

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 25 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.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Auditor-General's Report for 2011, Volume Two.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Inaugural Speeches

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That the business before the House be interrupted:

- (1) at 11.30 a.m. to permit the presentation of inaugural speeches by the members for Bathurst, Bankstown, and Shellharbour; and
- (2) at 6.00 p.m. to permit the presentation of inaugural speeches by the members for Newcastle, Swansea, Riverstone and Charlestown.

The commencement of each parliamentary term brings with it the delivery of inaugural speeches by new members. That in turn necessitates a slight change to the routine of business of the House. I have discussed the following proposal with the Opposition. Today at 11.30 a.m. inaugural speeches will be presented by the member for Bathurst, the member for Bankstown and the member for Shellharbour and, later in the day, at 6.00 p.m., the business of the House will be interrupted to permit the presentation of inaugural speeches by the member for Newcastle, the member for Swansea, the member for Riverstone and the member for Charlestown.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.05 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business at this sitting after the conclusion of the motion accorded priority:

- (1) Business with precedence;
- (2) Government business;
- (3) Notices of motions (General Notices);
- (4) Matter of public importance;
- (5) Private members' statements;
- (6) At 6.00 p.m., inaugural speeches; and
- (7) The House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of inaugural speeches.

Because inaugural speeches will be presented, the normal order of the business of the House will have to be rearranged slightly. Pursuant to the motion, during Government business this afternoon precedence will be given to a motion relating to the Marine Park Act disallowance of regulation. Accordingly, there will be some adjustment made to the normal routine of business of the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

LIBRARY AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr George Souris.

Agreement in Principle

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [10.07 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am delighted that the first bill I introduce as the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts is an amendment to enhance the Library Act 1939. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting our public libraries. We acknowledge that public libraries provide a wide range of services that are greatly valued by the community. It is pleasing to note that in 2009-10, New South Wales public libraries had 3.3 million members—46 per cent of the population—received 37 million visitations, administered 50 million loans and used 2.44 million internet hours.

The object of the Library Amendment Bill 2011 is to enable two or more local authorities to enter into an arrangement for the provision, control and management of libraries, library services and information services in any of their respective local government areas. The bill provides an alternative to the current situation under section 12 of the Library Act 1939 whereby two or more local authorities may enter into an agreement with regard to which one of the local authorities should undertake these functions in the area of any local authority that is party to the arrangement. There are 19 libraries in New South Wales controlled or managed between 70 local authorities under agreements made pursuant to section 12 of the Library Act 1939. Located throughout the State, they are what are colloquially known as regional libraries. In general, these arrangements work well. By pooling resources, regional libraries provide services for communities that would be difficult or impossible for any individual council to fund.

The 19 regional libraries are: Central Murray, comprising Deniliquin, Conargo and Murray local government areas; Central Northern, comprising Tamworth Regional, Liverpool Plains, Narrabri, Uralla and Walcha; Central West, comprising Orange, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra and Forbes; Clarence, comprising Clarence Valley, Bellingen and Nambucca; Macquarie, comprising Dubbo, Narromine, Warrumbungle and Wellington; Monaro, comprising Cooma-Monaro, Bombala and Snowy River; Newcastle, comprising Newcastle, Dungog, Gloucester and Port Stephens; North Western, comprising Warren, Bogan, Coonamble and Gilgandra; Northern, comprising Moree Plains, Brewarrina, Gwydir, Walgett; Queanbeyan-Palerang, comprising Queanbeyan and Palerang; Richmond-Tweed, comprising Lismore, Ballina, Byron and Tweed; Richmond-Upper Clarence, comprising Richmond Valley and Kyogle; Riverina, comprising Wagga, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Gundagai, Junee, Lockhart, Temora and Tumut; South West, comprising Young, Boorowa and Harden; Southern Tablelands, comprising Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan and Yass Valley; Upper Hunter, comprising Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter shire; Upper Murray, comprising Urana, Corowa, Greater Hume, Tumbarumba; Western Riverina, comprising Griffith, Carrathool, Hay, Jerilderie, Murrumbidgee and Narrandera; and, finally, the only one in the metropolitan area of Sydney, Ryde, which comprises Ryde and Hunters Hill.

The bill acknowledges that there should be greater flexibility for local authorities in the arrangements for the joint provision of library services. The Government wants to permit local authorities to enter into a cooperative model that provides for the collective or joint management of regional libraries, and specified aspects of library services, by some or all of the councils concerned. Of course such a model should have at its core appropriate governance arrangements that are consistent with the broader policy framework for local government in New South Wales. A collaborative arrangement should take many forms, as set out in the Division of Local Government's "A Guidance Paper: Collaboration and Partnerships between Councils".

Councils wanting to enter into new regional library arrangements under the bill will need to consider guidelines and other resource material issued by the Division of Local Government relating to the formation and management of collaborative arrangements between councils.

There are precedents for collective management at the local government level. For example, section 355 of the Local Government Act 1993 provides that a council may, subject to chapter 12 of that Act, exercise its functions jointly by the council and another council or councils. This power is used for collaborative arrangements covering areas as diverse as companion animals, community services, economic development, environmental management, health, social justice, skills development, tourism, waste and water. The bill provides the Minister administering the Library Act with responsibility for approval of alternative arrangements for regional libraries. Of course, in practice, the Minister will seek advice from the Library Council on proposed alternative arrangements. The key issues for the Library Council will be ensuring that any proposed alternative arrangements meet the requirements for public libraries under the Library Act and will result in a sustainable library service that meets the needs of library users.

Given the central role of local government in the provision of public libraries and the need for consistency with the State's local government policies, the bill provides that the Minister for Local Government must also agree to any arrangements under new section 12A of the Library Act. In terms of implementation of the arrangements and amendments, the State Library will continue to support local councils in the framing of arrangements. I reiterate that the amendments provide enhanced flexibility for councils while ensuring proper consideration of library policy issues and alignment with State local government policies. The bill is supported by the Library Council and representatives of the Public Libraries Consultative Committee, which includes Public Libraries New South Wales, Public Libraries New South Wales-Country, Public Libraries New South Wales Metropolitan Association and the Local Government and Shires Associations. These stakeholders uniformly describe the bill as very positive and worthy of their support.

New arrangements between councils potentially could improve services across local government areas through initiatives such as greater collection, sharing and joint purchasing. In areas such as home library services, councils also could collaborate to improve services and decrease costs. As I stated at the outset, this Government understands the importance of public libraries in our communities. I am pleased to note that there has been significant growth in demand for New South Wales public libraries in the State over the past five years. The latest public library statistics for New South Wales show that library visits have increased by 15 per cent over the past six years, loans of books and other materials have increased by 10 per cent over the past six years, and that Internet use in libraries has increased by 30 per cent in the past five years. Although demand for public libraries has grown significantly over the last five years, the funding base for public library grants and subsidies remained static from 2007-08 at \$23.58 million to 2010-11.

The Library Development Grants program, which is used to improve buildings, collections and technology services and to enable innovative library projects for communities, has decreased from \$3.3 million in 2005-06 to \$1.1 million in 2010-11. While some relief was provided by the temporary allocation of an additional \$2 million a year to country libraries until 2012-13, this has not addressed the problem of inadequate core funding. The Government is addressing public library funding. We will further examine the current funding system for public libraries. This bill, along with the Government's public library funding commitments, demonstrates that we are responding to a much-neglected but crucial sector. In conclusion, I acknowledge the efforts of the Hon Catherine Cusack, MLC, in bringing to the attention of the Parliament the need for greater flexibility in regional library arrangements. I commend the bill to the House.

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

COURT SECURITY AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith.

Agreement in Principle

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [10.17 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The bill gives effect to recommendations that arose out of a five-year statutory review of the Court Security Act 2005 that has been tabled in the House on a previous occasion. The Court Security Act 2005 provides a statutory

basis for the exercise of security powers in New South Wales courts. The legislation provides security officers with a range of powers that are specifically directed at ensuring the secure and orderly operation of the courts. Sheriff's officers generally undertake court security and have the power to undertake limited services that the court uses to confiscate offensive implements or prohibited items, such as weapons. I recall years ago, before the Court Security Act came into operation, that sometimes when I was prosecuting cases security checks were made at the courts through the use of metal detectors, but that at other times when there were no security checks people brought into court knives, guns, iron bars and implements of that type and that from time to time there were threats or attacks on witnesses in the courtroom.

The principle Act, the Court Security Act, was necessary to clarify the powers of sheriff's officers to avoid difficulties they might experience. The existing powers of arrest under the Court Security Act applies to such matters as absconding to avoid arrest, known as the "power of hot pursuit", the obstruction of security officers, failure to obey a direction given by a security officer, and the destruction of signs in court premises. Security incidents in New South Wales courts are relatively uncommon, nevertheless a number of incidents have occurred in which sheriff's officers and people on court premises have been the subject of violence. The bill provides that security officers may arrest a person when they or other people attending court premises are the subject of an act of violence under part 3 of the Crimes Act 1900, which relates to offences against the person.

Consistent with the safeguards contained in the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, the bill also provides that a security officer may discontinue an arrest at any time if the arrested person is no longer a suspect or the reason for the arrest no longer exists. Security officers will receive further training in relation to their new powers. The definition of "court premises" has also been amended in the bill. The definition makes it clear that court premises extend to areas used for the operations of the court or nearby areas used for other purposes. The proposed amendment will enable security officers to intervene if members of the public are being harassed or altercations occur in areas adjacent to the court such as in a justice precinct or on a footpath. The Parramatta precinct is home to a modern establishment that contains a very functional court and other agencies. From time to time people attending those other agencies have been involved in arguments and violence and court officers have had to assist in resolving such situations. It should not be assumed that the courts exist on an island; other agencies might attract clients who can cause trouble and it would be useful if court officers could be called on to assist in restoring order.

The Court Security Act currently provides that a judicial officer may order that members of the public leave court premises or be denied entry to court premises where that is considered necessary for securing order and safety in court premises. Currently such orders may be open-ended, and that can create problems. The bill clarifies the operation of the provision so that an initial order is limited to 28 days but may be renewed. Other relatively minor amendments to the legislation introduce restrictions concerning the bringing of alcohol and animals into court premises and the wearing of helmets in court premises. Of course, assistance animals will continue to be permitted in court premises. In respect of the power of the court to exclude people, I recall a trial some years ago involving a defendant who had a large support group in the membership of a particular organisation.

Members of that organisation would attend court in groups of 15 to 20. The presiding judge determined that their staring at witnesses constituted intimidation and that evidence would be continued in closed court, thereby excluding the support group. The accused was convicted and that order was an unsuccessful ground of appeal. There may be occasions when witnesses are intimidated or the processes of the court are interfered with and it is necessary for courts to make those sorts of orders. The bill updates the Court Security Act and will help to ensure that court security officers can continue to perform their role in protecting court personnel and other court users. The bill will commence towards the end of the year once security officers have received appropriate training relating to the amendments to the Act. I commend the bill to the House.

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

COURTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 24 May 2011.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [10.24 a.m.]: I support the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. It makes a number of important amendments, but I will focus on those that relate to the

Land and Environment Court Act 1979, the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Trustee Companies Act 1964. These amendments make sensible changes that may not be particularly exciting but that are necessary for good governance, which underpins the O'Farrell-Stoner Government.

The bill makes three changes to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979. First, it allows on-site hearings for hedge disputes between neighbours. The amendments are necessary because the Land and Environment Court Act currently allows on-site hearings only for tree disputes and not high hedge disputes. The bill amends section 34A to allow for on-site high hedge disputes as proposed by the Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court. These disputes are best resolved by a commissioner on site who can quickly assess the particular situation. As the member for Tamworth, I know that disputes between neighbours unfortunately occur and that they should be resolved as quickly as possible. On-site hearings benefit all parties involved. They enable the commissioner to obtain a greater understanding of the situation, and that leads to better decisions and more rapid resolutions of disputes. Such hearings also allow the parties to avoid further dispute and to minimise expense to the taxpayers. As members know, personal observation of the issue in dispute assists throughout the mediation process.

Secondly, the bill provides for on-site hearings of appeals under section 97AA of the Act. Sections 96A and 96AA of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act allow consent authorities to modify a development application. Those who are dissatisfied with modifications can appeal to the Land and Environment Court. The right of appeal was previously located in sections 96A and 96AA of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act but is now located in section 97AA. The Land and Environment Court Act allows for on-site hearings under section 96A and 96AA appeals but not under section 97AA. This bill rectifies that situation.

Thirdly, the bill amends the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to update the statutory lists of the court's jurisdiction. Section 17 of the Act lists the court's class 1 jurisdiction, which primarily consists of merits review and development appeal matters. Section 97AA provides the Land and Environment Court with jurisdiction to hear appeals against councils' determination of applications to modify development approvals. However, it is not listed within the court's class 1 jurisdiction. This is important because it allows things such as conciliation conferences and site inspections. Section 149B of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 allows the Supreme Court to transfer matters to the Land and Environment Court. However, section 149B matters are not assigned a class. This bill assigns section 149B matters to class 4, which includes the court's general jurisdiction to enforce environmental and planning laws.

