 1998 in the Greiner years when the Liberal-Nationals were last in government. Those two members chose to retire, along with Judy Hopwood, who I have to say was one of the hardest-working members of this place and well liked by both sides. We also saw the retirement of Peter Debnam, who served as leader of our party; Michael Richardson, who served from 28 August 1993; and Russell Turner, who came to this place in 1996 and served his community of Orange so well. I do not forget the former father of the House, along with John Aquilina, Malcolm Kerr, who had long years of service here representing the people of Cronulla.

I also acknowledge the many members of the Labor Party who are no longer with us who contributed in various ways, serving as Ministers or parliamentary secretaries or on committees, and did their work as required. As I said, the game of politics is a very tough business and it has and will continue to claim casualties. It is the nature of the game. Thankfully, it does not result in death, as occurs in other adversarial conditions. It is the reason we have parliaments, it is the reason that the table is two sword-widths wide, and it is the reason we come here and argue until we are blue in the face. But when we step outside the door—certainly it is my policy—the arguments stay in the Chamber. That is what Parliament is all about. That is why communities elect members, as they have in this Fifty-fifth Parliament—to come into this place, have their say, make their views known and advocate as hard and as passionately as they can. That is what retiring members did.

I acknowledge particularly from our side of the House the many years of service given by the members I have mentioned, the friendships that have been formed with members on both sides of the Chamber, and the appreciation that communities have for those members of Parliament who have served with us. We have also lost members of Parliament through illness and death. This place has seen much sadness in the time I have served since 1999 and I can recall very fondly a number of members from different political persuasions who have passed away. We remember them also.

This is a tough business, adversarial in nature. I recall that in 1999 I was the only new Liberal member to be elected. We lost a number of excellent members of Parliament then. I say to my Labor friends: You have gone through what we went through in 1999 and you will go through it again, as all governments do. Our role now is to work hard—all of us—for the benefit of the community and of the State, and that is what our retiring members have done.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.16 p.m.]: There are many members I would like to express appreciation to who are no longer in the Parliament, and I acknowledge all of those members who are no longer with us due to losing their seats or because they have retired, but because of the limited time I will limit myself to speaking about two members in particular. I agree with some of the comments of former speakers: politics is, on the whole, an adversarial business. It is a contest of ideas, and most of us come into this place with a very clear understanding of our constituents' needs, our electorates' needs, but also a very clear commitment to the ability of our party's platform and philosophies to meet the needs of our constituents. We are willing to argue and debate passionately for the achievement of those ideals that our party holds dear. This can often lead to the perception that politics is a business in which there is more that divides than unites us and, while I certainly agree that that is the case on ideology, I do not think that is the case with regard to motivation. I think that across the political divide people come into this Parliament with the desire to represent their communities, to make the society that we all live in a better place. We may differ in our views on how we make this happen.

We also, of course, come into this place knowing that our time here is never certain. Every four years we put ourselves to the people for them to make the decision as to whether we will continue to represent them, and it is a humbling experience. In this age of politics there are very few safe seats and in the last election there is no doubt that Labor suffered a tsunami-sized swing against it. There were many reasons for that, but we did lose in that process some very good members. The first member that I want to acknowledge is Verity Firth, the former member for Balmain.

I congratulate Jamie Parker, the new member for Balmain. Verity held the seat neighbouring mine and we worked on many issues together. She was a good friend and colleague. Verity Firth had only one term in this Parliament yet I think many people would acknowledge that in those four years she made a huge contribution,

not only of behalf of her constituents but also as a Minister who held the portfolios of Environment and Climate Change, and Education. Her achievements as a Minister were many but I will refer to just a few, such as the establishment of an energy efficiency plan. Verity was a passionate advocate for the environment, including saving the river red gum forests. She worked hard to improve opportunities for students in New South Wales, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. She was successful in increasing the school leaving age and also in establishing ethics classes as an alternative to scripture.

Representing a seat such as Balmain, with its diverse community and many politically aware and progressive people, does pose real challenges when you are a member of a party that also has to respond to the needs and aspirations of the whole community. Verity managed this challenge with passion and intelligence. She had many successes on behalf of her constituents, including the extension of the light rail, the protection of Callan Park and the establishment of the common ground project at Camperdown. Verity was a fantastic member for Balmain and a great Minister, and she did all of this while also being the mother of a very young child, a wonderful mum to her daughter, April, and a great partner for Matthew. I will miss Verity: she had many achievements and I know that many others also feel that way.

The second member I wish to speak about briefly is Paul Pearce, the former member for Coogee, who is also no longer with us. Paul came into this Parliament in 2003 but I have known Paul from much earlier than that. We first met years ago when we were both involved in our union, the Federated Clerks Union, as it was then known. Paul served on many committees in this place. He was the chair of a number of committees, including the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics and the deputy chair of the Legislation Review Committee. He was a passionate advocate for his community. He came into this place with a long history of community activism as a former councillor of Waverley Council and mayor of that council from 1997 to 2004. He was educated in the New South Wales public school system and developed early a strong commitment to social justice. He was the first member of his family to pursue a university-level education. Paul was one of the smartest people I know: he had a huge knowledge of so many different areas, particularly of the environment and planning legislation. He was never afraid to speak his mind, whether in caucus or in the Parliament. I pay tribute to Paul Pearce.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [12.21 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Mount Druitt, Albury, Maroubra, Wagga Wagga and Marrickville for their contributions. I note there was generally consensus that in what is a combative, adversarial and vigorous environment we can agree at times, in this case to express appreciation to colleagues who have served the public professionally and with honour. In the main, despite the obvious scandals that we hear about and have heard about over the past four years, the vast majority of people who left Parliament did so after periods of very honourable and professional service. I note in particular the tribute of the member for Mount Druitt to the former member for Bathurst and the former member for Riverstone, the contribution of the member for Marrickville relating to the former members for Balmain and Coogee, and note that but for the grace of God she might have been one of those we are talking about.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Absolutely. I said it was a humbling experience.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Certainly the bipartisan nature of this debate and its good intentions were demonstrated also by the member for Albury, who spent more time talking about the former member for Blue Mountains than about anyone else. I think that was indicative of the spirit and intent of the motion. The member for Wagga Wagga emphasised that we do have a lot in common despite obvious differences in philosophies and views. Irrespective of political affiliation, it is highly appropriate to acknowledge the public service of those who left our parliamentary ranks at the last election. It is easy to be critical of politicians, particularly when some abuse the trust placed in them; however, I have no doubt that the vast majority of people who come into this place do so with the best of motives. That point was emphasised by the member for Maroubra as well.

Certainly the content and quality of the inaugural speeches I have heard to date indicate that this is as true of the class of 2011 as it was of those of us who entered this place in the course of the Fifty-fourth Parliament, either at the beginning or through a later by-election. My observation is that most people in this place work hard and with integrity, and it is only right that we acknowledge them properly on departure. To the extent that there is no opportunity for closure for those people who leave, particularly having fought an election, it is unfortunate. Therefore, it is even more appropriate that a motion such as this is considered and supported by all in this House.

In speaking to my motion I canvassed the introduction of a potential termination payment and I note supportive comments in that regard from the member for Mount Druitt and the member for Maroubra. I emphasise again that I am expressing a personal view. In addition to being fair, this measure might also

encourage more people to consider giving, in Menzies' words, honourable and patriotic service in public affairs. I believe that may be a matter that could be given further consideration in appropriate forums.

In conclusion, on behalf of the people of New South Wales we should say thank you to those who have left our ranks where they have provided honourable and dedicated service. It is simply a decent thing to do. No-one is perfect: we see that in this place and the media highlight any imperfections that are detected. Hopefully, we can learn from the mistakes of others as well as their successes. I am therefore pleased that everyone in this place appears to be supportive of this motion expressing appreciation for the service of those members of the Fifty-fourth Parliament who left office at the recent New South Wales election. I add my personal good wishes to them all. I again mention those from our side: Peter Debnam, Judy Hopwood, Malcolm Kerr, Wayne Merton, Michael Richardson, John Turner and Russell Turner. I hope that they and all members from the Labor side as well find a meaningful and constructive purpose to their lives following their departure from political office.

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

Motion agreed to.

TOUCH FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that 11 Wallsend players have been selected to play for Australia at the 2011 Touch Football World Cup; and
- (2) congratulates Stephanie Halpin, Kylie Hilder, Holly Smith, Amy Smith, Nathan Jones, Joshua Sparke, Jason Toby, Matthew Stanton, Darren McSpadden, Brad Squires and John Clarke on their selection.

It is wonderful to be able to congratulate our local sporting heroes. Each and every one of the 93 electorates in this State has them. It has been interesting and timely this week that we have paid tribute to one of our best sporting heroes, Lionel Rose, who passed away recently. Vale Lionel Rose. It was great to read in the *Star*, the local free newspaper, about our "touchies", who have been terrific. I have mentioned their names and they are going to be joined by Wallsend Touch Football Association referee Beau Newell in Scotland later this year for a five-day tournament. Interestingly, the team includes twin sisters Amy and Holly Smith. It is a pity that we cannot show photographs in this House because there is a very fetching photograph of the twins in the *Star*. They both played for Australia in the Trans-Tasman Test Series in the Northern Territory earlier this year and they are playing in the Australian senior mixed side.

Joshua Sparke, Jason Toby and Beau Newell are cousins, so there is a lot of family connection involved. All three will make their Touch World Cup debut and represent Australia in the men's 35 and mixed senior teams as well as in refereeing. The Touch Football World Cup is run by the Federation of International Touch and is held every four years. Participation is considered to be the pinnacle of an individual's touch football career. Interestingly, Australia will send seven teams to cover all divisions, including the men's open, the women's open, the mixed open, the men's 30, the men's 35 and the men's 40 age groups. Each team will compete in its respective division during a five-day Touch World Cup extravaganza. It is important to note that there are men's teams, women's teams, mixed teams and junior teams.

My connection with touch football is not because I am a touch football fan—I am hopeless with any ball sports—but because my sister played for a local mixed team for a long time and greatly enjoyed it. I will outline to the House the background of New South Wales touch football. The first formalised touch football competition was organised by the South Sydney Touch Football Association in 1968. Touch football increased in popularity such that in the 1970s it took hold in country areas. The Wagga Wagga Touch Association held the first country competition. To date competitions have been running very strongly. The New South Wales Touch Association was constituted in 1972. At that point there were six competitions and approximately 1,500 players. As at 2010, the number of registered players throughout New South Wales had reached more than 110,000, which is a heck of a lot of players, and there have been more than 170 affiliated competitions.

I will outline a little of the history of the Wallsend Touch Association. It was formerly known as the Newcastle Wallsend Touch Association which was formed in the summer of 1982 by the foundation President Harold "Puddy" Miller. The original club colours were green and maroon, which no doubt were effective if not

fetching. The first competition commenced with 18 men's teams in two divisions and was held at Federal Park during the summer of 1982. Competitions have been moved to the Upper Reserve Wallsend, which is a very large and popular reserve, except when it rains too much and becomes a spillway.

I will provide the House with a summary of information relating to the association's committee because it reflects the success of the Wallsend Touch Association. Since formation in 1982 the committee has been very conscious of the fact that to gain a foothold in the Newcastle sporting fraternity, the association has to be financially sound, involved in community organisations such as the sports councils and become proactive in establishing a highly successful organisation renowned throughout Newcastle. I can attest to the attainment of those goals because when I was first elected in 2007, the Wallsend Touch Association was one of the first sporting groups to lobby me about better facilities and resources. I pay tribute to the committee for doing so. I am sure that new members of Parliament will have the privilege of meeting many associations during their political careers.

The Wallsend Touch Association began entering teams in New South Wales and organised tournaments in its first year. It has continued to be a strong supporter of regional and State tournaments, which is fantastic. The association regards its technical division as important. It has more than 30 active official referees, more than 15 official selectors and more than 15 official coaches. They are integral and important categories of membership in any club. More than 4,500 football games are played by members of the Wallsend Touch Association, which means that the Upper Reserve Wallsend ground is very well used. I like the motto of the Wallsend Touch Association, which prides itself on each person being a volunteer and giving as much of their personal time as possible to put something back into the club. The association's website is really interesting and provides a great deal of information. Although the association invites everyone to become a member of the team, I am afraid my parliamentary schedule will not allow it—and a team would not want me anyway.

The executive of the association comprises Chad Gillies, who is President of the Wallsend Touch Association. Chad has represented Wallsend at many levels over the past decade. Throughout his term as president, he has been instrumental in the further development and continual growth of that wonderful club. Mr Colin Curry is the Vice-President of the Wallsend Touch Association. Prior to his election, his passion for the game was well known in the junior branch. He was junior vice-president in 2002-03. Karen Oliver is the club's junior vice-president since amalgamation of senior and junior committees took place. Karen has been the frontrunner of the junior arm at the Wallsend Touch Association. Kellie-Jeane Johnston is a very important person in the club. Kellie has been involved in touch with the Wallsend Touch Association for more than 18 years.

Another important member of the club is Robyn Hardes, who is the treasurer. Robyn has held that position for many years and she is the longest-serving Treasurer of the Wallsend Touch Association. Peter Kirkland, who is also known as "Kirko", is the current co-director of referees of the Wallsend Touch Association's senior competitions. I am sure all members will agree that in all sports referees play a vital role and that being a referee in any sport would be one of the hardest jobs a person could have. Ian Mosman, who is also known as "Mossie", is one of the club's co-directors of referees. Many people have had long-term involvement with the Wallsend Touch Association, which is fantastic.

Earlier I mentioned that there are men's teams, women's teams, mixed teams and junior teams to ensure that every body's needs and interests are catered for. The men's team plays on Monday nights, the women's team plays on Wednesday nights and there is a junior competition. Touch football is a great game for children who are interested in sport. The reason so many people are involved in touch football is that it is affordable, easily accessible and popular. It does not matter whether a person is male or female; he or she can play the game and have a fair go. It is a sport that is open to all members of the community. I am looking forward to speeches that will be made by other members on this topic. I am sure that members opposite will have some interesting stories to tell about touch football.

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY (Miranda—Minister for Sports and Recreation) [12.37 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I participate in debate on the motion. I congratulate the Australian players on their selection to compete in the 2011 Touch Football World Cup. The 2011 Federation of International Touch World Cup involves 92 teams from 28 countries that from 20 to 26 June in Edinburgh, Scotland, will take to the field in pursuit of global dominance. A number of divisions will be contested throughout the five-day tournament. The history of touch football is quite interesting. The game had very humble beginnings. It was used mainly as a training technique for rugby league teams during the 1950s and 1960s and was not really regarded as a sport in its own right.

However, eventually more and more people, who perhaps did not want to be involved in as much body contact as is associated with a traditional rugby league game, turned to touch football for a safe and social game. Touch football is also an important way of maintaining fitness. As the Minister for Sports and Recreation, I am obviously very keen to encourage and recommend any member of the community who wants to get involved in touch football or any other type of physical activity to reap the physical, mental and social benefits that come from living a healthy lifestyle. Touch football, among many other sporting pursuits, is an ideal way of becoming involved in fitness and sporting activities.

The first official game of touch football was held in the traditionally strong rugby league area of South Sydney. The South Sydney Touch Football Association was founded in 1968 and ran a competition that year. The matches were held at the aptly named Pioneer Park. Soon after this, other associations were formed and interdistrict competition began in 1978. The game soon blossomed in New South Wales and in 1980 the inaugural national championships were held. Only three divisions were contested that year: the men's and women's open and the men's over 35s. By 2005 the National Touch League catered for open age, under 20s and seniors. Currently, around 250,000 players are registered and approximately 500,000 schoolchildren play the sport. My earlier remarks demonstrate that this is a large participation sport that obviously has enormous health benefits for the community.

The game has also expanded overseas with international events attracting teams from New Zealand, South Africa, England, Wales, Scotland, the United States, Japan, Samoa, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Lebanon and Papua New Guinea, among others. As for my experience, I cannot lay claim to any great expertise as a touch player, but I dabbled with it in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As well as playing in the then public service competition I had the great honour of coaching an all-women's team. I am happy to say that I probably had more success as a coach than I did as a player. In that year, after pulling together a team of ladies who had never played the game—I must admit, at the first training session I was starting to wonder what I had got myself into—they took to the game quickly. We went through the season undefeated and actually won the competition. As I said, I will rest on my coaching record at that level and not go any further.

As for local touch football in the Sutherland shire, the Cronulla Touch Football League, as it was first called, was established in October 1974. To understand the circumstances in which the association was formed all those years ago, it is important to appreciate that touch football did not just happen suddenly; it had been played informally in many places, as I mentioned previously. The New South Wales body contained only one member club in 1973, South Sydney, as I have mentioned. Interstate matches were played against Queensland. In 1972 a group of casual touch players organised a team and were accepted into the competition. They called themselves the Ferrets. The Ferrets contested the South Sydney competition in 1972, 1973 and 1974. In 1973 some members of the Ferrets decided to form another team. They also applied and were accepted into the South Sydney competition. Interestingly, that team was called the Dragons and had players who lived in the Sutherland and Engadine areas. In fact, to this day the Engadine Dragons play in the Cronulla junior league. The significance of touch football in the shire is that it is acknowledged as the second touch football association to be established in New South Wales.

Many people have contributed enormously to the development of touch football, a number of whom I should like to place on the record as having contributed to such an extent that they were awarded life membership of the Touch Football Association of Australia. Going back as far as 1986 they include people such as Phil Smith, who was the first person awarded life membership. He received his award at a presentation ceremony following the 1986 national titles in Glenelg. Another is Barry Keenahan, whom I know through my rugby league experience. Barry was a graded rugby league referee 20 or more years ago. I remember he was heavily involved in touch football at that time. He comes from the Illawarra and started a touch football competition in 1978 in Wollongong. That same year he was elected President of the Referees Association and Director of Referees. He was awarded life membership in 1994. Barry believes the best referee he ever worked with was Rick Borg. Barry has a long and proud association with touch football.

Other life members include Dr Paul Webb, who received his award in 1996 along with Cary Thompson, and Brian Rooney in 2004. As well as life members the association has a hall of fame. Again, these people have contributed enormously to the development of the sport. The hall-of-famers include Terry Jacks, Karen Smith, Lisa Neal, Ray Lawrence, Kerry Norman, Mick McCall, Mark Boland, Scott Notley and Craig Pierce. They make up an impressive list of people who have contributed enormously to the development of touch football. Obviously I am happy to support the motion. I congratulate those representatives selected to represent Australia in the world cup. As Minister for Sports and Recreation, I certainly wish them well and hope they have every success in the tournament.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.45 p.m.]: I join the member for Wallsend and the Minister in congratulating touch players across the country and the State, particularly those from the Wallsend Wolves, 11 of whom will play in the world cup in Scotland. It is quite a strange place in which to hold a touch football world cup, but I am sure that if they run around fast enough they will warm up fairly quickly and possibly enjoy some other warmers afterwards. The 11 members selected for the national team continue a long tradition of the Wallsend Wolves providing players to represent their State or country. I understand that more than 19 Australian representatives and 60 State representatives came from the Wallsend Wolves club.

In 2006 the Wallsend Wolves celebrated its 25 years and nominated a team from those 25 years in the male and female categories. One of the players nominated in the 25-year team is heading to Scotland to compete in the over 35s. One of the great things about the sport of touch football is that children can compete from a young age and continue into their fifties and sixties, and beyond if necessary. I understand that the oldest Wallsend Wolves representative has participated in the over 50s. In my inaugural speech I spoke of the idea of creating and providing opportunities for people to leave their lounge rooms and participate in life, mix with others and form friendships and bonds. No doubt the Wallsend Wolves provide that opportunity to their local community.

I congratulate the Wallsend club on its success and all it does for the community. One of the unique things about this club is that it has a dedicated Wallsend touch field. My understanding and certainly my experience in local council of local fields and ovals is that generally they are shared between a winter and a summer sport. Again, one of the great things about touch football is that it is a winter and a summer sport. To drive past a field that is designated as Wallsend touch football fields is unique and makes me wonder where the next nearest dedicated touch football field would be. Of the 11 people named I make particular mention of John Clarke, who is married to Sam Clarke who also will attend the world cup in her capacity as a referee.

I appreciate that this sport brings people and families together. Dad or mum can compete in the over 40s or over 50s and the children can play in the juniors. It is a little like water polo in that members can continue to play and rise through the ranks from junior to senior. Unfortunately, some of the more taxing sports that take a greater toll on the body do not allow that. I encourage members of the wider community who find their own sport to be too taxing to find a different sport to participate in. I made a point of following up with the Minister, after his inaugural speech, to tell him what a great concept this is and to commend his strong belief in the importance of people participating in sport beyond their playing days, and how important it is to encourage people to be involved in sport throughout their lives.

I conclude by saying that it must be an incredible honour for a person to be selected to represent their country. It is an honour that I have never experienced; I was never quite good enough at anything to be selected. But what an incredible honour it must be to be selected to represent one's country, to be known as one of the best players in the country in one's chosen sport. It is beyond me to realise what that must feel like, but I do wonder about it. For the 11 players who have that great privilege and honour, I wish them the very best. I understand our women's team has never been beaten in international touch football. I trust that they will keep that fine reputation intact.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): The member should not feel badly about not making the team; I am sure quite a few other members of this House have not achieved that status.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [12.50 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion and to highlight the excellent people who will represent Australia in the Touch World Cup to be held in June in Scotland. From looking at the website earlier today they will play more than 400 games in five days in mixed, men's, women's and the over-35s groups. It is good to see that such a strong contingent of Australians will be going to the world cup. I was pleased that the member for Wallsend acknowledged those participants from her part of New South Wales who will be part of that event. Looking around the Chamber, I see a few members involved in this sport.

Forster-Tuncurry has a fairly active touch football association, so I expect the member for Myall Lakes will be there supporting them from time to time. I am sure the Hills Touch Association has a very solid advocate in the new member for Baulkham Hills. I know the member for Newcastle will be championing at the bit to get down to the Newcastle City Touch Association. He should not forget the guys at the University of Newcastle—I know university guys get a little bit touchy when it all goes somewhere else. The member for Campbelltown is lucky enough to have two touch associations; he has a junior association as well as the Campbelltown Touch Association.

The Penrith Touch Association is one of the most strongly supported touch football associations in the area. They compete quite strongly with a number of other sports, Penrith being a great nursery of sporting talent. The Penrith Touch Association has a few representatives, but for me one stood out, Scott Buckley, because I was lucky enough to attend university with him. I remember a number of times participating in university games with Scott, affectionately known as "Jack" by many of his friends. I understand he has represented Australia on a number of occasions. This will be another feather in his cap. He has been a long-term participant in the Penrith Touch Association, which has been operating a competition since 1976.

I also note the involvement of the member for Londonderry—the Kingsway sporting fields are in his electorate. I am sure many participate in the Penrith Touch Association games on Monday and Wednesday nights across all age groups, as well as on Tuesday night competitions for the mixed grade. I feel sure the member and I will have the opportunity to get to games and to support those organisations. I am fairly certain that my membership of the Penrith Touch Association is still valid, and I await the next call-up to run around. I expect that will bring a few laughs from the members of the Penrith Rams Australian Football Club who would kindly inform members of the House that I could not run out of sight on a dark night.

It is important to acknowledge the contributions of members and to recognise that touch football gives people the opportunity to participate in a safe environment. I applaud the New South Wales Touch Association and Touch Football Australia on the development of a code of conduct. I think that centred on a number of issues that will foster an important ethos across participation in sport. This is a sport that enables both young people and those over the age of 35 years to participate in men's, men's and mixed formats.

I draw on some of the comments made by the member for Wallsend about the good job that referees do. I am sure the skills that the member for Miranda acquired in a previous form of employment might be useful over time. I would like to acknowledge the Government's efforts to encourage and highlight healthy lifestyles by creating a shadow Minister for Healthy Lifestyles in the previous term of government. That is now supported by a new Minister for Sport and Recreation. I note that healthy lifestyles and preventative health are a key focus of the Minister for Health, the member for North Shore. With three such capable Ministers covering those areas, sport and healthy lifestyles will definitely be at the forefront of consideration by the current Government. I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion in the House today.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.55 p.m.]: In speaking to the motion, I congratulate all players on having been selected to represent Australia. One of them is a young lady by the name of Kylie Hilder. Kylie, who lives in the Forster-Tuncurry area and is a National Rugby League development officer, has been a very active touch footballer, rugby league and women's tag player. She played women's rugby league for Australia, and has been part of that successful team. Kylie Hilder was instrumental in starting women's tag in group 3, one of the great nurseries of Australian rugby league, stretching from Forster-Tuncurry in the south and to include Wingham, Taree, Hallidays Point, Old Bar and on to Port Macquarie. The group has two teams in Port Macquarie and one in Wauchope. In her development role, Kylie travels throughout the Great Lakes and the Manning Valley teaching at various groups and schools. She is also very involved in the Taree Touch Football Association and the Forster Tuncurry Touch Association.

One of the persons who has been involved with the Taree Touch Football Association for many years is Geoff Pensini. For many of those years he was a volunteer at the association. Both Taree and Great Lakes have very strong touch associations, with a lot of players contributing to them. The Forster Tuncurry touch football fields are shared by that great club, the Forster Tuncurry Rugby Union Club. It is great for the community that it has a number of sports sharing facilities.

My involvement with touch football, like that of the member for Cessnock, did not lead to my reaching any great heights. Obviously for those who play rugby, touch was used as a training activity. When in the Police Force, I played with the police touch footballers; Taree police often hosted great police touch football games. Last year I was playing touch football as training for the Forster Dolphins, and as their president encouraging the boys to train hard and to be involved. I stepped around a player and was running when I heard someone on the sideline say, "That wasn't a side step. That was an arthritic lurch." I will not be lurching much these days.

Touch football is an important sport in Manning and Great Lakes—indeed, throughout the Myall Lakes electorate. As previous speakers have said, it is important that everyone gets involved in sport. When a person's playing days are over he or she can contribute through volunteering. Through that, I have been involved in netball with my daughters, as well as rugby. I was the president of Old Bar rugby club and the Mid North Coast Rugby Association, and recently I was the president of the Forster-Tuncurry Dolphins. Whatever people put in

they reap tenfold, including the stories and things they have done. Unfortunately I cannot go into it, but in 2005 we had a rugby tour of Ireland. It was great to travel around Ireland on a bus with 40 or more people. We played and won three games. So it was a grand slam winning tour. We were known as the 2005 invincibles. I commend the motion.

By consent, Order of the Day (Committee Reports) postponed to permit the conclusion of the current debate.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [1.00 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions: the Minister for Sports and Recreation, the newly elected member for Cessnock, the member for Penrith and the newly elected member for Myall Lakes. I agree with the Minister that touch football had humble beginnings. It was nice to hear from someone in the know that touch football started as a training technique for rugby league teams. I agree with the Minister that it is a safe social game. A healthy lifestyle is important to the Minister for Sports and Recreation. I like the Minister's terminology about the "blossoming" of the game. Indeed, many people participate in the sport. I congratulate the Minister on his success at coaching women's touch football. Well done! It must have taken great patience.

I congratulate the newly elected member for Cessnock, who congratulated the Wallsend Wolves. I agree that the Wallsend Wolves have a long history of providing great representation in touch football in Australia. I also agree that the beauty of touch football is that all ages can compete, from youth onwards. Participation is important. I am sure all members agree that sport is all about a healthy lifestyle—getting away from the television set and getting outdoors and exercising. Wallsend has a dedicated touch football field—that is unique, and I am sure the Wallsend Wolves will keep it that way. It is a family affair. I also agree that the 11 locals are honoured to be our ambassadors overseas. It is fantastic that our women have never been beaten in Australia.

I thank the member for Penrith for his contribution. It was interesting to hear that more than 400 games will be played in Scotland shortly. So there will be some very tired players. Hopefully, no-one will end up on crutches, like the erstwhile member for Myall Lakes. I thank the member for Penrith for talking about the strong contingent from Wallsend and Australia. I liked his terminology when he said that Penrith is a "nursery" for sporting talent. I am sure it is. I digress for a moment. Now that Wayne Bennett is training the Newcastle Knights we will have a great nursery for sporting talent in Newcastle. The member for Penrith talked about the success of touch football throughout New South Wales. I applaud the New South Wales touch football association for its ethos and code of conduct.

I thank the member for Myall Lakes for his contribution. It is interesting to note that Kylie Hilder is a Forster-Tuncurry local. Obviously she has been instrumental in the Forster-Tuncurry, Manning area for her contribution to women's tag or touch football. I agree that it is important to factor in the contribution of volunteers, which is the ethos of the Wallsend Wolves. Finally, on behalf of the House, I say a big thank you and congratulations to all our touch players who will be playing in Scotland. We wish them all the best. We know that they will do well and be fantastic ambassadors for not only New South Wales but also our country.

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

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It being after 1.00 p.m., the House will proceed with Orders of the Day (Committee Reports).

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AND ETHICS

Report: Review of the Code of Conduct, Aspects of Disclosure of Interests and Related Issues

Question, by leave—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [1.07 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): It is with a great deal of pride that I deliver my inaugural speech to the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales, buoyed by the optimism of

being part of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. I look to the gallery and see familiar faces in family and friends—obviously, they had nothing better to do today—but I thank them for coming. It means a lot to me to have them here to share this important occasion. They have travelled from Tamworth and Gunnedah—Frogmore Park, to be exact; I can see Judy, Will and Tom—as well as Quirindi, with my parents-in-law, Don and Kath Davidson. Thank you for travelling here today.

A number of people could not make it today, and I have received many good luck messages, including the crew from Tamworth—the Wolfgangs, represented today by Grayson—he is the head of the family when his wife says he can be; Grayson, thank you for coming—the Omaras, the Fraters, the Dalitzs, Paul Dooley and the Tremains—basically, our sounding board and the executive. To my father Jim and sister Jenny, who took the bus early from Canberra today, it is great to have you here. Thank you. Unfortunately other members of my family could not be here today, but we are thinking of them, and I know my mother, who passed away a number of years ago, would be very proud indeed. I express my sincere thanks to many of my parliamentary colleagues and their staff, including the Premier and the Deputy Premier, who came to the electorate and supported me. I note their presence in the House today. Thank you.