This bill amends the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 in order to list the New South Wales Sheriff's Office as a law enforcement agency. This Act governs how New South Wales public agencies deal with personal information and allows law enforcement agencies to have certain exemptions and to perform certain functions. The amendment contained in this bill allows sheriff's officers to perform their duties without being concerned about whether or not they are entitled to certain information, which is very important. Sheriff's officers may need to obtain information from police or other agencies in order, for example, to conduct a risk assessment for their wellbeing and safekeeping. This amendment ensures that officers can perform such duties knowing that they can legally utilise the information they need, therefore, streamlining their process and easing their work.

This bill also amends the Trustee Companies Act 1964 in order to facilitate the transfer of estate assets and liabilities from one trustee company to another where the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has made a voluntary transfer determination under chapter 5 of the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001. Many businesses that operate across State borders wish to transfer the business of their subsidiaries to one licensed trustee company. Recent Commonwealth reforms have allowed the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to make voluntary transfer determinations at the request of the transferring trustee company. These transfers require amendments to State legislation, which this bill proposes. This bill's amendments to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979, the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Trustee Companies Act 1964 are sensible and appropriate, as are the other amendments spoken about by other members. This bill deserves the full support of the Parliament.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [10.32 a.m.]: I support the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The purpose of this bill is to make amendments to various Acts. The members representing the electorates of Davidson, Campbelltown, Cronulla, Oatley and Tamworth spoke at length and in eloquent detail about some components of the bill. I shall make brief comments on those components. This bill amends the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to allow the appointment of a retired magistrate to the

New South Wales Sentencing Council. Despite that the Local Court is the State's busiest criminal jurisdiction; no former judicial officer of the Local Court is represented on the Sentencing Council. It is timely to amend that anomaly and the Chief Magistrate of the Local Court supports the amendment. In recent times it has become necessary to consider the appointment of a new Director of Public Prosecutions in New South Wales. During the consultation period it became apparent that there was some doubt as to whether prior judicial service counted towards service as the Director of Public Prosecutions for the purposes of determining eligibility for that officer's judicial pension. This amendment makes it clear that prior judicial service does count and it also clarifies that a Director of Public Prosecutions is only entitled to a single pension.

It is proposed that the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 be amended to allow on-site hearings for hedge disputes between neighbours. In 2010 the Trees (Disputes between Neighbours) Act 2006 was amended to allow the court to deal with disputes about high hedges that severely obstruct sunlight to a window of a dwelling or a view from a dwelling. Often these disputes are very acrimonious. Section 34A (1) of the Act provides for certain matters to be heard and disposed of by a commissioner on site. Applications regarding tree disputes are covered by the Act but high hedge disputes are not. This amendment will enable commissioners to carry out on-site hearings of hedge disputes. The Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court proposed this amendment. The amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act provides for an update to the statutory list of the court's jurisdiction. The court's class 1 jurisdiction is set out in section 17 of the Act, which deals with environmental planning and protection appeals. Section 97AA of the Act empowers the court to hear appeals against councils' determinations of applications to modify development approvals. This amendment corrects an oversight whereby section 97AA of the Act was enacted but not listed in the court's class 1 jurisdiction.

Section 20 of the Land and Environment Court Act sets out the court's class 4 civil enforcement jurisdiction, which includes the Land and Environment Court's general jurisdiction to enforce environmental and planning laws. Section 149B of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 allows the Supreme Court to transfer matters to the Land and Environment Court when that court is the more appropriate forum. However, section 149B matters are not currently listed in any class of the court's jurisdiction. This amendment is made upon the request of the chief judge, which we support. There is a further amendment to the Land and Environment Act to provide for on-site hearings in respect of appeals under section 97AA of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. From my experience, many disputes in the Blue Mountains electorate are taken to the Land and Environment Court. This amendment will assist persons involved in those disputes to see what happens.

The bill amends the Law Reform Commission Act 1967 to require that a report produced by the Law Reform Commission be tabled within 14 days of the Attorney General receiving the report. The chairperson of the Law Reform Commission, the Hon. James Wood, QC, AO, proposed this amendment and we are pleased to support it. The intention behind this amendment is to increase accountability and transparency in government and to ensure that the recommendations contained in a report are current and relevant. This Government is committed to releasing such reports, unlike the many that were held back by the previous Labor Government. Under section 35 of the New South Wales Trustee and Guardian Act 2009 the New South Wales Trustee may pay to the Public Trustee of a reciprocating State the proceeds of an estate of a person for which the New South Wales Trustee is acting as collector of the estate, after payment of creditors and any costs under the Act, if the person was domiciled in the reciprocating State when the person died, and the Public Trustee of the reciprocating State is the administrator of the estate or is the collector of the estate in the reciprocating State. The proposed amendment clarifies the definition of a "reciprocating State" to make it clear that States and Territories do not have to be prescribed by regulation.

The bill amends the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 to include the Office of the New South Wales Sheriff as a law enforcement agency. The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act restricts New South Wales public agencies dealing with personal information and contains certain exemptions for law enforcement agencies and law enforcement functions. This amendment is designed to protect the safety of sheriffs and judges, and ensure that law enforcement actions involving other law enforcement agencies are not compromised.

The Surrogacy Act 2010 creates a new scheme for the grant of parentage orders in relation to altruistic surrogacy arrangements. Before the Surrogacy Act 2010 was enacted adoption or parental responsibility orders from the Family Court were the only options for the intended parents to gain legal responsibility for the child. To ease the transfer of parentage in these situations the Surrogacy Act 2010 created parentage orders that may be granted by the Supreme Court. This amendment amends the Surrogacy Act 2010 to provide that births must be registered by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and not just notified before a parentage order can be granted. Finally, the Trustee Companies Act 2010 is amended to facilitate the transfer of estate assets and

liabilities from one trustee company to another where the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has made a voluntary transfer determination under chapter 5D of the Commonwealth Corporations Act 2001. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.40 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which makes a number of important amendments. At the outset I compliment the Attorney General for bringing these matters before the House. So many pieces of legislation in New South Wales need tidying up after 16 years of neglect. The first amendment, which is to the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, requires the appointment of a retired magistrate to the Sentencing Council. I refer to two aspects with which I dealt, firstly, as a former police officer and, secondly, as a defence lawyer. After 30 years of experience in dealing with both sides of the court system, I can assure the House that the local courts are the backbone of justice in New South Wales, in particular, in regional New South Wales. When most people think of the Local Court and magistrates they think of crime. Crime is only one of the many aspects with which magistrates have to deal. They deal with family law matters, dividing fences, small claims and general areas of civil litigation. They deal also with fisheries, aviation and coroner's matters. There are many aspects with which they deal. The magistrates who sit in those courts have extensive experience and knowledge in many areas of law, whereas judges and justices of the higher courts do not.

My experience of magistrates is that the overwhelming majority want to do their best to ensure that justice not only is done but also is seen to be done. Sometimes it seems to me and many other law practitioners that it is *Groundhog Day* in our courts, as the same people are doing the same things before the same courts and are being represented by the same lawyers. Magistrates perform these duties day in and day out, month in and month out, and year in and year out. They bring to the bench and to the justice system in New South Wales freshness and often humour as they deal with many difficult cases. I can relate a number of instances in which magistrates have had to deal with the worst sexual assault cases, murders and those sorts of things that have to go through their courts before they go on to a higher court. Sometimes magistrates have to sit for weeks on end and deal with cases that most people would find horrendous and repugnant. Magistrates do a fantastic job for New South Wales.

As a young constable I often appeared before magistrates who showed me a great deal of understanding. They saw there was a young constable in the witness box, or presenting a case, and they treated me with dignity and compassion. The same could be said of victims who often break down in the witness box and are unable to continue giving evidence. Magistrates are compassionate and they assist witnesses by adjourning the case and enabling them to compose themselves. Mention has been made of appointing retired magistrates to the Sentencing Council, which could only be of benefit to our justice system in this State. Some people might think retired magistrates would not be able to perform such a task. However, many retired magistrates, who are active and vibrant people, are still right on the ball and 100 per cent up on the law. After their retirement many of them are called back to work in an acting position, in particular, in regional areas where magistrates go on extended leave or they have leave due to illness or injury. I commend this amendment to all members.

The amendment to the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1986 relates to the transfer of superannuation. I inform members that I have had three career changes. At first I was a registered nurse and from nursing I went into the New South Wales Police Force. However, at the time I could not transfer my superannuation which was only a small amount and, as I was young, it did not last long. I then left the New South Wales Police Force and became a solicitor in Taree and, once again, I could not transfer my superannuation. Worse still, my wife at that time was able to spend my superannuation before I could do anything with it. This is a commonsense amendment. Anyone working in the public service should be able to transfer his or her superannuation from one organisation to another. If we conducted a poll I am sure we would find that people transferring within the public sector would want to be able to transfer their superannuation. This legislation will correct an anomaly that people in the public service should not have to deal with.

The amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act will improve case management and efficiency of decision-making. That amendment will enable on-site hearings for hedge disputes and appeals against modifications of development consents. It beggars belief that the courts are not able to conduct on-site inspections or to view scenes on their own motion; we have to legislate to enable that to happen. Over the years I have been involved in many disputes, for example, civil disputes, traffic matters, murders and coroner's inquests. I remember one such case involving Miss Milledge, the State Deputy Coroner at the time. We travelled from Forster to Bulahdelah where a person had been struck by a motor vehicle in the middle of the night. The question that had to be asked was how he got there.

We could have sat in Forster court and looked at diagrams, schematic drawings and aerial photographs, but without viewing the scene we could not fully understand the circumstances of the case. A few years ago I represented a client in a speeding case. The young fellow said he had not been speeding, and we put to the court that from the position described the radar equipment could not recognise my client's vehicle and record its speed for the required time. I presented a number of drawings and photographs. My client, having the best representation available, successfully defended the case. The following day when I was talking to the magistrate at morning tea, he said, "I wish I had had a view of the area; if I had, I may have come to a different decision." Later that day or the next morning the magistrate happened to drive on that roadway past the intersection. He then realised that the photographs made the intersection look longer than it actually was, and that my client's vehicle could be seen by the police and its speed read. I had not misled the court; I had not looked at the scene and had produced photographs that had been provided to me by my client. That shows the importance of attending the site to understand its dimensions.

The Land and Environment Court needs powers to look at a site to help it determine the impact that a proposal will have on the parties involved when it comes to the hedged dispute. The bill will amend the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 to include the Office of the NSW Sheriff as a law enforcement agency. This will help to protect the safety of sheriffs and judges. Nothing could be more important than to ensure workers in the judicial system in New South Wales, including sheriffs and judges, are fully protected by all available means. The amendment will enable these government agencies to share information and it will help to protect those officers. The bill amends the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to update the statutory list of the court's jurisdiction. Section 17 of the Act lists the court's class 1 jurisdiction, which primarily consists of merits review and development appeal matters. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Section 97AA provides the Land and Environment Court with jurisdiction to hear appeals against councils' determinations of applications to modify development approvals; however, this is not listed within the court's class 1 jurisdiction, which relates to conciliation conferences and site inspections. It is common sense that the court has the right to conduct conciliation conferences and site inspections. In so many jurisdictions of law, conciliation conferences do a great deal to facilitate justice in New South Wales. Rather than going to the nth degree in court litigation and spending tremendous amounts of money, this amendment allows conciliation conferences in the determination of appeals. Conciliation conferences are all about getting the parties together, and getting them talking, negotiating and compromising so that a resolution can be reached. In the end, both parties may not be completely happy with the outcome, but it will be something that they can live with. In litigation there is often only one winner; the other side is a loser. Sometimes, both sides lose. Being able to trigger the conciliation mechanism is extremely important.

Disputes involving property are highly emotive, and enabling the arbitrator, conciliator and judge of the Land and Environment Court to see the site first-hand, to see how big or small it is as well as to take into account other considerations, will help in understanding the impact of any determinations on the parties to a dispute. That is extremely important. The bill also assigns section 149B matters to class 4, which includes the court's general jurisdiction to enforce environmental and planning laws. Further, the bill amends the Trustee Companies Act 1964 in order to facilitate the transfer of estate assets and liabilities from one trustee company to another trustee company where the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has made a voluntary transfer determination under chapter 5D of the Corporations Act 2001 of the Commonwealth. Many businesses that operate across State borders wish to transfer the business of their subsidiaries to one licensed trustee company. Recent Commonwealth reforms have allowed the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to make voluntary transfer determinations at the request of the transferring trustee company. These transfers require amendments to State legislation, which this bill proposes.

The bill's amendments to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979, the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Trustee Companies Act 1964 are sensible. The bill seeks to amend the New South Wales Trustee and Guardian Act 2009 to clarify that all Australian States and Territories automatically fall within the definition of a reciprocating State. The New South Wales Trustee and Guardian requested this amendment so that the definition of a "reciprocating State" concerning reciprocal arrangements in relation to an intestacy or the management of an estate is clarified. The States and Territories of Australia all have their own legislation relating to estates, wills, intestacies, trustees and the like. We should ensure that applications for intestacies and management of estates in New South Wales, for example, can be dealt with and managed across borders.