To head office, headed by Ben Franklin, with Greg, Nathan, Douglas, Laura and Felicity—thank you for your total support, on occasions! Also, to the Hon. Jennifer Gardiner and the Hon. Trevor Khan who have played important roles as duty members of the Legislative Council for Tamworth in the past and kept things going. As well I note the former member for Armidale, Ray Chappell, who is in the public gallery. Thank you for coming, I do appreciate your time.

To the many who helped in 2007 and then backed up in 2011. Throughout my campaign I was constantly amazed by the many volunteers who gave their time so freely and without complaint. I remember stuffing envelopes until late on Christmas Eve and having a travelling companion on the long drive to many of the evening meetings I attended and visiting home after home and town after town with an utterly dedicated team of doorknockers. Everybody talks about doorknocking but, let me tell you, in Tamworth we had it down to a fine art every day, including Sundays. There were still six of us hard at it at 6.30 p.m. on Friday 25 March and we said, "We had better let these people have their dinner." I remember when I doorknocked at a gentleman's house and introduced myself before giving the spiel. I said to him, "Kevin Anderson". He said, "Ah, Kevin Anderson?" I said, "Yes". He said, "I wouldn't vote for you unless hell froze over". I gently reminded him that we had had a very cold winter and would he like to reconsider. Unfortunately I did not catch his answer as he slammed the door in my face but I will catch up with him next time and he is always welcome in my electorate.

It can take a lot of courage to stand up and to show your political colours and allegiance. It sometimes leaves one open to criticism and attack, and in a regional centre it can be a particularly risky thing to do, costing your business and in some cases friendships. I have been humbled by the number of people keen to fly the flag and show their support, either appearing in the media, on ads or putting up a corflute in their front yard. They are the people who are not only my supporters but are passionate about where we live and passionate about getting the best deal possible for our communities, and in the Tamworth electorate there are lots of them. Like Bede and Narelle Burke and their family, part of the many who stood for months and toiled beside me, always by my side. Another by my side was my campaign manager, who is in the public gallery today and who has made the transition to be the electorate manager as well, that is, Angela Lyle from Gunnedah. Thank you, Ange. Ange gave me the drive and incentive to continue to push hard and, to be honest, without her I do not know what we would have done. I can honestly say we would get in there in the mornings and have our meetings and, regardless of the time, Ange would say, "Here's your door knocking box, it'll be fine. I'll get it all sorted. Have a good day." And it was, we would come back at night, sign documents and then go home at about 1.00 a.m. So, thank you, Ange, and it is great to have you with me still.

On the home front I would not be making this speech today if it were not for my wife, Anna. There is no doubt, as many have said, that I have married up. The sun was shining on the day I met Anna, and it is still shining. I don't know how you put up with me, but you have faith in what I do, where I want to go and everything we take part in, and that is a very powerful thing. We are on a journey and there is still a long way to go, and I am loving it. There are our three beautiful kids sitting in the front row. William who is 12—Wilbur, stand up. This bloke is my right-hand man. I would be lost without him and he is starting to shoulder the responsibility of taking care of everyone when I am away—and he's got a mean outswinger on the boil! William, thank you. Ella who is nine—this girl has the kindest heart of anyone I know. She finds the good in everyone, it doesn't matter who they are. She does take after her mother, thank you! She is just so sweet and I have got a message for the Australian netball team, "You had better look out because Ella Anderson is coming through".

And Sam Anderson—look at that little rascal! He is five and he is all over it. He is the king of walking backwards. You are the king of tying shoelaces, and the king of fake pop-offs! I have got to tell you, he laughs so hard he literally wets himself, and he takes after his dad! I have to pass some things on, and I am quite happy to do that. Don't start laughing. Will, Ella and Sam, thanks for taking the time off school today. I know it was a very tough decision for you and I only had to ask once—yes, normally it is 10 times. When it comes to the family, I need to give special thanks and it must go to Lyn and John Davy. Without them, Anna and I could not do what we do. So Mr Deputy-Speaker, life is never dull in the Anderson household.

I am the product of hardworking parents who raised five children and like most found difficult at times trying to carve a living out of a primary industry and in this case it was professional fishing. As a result we spent a fair bit time on boats—starting in Victoria and ending up in Papua New Guinea. A hell of a journey. Mum loved the mountains, the sea and warm weather so dad had to keep packing us up and heading north. I remember one occasion we were off the east coast on our way further north, and we were in the middle of a filthy storm. The waves were breaking green over the wheelhouse and it was rough. As the old man picked his way through the sets the five of us and mum were all huddled on the wheelhouse floor, clinging to whatever we could with the old man yelling "Hang on!" Mum was playing I-spy to keep us all occupied. I can imagine if she said, "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with B" one of us smarty-pants would have said "Big wave". But we got there and we were always in safe hands. I never ever felt frightened, never ever felt like I was in any sort of trouble whenever I stepped on board a boat and my old man was behind the wheel.

I remember another occasion when we were heading north. We were coming home from a fishing trip and we were off Samarai Island with about two hours' steaming time ahead and we could see a big black cloud coming up from the point of Papua New Guinea. If you looked to your right as you headed east you could see all the way to New Zealand—that is how much space there is. I said to my old man, "Open up the governor, let's get home. Come on, we've been out two weeks, we're a couple of hours away, let's get going." He said, "No, no, let's just park ourselves in behind this island for a couple of hours and let this puppy dog blow over." We were loaded to the hilt, down to the bulwarks. About three or four days later it blew its guts out and we got out from behind that island. I will never, ever question him ever again.

Like any agricultural or fishing business I worked with dad on the boat so I did all my high school education by correspondence and if it was not for my sister Jen and mum, who forced me to catch up on schoolwork when we came in from fishing trips, I would certainly not have passed English. I was not too fussed about the other subjects—I did not like them and they did not like me either! And it was lucky that I was good at English because for some reason I wanted to be a radio announcer. When I stepped off the boats I chased a career in media and communications, starting as a signals operator with the Royal Australian Air Force. I put myself through night school to gain the qualifications needed to be a broadcaster and journalist. After various locations and radio stations I found myself in Tamworth in the early 1990s, and began work at Prime Television and enjoyed 11 good years there. I had some time with the New England Area Health Service and most recently ran a marketing business.

Over that time, I became heavily involved in community groups and service organisations, playing an active role on boards and committees, assisting wherever I could. One project that I was very proud to be a part of was building a Ronald McDonald House in Tamworth. Ronald McDonald House is essentially a home away from home for sick kids and their families. The Tamworth house has five bedrooms all with en suites, a family room, a quiet room, a kids' play room, a television room, kitchen, the whole lot. The most incredible thing about this was that the house was built in two days—think about that—by an army of tradies. The building company that organised everything was Single Builders. When the blitz began there no less than 40 brickies at dawn, and labourers to back them up, and they had the walls of that house up in two hours. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

That epitomised the community spirit that we have in our region and I am delighted that Mark and Loanna Single from Single Builders are in the gallery today. Great effort! Thank you for coming; I really appreciate it. It was a logistical nightmare, but we will do it all again one day. My community involvement gave me an insight into what is possible when good people get involved and get jobs done, like David and Brenda Lodge from the Salvation Army, tireless community workers who run our local Salvo store. Their job is getting tougher as hardship in the community increases. These people—like many others—needed help, so I started to think about the region's concerns and issues and how to take things to the next level.

The road to representation has been a challenging one, and here I acknowledge the efforts of the former member for Tamworth Mr Peter Draper and his contribution to the community. I challenged Peter in 2007, but I came second. Close, but no cigar—but let me tell you: I could smell the smoke. After the election I had to

knuckle back down into my business, but I stayed involved in the community and activities. In 2010 a bold move was driven by The Nationals State Director Ben Franklin, who is with us today. Tamworth was chosen to trial a community pre-selection. This was a first in Australian political history where the community was asked to choose The Nationals candidate to contest the 2011 State election. Voting was non-compulsory, but still 4,293 people from our community turned up to vote at one of the eight polling booths throughout the electorate. There were four Nationals candidates in that community pre-selection and I was humbled to win. It was a totally open and democratic process that ran with the slogan "Your Voice Your Choice". The Tamworth community was given full ownership over the entire selection procedure.

It is interesting to note that Tamworth has been independent heartland since 1991. There was a brief 18-month period in the middle where it was held by Nationals member John Cull, but for the most part it has been independent. I acknowledge my parliamentary colleague Richard Torbay, the member for Northern Tablelands. I understand why. Tamworth is an electorate that will not tolerate being told what to do. It is an electorate that wants to know that its concerns will be more important to its local member of Parliament than anything else and where people want their voice heard and then acted upon. In short, they want their representative to put them first and any party second—and I get that. I make that commitment and will always make their voice heard.

I am delighted to be joined here by my parliamentary colleagues Leslie Williams from Port Macquarie and Troy Grant from Dubbo, who I know will also fight for their electorates—thanks very much. Our communities want this Government to know that those who choose to live in regional New South Wales should not be disadvantaged or forgotten. We can and should receive the same services as those who choose to live in metropolitan centres. We need to get our fair share, and it will be my job to do that and to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself.

Our communities must come first. Each is unique with special qualities that contribute to our region as a whole, like the Tamworth Country Music Festival, one of the top ten festivals in the world; the Nundle "Go for Gold" festival embracing Chinese culture; Manilla's famous Mount Borah, home of the world paragliding championships; Werris Creek, the first railway town in New South Wales with a beautiful station to boot; Gunnedah, the koala capital of the world; and Barraba, with its frost over Barraba festival—all great areas and events that play an important role in strengthening our region and exposing it to more and more visitors each year.

Each community in the electorate has its own needs and wants, and I do not believe that one size fits all. Decisions affecting our people must be made in consultation with them, not directed from the thirty-fifth floor of an office block in Sydney. If there is battle to be had to ensure our people are looked after then we will have that battle. We will stand side by side and contest. If we are to continue to grow and prosper, we need to embrace new ideas. We need to explore boundaries, we need a vision, we need a communication plan and we need a roadmap, and we need our communities to have ownership. This plan must be developed with meaningful consultation at every level.

There are so many areas critical to the future of regional New South Wales and they must be considered holistically. In the area of health we need to break down the tyranny of distance and look at providing safe sustainable services closer to home. The recruitment and retention of doctors and dentists is critical, as is looking after staff and building facilities that have the capacity for training and population growth. We have an excellent Minister for Health in Jillian Skinner, who I appreciate is in the Chamber today and who completely understands regional hospitals and the importance of delivering services in the best facilities. I am very pleased to say that we have already honoured our election promise of delivering \$100 million to the redevelopment of Tamworth Base Hospital, which with the Federal money and the Minister's good work will commence in due course. On behalf of our communities, thank you Minister.

In education—the key on so many levels—we have fantastic schools manned by some of the best teachers and administrators in the State. However, we need to stay abreast of changing technology and our students need to be offered every opportunity to thrive and the tools to chart their course. Our home-grown workforce is a priority, but we must provide flexible options for looking to further education and training, whether it is through TAFE or a university, and Tamworth needs to have both. Our communities are growing and there is a need to ensure that our police are resourced to manage that growth. They are our front line in providing a safe and secure environment in which to live. In my view, regional policing needs special attention, and the geography quite simply demands it. Our region is at the forefront of the resources boom and we need to

embrace it. We are in a unique position in that we have the opportunity to set the agenda and to manage that growth. We have the power to ensure that our environment is protected.

We have direct input into the process. Never before has a community or region been given that opportunity. We should not and will not squander the chance to form a cooperative, balanced approach to agriculture and mining, gas extraction and the resources industry. They must co-exist and they will. As a community, we are measured by the way we treat those in need and the less fortunate. Everyone in our community deserves an opportunity, the chance for an even break—those who are struggling with the rising cost of living; those who can only just make ends meet. My door will be open and they will not be turned away.

Transport is a major component of our infrastructure and is fundamental to any regional area's economic growth and sustainability. I will push for rail lines to be reopened and for more efficient and cost-effective means of carting goods and cattle to be implemented. Air travel is another issue. Gunnedah is on the verge of expansion and needs to be on the radar. I look forward to leading the discussion in relation to the Sydney-Tamworth air route and the options available to us and expanding. We are ready to absorb some sections of government departments. Decentralisation will be a key. That dovetails nicely with our jobs action plan, which was detailed during the election campaign.

We are blessed with a great region. To represent this great region and its people is indeed an honour that I will never lose sight of. I thank them for putting their trust and faith in me. I will serve with honesty, integrity and passion. I will never forget that it was the people of the Tamworth electorate who put their trust in me by electing me to be their voice. They decided to give this bloke a go. I accept the responsibility and will do my best to do them proud. I thank the House for the opportunity to deliver my inaugural speech.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I pass on the best wishes of the Hon. Roger Wotton, who would have loved to have been here today.

[The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 1.29 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Ministerial Statement

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [2.15 p.m.]: In January 1974 the decision was made by the International Council of Nurses to celebrate International Nurses Day on 12 May each year, the anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, who is widely considered to be the founder of modern nursing. Since 1974 on this day each year we reflect on the work of Florence Nightingale, who came to prominence for her pioneering work in nursing during the Crimean War, where she tended to wounded soldiers. As everyone knows, she was dubbed "the lady with the lamp" for her habit of making rounds at night. Nightingale laid the foundation of professional nursing with the establishment in 1860 of her nursing school at St Thomas' Hospital in London, the first secular nursing school in the world and now part of King's College, London.

Only eight years later Lucy Osbourne, who trained at the Nightingale school and was identified as an outstanding graduate, was appointed as superintendent and chief female officer of the Sydney Infirmary, later called Sydney Hospital, which is of course right next door. It is interesting to note that Sydney Hospital will celebrate its two hundredth birthday this year. Ms Osbourne and five other Nightingale nurses arrived in Sydney in 1868, where they encountered appalling conditions and hostility from medical staff. She spent the next 12 years transforming the hospital and training nurses in the Nightingale tradition. She set up the first nursing school in Australia and no doubt laid the groundwork for the highly professional standards of care we see from our nurses today.

I was delighted earlier today to meet representatives from the College of Nursing, including the Chief Executive, ward nurses at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and Nepean Hospital and others, and I am delighted there are nurses in the public gallery. I also thank the Premier for dropping in and talking to those nurses and indicating to them how much we value the work they do, not only in our hospitals but also in public health settings. Without nurses and the wonderful work they do I am afraid our system would fall apart.

In relation to Sydney Hospital I particularly want to acknowledge my electorate officer. Many members will know Marilyn Cameron. Her great-aunt, Elsie Pidgeon, trained at Sydney Hospital from 1904 and served in

Lemnos and France during the First World War. She returned to Sydney Hospital, where she continued her nursing career and held the position of matron until her death in 1956 at the age of 76. She died at work at Sydney Hospital and is recognised in that hospital as a wonderful matron. Her war medals are in the museum at Sydney Hospital. I recommend to anyone who has not had the opportunity to visit the museum, which celebrates nursing, that they do so.

Today's nurses, who form the largest part of our health workforce, display fantastic commitment to their work. The New South Wales Government has made a strong commitment to nursing in this State. We have committed to providing patient-centred care, which is what they all wanted. We will allocate \$47 million to employ an additional 275 clinical nurse/midwife educators and specialists, in addition to the 2,200 nurses already promised. We are going to develop a 10-year health professionals workforce plan that will protect the skill mix of the nursing workforce, identify strategies to more rapidly develop the clinical skills of new nursing graduates, attract experienced nurses back to the workforce, enhance career pathways for nurses and midwives, and identify needs for administrative support so that nurses can spend more time on clinical work.

I know my colleagues who represent Hunter electorates will be pleased to know that our promise to restore the right for nurses to be involved in setting their own rosters is well and truly on track and that I have halted rollout of the system in the Hunter that made nurses so angry. The theme for this year's International Nurses Day is Closing the Gap—Increasing Access and Equity. Nurses should acquaint themselves with scholarships and other initiatives that have been put in place through the New South Wales Health system. As the daughter of a nurse whose mother trained at Sydney Hospital many years ago and as the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research one of my greatest privileges is to work with a large number of dedicated and professional nurses who care for the people of New South Wales. I pay tribute to nurses.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [2.20 p.m.]: This is a day when Parliament and the community are able to acknowledge the vital contribution of nurses. The greatest privilege in my working life in the hospital system was to share my days with nursing staff. They are well and truly the good guys. Their advocacy, professionalism, determination and altruism save lives every day. The modern nurse is a university trained multiskilled health professional and part of a generation of nurses who will lead the delivery of health care in this State for many years to come. All members of the House know of the incredibly varied skills of nurses in all sorts of areas ranging from complex post-operative cardiac intensive care to community nursing in our most disadvantaged suburbs.

The theme of International Nurses Day is Closing the Gap—Increasing Access and Equity. This theme reminds us of the major gaps in health outcomes across the community, especially in life expectancy between different income levels, men and women, rural and urban communities, and among our Indigenous Australians. The inadequacies are well known to all nurses. Our nurses in New South Wales always have been strong supporters of the Closing the Gap campaign. I take this opportunity to pay special tribute to the nurses working in Aboriginal medical centres, such as Nobuntu Magona and Robyn Bond, who work at Tharawal in Campbelltown. Today I spoke to Robyn, who, like so many of our nurses, was so busy working that she did not know it is International Nurses Day. On behalf of you, Barry, I wished her the best.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: I wish nurses the best every day.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Nurses often play leadership roles outside the profession, including many who have served and continue to serve in Parliament such as Leslie Williams, who is the member for Port Macquarie, and Steve Bromhead, the member for Myall Lakes. In this State there are more than 90,000 registered and enrolled nurses and midwives, and approximately 10,000 assistants in nursing. Today we celebrate them and we thank them for their service to everyone across New South Wales. You are our best and greatest. Thank you very much.

SCHIZOPHRENIA AWARENESS WEEK

Ministerial Statement

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [2.05 p.m.]: Schizophrenia Awareness Week is an annual event providing an opportunity to raise community awareness of schizophrenia and mental illness in general. Schizophrenia Awareness Week begins next Monday. The week provides the community with an opportunity to

reflect on the impact that schizophrenia and mental illness generally have on those who suffer as well as the broader community. Schizophrenia affects about 1 per cent of our community directly but touches many more people's lives, such as the families, carers, friends and colleagues of people living with the condition.

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is committed to raising the profile and importance of mental health care in New South Wales. Its election commitments attest to that. Through the establishment of a mental health commission the Government will ensure that the best possible care is available in New South Wales and that funding for mental health care is spent on mental health care. This is an opportune time to highlight the emerging cutting-edge schizophrenia research that is happening in New South Wales. There is also available to those affected by schizophrenia, their families and carers a range of health and support services.

I encourage every member of this Parliament to take the opportunity of Schizophrenia Awareness Week to promote greater understanding of schizophrenia and mental illness generally. Greater understanding is the key to reducing stigma and helping people to engage with their community. This is also an opportunity for those who have schizophrenia to share their experiences and develop greater community awareness. Sadly, too many people with mental health problems find themselves coming into contact with the criminal justice system. The Liberals and Nationals are committed to improving the diversion of people who suffer from mental illness away from prison and back into community-based treatment that they deserve. If we are to reduce the adverse events associated with mental illness we need assessment and management practices to be structured and evidenced based.

Schizophrenia Awareness Week is a good time to remember that the vast majority of people with a mental illness are not violent or aggressive. But at the same time we must acknowledge that association exists, and we must better manage problems when they present. Schizophrenia Awareness Week not only is an important focal point but also is part of a much bigger set of activities that aim to improve the lives of people who are living with schizophrenia. For example, New South Wales provides significant funding to support the Schizophrenia Research Institute and drive a proactive research agenda to prevent and cure schizophrenia.

New South Wales is home to the world-renowned schizophrenia researcher Professor Cyndi Shannon Weickert. Professor Shannon Weickert's research focuses on the developmental biology of schizophrenia, including clinical trials examining whether hormone therapy can reverse emotional response inhibition impairment in people with schizophrenia. New South Wales also supports the chair in schizophrenia epidemiology and population health, which is a position currently occupied by an Australian schizophrenia expert Professor Vaughan Carr. Professor Carr is focusing on pinpointing the risk factors associated with schizophrenia and tracking health outcomes across communities. This funding also has supported the establishment of the Schizophrenia Research Library, Australia's first online library of its kind.

We are committed to providing easy and supportive access to treatment and services for people with schizophrenia and other mental illness. Of course, we must remember the important role of families and carers. The Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill [ARAFMI] represents the families and carers of people living with a mental illness and provides essential support and advocacy for those families and friends. The Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales, a non-profit community organisation, is working to ensure that people with schizophrenia, and their carers and relatives, have access to information and appropriate services—and in that regard I acknowledge the work of Rob Ramjan. The Schizophrenia Fellowship is holding a range of events to mark this important week, including the annual symposium that will focus on the physical health of people affected by mental illness, the Poetry Awards Ceremony and a Meet Your Neighbour morning tea. I encourage all members to support these activities in their electorates.

This Government is focusing on making improvements to the system. I am confident that in establishing the Mental Health Commission, we will include and consult with the sector to ensure that together, we take mental health in this State forward. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has demonstrated its commitment to improving the lives of those who suffer from mental health by establishing a ministerial portfolio for mental health. As the first ever Minister for Mental Health in New South Wales I am committed to doing the hard work that is needed to ensure improvements in the care for people with a mental illness, their carers and families and, most importantly, that their voices are heard.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [2.31 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Opposition in support of Schizophrenia Awareness Week. As all members will be aware, the importance of awareness week events in our communities is that they provide a chance for all members to bring to the attention of their communities issues in respect of the particular subject of the event. Schizophrenia Awareness Week is held

annually to raise awareness of schizophrenia as well as to highlight the services and education available to the community. It also provides the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge, and to have greater understanding of the needs and aspirations of those suffering this illness. Schizophrenia is a psychotic disorder that affects behaviour, thinking and emotions. It is estimated that approximately nine young people per 10,000 of population aged 15 to 24 years will be affected by the first-onset psychosis. Schizophrenia also is a major contributor to youth suicide.

According to the World Health Organization, schizophrenia is the third most disabling disease of all diseases, not just mental health disorders. Schizophrenia Awareness Week is a national event organised and hosted by the Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales. The first event was held in Victoria in May 1979 and has been held in New South Wales since 2004. NSW Health provides annual funding of \$15,000 towards this event. As part of Schizophrenia Awareness Week the Schizophrenia Fellowship will conduct a symposium at which speakers will include Judge Frank Walker, Professor Tim Lambert and Professor Philip Mitchell. While reflecting on this particular awareness week it is an opportunity also to reflect on the achievements of the former Government on mental health issues.

New South Wales continues to have the lowest suicide rate nationally at 7.8 per 100,000 of population, down from 14.8 per 100,000 in 1997. Suicide rates among young people now are the lowest in Australia, dropping from 15.2 per 100,000 to 5.9 per 100,000—a substantial achievement. We also introduced funding for the schizophrenia library, which is operated by the Schizophrenia Research Institute, by providing \$1,075,000 over five years. The schizophrenia library is an online library and a world first—a one-stop shop for a wide range of information on many aspects of schizophrenia. It allows the general public, researchers, clinicians and policymakers to research from over 400 topics to discover more information on treatment, risk factors, and cause and outcomes of the illness. The library was launched on 21 June 2010 by the former health Minister. Whilst acknowledging Schizophrenia Awareness Week we should acknowledge also the professionals, nursing staff, crisis teams, communities and families of sufferers of schizophrenia and pay tribute to them for their efforts.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery Mr Ray Chappell, former member for Northern Tablelands.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.36 p.m.]

ROADS FUNDING

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Could the Premier please inform the House whether at any stage since becoming Premier he, any member of his staff or department or any of his Ministers or their staff or departments suggested or agreed to the proposal that \$270 million of the \$300 million that the Federal Government previously had committed to the M4 East project be diverted to the Pacific Highway upgrade?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The answer to that is no. I can tell the House that because there was an approach about shifting funds from the M4 to the Pacific Highway. It was an approach that no-one signed up to. It was an approach on which the New South Wales Liberals-Nationals Government sought details in writing from the relevant Minister. The last letter I received in relation to that matter was signed by the Prime Minister last Friday. It referred to the fact that the discussions were progressing well and commended us on the discussions but stated that there was no agreement to that money. The first we heard of the split in funding with the Pacific Highway and the removal of the money upon which an approach actually had been made by the Federal Government was in the Federal Budget delivered on Tuesday night. That is not the way we would undertake negotiations—it is not the way I believe many people would undertake negotiations—but that is the way in which the Federal Government has negotiated.

Mr Michael Daley: Shame!

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In relation to that injection, I can say that the occupational health and safety bill could not be clearer. In February 2008, after a seminar in this building, we issued a statement saying that we supported occupational health and safety reform across Australia. Throughout the rest of the term of the last Parliament we repeatedly said, as did those opposite, that we support the national model of occupational health and safety laws being proposed by the Federal Rudd Government. It was only in the lead-up to the election campaign when the member for Heffron was desperate to enlist the support of the union movement that we saw a backflip. I remember former Minister Joe Tripodi standing at this podium and surprising me by saying that the New South Wales Government would indeed support those national occupational health and safety laws.

We all remember the history: the former leader of the Labor Party in the upper House, the former Leader of the Government in the upper House at that stage, going around employers before the 2007 election campaign with a draft bill that suggested the sorts of reforms we are now enacting and which were reflected in Federal legislation would be enacted in New South Wales. That was the commitment he gave in boardrooms around the city in the lead-up to the 2011 election campaign. That document was tabled in this place for all to see. I have no doubt that the Hon. John Della Bosca was indeed honourable in his intent at that time. It was not just about winning the 2007 election campaign; it was about what he recognised—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: An error has been made with the time remaining for the question. The five minutes of time was restarted. The Premier has had about eight minutes to speak. Clearly his time has expired.

The SPEAKER: Order! I note the point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Of course, after Labor won the election it refused to introduce the legislation. We sought to introduce it in August or September 2008 and guess what? Labor voted against it. Having given a solemn promise in 2007, and the leader of the Government in the other place giving that promise before the 2007 election, Labor walked away from it. I am pleased to say that I now have a copy of the letter sent to me from the Prime Minister:

I understand that our respective departments' work on the funding for the next phase of the Pacific Highway duplication is progressing well. The Federal Minister for Infrastructure will be writing to you in detail to continue discussions around the Pacific Highway duplication and how we can best achieve its timely delivery.

I thank you for your Government's cooperation towards achieving our shared commitment of completing the upgrade by 2016.

So don't take my word for it; take the word of your Labor Prime Minister, who said in the letter signed on Friday that we would get a letter detailing what the proposals were. We did not get that letter. We had no letter from Mr Albanese until a letter was received by the Minister for Transport late on Tuesday night, when for the first time the detail was done.

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES POLICY

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I direct my question to the Premier. What action will the Government take to deliver fair increases in public services wages while preventing a blowout in the State's finances?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member of Castle Hill for his question, and I congratulate him on his election. It is no mean feat to hold a seat when the sitting member retires, but he did that well, with even a swing to him. It is no secret that members opposite left the State's finances in a mess, including a \$5.2 billion black hole.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That is a hole not helped by the Federal Government's mismanagement of the economy and yesterday's Federal Budget news that New South Wales GST receipts will fall by \$875 million. As a Government, we need to look at how we responsibly fill that black hole, while improving services and providing fair pay arrangements for the State's workforce. One of the few sensible initiatives that the former Labor Government took was the introduction of a wages policy in 2007. Naturally, of course, it failed

to implement or deliver it, but it was a sensible initiative. The policy had merit because it was aimed at delivering a fair increase in wages of 2.5 per cent, while allowing further increases only where productivity savings were made. As I said, it was good policy but Labor failed to follow through.

Since 2007 annual wage increases in the New South Wales public sector have actually averaged 4 per cent—well above Labor's 2.5 per cent cap. Despite the promise of productivity increases for which payments were made over and above the 2.5 per cent, just over half of the promised savings have been achieved. That has resulted in taxpayers having to foot a bill of \$900 million to cover the shortfall. If Labor's lax approach to this policy were maintained, the impact on the State's budget over the next four years would be in the order of \$1.96 billion. I announce today that my Government intends to implement the same wages policy as Labor introduced. But the difference is that we will not only enforce it, we will introduce legislation to make sure that it happens. I will meet with Unions NSW next week to take them through these proposals. Under our wages policy, savings will have to be achieved before they are passed on in higher wages.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We will not expect taxpayers to foot the bill for Labor-style shortfalls.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We will legislate to ensure the Industrial Relations Commission takes account of our wages policy when making public sector awards. Our system will work on the principle that the Parliament sets the rules and the umpire, the Industrial Relations Commission, enforces them. Under the proposed legislation the Government's wages policy will be set out in a regulation. As members know, either House of Parliament can disallow a regulation. Given the Government's lack of a majority in the Legislative Council, our approach ensures proper accountability and proper safeguards.

Our wages policy seeks to maintain a balance between delivering fair wages for public servants while keeping the budget under control. We want to ensure that we can afford future wage increases, and our initiatives will ensure that funds are available to pay for awards determined by the Industrial Relations Commission. The 2.5 per cent increase is right in the middle of the Reserve Bank's consumer price index [CPI] target of 2 to 3 per cent. If public sector workers are able to deliver superior results with productivity savings, they deserve and they will get higher increases. And we will give them happily because of the benefits of the better services that will flow to people across New South Wales. Before those opposite start to get too excited about this, they should consider the words of one of their favourite sons.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He was one of the financial guns, one of the member for Heffron's great stalwarts in the election campaign.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This was one of Labor's famous Treasurers, who said of its wages policy:

This will produce a smaller, leaner but more efficient public sector.

Those words were uttered by Eric Roozendaal. I think this is the first time I have ever agreed with him.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is to the Deputy Premier. I refer to the Deputy Premier's comments quoted in an ABC News online article of 24 November last year in which he said his Government, in its first term, would inject \$5 billion of new funds into infrastructure, and that his priority would be utilising a large part of those funds to upgrade the Pacific Highway. If the Pacific Highway upgrade is the Deputy Premier's priority, why has his Government not committed to matching the additional Federal contribution announced in the Federal Budget this week?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for her question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: As I told the House only yesterday, the Pacific Highway remains a national scandal, with only 51 per cent of it upgraded after those opposite had 16 years to do the work.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Labor Government started off in 1996 under one of its seven roads Ministers, whose name I think was "Sparkles". Minister "Sparkles" Scully told us back in 1996 that the job would be finished in 2006. Two years later Labor shifted the goal posts, and the finish date went out to 2012. Then it became 2016—the current target of the Federal Government and the Prime Minister. As I have always said, the New South Wales Government is willing to work cooperatively with the Federal Government to finally get the job done because that lot opposite could not do it.