While talking about intestacy I take the opportunity to say that everyone should have a will, because when we talk about wills we are talking about estate planning. Members and those in the gallery as well should

be mindful that in 2011 three documents are important to estate planning. The first is a will to deal with one's estate on one's passing. Also, given Australia's ageing population, more and more elderly people are becoming incapable of making decisions about their property as well as their health, welfare and lifestyle. In those cases it is important to have a second document, power of attorney, enabling someone to stand in the shoes of the incapacitated person, make business and financial decisions that affect that person's life and sign legal documents and cheques on his or her behalf, pay the bills, and so on.

Another important document is one appointing an enduring guardian—a person who looks after the health, welfare and lifestyle of the disabled person. The enduring guardian may decide where the person lives, whether at home or another place, in a nursing home or some other institution. If the enduring guardian decides that the person needs to go into a nursing home, the guardian will deal with the nursing home to make the necessary arrangements. If it is decided that the person will remain in his or her home, the enduring guardian will arrange for the services necessary to facilitate that, for example, home care, home help, meals on wheels and community nursing.

It is also important that someone makes decisions about your medical treatment, operations and so on, and the enduring guardian can do that on your behalf. A clause can be added to the document—an advance directive, if you like—that basically says, "If I'm suffering from a malignant disease and the prognosis is that I'm not going to get any better and I'm on life support, I direct my guardian to authorise the medical staff to turn off the machines and let nature take its course." I raise those issues because without a will people have no control over what happens to their estate after death and intestacy incurs greater costs. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.00 a.m.]: From time to time legislation is required to amend certain bills that have been on the statute books for some time. In speaking to the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, I point out that our Attorney General—who is extremely capable in all matters concerning the law—has taken the time to consult broadly on these changes. As I have said many times publicly, the Attorney General has a greater understanding and appreciation of law than anybody I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. But he also has the ability to explain matters in commonsense and plain language.

Mr Richard Amery: Who are you talking about?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: There will be no humorous interjections from the member for Mount Druitt. I ask you to direct him to cease immediately, Mr Acting-Speaker. That skill is greatly appreciated. The Attorney General has been a worthy addition during his time as a member of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition. Like me, many members have benefitted from his explaining issues that are sometimes quite complex. Unfortunately, as you would know, Mr Acting-Speaker, when you delve into documents of a legal nature they appear to have been written in hieroglyphics. It takes you about three months to read them and you need some professor with an understanding and appreciation of linguistics to explain them. Our Attorney General takes the time to explain the issues in very plain English, and that is greatly appreciated. That skill is evident in many of the changes to the Act that I am about to talk about.

The Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act, which has not been changed since 1999, will be amended to require the appointment of a retired magistrate to the Sentencing Council. The New South Wales Government proposes to amend the Act to allow the appointment of retired magistrates to the New South Wales Sentencing Council. Despite the fact that the Local Court is the State's busiest criminal jurisdiction, no former judicial officer of the Local Court is represented on the Sentencing Council. We believe it is timely to amend that situation and the Chief Magistrate of the Local Court, in consultation with the Attorney General's department, supports the change, which is very encouraging.

In recent times it has become necessary to consider appointing a new Director of Public Prosecutions in New South Wales. I acknowledge the contribution of the Attorney General in his role as Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions before coming to this place. It gave him a great appreciation of this specific area of the Act. I point out for the record that, as we promised in Opposition, this new Government is prepared to consult broadly with the community at all times. It does not matter whether it involves speaking to a person on the street who has received a parking fine or talking to chief magistrates, you need to consult with people if you are going to introduce legislation into Parliament that makes New South Wales a better place for everyone. That has certainly been done in this case, and I pay full credit to the Attorney General. The amendment makes it clear that prior judicial service does count and also clarifies the fact that a Director of Public Prosecutions is only entitled to a single pension. That is encompassed in the Act.

It is proposed that the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 be amended to allow on-site hearings for hedge disputes between neighbours. I have a local government background—as do other former and serving members of this place. I note that the members for Gosford, for East Hills and for Smithfield served in local government and have a great appreciation of the problems that good councillors—and I was one of them prior to 2008—face in dealing with people, sometimes on a weekly or an even more frequent basis. Disputes between neighbours—and there are lots of them—can be the bane of the councillor's life. It is a great shame that people who can sometimes be the very best of friends end up in huge conflicts, at times over the simplest things. It is disappointing that such disputes sometimes end up before the courts. However, the Land and Environment Court Act has now been amended, in consultation with the Attorney General, to allow on-site hearings so that rather than dealing with hedge disputes in a court of law, officers of the court can go out and witness what is happening on the ground.

I have always been a great supporter of seeing firsthand what confronts you. You can read all the literature about a particular matter and see all the photographs, but unless you visit the site and listen to the neighbours and their concerns you will not have a thorough appreciation of the issues involved. In the past I have been critical of decisions made by the courts. The judge or magistrate can base their decisions only on the best information to hand. If the information is not as prudent or as accurate as it could be, decisions will not be made in the best interests of the parties concerned and the right outcomes will not be delivered. I will speak a little more about that in a moment.

The bill amends the Land and Environment Court Act to allow on-site hearings for hedge disputes between neighbours. In 2010 the Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act 2006—I remember speaking in the debate in this place—was amended to allow the court to deal with disputes about high hedges that severely obstruct sunlight to a window of a dwelling or a view from a dwelling. It comes back to basic planning. Councils and their administrators do what they can; they have rules, criteria and setbacks. But if people feel that they have been adversely affected by a decision they can go to the Land and Environment Court and have an on-site meeting. That is very important. Section 34A (1) of the Act provides for certain matters to be heard and disposed of by a commissioner on site. At the moment applications in relation to tree disputes are covered by the Act but high hedge disputes are not.

As we know, we now have some wonderful hedges around this city. Some incredible foliage and hedges can grow to enormous heights. Indeed, I have a very high hedge on my property; it is wonderful for privacy. But I can imagine that if that hedge were next to a neighbouring property it would be somewhat overbearing and would certainly block sunlight. Fortunately for me, that does not happen. However, if disputes regarding hedges arise they can now be assessed on site. That is a worthy amendment. As I said, this amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act will enable commissioners to carry out on-site hearings of hedge disputes. The Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court proposed the amendment, once again in consultation with the Attorney General.

The next amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act provides for an update to the statutory list of the court's jurisdiction. The court's class 1 jurisdiction is set out in section 17 of the Act, which deals with environmental planning and protection appeals. As I said earlier, it all comes back to basic planning and requirements, but sometimes, unfortunately, we cannot get it right. The amendment provides the opportunity for those matters to be assessed through the Land and Environment Court. Section 20 of the Land and Environment Court Act sets out the court's class 4, civil enforcement, jurisdiction, which includes the Land and Environment Court's general jurisdiction to enforce environmental and planning laws. Section 149B of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 allows the Supreme Court to transfer matters to the Land and Environment Court when that court is the more appropriate forum.

The bill also amends the Law Reform Commission Act 1967. One can see throughout this legislation that it makes changes and slight amendments to Acts that have been in place for a long time. The proposed amendment to the Law Reform Commission Act 1967 requires that a report produced by the Law Reform Commission is to be tabled within 14 days of the Attorney General receiving the report. The chairperson of the Law Reform Commission, the Hon. James Wood, QC, AO, proposed this amendment, and we are pleased that he has done so and appreciate his support for this section of the Act. The intention behind the amendment is to increase accountability and transparency in government—which has certainly been a platform of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition and was one of our pledges that we would bring to government in New South Wales. The amendment supports that policy announcement.

With regard to the amendment to the NSW Trustee and Guardian Act 2009, under section 35 the NSW Trustee may pay to the Public Trustee of a reciprocating State the proceeds of an estate of a person for which the

NSW Trustee is acting as collector of the estate, after payment of creditors and any costs under the Act, if, first, the person was domiciled in the reciprocating State when the person died; and, secondly, the Public Trustee of the reciprocating State is the administrator of the estate or is the collector of the estate in the reciprocating State. This amendment clarifies the definition of a "reciprocating State" to make it clear that States and Territories do not have to be prescribed by regulation. The next Act to be amended is the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. The purpose of the amendment is to protect sheriffs and judges with regard to their personal information. The Act contains certain exemptions for law enforcement agencies and law enforcement functions. The amendment is designed to protect the safety of sheriffs and judges, and to ensure that law enforcement actions involving other law enforcement agencies are not compromised.

The Surrogacy Act 2010 is also encapsulated in these legislative changes. The Surrogacy Act creates a new scheme for the grant of parentage orders in relation to altruistic surrogacy arrangements. Before the Surrogacy Act 2010 was enacted, adoption or parental responsibility orders from the Family Court were the only option for the intended parents to gain legal responsibility for the child. To ease the transfer of parentage in these situations, the Surrogacy Act created parentage orders that may be granted by the Supreme Court. The amendment amends the Surrogacy Act to provide that births must be registered in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and not just notified, before a parentage order can be granted.

As I began to say before, actions have been taken by people in the legal profession that I have not agreed with. But, as I have said, they can only base their judgements on the information that is provided to them. I refer in particular to an extremely awkward case that I am currently involved with regarding a family in my electorate. It involves a man who had two children to his first wife. He broke up with his first wife, and was therefore paying child support for the two children. The man then married another lady who had four children, whom he adopted and cares for. The couple then had another two children. During the period of this relationship, which is extremely happy, the birth father of the four children he adopted passed away and therefore no child support whatsoever was provided on behalf of that person. The couple has fallen on pretty tough times, looking after and supporting eight children, to the point where the man fell behind in his child support for the two children from his previous marriage. Indeed, he fell behind in his child support payments to the tune of some \$8,000 or \$9,000. For the past six months the man has come under an increasing barrage of claims from the agency that wants money for the two children from his previous marriage.

As I have said, the man is now supporting eight children. The two children from his previous marriage are in safe and secure circumstances, with parents who can provide for them. My constituent has certainly never shirked his responsibilities with regard to those children, and he has custody of his children on a regular basis. However, he is simply unable to pay the outstanding amount in child support for those children. Remarkably, on Monday this week, after repeated representations from me and various other people trying to get some sort of a delayed payment system on behalf of his family, it was ruled through the legal system that the family's car would be taken from them in order to pay part of the child support bill. It is a very old vehicle—it might only be worth up to \$1,500 or \$2,000—but it has now been taken from them. Although the family have another car, they have children to care for. It is a dreadful situation. I have discussed the matter with the solicitor concerned, but I did not receive any great satisfaction. I am pleased that some aspects have been tidied up in this bill, and I commend it to the House.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [11.15 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The purpose of the bill is to make amendments to various Acts. Turning to each Act, we propose to amend the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to allow the appointment of a retired magistrate to the NSW Sentencing Council. Despite the fact that the Local Court is the State's busiest criminal jurisdiction, no former judicial officer of the Local Court is represented on the Sentencing Council. We believe it is timely to amend this situation, and the Chief Magistrate of the Local Court supports this amendment.

In recent times it has become necessary to consider the appointment of a new Director of Public Prosecutions in New South Wales. During the consultation period it became apparent that there was some doubt as to whether prior judicial service counted towards service as the Director of Public Prosecutions for the purposes of determining eligibility for the Director of Public Prosecutions' judicial pension. This amendment makes it clear that prior judicial service does count, and also clarifies the fact that a Director of Public Prosecutions is entitled to only a single pension. It is proposed that the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 be amended to allow on-site hearings for hedge disputes between neighbours. In 2010 the Trees (Disputes Between Neighbours) Act 2006 was amended to allow the court to deal with disputes about high hedges that

severely obstruct sunlight to a window of a dwelling or a view from a dwelling. Section 34A (1) of the Act provides for certain matters to be heard and disposed of by a commissioner on site. At the moment applications in relation to tree disputes are covered by the Act but high hedge disputes are not.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: And this is an issue.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: It is. The amendment will enable commissioners to carry out on-site hearings of hedge disputes. The Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court proposed this amendment. The next amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act provides for an update to the statutory list of the court's jurisdiction. The court's class 1 jurisdiction is set out in section 17 of the Act, which deals with environmental planning and protection appeals. Section 97AA of the Act empowers the court to hear appeals against councils' determinations of applications to modify development approvals. This amendment corrects an oversight whereby section 97AA of the Act was enacted but not listed in the court's class 1 jurisdiction. Section 20 of the Land and Environment Court Act sets out the court's class 4 civil enforcement jurisdiction, which includes the Land and Environment Court's general jurisdiction to enforce environmental and planning laws.

Section 149B of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 allows the Supreme Court to transfer matters to the Land and Environment Court where the court is the more appropriate forum. However, section 149B matters are not currently listed in any class of the court's jurisdiction. This amendment is made upon the request of the Chief Judge, and the Government supports that request. The Land and Environment Act 1979 is also amended to provide for on-site hearings in respect of appeals under section 97AA of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The Government proposes to amend the Law Reform Commission Act 1967 to require that a report produced by the Law Reform Commission is to be tabled within 14 days of the Attorney General receiving the report. The chairperson of the Law Reform Commission, the Hon. James Wood, QC, AO proposed this amendment and the Government is pleased to support it. The intention behind this amendment is to increase accountability and transparency in government and to ensure that the recommendations contained in a report are current and relevant at the time of release.

In regard to the amendment to the NSW Trustee and Guardian Act 2009, under section 35 the NSW Trustee may pay to the Public Trustee of a reciprocating State the proceeds of an estate of a person for which the NSW Trustee is acting as collector of the estate, after payment of creditors and any costs under the Act, if the person was domiciled in the reciprocating State when the person died, and the Public Trustee of the reciprocating State is the administrator of the estate or is the collector of the estate in the reciprocating State. This amendment clarifies the definition of a "reciprocating State" to make it clear that States and Territories do not have to be prescribed by regulation. The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 is also amended. This Act is amended to include the Office of the NSW Sheriff as a law enforcement agency. The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act restricts New South Wales public agencies' dealing with personal information. It contains certain exemptions for law enforcement agencies and law enforcement functions. This amendment is designed to protect the safety of sheriffs and judges and to ensure that law enforcement actions involving other law enforcement agencies are not compromised.

The Surrogacy Act 2010 creates a new scheme for the grant of parentage orders in relation to altruistic surrogacy arrangements. Before the Surrogacy Act 2010 was enacted, adoption or parental responsibility orders from the Family Court were the only options for the intended parents to gain legal responsibility for the child. To ease the transfer of parentage in these situations the Surrogacy Act 2010 created parentage orders, which may be granted by the Supreme Court. This amendment amends the Surrogacy Act to provide that births must be registered in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and not just notified before a parentage order can be granted. The Trustee Companies Act 2010 is amended to facilitate the transfer of estate assets and liabilities from one trustee company to another when the Australian Securities and Investments Commission has made a voluntary transfer determination under chapter 5D of the Corporations Act 2001. I commend the Attorney General for introducing this bill, which I commend to the House.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [11.24 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Liverpool, for Davidson, for Campbelltown, for Cronulla, for Oatley, for Tamworth, for Blue Mountains, for Myall Lakes, for Hawkesbury and for Wagga Wagga for their contributions to this debate. In dealing with the issue of adding a retired magistrate to the Sentencing Council—because magistrates deal with about 95 per cent of criminal cases in New South Wales—all members shared some of their practical

experiences. The member for Campbelltown, who is a former chief inspector of police, gave a particularly moving account of how two of his former colleagues had been killed in the line of duty by offenders who used their motor vehicles as weapons. It should be remembered that from time to time motor vehicles are used deliberately to kill people, as well as the unfortunate instances of dangerous driving causing death.

The member for Davidson, the member for Cronulla and the member for Myall Lakes spoke of the importance of the Sentencing Council having the benefit of an experienced retired magistrate. They are qualified lawyers—the member for Cronulla is, of course, an eminent senior counsel—and they shared their experiences of working in the legal system. The member for Cronulla went into some detail as to the role of the Sentencing Council. The Sentencing Council is one useful initiative of the previous Government that will be maintained. Former Justice James Wood had previously been Chairman of the NSW Sentencing Council. However, in the part-time absence of its current chairman, the Hon. Jerrold Cripps—who is presently working as Acting Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission—he is now the acting chairman. The council is presently undertaking some very important work on suspended sentences and standard non-parole periods. I am eagerly awaiting its report on standard non-parole periods, in particular, because there has been quite a deal of criticism of the standard non-parole system. No doubt the retired magistrate to be added to the Sentencing Council will be able to assist with that.

The problem with standard non-parole periods is that some are 40 per cent of the maximum sentence for an offence and others are as high as 70 per cent. Yet some important offences such as sexual assault per se—not in circumstances of aggravation—do not have a standard non-parole period. So there is inconsistency. A view that is held by some of the general public and repeated by commentators in the press, particularly on talkback radio, is that sentences in this State are lighter than those in other States. The published fact is that New South Wales imposes higher sentences and the standard non-parole period has been a contributory factor. Our Government is looking at ways to reduce the rates of recidivism and repeat offending. We are looking more towards rehabilitating offenders, diverting people away from the criminal justice system and dealing with convicted criminals by way of punishments other than full-time custodial sentences. I refer there to minor offences. The emphasis still will be very much on punishing and imprisoning those who are dangerous to the community.

Pursuant to resolution business interrupted for the presentation of inaugural speeches and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I call on the member for Bathurst and congratulate him on his election to this place.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.31 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Fellow members of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales, National Party staff and executive, family and friends in the gallery, and all my constituents in the Bathurst electorate watching this live, what a great moment. This is for all of us to share! The privilege that has been given to me is a reflection of the confidence and trust that has been placed in me by those I represent. I undertake to take the journey that lies ahead of me with commitment, dedication and enthusiasm, and with the belief that I have an opportunity and a responsibility to make a difference. If that difference is just changing the life of one person, then that will empower me to continue to ensure that the people of regional New South Wales will continue to grow and prosper for future generations.

In the recent election, yes, we set unprecedented records. We changed the voting patterns of some people for the very first time and we will endeavour to hold their confidence. We will not take them for granted and we will deliver a progressive electorate for all to enjoy. During the campaign I met so many people who made the move to support the National Party. They were mums and dads who lie awake after their children have fallen asleep, wondering how they will pay their mortgage; pensioners wondering how they will pay their next electricity bill; miners worrying about whether they will have a job tomorrow; farmers worrying about food security for the region; and so on.

On 26 March 2011 a vote for the Coalition meant that there was new energy to harness, new jobs to be created, and new hospitals and new schools to be built. The road ahead will be challenging and long: There is much to do and many wrongs to right. We may not get there in one year or in one term, but I am confident that the Coalition Government will put us back on the right path and return New South Wales to its rightful place as the leading State in this nation. Along the way there will be false starts and setbacks, there will be some who do

not agree with every decision or policy made. We have a large job ahead of us and I know the Government cannot solve every problem. But by being honest and listening to and communicating with the electorate we can work alongside the community and deliver real results for each of our electorates.

I joined the National Party because I believe it is the only party that truly represents regional and rural communities. It is a party made up of local champions who want the best for their local areas and who are willing to fight for their local communities. This high standard of representation is embodied in outstanding members in the Central West—Andrew Gee in Orange and Troy Grant in Dubbo—and my other colleagues who have recently been elected, Leslie Williams in Port Macquarie, Kevin Anderson in Tamworth, Stephen Bromhead in Myall Lakes and John Barilaro in Monaro. The National Party is back and will remain a significant voice. We will deliver for each of our communities.

My pathway to this place began some three generations ago when my grandfather, Jack Toole, ran as the Liberal candidate back in 1956. However, in 1984 my dad saw the light and joined the National Party. In 1996 he ran as The Nationals' candidate, only to narrowly miss out by several hundred votes that came from Greens preferences to give Labor victory. My dad, who is my idol, is the person whom I have followed in the political arena since I was three years of age. He was a local councillor for 21 years and a mayor for 16 of those years. During his various campaigns I would keep him company in the ute; we visited and doorknocked so many rural constituents. My job was to walk up to the door and hand over the brochure or to open the gate of rural properties and stay there as he took off, leaving me in a puff of smoke, only to wait for his return, sometimes half an hour later, close the gate and go to the next property.

Meeting these people over so many years gave me the impetus to stand for local government when my father decided to retire. I have been a councillor for the past 16 years, representing both the rural and urban communities of the Bathurst district. During that time I have also been deputy mayor and mayor. Those opportunities and experiences have provided me with the skills and knowledge that I bring to this place today. One thing that stands out to me in every election that I have experienced is the high respect that my dad has in the community. People say to me all the time, "If you're as half as good as your dad, then you'll be okay."

I grew up on a farm some 15 kilometres outside Bathurst. I am one of nine children. Yes, David, I know you are going to ask if we had a television—we had two. I also pay tribute to my mum, who is also in the gallery today, for her unyielding love and support she has given to each and every one of us.

I acknowledge on the public record the work of the former member, Mr Gerard Martin. His contribution both as a councillor on Lithgow City Council and as a State member for the past 12 years has seen him give 37 continuous years of service to his community. I wish him and his wife, Kathy, all the best in his retirement.

I would also like acknowledge the support of the Premier and Deputy Premier of New South Wales. Both Barry and Andrew have become friends to the people of the Bathurst electorate. It was never a problem for either of them to visit my electorate or to attend the various functions held during the campaign. I thank them for their support and the trust that they have placed in me.

The electorate of Bathurst is one of the State's most diverse districts. It takes in some 71 hamlets and includes regional centres like Lithgow, which is dominated by coalmining and electricity generation, as well as Bathurst, which has varied industries and government departments that were attracted to the region in the 1970s when the city was part of the Whitlam Government's decentralisation plans. The electorate also takes in the surrounding areas of Oberon, Blayney, Rylstone and Kandos. The electorate covers 14,875 square kilometres and has a population of just under 66,000 people.

The election had many firsts and many stories that will be told for generations to come. One that comes to mind, however, is the fact that when I put up my hand to be the National Party candidate for the Bathurst electorate many people said, "You will struggle to win the people of Lithgow over. That is Labor heartland." Before Christmas last year I walked into the Lansdowne Hotel, which is in the main street of Lithgow. I grabbed a beer and walked up to a table where about 10 people were sitting. They were watching the television and I asked them how the cricket test had ended up. They looked at me and one piped up and said, "You're Paul Toole, aren't you?" I said, "Yes", and then it came, "Well, you've got the audacity, haven't you? This is a Labor pub and we've never seen a conservative walk into this pub at all."

Not knowing whether I was to be thrown out or dragged out, I just made the comment, "Well, we are all Australians and we like a beer." After a 20-minute conversation about the world and various matters, one of them said, "I'm going to vote for you, and it will be the first time, you know." Another bloke put his hands on his head and said, "I'm a Labor voter and now I'm really confused because I don't know who I'm going to vote for." Before I left, three others signed up straightaway and offered to help on election day and in our campaign

office. I walked into that pub with zero out of 10 and walked out of it with five out of 10. After that response I thought to myself: these people are looking for someone to listen to their stories, to listen to their concerns and to be their voice in Macquarie Street—they just want to be heard.

From that point on, we worked in Lithgow and on polling day we won every booth in the Lithgow district. We earned that trust and we will not lose it. Since then I have formed many new friendships and have been welcomed back to the Lithgow area. I have been invited to many functions, including the recent Lithgow Catholic ball, Ironfest, and the opening of the new Commonwealth Bank. Only last weekend I was invited to the sixtieth wedding anniversary of community members Emile and Madeleine Douthiel.

In regional areas The Nationals face many challenges. In regional New South Wales we have a great lifestyle: We have affordable housing, cheap industrial land, pristine environments and strong communities with some of the most resilient and outspoken people on this earth. But there are big challenges ahead. There are declines in many of our smaller towns in the form of job losses, lower income levels and crumbling infrastructure. A government will not provide all the answers, but it must act responsibly so that the creation of wealth in regional New South Wales, and in particular in the Bathurst electorate, will see New South Wales become number one again. To do this we must be innovative; we must seize opportunities and think outside the square. With Government members on this side of the House I am confident that this can and will happen.

My electorate also has a growing tourist industry, as many people discover the values of our lifestyle and the area's many beautiful and historical features. In Bathurst we have the premier racing circuit in the whole world—Mount Panorama—which the V8 supercars go around every year. In Oberon we have the Jenolan Caves. In Lithgow we have the Zig Zag Railway. In Blayney we have the Cadia mine as well as many other attractions. Many of the rural villages in my electorate are run by some of the very best progress associations, and I have enjoyed working with each of them over the years. I look forward to that relationship continuing. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

The progress associations have done so much for their local communities. Many of the villages that they represent have been restored to their original heritage state and take visitors back to a bygone era. For example, Hill End is renowned for its discovery of gold in the nineteenth century. However, I believe that we must do more to support these areas and these industries.

Let us not forget that Sydney is a global city and should be seen not only as a destination itself but also as a gateway and hub to regional New South Wales. The Bathurst electorate is a little west of that great sandstone curtain called the Blue Mountains or the Great Dividing Range. I say "curtain" because many people and some politicians living on the coast have never been over the Great Dividing Range; they have never passed through that curtain to see that life does exist beyond the mountains.

We must invest more in our roads and rail. There has to be greater focus on regional infrastructure and, in particular, our roads and rail systems. That is why I was pleased that during the election campaign the now Premier announced that we will look at all options when it comes to providing a daily rail return service between Bathurst and Sydney.

Agriculture is an important industry and employer in my electorate, which is why food security issues must be addressed. We produce some of the best beef, wheat, lamb and wines. We must support our primary producers once again. Many of them have suffered over the years from drought, bushfires and, more recently, floods.