Tuesday night's Federal Budget allegedly provided money to help progress the project. According to the announcement, apparently \$1.02 billion of supposedly new money was going towards the upgrade of the Pacific Highway. On the surface, everyone would be jumping up and down with excitement about that. I say "allegedly" because when we scratched the surface we found there had been a bit of smoke and mirrors in this announcement—Labornomics. After scratching the surface, we found that \$270 million of that money had come from the M4 extension—which, as the Treasurer says, has been scrapped; and \$150 million came from pushing out to the never-never the often promised F3 to M2 extension. In fact, Treasury estimates had already factored in \$400 million of that money as well to go to the Pacific Highway. There was not a lot of new money in the Federal Budget for this work.

The other disturbing thing is that in the past there have been constructive discussions with Federal governments of both persuasions about shared funding arrangements for the Pacific Highway, which, after all, is a national road. It is the major road freight route between Brisbane and Sydney. It is part of what has been called AusLink, but clearly it is a national highway. The current arrangement was for 80:20 funding between the Federal Government and the State. It was a surprise to us when the Federal Treasurer, Mr Swan, and the infrastructure Minister, Mr Albanese, suddenly said, "We're looking for 50 per cent. We're looking for \$750 million from the State Government."

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: In light of the \$5 billion black hole left to the State by Labor, we need to look at our ability to deliver that money.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: We have always maintained that saving lives and stopping carnage are important to this Government—much more important than it was to Labor for 16 years. That is why we are looking at our capacity to deliver on what has been requested by the Federal Government. It would be much more polite to ask the question first, instead of doing it by press release or a statement on budget night in Canberra.

DEFENCE INVESTMENT

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services. Will the Deputy Premier outline the Government's plan to attract defence investment in New South Wales?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the new member for Newcastle, Air Commodore Tim Owen, for his good question. The member has had a most distinguished career, including working with defence industries to deliver on the Australian Defence Force's commitment to protect our nation. He has built up many contacts in Canberra and, indeed, around the world in this defence industry space. I look forward to utilising his experience and knowledge to attract more defence industries to New South Wales. Currently, New South Wales has about 25 per cent of the nation's defence industries. I think what was once the premier State—we will make it that way again—should have more than 25 per cent of Australia's defence industries. Who was that yawning? Was that the member for Canterbury?

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Canterbury was nice when she first came here. Now she is bitter. She should watch the company she keeps.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Late last year the then Minister for State and Regional Development was spurred into action. Unfortunately this person was also the architect of the worst-ever asset State in Australian political history, also known as the master chef, Eric Roozendaal. What did the master chef do? I have had a briefing from the department on this matter, and it is interesting.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The master chef decided that he would put forward a defence industry advertising campaign to "raise the profile and awareness of the New South Wales Government's commitment to building the defence industry". That sounds suspiciously like political advertising. What happened with the advertising campaign? The campaign, which cost \$877,000, was doomed to fail. Not one defence industry came to New South Wales for all of that taxpayers' money. Had the master chef bothered to ask people such as the member for Newcastle, he would have been well advised that such a strategy would be a complete and utter waste of taxpayers' money. But wait! There is more. In another stroke of genius the master chef decided to put aside a \$30 million parcel of land at Macquarie Park to "support the defence industries". Surely there would be a return to taxpayers for that \$30 million investment. So how many defence industries moved to Macquarie Park? Zippo! Nada! None! Not a sausage!

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will refrain from inciting Government members.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Had the master chef taken advice he would have found that defence industries like to cluster around things like airports, sea ports or related industries and businesses, instead of moving to a greenfield site, complicated by the fact that there were large parcels of surplus office space and development-ready space in the immediate vicinity of Macquarie Park.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I am disappointed for the member for Newcastle. There are 30 seconds remaining and he has not heard one skerrick of the Government's planned outline. The question was simple: What will the Government do to attract defence industries?

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Deputy Premier will address that aspect of the question.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Not one defence industry moved to Macquarie Park. It was gobsmacking incompetence and the worst fiscal irresponsibility that led to the serious financial problems facing this State.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. I refer to the Deputy Premier's comments in the *Casino Times* on 19 January 2011 regarding Restart NSW:

I'm proud that The Nationals have secured up to \$1.6 billion for this for regional areas. This significant amount of money [is] to be spent on the Pacific Highway and other such projects.

Will the Deputy Premier now put his money where his mouth is and match the Federal Government's \$750 contribution to upgrade the Pacific Highway?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Liverpool is referring to a groundbreaking policy put forward by the Liberal-Nationals during the election campaign that would guarantee that 30 per cent of the specific infrastructure fund would go to regional areas—Labor would never have dreamt of something like that—to ensure whole-of-State development and decentralisation. Labor's plans would have Sydney, over the next 25 years, growing at the rate of 31 per cent and regional New South Wales growing at the rate of only 15 per cent. That was Labor's idea of forward planning. If people think traffic, congestion and public transport in Sydney are bad now, it would be an absolute nightmare in 25 years under Labor.

We announced the Restart NSW Fund, along with a Jobs Action Plan to grow jobs in regional New South Wales and a regional relocation grant to attract people to make the move. We will build the infrastructure, create the jobs and bring the people. Upgrading the Pacific Highway has always been a priority for the Liberal-Nationals. We have never made a secret of that. Labor members had a go with the previous question and they are having another go. I will continue saying it, because members opposite do not seem to get it. On Tuesday night the Federal Treasurer made an announcement that had a lot of smoke and a fair few mirrors around it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time. I call the member for Kogarah to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW STONER: After the event, in a press release, the Federal Treasurer challenged the New South Wales Government to produce the money. We are looking at producing that money.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. If they do not come to order I will place them on a call them to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: However, it would have been much more polite to do what previous governments have done, that is, reach a funding agreement between the State and Federal governments first. They did not do that. That is why we are examining our capacity to deliver and secure that extra money.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister detail how the people of New South Wales are paying the price for the waste and mismanagement of the former New South Wales Labor Government in the area of transport?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I congratulate the member for Riverstone on his resounding election victory and on his wonderful interest in public transport. It is very difficult to know where to start with this excellent question. However, given that the question was asked by the member for Riverstone, I will start with the north-west rail line. This morning I was amazed to read that the Federal Government said it had never ever received a submission from the State Labor Government in respect of the north-west rail line. I did some digging and look what I found: an 80-page submission! I was amazed because the submission was made in August 2010, before the Federal election, to the Commonwealth's body—Infrastructure Australia—on transport priorities for New South Wales.

Again, I emphasise that it was an 80-page submission. It was touted as the No. 1 rail priority. Yet what did the former Government tell the people of New South Wales was its No.1 rail priority during the Federal election campaign? The Government said it was the Parramatta to Epping rail line. Guess how many pages the former Government gave that? Only seven pages. Members of the former Government told the people of New South Wales one thing whilst they had 80 pages for the north-west rail line, and seven pages and only a \$30 million request for funding, and they end up with \$2.1 billion for seven pages.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If it was their No. 1 priority, why did they only use seven pages? Their department worked on the north-west rail line but they were telling the people of New South Wales something else. This demonstrates their absolute incompetence. It also shows this as an election stunt of the worst kind. What mismanagement from the former Government. We know its mismanagement has no bounds. I could speak for hours about how they have mismanaged the north-west rail line project, but there is too much more material. I refer to the Rozelle metro. It was announced in 2008 by No. 41, and it was axed in 2010 by No. 42, but how much did it cost? Half a billion dollars! We have been on the record as saying this is the worst public transport decision in the State's history but, mind you, it has had stiff competition because there have been so many. On that project, on 2 December last year the Auditor General said:

Of the \$412 million which had been spent at that stage on the Sydney Metro, \$356 million represents expenditure with no apparent benefit to the taxpayers of New South Wales.

The taxpayers of this State continue to pay for that bungle. Now that I have spoken about the former Government's failed rail projects, I will now speak about ticketing. The Tcard was promised in 1998 for the 2000 Olympics, we all remember that. In 2007 the then transport Minister, John Watkins, announced the

existing integrated ticketing project was off. How much did that cost the taxpayers of New South Wales? It cost \$100 million—with nothing to show for it! But not content with botching up the Tcard project, it then announced the MyZone project. Do we remember what happened when the former Government announced that? It got the boundaries and the fares wrong and it had to shred all the brochures. We all know how good they are at shredding, don't we? I have dealt with rail lines and ticketing, so I will go onto rolling stock. In the lead-up to the 2007 election Labor promised air-conditioned carriages for western Sydney by the end of 2010. Where are the western Sydney members? Remember, Labor was supposed to provide air-conditioned carriages by 2010. [*Time expired.*]

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. I refer the Treasurer to a statement made by the member for Coffs Harbour to the House in relation to Pacific Highway funding on 17 November 2006, wherein he said:

I fear that some of them will be involved in motor accidents and be injured or killed purely because of the lack of funding by this Government.

Given the Coalition Government's much-repeated statements regarding the need for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway, will the Minister stop playing politics and provide funding to complete this road?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The member for Maroubra has asked his question. He will listen to the answer in silence.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We understand the importance of the Pacific Highway more than anyone else. Many members on this side of the House have fought long and hard for the Pacific Highway.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is worth noting what State Labor did in the mini-budget. Do Labor members remember what it did when it was looking to save money? One of the many things Labor did wrong in the mini-budget was cut funding to the Pacific Highway. They did not tell us that, did they? The stunt that is going on at the moment is typical of Labor. It said on the weekend—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They said on the weekend it will be \$1 billion, but what did they do? They cut money to western Sydney. They ripped money away from all of those families in western Sydney to meet a commitment that they had already made. For the Leader of the Opposition to try to pretend that he is interested in the communities up and down the Pacific Highway is hypocrisy of the highest order. We are going to look at the Pacific Highway. We are going to have a formal discussion.

Ms Kristina Keneally: Look at it and a formal discussion!

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Well, you don't understand process!

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not tolerate unparliamentary behaviour. This is the last sitting day of the week. All members who have been called to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. If members continue to interject they will be removed from the Chamber. Question time will proceed in an orderly fashion. The member for Cabramatta will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Of course, the State Government will sit down and have appropriate negotiations—as the Prime Minister said to the Premier of this State, "We look forward to formal discussions." We will not have round-the-corner discussions between mates. We will not go into the back room to sort things out. State Labor has gone! We are talking about people's lives. We are going to deal with the Pacific Highway properly. We are going to back the families represented by many members in this place. We are going to look at the finances to look after the Pacific Highway, but the Opposition should stand condemned for raising this issue today given its history on this project. It is a disgrace. The families of New South Wales and every member of this State deserve better than what it dished up, what the Federal Treasurer has dished up and what the Federal Minister for Infrastructure has dished up, because it is rubbish!

DISABILITY SERVICES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Ageing and Disability. Can the Minister outline what steps the Government is taking to address the issues it faces in disability services?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Menai for her question and congratulate her on her 27 per cent swing in the State Election. In doing so can I also note that the member for Menai, prior to coming into this place, worked in disability services and she knows full well the pressure that families are under across this State, having worked on the front line, meeting their support needs. A couple of weeks ago the member for Menai and I, together with the member for Heathcote, the member for Cronulla and the member for Miranda, met with members of the Sutherland shire supported accommodation group.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members on both sides of the Chamber will come to order. The member for Hawkesbury will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: The point here is that disability services in this State are under enormous pressure for a number of reasons, starting with 16 years of mismanagement from those opposite.

Ms Kristina Keneally: You can't be serious! You endorsed our plan.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: When the members met with the Sutherland shire supported accommodation action group a number of weeks ago, we heard firsthand from families about the pressure that they are under. We are talking about families who have to make the heart-wrenching decision to walk away from their loved ones because they are under enormous strain and pressure because Government and community are not there supporting them. In fact, last year 70 families went through that heart-wrenching decision. At the same time, 236 families needed emergency intervention from Government because they were not being well supported in the first place. Those opposite sat on report after report, from the Ombudsman through to actuarial studies, which showed the true situation in relation to disability services in this State, and that includes the fact that we are including a growth in demand for services at around 9 to 10 per cent with a correlating decrease in terms of unpaid care at around 1.6 per cent. That information was sat on and as a result of that information being sat on the community does not have a true and accurate picture as to what pressure the system is under in relation to meeting the needs of people across this State.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: What worries me enormously as we sit here today is that there are families in the community who are not accessing services—some 97,000 people with severe and profound disabilities who are not accessing services—who need help and need help urgently. The O'Farrell Government over the next five years is going to increase the growth funding for disability services 33 per cent above the last five years under the Labor Government. In doing so, we are going to provide \$2 billion in growth funding to build an additional 1,750 supported accommodation places and we are also going to provide 47,000 additional support places for people with disabilities in this State.

One of the most important initiatives that this Government will ever engage in is to make New South Wales the number one State in terms of the provision of self-directed support and individualised funding to people with disabilities because under the former Government they were dictated to by bureaucracy about what services they can have, when they can have them, by whom they can have them and how they are going to have them. Under this Government, we are going to move the system from a reactive, crisis-driven approach, which is based on rationing, to one which is proactive, responsive and puts the person with a disability, their carers and their families at front and centre in terms of the decision making around their support needs, and to do that we want to empower them to pick and choose the services that best meet their needs rather than be dictated to by Government.

Mr Nick Lalich: You copied our plans.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite were about plans; we are about action. The fact is that they had 5,000 people on the steps of the Opera House dragging them—kicking and screaming—to properly fund disability services in this State.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I am reluctant to take a point of order on such a serious point, but I do not think it is appropriate that the Minister lies to this place—and he knows he has!

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume her seat. There is no point of order. I refer the member to the standing orders, which state that it is disorderly to accuse another member of lying in this place. The member should take more care when speaking about members of this House.

FERRY SERVICES

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I direct my question to the Minister for Transport. I refer to the announcement that the Minister will introduce a franchise model for the operation of Sydney harbour ferry services, which has caused considerable concern for employees at the Balmain shipyards. Will any employees of Sydney Ferries lose their jobs or have their pay and conditions reduced as a result of the Government's decision?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Balmain for his question and acknowledge his interest in public transport issues. We have dealt with a lot of issues together in the past months. I would like to give him an assurance about what I said yesterday, and I will say it again today. The operator will have strict obligations around staff. Every employee who is skilled and works hard will have a job running Sydney ferries.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Unlike Labor's forecast of up to 5 per cent decline in patronage—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that some of them are on three calls to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We will all remember the most recent Labor Government plan because No. 42 walked around and snatched it from my hand. In that plan there was predicted a decline in ferry patronage by 5 per cent in the next 10 years. That is unacceptable. We all know that more services mean more jobs—and that is what we are about. Our program will give better opportunities for staff by providing sustainable jobs in a viable organisation with more services, not less. We know the Opposition's record on services. They cut more than 200 ferry services last year. They cut services. How can they claim they care about jobs when they cut services? We on this side know that providing more services means more jobs, and that is the bottom line.

We have committed to working with staff and unions throughout this process to ensure a smooth transition, and that includes all aspects of the network from the Balmain shipyard to the reintroduction of all those services that I mentioned members opposite cut. I stand true to that commitment. In fact I had a productive meeting with unions before the announcement yesterday to explain our plans and to talk about the consultation moving forward. Our program is all about delivering more and better services and, as I said, declining patronage and reduced services, which is what those opposite projected or what they did in government, is not and cannot be the approach taken.

I also allude to the Leader of the Opposition because yesterday he came out attacking our plan, but he was the one who wrote to the Labor Party administration committee supporting a franchise model. He actually wrote to the Australian Labor Party, it was reported, in April 2009 supporting a franchise model and he cannot criticise our model because he actually highlighted to his own administration committee that franchise is different from privatisation. That is what he said then; it is not what he is saying now because he is a hypocrite. What this question has also allowed me to do is to talk about some of the job cuts that happened under those opposite because, whilst I was the shadow Minister for Transport I used to track this very closely and carefully. We know that when they were in government they slashed—took away—600 front-line positions in rail alone.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: Relevance. The question was about ferries, it was not about broader transport issues.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a valid point of order. The Minister has been answering the question and is entirely relevant.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We know members opposite are sensitive about jobs because their record was appalling. They took away 600 front-line positions in rail alone and many stations did not have staff for large parts of the day because of what they did. The Leader of the Opposition is a hypocrite in relation to a

franchise model. Now they are arguing about jobs when they cut jobs and services. I am happy to outline what Labor did in public transport alone. They reduced daily rail services by more than 400 in 2005. They cut more than 1,500 weekly bus services.

We on this side of the House know that more services mean more jobs, and that is what we are about. I digress. The member asked me specifically about the ferry franchise model and I have assured him of our commitment, but I think it is appropriate to place on the record some of the accolades we received after yesterday's announcement. None other than the Chief Executive of the Tourism and Transport Forum, Mr John Lee, who is well known to the other side—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —said in his press release:

... this is a positive first step by the new government after a number of false starts under Labor.

John Lee went on to say:

It's this sort of innovation that will give Sydney the ferry services the world's best harbour deserves and will deliver commuters more choices and more routes.

Far from a wholesale sell-off of Sydney Ferries, franchising will maintain—

[Time expired.]

LOBBYING REFORM

Mr ANDREW GEE: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier update the House on moves to clean up lobbying in New South Wales?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Orange for his question and I congratulate him upon his election. I was just looking at the temperature at Orange Airport: 5.1 degrees at 3.20 p.m. The only place colder is the caucus room. I am delighted to advise the House that the Government's new laws—

Ms Cherie Burton: We weren't listening to you.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: You do not listen to police. We understand that. You are a serial offender. I tell my kids, "Do what police tell you; do what police ask of you", but is that the lesson of the member for Kogarah?

Government members: No.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am happy to tell the House that new laws to ban success fees for lobbyists have passed through the Parliament. There have been just two weeks of Parliament and we have already done more in those two weeks to clean up the lobbying industry than those opposite did in 16 years.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Success fees are a recipe for shady deals and corruption. They created a perception that Government could be bought and they created a climate for corruption. That is why the Independent Commission Against Corruption recommended that success fees be outlawed. But did the Labor Government adopt that recommendation?

Government members: No.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Naturally they did nothing. It is no wonder because one of their favoured sons, Bruce Hawker, was able to build an empire by charging clients exorbitant fees because of his access to members opposite when they were in government. And of course his company, Hawker Britton, then ploughed large amounts back into the Labor Party as donations. Of course, Mr Hawker was able to find in the goodness of his heart time to work on every one of their campaigns during that time. But I bet he did not charge a success fee for the last election campaign. I have to say that I started to have my views about lobbyists confirmed when

I heard Mr Hawker saying throughout that campaign, "But, but, we're winning the campaign." The member for Heffron and 69 members on this side attest to what rubbish that was. The arrangement between Labor and Mr Hawker was dubious—

Ms Kristina Keneally: Did you win every debate?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Whatever gets the member for Heffron to sleep at night is fine with me.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The arrangement between Hawker and Labor was dubious but it was allowed to flourish for years under Labor without any attempt to stop it. My message to Hawker Britton and to lobbyists generally is the same message I gave last week: If you think that you are going to pay Mr Hawker or any other lobbyist to get special access to my Government, you are wasting your money. Do not do it. We will be judging projects and ideas on their merits, not by the lobbyist they employ.

One organisation that does not need to be told this is the Sydney Opera House Trust. Members may recall—I am sure the member for Toongabbie does—the Sydney Opera House renewal project, the project that came to characterise the chaos and confusion of the disastrous but thankfully short-lived term of old 41 over there. When he was not wasting half a billion on the Rozelle metro he was proposing a \$1 billion refurbishment of the Opera House with his mates in Canberra. The plan was shot down in flames by taxpayers who said, "We want hospitals fixed, we want transport fixed, we want schools fixed." But who was hired to do the lobbying on that project? None other than Hawker Britton. Did they do it as a public service? No. Did he do it pro bono because of all the other largesse he got from Labor?

Government members: No.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In fact, he charged them \$190,000 for the job. What did the Opera House get in return? Absolutely nothing. So that is the second instance where he clearly was not on a success fee. Thankfully, I am advised, the Opera House Trust has no plans to use Mr Hawker in the future, but I notice it has not stopped him skulking around visiting Labor members in this House. Re-election of Labor one day would come with Hawker Britton attached.

Question time concluded at 3.26 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Oxford Street Traffic Arrangements

Petition requesting the removal of the clearway and introduction of a 40 kilometres per hour speed limit in Oxford Street, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pet Shops

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

Public Housing

Petition requesting that no inner city public housing stock be sold and that funding for public housing maintenance be increased, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Mental Health Services

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUNFLOWER FAMILY SERVICES

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [3.32 p.m.]: Next week is Schizophrenia Awareness Week. This widely misunderstood illness creates disability in people's lives and disruption to carers and families. In my electorate of Wagga Wagga we have an organisation called Sunflower House, which offers recovery services for people suffering from schizophrenia. On previous occasions I have spoken in this place about the wonderful work carried out by the staff at Sunflower House. Yesterday the not-for-profit organisation Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales launched Sunflower Family Services in Wagga Wagga, which will provide services and programs to help people and families affected by mental health issues.

As part of the official opening of Sunflower Family Services, guests were invited to be myth busters with the aim of busting the myths and fears in the community surrounding schizophrenia. Each person was given an information card describing the common myths about schizophrenia and the facts that bust those myths. It is hoped that the guests will take the myth-busting campaign into the community through their workplaces, family and social contacts. Together, Sunflower House and Sunflower Family Services provide a community development program to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of everyone in the community. They provide education to build greater understanding of mental health issues, especially in young people, by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and early intervention when mental health issues arise.

The Carer Assist program provides information, education, advocacy and support for people who care for someone who has a mental illness, including adult carers and children of parents who are living with mental illness. The Day to Day Living in the Community Program recognises that people with a mental illness often are faced with significant challenges when reconnecting to their social and community networks, both during and after recovery. Those with a mental illness can engage in their choice of support and drop-in facilities that are all offered in a friendly and positive environment. The program also offers activities and engagement with groups to encourage socialisation and development of useful life skills. The Personal Helpers and Mentors Program is a strengths-based program that works with participants who are 16 years and older and who identify themselves as having a severe and persistent mental illness that impacts upon their functioning in the community. There is also a Recovery and Resource Services Program, an employment service, and respite services.

A new program that deserves special mention is called On Fire, which is funded by the nib foundation to cultivate enhanced resilience and wellbeing in children and young people aged eight to 17 years in families who are affected by mental health issues. This program offers regular fun days that occur throughout the year and two-day camps that run twice a year. On Fire also offers a group peer support program. Mental health issues can tear families apart and have a profound effect on young people who are trying to cope with the mental illness of a family member. I welcome the opening of Sunflower Family Services in Wagga Wagga. I acknowledge the importance of Schizophrenia Awareness Week in reminding the community of not only the sadness and chaos created by mental illness but also the help that is available and the extraordinary services carried out by those who work in the field of mental health.

I am proud to be the patron of Sunflower House, which is a service that was created by the Wagga Wagga community. A number of years ago members of the community got together and renovated a derelict building and engaged professionals. The formation of Sunflower Family Services represents an addition to mental health assistance for people who struggle. I commend the entire community of Wagga Wagga for providing a service not limited to Wagga Wagga. Outreach services are provided to towns surrounding Wagga Wagga in the Riverina region.

The staff in the centre are extremely dedicated. We are so lucky to have Sunflower House established as a result of support from an enormous number of community organisations. I pay tribute to Rotary and Lions, the local council, and TAFE, whose students did all the renovations basically at no cost. I commend the management of Schizophrenia Fellowship, which provides tireless advocacy for people with mental illness and advocated for the establishment of this wonderful service. As the name suggests, Sunflower Family Services is blooming and offers new hope to people who suffer from mental illness.

GOSSIP NATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown) [3.37 p.m.]: I inform the House of a significant event that will take place in my electorate on Saturday 14 May. The movie *Gossip Nation* will be premiering at the Hoyts cinema complex at Westpoint Blacktown. I encourage all members present to attend this event in support of the arts in western Sydney. *Gossip Nation* is a story told largely from the perspective of African immigrants. Part of the film's tagline states:

In Blacktown, a small but steadily growing African community faces its greatest challenge—gossip. Gossip that destroys friendships ... even interracial relations with other Australians, as we strive through the difficult road of multiculturalism.

Gossip Nation seeks to hold a mirror up to society, telling such stories as that of Emeka, an engineer from Nigeria who now works as an office cleaner in Australia. Emeka lives a faceless existence, a shadow of what he hoped his Australian life would be.

This movie is the first African-Australian production to premiere at a mainstream cinema in Australia. I congratulate the writer-producer, Blacktown resident Daniel Okoduwa, on this significant achievement. And, like so many things in Blacktown, it was done tough. The team behind *Gossip Nation* produced the film without any financial assistance and with great personal sacrifice. Many members of the cast and crew were working for little or no payment, driven only by the need to stand up and have Blacktown's voice heard. Nevertheless, they persevered and this Saturday we will have the opportunity to witness for the first time the results of all their hard work.

I pay tribute to their work, and I look forward to working as the State member for Blacktown to see that this movie will become an example for other aspiring filmmakers in the Blacktown area. I acknowledge the cast and crew of *Gossip Nation*. I acknowledge also the Blacktown Arts Centre for its donation of space for this film. Above all, I acknowledge the commitment of Mr Okoduwa and his co-producer Gideon Nweke, who through great personal hardship have largely financed this film themselves.

Blacktown is a culturally vibrant place, and it is in the sharing of culture that we find strength. This film is important because it highlights cultural tensions and tells the stories of recent immigrants to Australia—stories that are so often ignored but are so typical of Blacktown. When Mr Okoduwa met with the director, Michael Kang, the first thing they agreed on was that they would not make a one-sided, politically correct film. *Gossip Nation* was to be a warts-and-all portrayal of the human problems and drama suffered by the growing African community in Blacktown. It is in this spirit that they produced *Gossip Nation*, and I applaud them for their bravery in taking on this tough issue.

New South Wales is a State built by the efforts and labour of immigrants and, of course, Blacktown is a community that thrives on its diversity. We are proud of that cultural diversity in New South Wales, and the way in which different communities are able to live and work side by side. Blacktown is a fine example of the benefits of a working social cohesion. One of the ways this social harmony is achieved is through supporting communities as they embrace the Australian way of life while celebrating and maintaining their own unique cultural heritage. By giving voice to the stories of African migrants Mr Okoduwa is a powerful advocate for the African community in Blacktown. It is through work such as his that we are able to gain a greater understanding and respect for each other.

Mr Okoduwa has been able to give voice to these issues so effectively because he himself emigrated here from Nigeria in 2000. He promptly settled in Blacktown and since then has been an active participant in community groups and within the local African community. The willingness and spirit of people such as Mr Okoduwa bridges the cultural gap and helps to bring our society together. This willingness and spirit drove this production forward. Without the extraordinary efforts of Mr Okoduwa and people like him Blacktown would lack its rich culture. It gives me great pleasure to be able to record his efforts here today.

COFFS HARBOUR HEALTH CAMPUS PARKING

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant Speaker): [3.42 p.m.]: I raise the issue of parking at the Coffs Harbour health campus. While the health campus was being built and when it opened in 2001 I had several discussions with the then Minister for Health, Minister Knowles, in which I said that as he had reserved some regrowth forest on the southern side of the site when he was planning Minister parking on the new campus would be somewhat limited. I suggested that the Smiths' house at the front of the site should be purchased for future development or parking. The house was situated on roughly five acres and could have been bought at a bargain-basement price of about \$500,000, but the Minister failed to do so. The site was purchased by a group of local doctors who are building a private health care centre that will complement the health campus. However, traffic congestion will further increase.

The builders arrive on site early and they park around and near the campus. At the back of the site is the North Coast Cancer Institute, a fantastic rural health facility, which also has cancer care units for visiting

out-of-town patients and their families. Literally hundreds of people who work at the campus require parking for their vehicles. The ambulance station is also located on the campus site. It is a great campus and on many occasions in this House I have raised how stressed and overworked the staff are, especially the medical staff, nurses and doctors. The present problem is that medical staff now have to park off campus. Security is not the best and often staff have to park in an industrial estate across the Pacific Highway near a dangerous intersection. Recently nurses have told me that they have had to park in spaces at the emergency department because they do not feel safe going across the highway when they finish their late-night shifts.

My office and I receive complaints almost daily from people attending the health campus either for day surgery or to visit relatives and friends who are patients because they are not able to find parking spaces. In fact, each time I attend the campus for any reason I drive my four-wheel drive ute because I can climb the gutter and park on the grassed area. Unfortunately, after all the recent rain much of the grassed areas is boggy. An incredible number of people are parking on those areas anyway. Anyone who read or saw the local media after a couple of recent floods would have seen that the car park was flooded. This resulted because the drain on the southern side, which was identified in the flood study after the site was purchased, was never deepened, widened or concreted as recommended; council has never addressed the matter.

I have written to council and other departments to investigate improving the site drainage to ensure that the areas used currently as overflow parking will not be boggy for nurses, doctors and visitors to park in. Unfortunately, nothing has been done. I ask the Minister for Health to call for a report on opportunities to increase the parking area and improve access to the site. When the hospital was planned the agreement with council was for a road to be opened on the eastern side of the site running back to the Marshalls' estate, which is a sporting area, to enable unrestricted access to the hospital for ambulances attending an accident on the highway or if floodwaters cut off access via the highway. I appeal to the Minister to work with Coffs Harbour City Council and try to reach a resolution to improve the campus parking.

The campus is used comprehensively not just by the residents of Coffs Harbour but also at times by people from as far south as Port Macquarie for cancer care, and by people from Grafton for cardiac and cancer care. It is imperative that a solution is achieved urgently; otherwise I fear there will be problems not only with nurses, visitors and patients but also with people trying to cross the Pacific Highway.