Decentralisation is also another policy that we must embrace and get right, and I welcome the opportunity for consideration of a decade of decentralisation. With Sydney expected to grow by 1.5 million over the next 25 years, it is essential that we put programs in place to take the pressure off Sydney and to ensure that regional communities that are keen to grow their population can do so by stimulating their local economies and attracting new skills and investment.

To me, health has always been at the heart of every election, whether it be at a State or Federal level. I note that the Minister for Health is present in the Chamber. I thank her for making regular visits to my electorate and I look forward to a very long association with her in the years to come. It is critical that in the Bathurst electorate we see the return of essential services and that we stop the bleeding of various services from regional centres. More needs to be done to attract professional health workers to our area. Country hospitals are already short of specialised staff, and I strongly support the push by Charles Sturt University in its bid for a medical school. To see this come to fruition would not only address the issue of the massive shortage of doctors in rural areas but also it would result in many students who study in regional and rural areas staying on and practising medicine in these areas.

Another project that is crucial to the development of the entire Central West is the road over the Blue Mountains. The current major route from Sydney to the west is the Great Western Highway, which is now, and has been for a number of years, undergoing major upgrades. But it will not deliver a road that will open up the Central West for future economic development. The current route through the Blue Mountains is heavily urbanised, and even the four-lane sections are subject to various speed limits. That is a significant barrier to the transport of goods and materials to the eastern seaboard. I welcome the Premier's announcement to look at these types of projects of significance through Infrastructure NSW.

In planning, a good system should enjoy public support and confidence, and provide certainty to residents, investors and communities. I cannot wait to see the end of 30-year-old planning legislation that is in such desperate need of an overhaul.

I would not be standing here today without the unyielding support of my best friend for the past 11 years, the love of my life, my wife, Joanne, and our three beautiful children Rhayne, Keely and Scout. I thank all of them for the opportunity that has been given to me to be able to go on this journey. I know that at times it will be tough and it will be lonely, and that at times it will be demanding for you on your own. But remember at all times that I love you all. At times I did not know whether I would stand as a candidate, but Joanne's push and support along the way helped me to make a firm decision. And kids, if you think that dad was slow going down the street before because he was being stopped by people, then all I can say to you is that it is not going to get any better.

To my grandmother, who is at St Catherine's in Bathurst watching: I know you are very proud and I thank you for playing such a pivotal role in my life. To my in-laws, Gary and Barbara Field: Thank you for all your assistance and your response to last-minute requests for babysitting. It has not ended; I will need you much more now.

To my campaign manager, Gary Rush and the entire Nationals team comprising Kay Martin, the duty member of the Legislative Council for Bathurst the Hon. Rick Colless, Ben Franklin, Douglas Martin, Nathan Quigley, Peter Pilbeam, Tony Sarks, David Veness, Terry Clarke, Sam Faraway, former shadow Ministers and now Ministers, Mike Baird and all our 400-plus polling booth helpers: You made this happen. We formed one of the most formidable campaign teams ever gathered in the history of politics. I am forever grateful to you for what you have all sacrificed to make this happen. Your tremendous loyalty, support and professionalism and your 24-hour dedication achieved this great result for the people of our electorate.

To my dearest friends at the Assumption Primary School, at which I taught for 17 years: What an amazing time we had together. I will admit on the public record that sometimes I was the bad boy on the staff. However, the executive, comprising Peter Nugent, Di Walkowiak, Therese Hooper, and all the staff gave me the best support and friendship that anyone could ask for. Thank you.

Finally, I want my electorate to get back to providing local services for our local communities, whether that be better roads, hospital boards that listen to our communities, improvements in our PCYC centres, flashing lights for schools, full-time fire stations, additional teachers and nurses, more police officers or better infrastructure. As elected representatives it is critical that we stand up for the interests of our communities. There will be tough decisions to make along the way and at times we will confront steep mountains to climb. However, those decisions must be made so that the New South Wales economy may once again flourish, and so that this State is open for business and number one again.

I will conclude by offering a quote to my electorate and members in this Chamber: "We are happy, we are joyful that the verdict has been given by the Australian people but never forget the fact that governments are elected to govern not only for the people who vote for them, but also for the people who voted against them."

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): In congratulating the member for Bathurst on his inaugural speech, I acknowledge his dad, Trevor Toole. Everything he said about his father is correct. Well done.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.56 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): There is almost nothing more futile than a politician without conviction. In the end they have no credibility and deliver little for those they serve. We all have and represent different views and opinions. What determines whether our views and opinions will influence public discourse and public policy is whether each of us has the strength of our convictions and the fortitude in character to prevail in the rough and tumble of our political process. This is what people judge us on today: conviction and character. Today and on every occasion that I speak in this House, I will espouse the values and convictions of my family, my community and my party.

It is with pride and humility that I enter Australia's oldest Parliament as a representative of the Australian Labor Party in the electorate of Bankstown. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects

to their elders. The original inhabitants of the area of Bankstown were the people of the Eora nation. Their land bordered that of the Dharawal and the Darung people. Australia's Indigenous history is our nation's proudest, but what has become of the Indigenous people still remains our nation's humiliation. Tomorrow, 26 May, is National Sorry Day. It is a reminder that despite progress in recent years there are still many more wrongs to right.

Bankstown's European settlement can be traced back to 1795 when Matthew Flinders and George Bass sailed the Georges River aboard an eight-foot craft called the *Tom Thumb* to determine whether the area west of Botany Bay was hospitable. They landed at what is now known as Garrison Point at Georges Hall. They reported back to the Governor that the land indeed was hospitable and it was named Bankstown in honour of Sir Joseph Banks. Today Bankstown is still hospitable in welcoming people from around the world. It is a lively and cosmopolitan city with more than 130 cultures and 60 languages spoken. From the Asian grocery store and the Greek pastry shop to the Lebanese restaurant, the spoils of multiculturalism are there to be enjoyed by all. It is a community that has given us great sports people, entertainers and thousands of unsung heroes.

The Bankstown community has a great sense of pride and has every reason for having it. We proudly celebrate our diversity and traditions through an annual calendar of festivities, including Christmas carol events, Australia Day, our different Easters, Ramadan and Eids, and Chinese and Vietnamese New Year celebrations to mention just some. Many in the Bankstown community may not be wealthy, but we are rich in hospitality, generosity, culture and life experience. We have been very fortunate in Bankstown to have had quality parliamentary representatives in this place. Tony Stewart was an integral part of the last 16 years of Labor government in New South Wales. However, it was Mr Doug Shedden who was the member for Bankstown when I first joined the Australian Labor Party and the local Bankstown branch. Mr Shedden continues to be very much part of the Bankstown community.

I am eager to place on record my enormous gratitude to the many people who assisted and supported me in the election, many of whom are here today. First among them I thank my campaign director, Khal Asfour, for his unstinting support and loyalty. Khal worked with a fantastic campaign team—Gisele Doumet, Greg and Jenny Gollodge, Wilma Hickey, Claire Haig, Pam Gavin, Albeer Hayek, Mick Stephenson, Ken King, Brendan Kavanagh, Annie Bertolli, Raymond Arraj, Abdul Hasna, Gerald Keneally, Faical Ryma, the Keevil family, the Hanna family, the Shahho family, the Asfour family and all the team that came out in force on election day. Thanks also to Graeme Kelly from the United Services Union and Gerard Dwyer from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association for their support.

There are a number of friends within the Bankstown community who have supported me over the years. I will name just a few: Helen Williamson and the Greenacre Lions, Bruce Pawley, Jack Bedford and the Bankstown RSL, John Murray and Bankstown Sports, John and Trent Engisch and Torch Publishing, Father Antoine Tarabay, Stan and Marie Quirke, Mr Thanh Nguyen and the VCA-New South Wales Chapter, Dr Vinh Bin Lieu, Kim Huynh, Peter Theo and St Euphemia Church. The Labor Party and I also owe a great debt of gratitude to our local party faithful, in particular, Mick Stephenson, Hilda and Charlie Garwood, Mick Quinlivan, June Ryan, Patsy Patton, Heather and Margaret Wicks, and Ken King. These are people of strong convictions and faith and I thank them for their tremendous long-term support and friendship.

Special thanks go to the NSW Labor Party Office, in particular, Sam Dastyari, Chris Minns, Brendan Kavanagh and Courtney Roche for their support and assistance in the campaign. They will lead our efforts to renew our party and I am confident that this team has both the capacity and the enthusiasm to make the necessary changes that will help restore faith in our party. Equally, I have faith in John Robertson and in our whole team that we will play our role in rebuilding our party by holding the Coalition Government to account and being a credible alternative in 2015. I thank the former Premier Kristina Keneally for her support and for launching my campaign, and I thank Barbara Perry for her support over the years. Above all, I thank the electorate of Bankstown and the people who placed their faith and their trust in me. I thank those who voted for me and I look forward to representing you, and to those that didn't, I will work equally hard to represent you and I hope to earn your trust.

Becoming a councillor in 2004 and a mayor in 2006 provided with me with a tremendous opportunity to invest in community life. But I have not been alone in this task. We are blessed to have a large number of inspiring people who contribute to community life in Bankstown. I acknowledge the contribution of community organisations, licensed clubs, sporting groups and service clubs in channelling their time, effort and funds into supporting the recreational, community and cultural needs of our residents. Today I pay special tribute to the men and women who contribute towards Bankstown's Meals on Wheels program; our emergency service personnel including Bankstown police; the State Emergency Service; the staff and volunteers of the Bankstown hospital and in aged care; the teachers and volunteers at our local schools; our Lions and Rotary volunteers; our community service workers; and our Bushcare volunteers. The list of volunteers in Bankstown is endless.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my fellow councillors, management and staff at Bankstown City Council. Special thanks to Rachel Symons, my executive assistant for the past five years who has provided me with tremendous support and one of Bankstown council's greatest assets, who has provided me with tremendous support. In speaking about local government it is also important also to acknowledge the great work of the United Services Union in protecting its members' rights and conditions, in particular, under the stewardship of Graeme Kelly. Local government has an enormous role in developing cities as the unique and distinct identities they are and should be, and in providing much-needed services and infrastructure. Its relevance must be strengthened and not undermined. It is my strong view that local government should be enshrined in our Constitution.

It is often stated that education opens up all doors. But in my experience doors also begin to shut if one is not gainfully employed. Australia's renowned egalitarianism is directly linked to the opportunities provided by stable employment that encompass a career path. Education must be viewed broadly as it clearly has both private and public benefits to its recipients. The value of apprenticeships, TAFE courses, community colleges and traineeships cannot be forgotten, not just because these lead to employment and the commencement of small business, but because it empowers individuals to appreciate the value of their actual and potential contribution to society over the stretch of their lives.

The opportunities coming our way from the buoyancy of the South Asian and East Asian economies require both the public and private sector to focus on building infrastructure. Primary in this is strong transport links. Managing the development of an integrated transport network for western and south-western Sydney is a matter of urgency for our economy and our environment. The M5 corridor connects the centres of the Sydney central business district, Sydney airport and Port Botany with greater western Sydney. This stretch of road supports Australia's third-largest economy after the Sydney central business district and south-east Queensland. The widening of the M5—most importantly the duplication of the M5 East—is critical to the future of our State.

Bankstown is filled with many migrant stories and amongst those stories is that of my own family which, with the indulgence of this House, I shall share. In particular, I want to place on the record how a person with the name Mihailuk came to be the member for Bankstown. Members in this place learnt how to say "Berejiklian" so I am sure they can learn also to say "Mihailuk". My parents were born in China and my grandparents in Russia. My paternal grandfather, Timothy Mihailuk, fought for the Russian Army and during World War I his military unit was stationed in Manchuria, now north-east China, protecting the massive rail infrastructure being built at the time to foster trade. As the Russian Revolution began, the army dismantled, civil war escalated and my grandfather remained in China.

In 1917, in the city of Nikolayevsk On Amur in Russia my four-year-old orphaned paternal grandmother, Valentina, and her six-year-old sister were placed unaccompanied on a train to travel 20 hours to the city of Harbin, China, to meet an aunt whom they knew only by name. Not long after they left most of the city's inhabitants were massacred and the city was burnt to the ground. In the early 1930s my maternal grandfather and grandmother, Tihon and Maria Nesmashin, after losing three children in a famine forced on them by Stalin to control the masses, travelled for weeks by foot from southern Russia into the north-west province of Xinjiang, China. In China my grandparents, along with other Russians, settled as refugees.

In the late 1940s and 1950s circumstances in China began to change rapidly making it necessary for my family to leave. My father abandoned his university studies, boarded a cargo ship and ended up in Brazil. Within a few years he was granted an opportunity to come to Australia, this time via a passenger liner, while my mother waited for months in Hong Kong before finally receiving her visa to Australia. My father arrived in Australia in 1959 and my mother in 1960. For my parents Australia was a place to call home and it afforded them the opportunity for the first time in their lives to be citizens of a nation. They have been so grateful they have never left Australia since—not even on a holiday. Australia afforded my parents a fair go, the ability to own their own home, to earn their own keep and to vote for the first time—the basic staples of a civil society.