HUNTER VALLEY COAL SEAM GAS MINING

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.47 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a matter of importance to the vigneron and hospitality industries of the Hunter Valley: coal seam gas mining and extraction. The vineyards of the Hunter Valley are the State's second-most visited tourist destination, second only to Sydney. I suspect that has a little to do with an airport that receives international visitors; otherwise I firmly believe the Hunter Valley would be number one. The \$1.8 billion industry offers world-class hospitality and wines, and employs many thousands of people. We are fortunate that at this stage the wineries and the vigneron industry can co-exist with the coalmining for which our region is so famous. We would like that amicable co-existence to continue. Certainly, it would not be possible for one or the other to exist solely and would be extremely detrimental to my community if it were to happen. We want them to co-exist. The Labor Government was investigating coal seam gas as an energy alternative, and the current Government must continue that investigation.

Extracting coal seam gas involves a range of risks. Depending on the techniques used, the risks vary. Having coal seam gas mining amidst the wineries, the vineyards and the horse-breeding industry is of concern to me and my constituents. We exist in a sensitive ecosystem and opportunities are available for coal seam gas mining in other places with far less sensitive ecosystems. I welcome the concept of exploring coal seam gas as an alternative energy source but I ask that it take place in far less sensitive areas. Coal seam gas opportunities are being explored widely across Queensland by the Queensland Government, and they have been explored for years across the State of California. At this stage both jurisdictions are fast rolling back restrictions. They want to impose more restrictions and they want to get away from the fracking system that is so dangerous and detrimental to the regions, the communities and the environment. We need to be careful about coal seam gas mining, but I would still suggest that we need this form of mining.

I was very fortunate during the election campaign to have Tony Kelly, the then Minister for Planning, come to Cessnock and speak with several vignerons and tourist operators. We spent several hours together over a cup of tea, and exchanged a lot of ideas. To be honest, going into that meeting I thought I knew a little bit about the topic but, quite frankly, I was humbled by how much they knew. They really know their content, and

I thought it was a perfect way to proceed when Tony Kelly put one of these gentlemen onto the shaping board or committee that was to be shaping up policy going forward from there. As a result of ongoing community consultation and further conversations I was very happy to be on hand when the then Premier of New South Wales, Kristina Keneally, came to the vineyards in my area and announced that we would effectively ring-fence a protection zone around the horse-breeding and wine industries of the Hunter and Upper Hunter.

I make this speech today in the hope that that work will continue under the current Government. Labor started something which I think has the potential to create enormous opportunity across the entire State, but it was also a start to preserving some things that need to be preserved, that is, the wine and tourism industries of the Broke Fordwich and Pokolbin regions. On behalf of members representing the Upper Hunter I extend that to include the horse-breeding region of Scone, also in the Upper Hunter. We need to protect sensitive areas, but we also need this energy source; no-one could argue against that. So I speak strongly and passionately on behalf of my community about the need to protect the wine and vineyard areas from the coal seam gas mining and extraction processes that will be a part of this State's progress into the future.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY (Miranda—Minister for Sports and Recreation) [3.52 p.m.]: I wish today to acknowledge and congratulate the 3,000-strong supporters who attended the recent Relay for Life staged in the Sutherland shire. I am very proud to say that my daughter Lauren took part in this time-honoured event that continues to look for the positives in life by celebrating, remembering and applauding those who are fighting back against cancer. Cancer is without question one of the most insidious diseases we will encounter during our lives. Invariably it will touch all of us during our lives, whether it be a loved one, a friend, or the friend of a friend. Cancer does not discriminate when choosing a victim, usually without notice, consuming the lives of friends and loved ones as they battle with the emotional and financial roller coaster that accompanies this disease.

This year's Sutherland Relay for Life was reported in the local *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* as being the "biggest and best in the State". That does not surprise me as we do everything bigger and better in the shire. The efforts of those involved raised in excess of \$470,000 for the Cancer Council of New South Wales, an outstanding effort. I can speak firsthand about the weather conditions for the event, as I had to make a trip to the local Sylvania Kmart at 11 o'clock at night to buy Lauren a new pair of shoes, such was the state of the weather. As only an 18-year-old girl might do, she decided to participate wearing Ugg boots! It was bucketing down and everyone was saturated, so imagine the state of her Ugg boots by the time I got there.

I mention this to highlight the extraordinary moral commitment and contribution of the walkers who refused to let the heavy rain dampen their resolve. Having been involved in sport for nearly four decades I can speak with some authority on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and physical activity. In fact I am still regularly pounding the pavement in an effort to keep this ageing frame in some sort of condition. The message to everyone, irrespective of age, is that lifestyle does play an important role in reducing the occurrence of cancer, helping detect cancer and also making it easier to treat. Eating healthy food and playing sport can make a difference. The local paper reported that a record 300 people had taken part in the cancer survivors and carers lap of honour, with 1,000 people attending the candlelight ceremony of hope. This again highlights the community's support for both cancer survivors and the Relay for Life.

It is probably important to mention also how the moneys raised have helped the Cancer Council. Funds have been distributed to cancer support groups dealing in grief and loss counselling within the shire. It has also been used for cancer information booklets at both St George and Sutherland hospitals. The Sutherland shire network also has received funds to help promote cancer awareness and prevention. In excess of \$4,000 was given in assistance grants to 18 shire families experiencing hardship as a result of a member being diagnosed with cancer. Funds were allocated to skin cancer awareness information sessions at Elouera Surf Club's annual clinic, as well as to a partnership with Sutherland Shire Council to provide a program for young people called Be Sun Sound, specifically targeting sun-related skin cancer in youth. It is events such as the Sutherland Relay for Life that bond and unite a community, and also make me very proud to be both the member for Miranda and a resident of the beautiful Sutherland shire.

GRAFFITI

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [3.56 p.m.]: I speak on a matter of grave concern to locals in the electorate of Toongabbie but a matter that will no doubt be of concern to constituents across the State—graffiti.

When I was Premier my Government conducted a number of Community Cabinets around New South Wales. Time and again this issue was raised by the residents of New South Wales. Graffiti is not only an eyesore but it also is to many people a sign of the breakdown of social order and implies a physical threat and a threat to their safety. It is on that basis that we take this issue seriously, and was on that basis that as Premier I introduced the if you mess up you clean up provisions or their equivalent, which meant that an individual who was convicted of an offence of creating graffiti was subject to an order, at the discretion of the courts, to clean it up.

We know that graffiti exists on private property, public property, trains, hospitals, utility buildings and so on, but we have had some success with a program in Lalor Park, in my electorate. I want to pay tribute to Blacktown councillors for their efforts on this matter. Those efforts have been very good. In particular, I refer to Julie Griffiths and Leo Kelly. We have worked with State governments, local governments and a lady called Danielle Rawnsley-Smith, who came to see me a couple of years ago. She indicated that she wanted to work with some of the youngsters in the area, engage them and redirect some of their creative efforts to more socially acceptable uses.

I was very sceptical at the time and walked her through the reasons that elderly people in particular see graffiti as emblematic of a breakdown in social order and a direct threat to their safety. However, I must say there has been significant improvement since we gave this lady and her team a start. She has worked hand in glove with a community group called Common Groundz, a café in Lalor Park. It is run by volunteer labour and is coordinated by a gentleman, coincidentally, named Nathan. This social enterprise has made a real difference in the area. When I walked around Lalor Park shops with the former Minister for Police, then Minister Daley, I was gratified to hear three or four shopkeepers say to him, unprompted, that things had improved over the past three or four years. So that was good news.

But there is more work to be done, and this area of Lalor Park is screaming out for more attention to be paid to this matter. The police have been very good. However, I take the opportunity to invite the new Attorney General and the new Premier to visit Lalor Park at some stage to examine the prevalence of graffiti there and also to talk with Nathan and the people at Common Groundz café to work out how we might ameliorate its effects. The Common Groundz café is also suffering financial hardship. It has a business model to get things up and running, but the good work that they have been doing is greatly threatened.

Nathan has been running the café rather than doing the social outreach work that the café is meant to fund. So despite all their terrific efforts the business model requires a tweak and an injection of funds from somewhere. I suspect that that somewhere will be across a range of government departments. I invite the Premier and the Attorney General and/or the Minister for Police to attend Lalor Park. I will work with whoever is prepared to help the people of western Sydney and Toongabbie in particular. I ask, with respect, that if they do visit Lalor Park it is not simply a flying visit but that there is a commitment to provide either an injection of funds or support for some of the different programs.

Many families in that patch are doing it tough. I do not want a visit to the area to be used in a media stunt but as an opportunity to improve people's lives. The issue speaks for itself. All of us are intent on cleaning up graffiti throughout New South Wales and bringing the perpetrators to account. But graffiti often points to deeper issues of social inequities and a lack of education and employment opportunities in a region. That is an outline of the issue. I welcome a visit by Government members, Ministers or, indeed, the Premier so that I will walk them through the issue.

TRIBUTE TO JOSEVA ROKOQO

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [4.01 p.m.]: Each of our electorates has constituents who have migrated to our wonderful country, Australia. I have been humbled by what I have learnt from my colleagues in their inaugural speeches. I have been humbled further by the number of members who have migrated or who are sons and daughters of families that migrated to Australia. Today, together with the Hon. Charlie Lynn from the other place, as Deputy-Speaker I had the honour to represent the Premier and all members at the service of thanksgiving for the life of Joe Rokoqo. Tribute was paid to Joe in the House earlier this week, and on behalf of the family I thank the House for paying tribute to Joe in Parliament.

The service was touching, to say the least. The service of thanksgiving was held in the Mytilenian Hall in Canterbury. There was a welcome by Reverend Qele Ratu followed by a viewing of the body. The hall was absolutely full. I was humbled by the number of people who had been touched by this gentleman. As members would appreciate, the singing was beautiful. Indeed, Fijians are recognised for their singing. As with the

revealing inaugural speeches, sadly, we do not know someone until we hear eulogies about them. Today we heard eulogies from Peni Finau, Joseva Rokoqo Junior, who was adopted by Joe, Miriama Hayes, Charlie Lynn, Manoa Togoloa and a representative from Sydney airport security, where Joe had been working for the past few years. There was a slide show presentation about Joe, including quite a few photographs of Joe in Parliament House. It was a touching experience. I refer members and parliamentary staff to the tribute paid to Joe in the other place last night by the Hon. Charlie Lynn, who said:

In 1989 [Joe] took up a position as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager in our catering section in the Parliament, where he worked for the next 16 years. In our eyes he was the boss—no job was too big, too small or too inconvenient. Big Joe was universally popular in the Parliament. He greeted everybody in the same manner. We were all equal in his eyes—Premiers, Ministers, backbenchers, staffers and visitors. All were met with a beaming smile, arms outstretched and a hearty greeting. He was a gentle giant of a man and earned the respect of everybody who knew him.

We will never forget Joe's beaming smile. I acknowledge the presence of the member for Coffs Harbour. Visitors to Fiji know that they must greet everyone by saying "bula" or "bula, bula". That became our trademark. I enjoyed that, and I look back with pride that it meant something to Joe. When a section of the catering department closed Joe took 12 months off to spend time with his family. Joe and his lovely wife adopted a number of children and gave them an opportunity they never would have had without Joe's direction. His son, who spoke today, had been taken in by Joe; he now plays for the Sharks under-20 team. His tribute to Joe was touching. He said he would not be where he is today without the direction provided by Joe and his lovely wife.

My statement is not only to recognise migrants and their sons and daughters; I want the parliamentary staff to know that they are highly valued. If they had seen the number of people who attended the service today they would know that all members of Parliament appreciate the job they do for us. I place on record a tribute not only to Joe but to everyone who works in the place. I was proud to offer our condolences to the family today, and to place them on the record.

CHESTER HILL NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.06 p.m.]: I deliver my first private member's statement in this House on Chester Hill North Public School. Chester Hill North Public School espouses the notion of "Truth Through Reason". On Wednesday 30 March 2011 I was invited by principal Helen Colquhoun to partake in the recognition ceremony for the Building the Education Revolution [BER] project and official opening of the new multipurpose classroom. The Federal member for Blaxland, the Hon. Jason Clare, attended to unveil the plaque and officially speak on behalf of the Federal Government. On entering the campus I was greeted by two distinguished school leaders who displayed unprecedented welcoming attributes.

Time was spent with the Hon. Jason Clare, principal Helen Colquhoun and the leaders discussing the virtues of leadership and opportunities that education brings. Following our meeting the official party proceeded to the new multipurpose classroom. Speeches were delivered by the student leaders, the principal and official guests, including the President of the Parents and Citizens Association, Mrs Toni Renyolds-Pace. The new multipurpose classroom has been designed and constructed to meet the highest environmental standards, providing both students and staff with the most modern facilities and classroom environment in which to teach and learn. It was impressive that on an extremely hot day the room temperature was maintained at a comfortable level without the use of air conditioning. It was quite remarkable.

Today's modern classrooms are very different from those of the past, as members would appreciate. The integration of technology provides students with the opportunity to access, process and present information in various formats—an aspect of education earlier students of the school would not have had the opportunity to experience. The classroom has been fitted with a smart board, computers and an abundance of teaching resources. It was evident that good quality education is a priority at Chester Hill North Public School, with many pieces of work displayed proudly by the teachers on surrounding pin boards. Of course, this encourages students to take pride in their school work.

Upon completion of the official speeches we were taken on a tour of the school. Much work has gone into the refurbishment of classrooms. Each classroom visited was a hive of activity and a reassurance that our children in the Fairfield electorate are receiving the best education possible. All children were engaged in a variety of creative activities, colouring, painting and computing. The students were happily working away and it was great to see the teachers enjoying the fruits of the students' labour.

During the visit it was impressive to watch a group of teachers programming and planning for the future. Part of the tour also comprised a visit to the new award-winning designed school hall. Finally, an

inspection of the old Department of Education district office building took place due to its relocation to Ringrose. The opportunity arose to refurbish the building, which included the installation of new blinds, carpet and a fresh coat of paint. It is with much regret I advise that, on Thursday 7 April, a week later, that the refurbished office was damaged by fire as a result of an electrical fault. The experience was frightening for the primary students, staff and parents. It is remarkable that 500 students were evacuated in a time frame of exactly three minutes. The students were escorted to nearby Campbell Hill Pioneer Reserve.

The brave efforts of the young staff must be noted as they managed what was a major critical incident. Notice of the evacuation occurred via word of mouth. The mass evacuation, which resulted in no-one being critically injured, was an extraordinary achievement. Unfortunately 16 students were taken to hospital due to smoke inhalation and some staff were suffering from post-traumatic stress. I praise the efforts of local fire and rescue crews for their work on the day. The school executive is also to be commended for its leadership during this critical incident. Many executives stayed behind until 7.00 p.m. speaking with local authorities about the fire. As a former teacher I commend the efforts of the teaching staff, especially the young teachers who, under the circumstances, remained calm and focused during the entire ordeal. Chester Hill North Public School is a credit to the Fairfield electorate. I acknowledge the Premier who visited the school the next day.