My father treated seriously his newfound right to vote and comprehensively researched the Australian political landscape. My father proved too smart for Menzies' "Reds under your beds" propaganda and he identified very early that the values of Labor matched his ideals. As a child I remember receiving Keating's letters as our local member. My father always said, "Hawke and Keating are smart men" and, with a dismissive wave of his hand, he would say, "The rest are idiots." My parents bought their first home in Punchbowl. My father eventually found work at Telecom and my mother looked after us at home only to start work in aged care when we were at high school. Their goal was the Australian dream—to pay off our home. There were no holidays, piano lessons, swimming lessons, organised sport, ballet classes or new clothes. When our car was stolen we relied solely on public transport for more than a decade. But I never felt as though I missed out. We were rich in culture, knowledge and life experience. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

My parents inspired me in many ways. My father inspired my interest in politics, history and learning. He always wanted me to pursue tertiary studies and instilled in me a belief in lifelong learning. He would take my younger brother, Paul, and I every fortnight into the city as children. We would catch the old red rattlers and it was always an educational experience. We would visit the State Library, museums, the Opera House, the Botanic Gardens, the Art Gallery, countless numbers of stamp and coin exhibitions and the New South Wales Parliament House. It was these family excursions that inspired my belief that all governments have a duty to provide communities with great cultural, social and educational opportunities and institutions.

My mother fed me with the staples of life, giving me advice on day-to-day living, teaching me to be cautious with spending, hardworking and resilient. My mother never particularly understood any of my studies but she was streetwise and kept me well grounded, always more interested in what was in my bank balance. To my mum, having a degree meant nothing if it did not help pay off a mortgage—advice I have come to appreciate. My mother also focused on making church central to our lives. Standing on one's feet for a few hours on a Sunday morning on an empty stomach listening to prayers in Slavonic was no easy task but in time the Russian Orthodox faith became ingrained in me. I am by no means perfect in the practice of my faith but my faith is important to me and I respect that religion, and we are blessed to have many, is important to the vast majority of people in Bankstown.

While I am committed to representing people who have a faith, I am also equally committed to representing those who choose not to have one. Having faith has helped my family cope with many of life's challenges. My parents' lives were turned upside down when my older brother, at the age of 2½, was diagnosed with severe autism. In the 1970s very little information or support services were available. Autism involves a degree of compulsive, repetitive and, at times, impulsive behaviour which coupled with tantrums can lead to self-harm and aggression. By the age of 10 it was no longer possible for my brother to live with us and he became a permanent resident of Marsden Centre at Westmead. Recently he has moved into a more independent home. As a parent I now understand and pay tribute to my parents, in particular, my mother for providing my brother with unconditional love and never giving up on him. Some families in these circumstances understandably give up and their children are left wards of the State.

Undoubtedly, having an autistic brother shaped my view on the needs of people living with a disability, and their carers. Every time a government decides to make budgetary cuts, to contract out essential services or to sell residential homes, my brother and others in similar circumstances can be adversely affected. One of our nation's greatest shames is that prisoners are afforded better facilities and support than people with severe disabilities. I congratulate the former Keneally Government on its \$2 billion Stronger Together 2 package providing growth funding for disability services. I hope that the Coalition Government commits to and properly administers this package.

A combination of geography, family and social circumstances defined my political persuasion. In 1995 I handed my details over to the Labor club at Macquarie University and it was a letter calling all Young Labor members and supporters to help the then Prime Minister Paul Keating's campaign in 1996 that sprung me into action. I resigned from my part-time paid job—much to my mum's disappointment—and started to campaign as a volunteer. My life has never been the same since. I must confess that I was, am and will always be a "true believer". My first week in this place provided me with a stark reminder why I am here as a member of the Australian Labor Party. To helplessly watch the Occupational Health and Safety Act being stripped back with no community or industry consultation was appalling. The Act was amended to bolster the ability to prosecute the often reckless endangerment of lives at the workplace. All workers, their families and respective communities deserve the best occupational health and safety protection that can be afforded by the government of the day.

In closing, I thank my mother, Alla, who is helping Alex and me raise our children. I owe my mother a debt that I can never repay. I acknowledge my father, George, my brothers, Alec and Paul, my godparents, Boris and Nina, my brothers-in-law, George and Victor, sisters-in-law, Anna and Mischelle, my nieces and nephews, and my in-laws, Vasily and Nadja, who welcomed me into their family as one of their own. I thank my husband, Alex, who, unlike anyone else in my life, has showered me with an abundance of generosity, kindness and patience. When I knew Alex was the one—and believe me I knew a lot sooner than he did—I issued him with an ultimatum. It was not an ultimatum to marry me, or to buy me a ring or a house—I did that much later. It was an ultimatum that he should join the Australian Labor Party and just attend a couple of meetings a year. Anyhow, Alex got the message and today, a decade later, he is a delegate to the Australian Labor Party State conference, secretary of a branch, and a Bankstown city councillor. There are many reasons Alex is special and one of them is that he never has any ill will towards anybody—a rare trait in politics. A more genuine person you will not meet.

Lastly, I mention my greatest joy, my three children, Larissa, Matthew and Daniel, who remind me every day what is truly important in life. Their happiness and progress are my ultimate motivation. I wish to afford my children the opportunities everyone deserves in life and I hope they appreciate their good fortune. I want my children to have the values that inspire them to confront and challenge injustice and not be bystanders. Most of all, I want them to be happy and live in a society where they reach their full potential. I wish this for my children and for all the children of our nation. I am proud and humbled to be here and represent the values and convictions of my family, my community of Bankstown and my party. As my daughter wholeheartedly assures me on her way to school that she will do her best, I make the same earnest and unequivocal commitment to do my best for Bankstown and New South Wales. The people expect and deserve no less. Thank you.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I, too, congratulate the member for Bankstown, Tania Mihailuk, on her inaugural speech. I hope that all members master the correct pronunciation of her name.

COURTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [12.18 p.m.], in reply: Before the adjournment of debate on the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, I was referring to some of the good contributions that had been made during that debate. This bill contains miscellaneous amendments arising out of the regular review of courts-related legislation and other legislation administered by the Department of Attorney General and Justice. The amendments will ensure that court procedures continue to be as effective as possible. The amendments will also support the administration of justice in New South Wales by ensuring that a range of regulatory and law reform bodies are able to discharge their functions effectively. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.20 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Let me begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today. I pay my respects to their elders both past and present. It is with immense pride and humility that I enter this place, Australia's oldest Parliament, as a representative of Australia's oldest political party, the Australian Labor Party. Australia is a wonderful country, free with spirit and a bright future. There is only one reason that we live in peace and harmony in this beautiful land—that is, because we have a democratic and parliamentary form of government. The word "democracy" is our greatest treasure. It is a word written with the blood of previous generations who are buried in cemeteries of foreign countries all over the world. They are the reason why a working-class girl from the suburbs of Sydney can stand humbly before you in this House today.

I would like to dedicate my achievement as an elected member of Parliament to my beautiful grandmother, Ellen Johnston, known as "Nan" to our family. Nan came from the generation born around the end of the First World War. I call them the no-frills generation. By the time they were teenagers, the world was plunged into the Great Depression and following that they were again faced with the greatest conflict the world has known, the Second World War. They fought for one reason only: freedom and democracy. Returning from that conflict they were told essentially to "get on with it"—and so they bloody well did! All that we have today—schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and all the infrastructure of this great country we take for granted—was built by them and thousands of new Australians, migrants from war-torn countries, all achieved under the banner of a democratic Australia.

The Australian Labor Party is an institution that has been steeped in my world from the time I could walk. I have been a member of the Australian Labor Party for 15 years. Labor traditions and principles such as equality, fairness, solidarity and social justice shaped my humble upbringing, and have run deep in my family for many decades and generations. I stand before you today with mixed emotions. It is hard for me to believe that I am delivering this speech to you today in this place of great tradition. I do so with gratitude to so many people who have brought me here, wanting so much to do a good job for the people of the Shellharbour electorate. Shellharbour is the fastest-growing electorate on the eastern seaboard of New South Wales. I moved to Shellharbour in 1992 and built a home there with my husband, Peter, and two children, Sophie and Joseph. My children were educated at the local Catholic school, Stella Maris, in Shellharbour village, then St Josephs in Albion Park, and my son attended Edmund Rice College—which I later learned was because the canteen was better there.

Today I will talk about the Shellharbour electorate and some of the people who live in it. My electorate starts from Kanahooka and continues to Dapto, Haywards Bay, Yallah, Albion Park Rail, Mount Brown, Oak Flats, Flinders, Blackbutt, Mount Warrigal, Warilla, Lake Illawarra, Shellharbour, Balarang, Avondale Penrose and Barrack Point. It comprises young singles, couples, married people with children and retirees. The electorate of Shellharbour is pure coastal bliss framed by the magnificent Illawarra escarpment. It is untouched with no high rise and its natural beauty is boundless. The people who live in my electorate are salt of the earth, working-class people.

The day after the election I visited the Surfrider Caravan Park, which had been devastated in a once-in-a-hundred-year flash flood. The owners and management of the Surfrider Caravan Park were explaining to me and to Narelle Clay from Southern Youth and Family Services that many of the residents did not have much to lose; however, they lost what little they had. We visited many of the caravans which are homes to the residents of the Surfrider. Many were elderly and lived alone. One couple, Jenny Stewart and her husband, are quite ill. Mr Stewart suffers from chronic arthritis and gout while Jenny has severe breathing difficulties and is battling cancer. The Stewarts' caravan was one of 173 caravans that were damaged or destroyed. While talking with the Stewarts about the problems they faced, Jenny sighed and said, "Oh well, there are people a lot worse off than us."

I could not believe how a family who had just lost everything, including floors, furniture, computers and fridges, could be so humble. As we continued to meet with residents of the caravan park we noticed that they were all out helping one another to clean up the mess that the storm had left. They were laughing and working with one another. I realised then that the people at Surfrider were a united, strong and resourceful people. It was heartbreaking to see what they had lost; however, they are very proud of what they do have. This spirit runs through the veins of people in Shellharbour. I take this opportunity to thank Kristina Keneally for her visit to Shellharbour and for her kind words to the residents. Kristina has always been a good friend to the people of the Illawarra and she is warmly thought of by people in the south. Her compassion, friendship and understanding did not go unnoticed.

My family is here today in the gallery. My father, John Harwood, is here and I know he is immensely proud. My mother, Maria Harwood, cannot be with us today as she has recently suffered a minor stroke and is still in hospital. My parents are and have been the best parents anyone could ask for. They never stop giving advice, whether or not one wants it. My twin brother, Sean, and his wife, Jenny, are also present in the gallery, and their children, Sam, Nathan and Alana, are in the front row. They are great kids and they take pleasure in tormenting their auntie at every opportunity. My sister, Kate, and her husband, Lander, and her children, Calum and Finn, could not be here today, but again the kids are lovely. I would like to mention my younger brother, Tim, who cannot be here today as he lives and works in Dubai with his wife, Rhonda, and their children, Sarah and Xavier. My daughter, Sophie, who is a journalist, is in the gallery with her partner, Andrew, and my son, Joseph, is also here with his partner, Katie.

My grandmother passed away a few years ago. However, I know that as a loving grandmother and a staunch Labor comrade from long ago she is watching and looking down on me today. I would also like to mention my extended family, the members of whom are here today. My mother was one of 12 and my father one of five. I am lucky enough to have some of them here today and I thank them for making the journey. I was born and raised in an amazing extended family, all staunch Labor and trade union supporters. I have early memories of painting banners for waterside workers marches and demonstrations. My Nan, whom I mentioned earlier, was the live-in caretaker of the union rooms in Sussex Street. I spent a lot of time there as a child: most of my uncles and my father were waterfront workers, as well as both my grandfathers. My twin brother, Sean, is a captain of the pilot boat at Port Kembla. I am very proud to say that now my son, Joseph, is carrying on the

tradition—securing a job as a linesman also at Port Kembla. Joe is a fifth generation member of the Maritime Union of Australia. I can remember people crowding the hall and singing songs of solidarity accompanied by a woman on the piano. The wharfies had their banner room out the back, which was a constant source of amusement for Sean and me.

I come from a working-class world. My mother worked at the shop assistants union for Ernie O'Dea. The love and support of my family is what has brought me to this point in my life, along with the education I was given both in and out of school. I can remember sitting at our dining room table and talking about industrial matters on the waterfront and stop-work meetings. The conversation more often than not revolved around politics. My family members were outraged after the dismissal of Gough Whitlam. I am a product of my upbringing, and I am very, very proud to have been born into a family where social justice, fairness, compassion and unity were central to our lives. My two brothers and my sister often discuss politics, and I have always wanted to make things better in the community. I could see as I got older the divide between the haves and the have-nots. It always seemed unfair to me—and even more so given that we are such a young country, where opportunity should be a result of hard work and determination, not the bank balance of one's parents or the school that one attended.