SANCTUARY POINT

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.11 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to praise the significant efforts of the community of Sanctuary Point in my electorate. These community efforts have driven down crime and antisocial behaviour, and restored a sense of pride in Sanctuary Point community. Recently a campaign was undertaken involving all aspects of the community to bring town pride back to the village of Sanctuary Point and surrounds. Local residents have banded together to clean up their town by mowing verges, weeding gardens and painting public amenity blocks. Councils cannot always undertake those types of jobs in a timely manner so the community decided to do it themselves. The campaign has been driven by the local community through a social networking Facebook page, and the local media through the *South Coast Register* and local radio 2ST. After complaints about a lack of maintenance, on 17 March a group of residents took to Sanctuary Point's eastern entrance with mowers, line trimmers and pruning shears in order to prove that the entire community could play a role in improving and beautifying the village. On 18 March the *South Coast Register* noted:

Staff at Sanctuary Point Public School had also offered to help by getting their students involved in projects.

That is also pleasing to see. It is this kind of attitude from communities like Sanctuary Point that can and will drive change. I congratulate all community members and local councillors who took part in the day. Of course, it should not be entirely up to the community to ensure that public assets are appropriately maintained. I have made representations to the general manager of Shoalhaven City Council on many occasions, and have met with council representatives to seek a solution to the ongoing lack of maintenance within and around Sanctuary Point. I will continue to lobby Shoalhaven City Council and liaise with council officials to ensure that appropriate maintenance work is undertaken across the village.

There is also a continuing problem concerning crime and antisocial behaviour within the bay and basin community, and also around Sanctuary Point. That is not the only area that has problems with antisocial behaviour, but it seems to have spiked in recent months. It is essential that the Government provide adequate police resources and services to ensure a small element within the community that seeks to disturb the lives and wellbeing of many residents through perpetrating crimes are dealt with to the full extent of the law. I am pleased that the Coalition Government has honoured an election commitment to deliver a mobile local area command vehicle for the Shoalhaven Local Area Command. It was originally promised by the former Labor Government. It was months behind schedule, but it has now been delivered by the O'Farrell Government, much to the joy and delight of the officers of the Shoalhaven Local Area Command.

The fully marked mobile police command vehicle will provide local police with improved technology for law enforcement. It will be deployed as part of a high-visibility police operation targeting crime hot spots or used as an on-site command post at the scenes of major incidents including crime scenes, search warrants, crashes, and search and rescue incidents. The mobile police command vehicle is a welcome addition to the area, boosting local resources and increasing police mobility. It is equipped with the latest equipment including data terminals with access to the police database, a television monitor, interview room and digital message board. The Mercedes Sprinter van seats five officers and will enable local police to access more remote areas and provide a platform for officers to work out of while in the community.

I welcome the appointment of the new Shoalhaven Local Area Command Superintendent, Wayne Murray. In early conversations with him I have mentioned my preference that the mobile command vehicle have a high visibility within the bay and basin area, particularly Sanctuary Point from where the concerns have arisen in recent months. I have also discussed with the superintendent ways in which all residents, officers, the community and the council can work together to drive down crime and antisocial behaviour within the Sanctuary Point community. I am also pleased to outline other measures the O'Farrell Government is implementing that will benefit the Sanctuary Point community and drive down crime. Local people are working in collaboration with local police through community policing, which is the most effective way of tackling crime.

The New South Wales Government will make local streets safer through a genuine partnership between police and communities by implementing a twenty-first century Neighbourhood Watch Program. Neighbourhood Watch was one of the most well-established and successful community policing initiatives. The O'Farrell Government will see a return of Neighbourhood Watch working effectively and efficiently. I look forward to a Neighbourhood Watch Program being initiated in the South Coast electorate because they have worked well in the past. I also look forward to working with the new local area commander and residents of Sanctuary Point to improve the amenity of that area. I congratulate all police officers on their efforts to date.

RYDE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [4.16 p.m.]: On Tuesday 10 May 2011, I was privileged to attend the 2011 City of Ryde Volunteer of the Year Awards. As the Minister responsible for volunteering in the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, I am so proud of the contribution the good people of Ryde make to our society through volunteering. I congratulate winners in each category. I also record the background of their contributions as noted in the program provided to me during the ceremony. Joan Graham won the individual award for Volunteer of the Year. Joan has long been associated with New Horizons, a non-profit organisation that has grown over the years to be a community leader in mental health and disability support services. Recently stepping down as president, a position she held for more than 20 years, Joan is a hands-on leader with a strong sense of social justice. She is willing to give her time and energy to support those less fortunate.

As part of a committee of the Ladies Auxiliary at Macquarie Hospital Joan was instrumental in obtaining a government grant to build a factory in which people with disabilities could work. The land was provided by the area health department and the factory was built. Joan is a committed community member and her dedication to the needs of people with a disability is inspiring. Kim Rodgers won the award for Young Volunteer of the Year. Young people in Ryde have access to an engaging dramatic arts program thanks to Kim Rogers' work as a drama tutor and director with the Ryde Youth Theatre. Through the program implemented by Kim, local young people have developed skills in performance, public speaking and group work. Additionally, they have been given the opportunity to gain confidence and self awareness. To develop the program, which includes workshops and all aspects of production, Kim devoted a great deal of her time and energy and has willingly shared her skills and knowledge of the dramatic arts.

Kim volunteers because she feels that she can make a difference. Her Christian background gives her a strong belief that she is called to use her skills to help others. The Achieve Australia Vintage and Value Enterprise team of volunteers won the Group Volunteer of the Year Award. Achieve Australia volunteers is a committed group of people whose dedication, knowledge, compassion and fundraising enhances the lives of people living with a disability in our community. The volunteers run the Needlecraft Emporium, Fabric Cave, second-hand bookshop and nurseries, and run an annual fete at Crowle Home in Ryde. It has tremendous goodwill through the local community. In the past five years the annual fete has raised not only awareness for their cause but also more than \$80,000—all to assist people living with a disability. Just as importantly, I record into our New South Wales history, through the record of *Hansard*, the numerous individuals and groups nominated for the Ryde volunteer awards.

The individual nominees for Volunteer of the Year were: Ms Robyn Bates, Ms Val Bird, Mr Alf Bourne, Mr Teddy Chan, Mrs Lyn Cosandey, Mr Bruce Davidson, Mr Ian Dear, Mrs Geraldene Dear, Mr Alex Eady, Ms Elizabeth Graham, Ms Billy Grounds, Ms Megan Henderson, Ms June Hoban, Mr Ron and Mrs Vida Hoffman, Mr Robert Israel, Ms Margaret Jones, Ms Suzanne Maslen, Ms Irene Miller, Mr John Mortimer, Ms Trina Mosley, Ms Shohreh Nourouzi, Mr Ara Ohanessian, Mrs Dianne Seary, Mr Jimmy Shaw, Dr Andrew Tan, Ms Vicky Vernados, Mrs Margaret Walsh, Mrs Pamela Ward, Ms Dorothy Webb, Ms Margaret Wilson and Mrs Glad Wilson.

The group nominees were: 322 (City of Ryde) Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets, CCA Board of Directors, DHL Volunteers—Nancy Wood, Megan Henderson, Hanna Meisch and Rosemary Shepherd—drop-in lunch volunteers, leisure learning tutors, Meadowbank Chinese Neighbourhood Centre Incorporated, medical transport drivers, motor neurone disease massage team volunteers, Ryde City branch of the NSW Justices Association Incorporated, and last but not least the World Vision Committee of the Ryde Secondary College. I express my sincere thanks for all volunteers, particularly those in our great electorate of Ryde. Volunteers are undoubtedly the heart and soul of our community. Their selfless acts of kindness do not go unnoticed.

GLENDALE INTERCHANGE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.21 p.m.]: I raise with the House the significant opportunities for regional development currently offered by planning and proposals for the Cardiff, Glendale and Boolaroo areas, and the impediment posed by decisions of the previous Government and by the policies of government agencies. On Friday last week this House acknowledged unanimous endorsement by the mayors of 11 Hunter councils for the Lake Macquarie transport interchange as their major regional priority. I thank the member for Wallsend for raising the matter by way of motion and I was pleased to see broad-based support from across the House. As the Independent member for Lake Macquarie and Mayor of Lake Macquarie I was delighted to see the motion supported by both the Opposition and the Government. The significance of the proposal was recognised by the member for Port Stephens. It was particularly pleasing to hear the positive response from the Minister for Transport in reiterating the Government's \$15 million commitment to the project's first stage.

Points raised during debate captured the importance of the project and chief among these is employment in the expanding Cardiff industrial zone. The demographically central location offers much to the region and connectivity with the main road network will underpin this. The Pennant Street Bridge and its connection to Glendale Drive will greatly enhance the interchange. Delivery of the interchange will be a critical point to many people in the region choosing to take up public transport based, of course, on the site's key values of its central location and its connectivity. When a commitment is finally made on an east coast high-speed rail link, Glendale must be seen as an essential node for the lower Hunter.

The crucial unresolved aspect of connectivity is the proposed Munibung Road extension, which is part of a project to expand the Cardiff industrial estate. Extending Munibung Road to meet Main Road 217 will be another factor vital in connecting the interchange and the expanding industrial area to the Roads and Traffic Authority's main road network. It will produce a huge regional benefit in its own right by bringing employment closer to the string of major residential suburbs stretching from Warners Bay to Toronto and beyond. Fortuitously, this opportunity coincides with progress on the Glendale transport interchange.

Land for the road extension is becoming available through redevelopment of the Pasminco smelter site. Problems, including health impacts from lead contamination and pollution of Cockle Creek, led to the unprofitable smelter being stripped of assets and cast adrift, ultimately falling under administration by Ferrier Hodgson. The administrator is redeveloping the site, but claims no financial capacity to build a major intersection to serve both Munibung Road and the site's other developments. The Department of Planning has not imposed any particularly requirement on this.

For its part, the Roads and Traffic Authority says it does not fund road works for developers, but this statement does not consider the broad benefits of the new connection. Beyond this, the Roads and Traffic Authority invokes the criterion of whether the new intersection would benefit its road network and surprisingly concludes that it would not. Apart from the clear regional benefit of the new road, there would certainly be a benefit to the Roads and Traffic Authority's road network through the volume of traffic diverted from Main Road 217 onto local roads, particularly Munibung and Myall Roads.

Lake Macquarie City Council had proposed that two intersections be constructed as part of the new development, one of which would maintain convenient and direct access to Boolaroo. The Roads and Traffic Authority initially supported this, but appeared to change its mind when the suggestion was made that it should contribute to the cost. This change of position has undermined the council and the community in achieving the best outcome for both the new development and the existing residents and businesses of Boolaroo and Speers Point.

Without Roads and Traffic Authority support for two intersections or a large roundabout, Ferrier Hodgson wants to close the existing road and use just one intersection, creating good access to its site but a

tortuous route to Boolaroo. This proposal has created outrage in the community because it would effectively stem the flow of traffic to Boolaroo's shopping centre. It would also have a negative impact on the main road network by diverting both existing traffic and new traffic onto Main Roads 217 and 674. I will soon meet with Ferrier Hodgson to explore options to resolve the matter, but the reality is that the Government should play a role in this. Indeed, there are real implications for the Government and the community of any failure to complete remediation and redevelopment of the smelter site. I ask that the Minister for the Hunter and the Minister for Roads and Ports consider the regional benefits that can arise from the new intersection and to seek a meaningful contribution by the Government.

KINGS CROSS INJECTING ROOM

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [4.26 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak on an important facility in my electorate of Sydney, formerly known as Bligh. Last Friday I attended the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the medically supervised injecting centre. I became involved in this issue in the 1990s as the local member when injecting on the streets and in the back lanes, and young people dying from overdoses, had become a really serious problem for the Kings Cross community. In 1997 the parliamentary Joint Select Committee into Safe Injecting Rooms was established following Justice Wood's recommendation for the establishment of safe, sanitary injecting rooms. After examining issues of illegal drugs and police corruption Commissioner James Wood stated:

At present, publicly funded programs operate to provide syringes and needles to injecting drug users with the clear understanding they will be used to administer prohibited drugs. In these circumstances, to shrink from the provision of safe, sanitary premises where users can safely inject is somewhat short-sighted. The health and public safety benefits outweigh the policy considerations against condoning otherwise unlawful behaviour.

I was a member of the joint select committee. There were two major areas of concern in Sydney—Cabramatta and the Kings Cross areas. The parliamentary committee visited Cabramatta and met with drug users. We visited Porky's in Kings Cross, which at the time was a de facto injecting centre—I have to say that was a fairly full-on experience—and then with local residents I went to Caroline Lane in Redfern. This was heartbreaking because we saw very young girls with needles hanging out of their arms using the lane as an injecting place. The committee took compelling evidence from families, many of whom had lost their son or daughter, and we were presented with information on what was being done in other countries to more effectively address this serious health problem. However, in February 1998 a report entitled "Report on the Establishment or Trial of Safe Injecting Rooms" recommended that the establishment or trial of injecting rooms not proceed. I supported the dissenting report that recommended a scientifically rigorous trial as part of an integrated public health and safety approach to injecting drug use, as proposed by Commissioner Wood in the royal commission.

The circumstances that led the New South Wales Parliament actually agreeing to setting up a trial was the result of a front-page *Sun-Herald* story in the lead-up to the 1999 State election that had a fairly shocking photo of a young user in Caroline Lane. In response Premier Carr committed to a Drug Summit following the election. This was held in May 1999. The summit heard evidence from experts and we heard about the experiences of families across New South Wales. Members of Parliament learned that drug addiction does not discriminate; it has consequences for users and for their families, whether they live in our suburbs or in our regional areas. At the Drug Summit I moved the motion recommending the trial and it was successfully carried. The Sisters of Charity wanted to sponsor the project but the Vatican intervened and they were unable to do so. Therefore, the project was taken over by UnitingCare under the leadership of Reverend Harry Herbert.

The centre is an important signifier of the kind of city we want in Sydney. We want one that is compassionate and that is responsive to the needs of all its people, including those who struggle with drug addiction and their families. It is a centrepiece for a range of initiatives—needle and syringe programs, community sharps disposal bins and primary health care services—that have positioned Sydney as an international leader in harm reduction and in minimising the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C. Residents and business operators in Kings Cross no longer see people slumped in doorways, streets and parks. Ambulances no longer get the huge number of callouts and emergency departments see fewer drug overdoses these days. The city has received fewer complaints from Kings Cross residents and businesses about injecting drug activity, which can so shock people, and there has been a reduction in discarded equipment. In fact, we have received a great deal of support about the positive effects this has had on the local amenity.

If we have to reduce this important social and health facility to economic terms, another report found that the centre had an "overwhelmingly positive outcome in economic terms". More importantly, the centre saves lives and gets young users into treatment, as the independent evaluations have shown. It is a practical and

compassionate solution to one of our biggest social challenges, and it is a tribute to all those who worked so hard to see it established and those quite wonderful people who continue to provide a much-needed service on a day-to-day basis. The service has been led by Dr Ingrid van Beek, the centre's first director, and that work has been taken over by her successor, Dr Marianne Jauncey.

Last Friday night the Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries, spoke about problems of drug use in his country electorate, and people were very impressed and very encouraged by his words, as was I. We were also joined by former Premier Bob Carr and former Opposition leader John Brogden who both, in the spirit of bipartisanship, broke the constraints of narrow party politics to vote in support of the medically supervised injecting centre. On this 10-year milestone I congratulate all those who have worked inside or outside the centre and made this project—which has been so important to save lives and improve the amenity of the area—such a success.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 4.31 p.m. until
Tuesday 24 May 2011 at 1.00 p.m.**