In 1992 I was living in my parent's garage with my husband, Peter, and our babies, Sophie and Joe. It was a difficult time, but once again the unconditional support of my parents continued to serve us well. Land and house prices in Sydney had become far too expensive, so we decided to look further afield. By chance one day, I found a block of land on Cygnet Avenue in Blackbutt, Shellharbour, behind what are now Bunnings and Woolworths. The block had beautiful views over Lake Illawarra and the escarpment. We purchased the block, and we built our first home. I can tell members that the best move we ever made was to the Illawarra over 20 years ago. Shellharbour was a fledging area which offered everything for young couples starting out, and we soon became part of the community. Our children had all their schooling in Shellharbour, culminating two years ago with our beautiful daughter graduating with a degree in journalism from the University of Wollongong.

My husband, Peter, has been a truck driver and, for the past nine years, has owned and operated his own transport business. I first worked for the Commonwealth Bank, then St George Bank, followed by several years at a medical fund. It was there that I rediscovered my strong belief in workers' rights, and I became the union delegate. My passion for fighting for the rights of workers was noticed by a union organiser named Rudi Oppitz. He asked me whether I would be interested in pursuing that passion as an organiser with the then Australian Services Union. I accepted the offer and it changed my life forever. I found my true vocation in life: working and fighting for what people like my Nan had established long ago. So I feel it is a natural progression for me to move from the trade union movement to politics.

Having grown up and lived in such an environment, it is no surprise that I ventured into a career with the trade union movement. I worked as a union organiser with the United Services Union [USU] for 12 years. In that role I advocated and represented workers in the services area, including local government, and I learnt that local government workers are the backbone of the community. They build and maintain roads, bridges, parks and gardens, water and sewerage, and local swimming pools. They patrol our beaches, educate our preschoolers, and administer civic centres and offices throughout New South Wales. The United Services Union is the principal union in local government in New South Wales and it has delivered a better way of life for its members and employees in local government, such as by negotiating the award and collective agreements, protecting rates of pay and conditions of employment, and protecting workers from unfair dismissal through conciliation and/or arbitration.

The United Services Union is responsible for campaigning around the health and safety of workers in local government and for providing industry reference groups with appropriate information. The achievements of the United Services Union, with over 40,000 members across New South Wales, are many. I am honoured to have been a part of that success. I was fortunate to have wonderful mentors, who are now lifelong friends, at the United Services Union and in the Wollongong office: Graeme Kelly, now General Secretary, and Jack Klower, now retired but who held the position of the southern regions industrial officer. I recall one occasion when a dispute at the Cudgong Abattoir saw approximately 300 employees retrenched without notice, leaving them with wages and entitlements owing to the value of \$5.3 million. This was after the directors of the company increased their director fees, which they paid themselves, and then announced they would be closing as the company was broke. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The United Services Union led by Graeme Kelly, Jack Klower, union local organiser, rugby league legend "TV" Ted Ellery, then General Secretary Brian Harris and all the union members fought tirelessly for

months organising picket lines, food hampers and financial assistance for members to help them through a very dark period in Mudgee's history. After almost 10 months of intense campaigning, the members received all moneys owing to them through the collective efforts of the United Services Union and the New South Wales Labor Government—in particular the Hon. Tony Kelly, then Minister for Local Government, and Premier Bob Carr—and Mr Garry Styles, then General Manager of Mudgee Shire Council. That is only one story of what the United Services Union has done for its members.

People such as Graeme Kelly and Jack Klower had such an impact on me as a union official. While at times I was often the target of torment and jest, were it not for Graeme Kelly and Jack Klower I would not be standing here today delivering this speech. It is with the greatest respect, gratitude, admiration and friendship that I thank both Graeme and Jack for their continuous support and assistance throughout my time at the United Services Union. I also thank the executive of the union. I will always treasure my time at the United Services Union and remember it warmly. I take my role as a newly elected member of Parliament very seriously, as well as my obligations to represent the constituents of the electorate of Shellharbour. It is without doubt an honour and a privilege. I believe the electorate of Shellharbour is the best electorate in the State; it has the most down-to-earth and the lovely people in New South Wales. I will not take my position as their voice in this place for granted, and I will work hard for the trust and confidence that has been placed in me.

During the campaign and since my election I have talked to numerous people as well as countless groups, community organisations and businesses. I look forward to being a part of the New South Wales Parliament because government has a responsibility to do far more to eliminate, or at least progressively reduce, poverty, homelessness and unemployment. We can work towards increasing awareness about the importance of safety for women and children, and we must implement strategies and direct resources to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and child abuse. The structural causes of these social problems can be addressed with policies, resources and political will. I believe we need to deliver government in a way that delivers human rights to the people of New South Wales and of Australia. The human rights of our citizens can be upheld in many ways. The essential role of government is to ensure the provision of public, affordable, accessible, quality and appropriate goods and services to all in the community, not just those who can afford it. Schools, hospitals, health services, emergency services including short supported accommodation, support services, legal services, social housing and public transport must be available and accessible to all. This will contribute to an improved quality of life for all and to a strengthened and responsive community. We all want a socially just society.

As I mentioned earlier, at the time of the election some parts of my electorate were flooded. The speed at which it happened was frightening, and many people were unprepared. Sadly, the flood resulted in the death of one man and many people suffered damage to their property. On the Sunday after the election I spent some time with residents of the caravan park at Barrack Point. Some still had no hot water while others had not yet been able to return. Some of the residents were confused, some had serious health problems and many had no financial resources in the form of savings. Many were on social housing waiting lists. Many were unemployed. Many were elderly. Many needed practical assistance. Yet their courage was obvious and their resilience was clear. Their optimism was high and they showed genuine appreciation for any help they received. It was heart warming. I saw generous people bring cooked meals to them. Staff from Southern Youth and Family Services showed up with crates of baked vegetables and chickens—a home-cooked baked dinner. Neighbours and community workers rallied to provide support. A church group arrived with a barbeque to cheer up the residents, and the State Emergency Service [SES] volunteers did a sterling job. This is a strong, well-linked, kind and generous community—one that I am proud to support and represent.

Governments should direct resources to overcome disadvantage. When listening to a speech given by Narelle Clay, a long-term community worker from Shellharbour, at the recent May Day celebrations I was reminded of the importance of holding firm to our values regarding what sort of people we are and what sort of communities we want. Narelle commented that her family had drummed into her that she was fortunate—she had a loving family, secure housing, and education leading to employment. As a child and young person she was constantly reminded of the responsibility that went with that fortunate upbringing: responsibility to "contribute and give back to the community" and "not to whinge but do something about what's wrong". This leads to the responsibility to advocate and to speak up for those who are doing it tough in the community. As a member of Parliament, and as someone who has also had a fortunate upbringing, I commit to working towards improving the standard and quality of life for all in New South Wales. I commit to upholding the responsibility bestowed on me to represent and to advocate for those who need our support and our assistance.

A strong community is one that has strong infrastructure and strong and productive industries. The Shellharbour area is part of the broader Illawarra, and the steel industry, the port and the mines are proud

industries essential to the prosperity of that area. The public service, the retail, the hospitality, the tourism and the community services industries, and the health and education sectors are also important and essential to the area's economy. I am committed to supporting the growth of Port Kembla. I would like to thank the people of the Shellharbour electorate for their support—I will not let them down. I have been inspired and supported by some good people and will mention but a few of them today: Garry Keane of the Maritime Union of Australia, Andy Gillespie of the Australian Workers Union, Narelle Clay, Tye McMahon, Jenny Kazman, Lou Stefanovski, Tome Dimovski, David Hamilton, Dana Nelse, Young Labor members such as Sara Howson, Peter Hughes and Dom Wilcox, and, of course, the Macedonian community. I sincerely and respectfully thank those from the head office of the Australian Labor Party, in particular Sam Dastyari, Courtney Roach, George Houssos and Chris Minz. I also thank all who volunteered on the day of the election. I take this opportunity to also thank Noreen Hay, who gave freely of her advice, encouragement, knowledge, support and friendship.

[Interruption]

She was busy doing her own doorknocking. Noreen, I will not forget your contribution and your kindness. I appreciate your assistance more than you may ever know. I will continue to seek your counsel, and I look forward to working with you. The people of Wollongong are fortunate to have you represent them. The people I have mentioned give of themselves every day to the community. They fight, they advocate, they support, they stick out their necks and, win or lose, they come back time and again. I am fortunate to call these people my friends. I love the Illawarra region. I have a vision for the area. One of my many concerns is youth unemployment, and I want to attract business big and small to the Illawarra. I have strong views and beliefs about the environment, advances in technology, the energy crisis, teenage binge drinking, the economy, health and hospitals, the ageing generation, infrastructure and education.

I have a whole laundry list of issues. More than anything, I want prosperity for the Illawarra, the State and the country. I intend always to honour my family, and I hope that they will be proud of the way I represent my electorate. I also intend to honour the people I represent in my electorate and across New South Wales. But most of all I intend to honour not only what is right but what is fair. I have pledged to the people of Shellharbour that I will spend my time working tirelessly to make our small corner of heaven an even better place than it is already. Before I conclude today, I will leave you with the following story. When my husband, Peter, was a boy his primary school, like any other, had a motto: Nothing without labour. My fellow parliamentarians, I can say unequivocally that I, my family, this State and this great country of ours would be nothing without Labor.

DEATH OF SERGEANT BRETT WOOD, MG

Ministerial Statement

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [12.40 p.m.], by leave: It is with solemn regret that I make a ministerial statement on the death of Sergeant Brett Wood, who was killed in action in Afghanistan on Monday 23 May 2011. Thirty-two-year-old Sergeant Wood was from the Sydney-based 2nd Commando Regiment and was on his third deployment to Afghanistan, which started in March 2011. The 2nd Commando Regiment's garrison headquarters are at Holsworthy army base in the electorate of the member for Menai. Elvi Wood, Sergeant Wood's widow, released a statement yesterday in which she said that Brett was a much-loved son, grandson and brother who inspired his family with his dedication and generosity. At times like these when we commemorate the death of those who have fallen in battle, who have fought on our behalf to maintain the freedoms and liberties that we enjoy in our country, we must remind ourselves that these are not names simply to be acknowledged and forgotten; they are names that have to be remembered. Brett Wood was a son, a grandson, a brother, a husband, a friend to many and a colleague to those with whom he served.

Since joining the Army in 1996 Brett Wood served in Bougainville in 2000, East Timor in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, before his first deployment to Afghanistan in 2006 and second deployment in 2009. For his bravery, like so many in our armed forces, he received commendations. In 2006 he was awarded the Medal for Gallantry for his gallantry and leadership in action as a Commando Team Commander of the Special Operations Task Group Task 4637 whilst deployed on Operation Slipper Rotation Three in Afghanistan. Sergeant Wood leaves behind his wife, Elvi. In her statement yesterday she went on to say that Brett was extremely proud to be part of the 2nd Commando Regiment and he considered many of his colleagues to be his second family. He was an excellent soldier, a true leader and a friend to all in his unit. As I said, Brett was a much-loved son, grandson and brother who inspired his family with his dedication and generosity.

This morning I attended the RSL congress. Yesterday they acknowledged Sergeant Wood's death, as they always will. I am reminded of the comments of Major-General Gordon Maitland, who said that it is politicians who send soldiers overseas, but Australians would not be dinkum Australians if we did not support our soldiers' activities, whatever action they are involved in. Deaths in conflicts such as Sergeant Wood's death in Afghanistan inevitably spark public controversy. Today is not the time for that. Today is the time for Australians to rally behind all those who have served and continue to serve overseas, to acknowledge the passing of Sergeant Brett Wood, to extend our sympathy, support and love to his family, his friends and his colleagues and to keep in our prayers the five colleagues of Sergeant Wood who were injured in the incident. At this time it is important also to reflect on the tragic Australian losses suffered in Afghanistan since 2001, which now total 24. We will remember them. Lest we forget.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [12.45 p.m.]: I join the Premier in expressing our deepest sorrow to the family, friends and loved ones of Sergeant Brett Wood, who tragically was killed on Monday 23 May 2011. As the Premier said, he is the twenty-fourth soldier to have lost his life in the conflict in Afghanistan. We pray for his wife, Elvi, and for his family in this time of great sorrow, as we pray for the families of all those who have lost their lives serving their country in Afghanistan. It is our nation's highest calling to wear the uniform of Australia. But to die while wearing that uniform is one of the greatest sacrifices that can be made for the people of our nation. It is the greatest sacrifice we can ask of the men and women of our armed services.

Today is a tragedy for our nation. We have lost one of our bravest and finest Australians. Sergeant Wood was from the Sydney-based 2nd Commando Regiment. He was just 32. His life was cut tragically short, but in that time he had many achievements. As the Premier said, Sergeant Wood's first deployment was to Bougainville in 2000. In 2001 he was deployed to East Timor on Operation Tanager and in 2003 to Iraq on Operation Falconer. In 2006 he was deployed to Afghanistan as part of Operation Slipper. During this tour he received the first of many accolades—the Medal for Gallantry for leadership in action as a team commander. He would return to Afghanistan on deployment in 2009 and again this year.

Sergeant Wood's commendations are many. I do not propose to list them all, but they are extensive. For someone so young to have received such recognition is a demonstration of a soldier committed to upholding and fighting for the liberties that we take for granted in our country. He was committed to the rebuilding of Afghanistan so that the Afghani people can enjoy personal security and economic prosperity. For those of us who are privileged to represent our communities, today is a reminder of the debt we owe the great men and women who put on a uniform and travel overseas to represent us and to fight for the things that we all believe in so passionately. Sergeant Wood's death is all the more tragic because not only did his mother lose a son on Monday, but Sergeant Wood's brother David passed away in a car accident outside the Holsworthy army base in 2001. I am sure that today we all join in expressing our great sympathy to the family. As well as Sergeant Brett Wood, we remember the other 23 soldiers who have passed away in this conflict. Lest we forget.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

LAW ENFORCEMENT (POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES) AMENDMENT (MOVE ON DIRECTIONS) BILL 2011

Bill received from the Legislative Council and introduced.

Agreement in principle set down as an order of the day for a future day.

[The Speaker left the chair at 12.51 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given his comments on Channel 9 News on 31 March 2010 that the no-forced-redundancy policy would go, but "there is no threat to the rest of the

public service", how can he justify introducing legislation that allows Ministers to override the Industrial Relations Commission and to reduce the employment conditions of nurses, police and other public servants by regulation?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I genuinely thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. Over the past 16 years this House has seen a fair share of hypocrisy from members opposite. However, with all due respect to the Minister for Transport, on this occasion the Leader of the Opposition takes the cake. The hypocrisy of members opposite is far better than the cake presented yesterday by the Minister. I make it clear that what the Leader of the Opposition complained about in his question has been the Labor Party's policy for the past four years.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That policy with regard to pay and conditions has been on the table for pay increases of more than 2.5 per cent.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The same policy that the Leader of the Opposition now claims will cause the end of life as we know it has been the policy pursued for four years by members opposite.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition is simply breathtaking.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Yesterday he made a limp attack on the Government for doing something about the mess that he created with the Solar Bonus Scheme. However, his heart was not in it because he designed a scheme that was too generous, too costly and, as we have seen, too open to abuse.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He has taken another hypocritical leap today by hysterically attacking the wages policy that has been in place since 2007.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only difference is that, unlike members opposite, this Government will deliver on its wages policy. For increases of more than 2.5 per cent where productivity improvements are promised and increased wages are paid, taxpayers will not be stuck with the \$900-million bill they have been stuck with in the past because members opposite did not follow through on policy promises. This Government will deliver on policy and not simply talk about it. That is precisely why we were given an overwhelming mandate by the people of New South Wales on 26 March. They charged us with tackling problems like that and fixing this State. The families of this State are sick of a do-nothing government led by No. 41 and No. 42 opposite. They demanded real change on 26 March. As the Treasurer said, the first thing we must do—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. I call the member for Kogarah to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —is to get the State's finances under control. We must wipe out the \$5.2 billion black hole left by those opposite, which includes the \$759-million blowout caused by the Solar Bonus Scheme, and identified by Acting Treasury head Mike Lambert in the report often lauded by members of the Opposition. For us to do that, for us to clean up the mess, tough decisions will have to be made. It means reining in the cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme, which the Leader of the Opposition allowed to blow out from less than \$400 million to an estimated \$1.9 billion, according to the Duffy-Parry report.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It would be easy for us to sit back and do nothing, as those opposite did for 16 years—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —and to allow Labor's ill-conceived and poorly managed scheme to simply run on and blow out the power bills of people across the State.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: But we were elected to clean up that mess, and that is precisely what we on this side of the House are going to do, just as we have dealt with so many other messes left and put in the too hard basket by Labor. In just 60 days we have made more tough decisions than were taken by Labor during its 16 years in government. We have moved to clean up the lobbying industry; we have repealed Labor's home buyers' tax; we have strengthened police powers to allow them greater control in relation to people who are drunk and disorderly; we have begun project work on the North West Rail Link.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: And we have scrapped Labor's corrupt part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. We have started to establish the integrated transport agency that this city and State need. We have started to repair our relationship with the Federal Labor Government, which members opposite so destroyed that we missed out on infrastructure funding under the first round of funding.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We will tackle the tough decisions. We will clean up the State and we will secure the future of all people in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that a number of them are on two calls to order. Members will refrain from making personal comments.

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES POLICY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: My question is directed to the Premier. What safeguards are in place to protect the conditions of public servants under the Government's wages policy?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Swansea for his question, his first since 26 March, when we received that mandate to clean up the problems left by Labor in New South Wales. As I understand it, this is the first time that the Liberal Party has held the seat of Swansea. And who did we win it from? We won it from a former Labor member who was a union representative who signed up to the same wages policy that those opposite are crying about. As I said earlier, the hypocrisy of members of the Opposition is extraordinary. Here we have the Leader of the Opposition, the alleged champion of all workers, feigning concern that workers' conditions are being threatened by the very same policy that Labor pursued over the past four years.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This is the same person who demonstrated his real lack of concern for workers' conditions when he—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time. The member for Kiama will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —was a director of WorkCover from 2001 to 2007. During that period he had an attendance rate at meetings of the WorkCover board of just 50 per cent, including one year when he failed to turn up to a single meeting of the board.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The very year when WorkCover was setting targets to reduce fatalities in the workplace by 20 per cent he was off missing in action.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Clearly, WorkCover had to strive to achieve that admirable goal without the support of the so-called champion of workers' rights. The Leader of the Opposition has now embarked on a campaign to sabotage our task of fixing the mess that he and his colleagues left us. It is not enough that he left New South Wales with the legacy of the solar bonus scheme. Now he wants to whip up hysteria about the Government's wages policy, the same wages policy that has been in place since 2007. As I said earlier, the only difference between our policy and Labor's policy is that we intend to deliver on it. Our policy is clear: we will allow 2.5 per cent wage increases across the public sector. There is provision for increases above that level but only if they are offset by employee-related savings—and that is exactly the same condition as that administered by those opposite for four years.

If we do not enforce that policy, if we pay wage increases for promised productivity savings that are not delivered—as those opposite did for four years—the State's finances will be threatened by \$1.9 billion over the next four years. Instead of delivering on his promise to be a constructive opposition leader, instead of supporting this initiative, instead of getting behind our attempts to clean up this State and fix the problems left to us, the Leader of the Opposition is running a scare campaign that public servants could lose their conditions and entitlements.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Nothing could be further from the truth. We have no intention of reducing conditions and entitlements. But, as the Leader of the Opposition knows—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —these issues are on the table should any unions want to negotiate them as part of their productivity improvements or awards, just as they were on the table under the Labor Party. What needs to be understood here, however, is who was head of the union movement when this policy was introduced in 2007.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Old Sergeant Sloppy over there. He did not go to WorkCover board meetings even though they were about workers' conditions and cannot get his facts right when it comes to the policy we have enunciated. He is trying to whip up hysteria and sabotage the Government's efforts to fix the State.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I take the point of order on behalf of the member for Swansea. I really want to hear the answer to the question about protections and safeguards.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. All members are trying to listen to the answer, which I am sure the Premier is about to conclude.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In view of the point of order I will ask for an extension of time to allow my answer to be finished. The Leader of the Opposition knows better than anyone that Parliament will always have the right to disallow our wages policy—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I seek an extension of time, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no provision for an extension of time during question time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As you and the member for Northern Tablelands are aware, Madam Speaker, it is a matter for your discretion.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: I wish to ask a supplementary question. Will the Premier elucidate his answer?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I appreciate the additional question from the member for Swansea. As the Leader of the Opposition knows better than anyone, the Parliament will always have the right to disallow our

wages policy decisions if it regards it as being too harsh. That is the accountability—the safeguards—that I referred to when I first raised this matter in this House on 12 May. Given that we do not have a majority in the upper House, I have no doubt that the crossbenchers, combined with the colleagues of those opposite, will quickly reject any change to our policy they think unfair. Our system works on the principle that Parliament sets the rules and the umpire enforces them, and that principle is reflected in the wages policy that the Government announced in its bill last night. But there will always be a safety valve in place to ensure that public servants in this State are protected from unfair decisions.

We are not in the business of taking conditions away from public servants; we are in the business of supporting public servants to enable them to deliver even better services to people across this State. We are in the business of delivering fair wage increases while bringing the budget under control so that we can start delivering the infrastructure and services that this State desperately needs. The Leader of the Opposition stands condemned for his hysterical media comments today. He has not learnt the lessons of 26 March. The people of this State want problems fixed, they want the messes cleaned up, and this side of politics is committed to doing just that.

POLICE AWARD NEGOTIATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education will come to order. All members will come to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Given the commitment made by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in a letter to the New South Wales Police Association dated 20 March 2011 that under a Coalition government police would keep their rights to collective bargaining, awards and an independent umpire, how can the Premier justify introducing legislation that will have the effect of empowering ministers to override the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission, as the Premier just admitted, on any public sector employment conditions?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I commend the legislation to the Leader of the Opposition, and I suggest that he actually read the Minister's second reading speech before he goes out hysterically--

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —to criticise not only his own wages policy but also what we are proposing. We are proposing to promulgate, through regulation, the State Government's wages policy—the policy that those opposite happily applied over seven years but failed to properly implement. Our policy ensures a guarantee to public servants of fair pay increases, a guarantee to taxpayers of productivity savings--

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —and guarantees that the Parliament has the right of veto. And ultimately that right of veto will, I am sure, be exercised if the wages policy is regarded as being harsh or unfair. We are not in the business of being unfair or harsh; we are in the business of fixing this State, of delivering better service to this State, and of supporting the public servants in this State who provide the front-line services upon which we all depend as we go about our lives each day. There cannot be a strong future for this State without a strong public sector, because the public sector provides the platform of services upon which all of us rely, whether those services relate to health, transport, education, family and community services, and those areas that are critical for people and families across this State. The hypocrisy on that side of the House is just extraordinary. The fact is that the Government does not have a role in directing any individual agreement. The Government is putting in place legislation that provides that the Industrial Relations Commission--

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —will have regard to the Government's wages policy.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: To do anything else would be irresponsible because over the past four years those opposite saw promises made of productivity savings so that people could get wage increases above

2.5 per cent. The Treasurer may correct me, but I believe the average wage increase over that time was in the order of 4 per cent, so that an additional 1.5 per cent or thereabouts was paid out in exchange for promised productivity savings. But did those opposite ensure that the promised productivity savings upon which the higher wages were paid were actually delivered? No. And what was the effect of that? The effect of that was an additional \$900 million for which taxpayers had to foot the bill.

We have seen with regard to the solar bonus scheme—which has gone out from \$355 million to an estimated Duffy-Parry figure of \$1.9 billion—that such amounts meant nothing to those opposite when they were in government. Certainly an additional \$900 million does not seem to mean much to those opposite. However, it means a lot to the taxpayers of this State now, because it means higher charges, higher taxes and higher costs at a time when people across this State are struggling to meet their family's bills. I will not stand here and be lectured by members of the Opposition. The commitments we made are clear. The wages policy has not changed except that we are requiring the Industrial Relations Commission to pay regard to that wages policy.

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order—

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Kogarah will state her point of order.

Ms Cherie Burton: The Premier is misleading the House. This is an unprecedented attack on workers' conditions in New South Wales and the Premier cannot—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I can understand why "Dodgem" Cherie is trying to ingratiate herself with the police—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Somebody who on two occasions has refused police requests is now trying to ingratiate herself in a scare campaign—

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah has been called to order three times. I ask the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove her from the Chamber.

[The member for Kogarah left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Madam Speaker, this is a historic day. The member for Kogarah has actually listened to authority for a change. I say again the Government's wages policy is a fair and responsible policy, and it is the only policy one can implement in order to fix the mess, particularly the financial mess, left by those opposite.

BUDGET BLACK HOLE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: My question is directed to the Treasurer. What action has the Government taken to plug Labor's \$5.2 billion black hole and restore proper management to the New South Wales State budget?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order or else some may be asked to leave the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is great to be asked a question by the member for Hawkesbury, for whom I believe only three people in his electorate did not vote at the recent elections. The reason he was re-elected is clear: he listens to his community, he acts for his community and he loves his community. With regard to the budget, I am pleased to talk about Labor's budget black hole and Labor's management of the economy and State budgets. What we saw under Labor in this State is a very important aspect of this hysterical debate that is being run by the Leader of the Opposition. Over the past four years the expense average run by State Labor was 7.6 per cent. Labor's fairytale forecast for the next four years was 3.4 per cent growth.

But has Labor ever delivered savings of any consequence? No it has not. What did that mean for the State budget? When we look at the Treasury documents we see that under the historical cost average under State Labor the triple-A credit rating was going to be lost by 2013-14. It was going to be removed from this State. They are the facts that are before us. We are going to align expense and revenue. We are going to take a responsible approach to our budget. We are going to align it, because that is what you need to do—live within your means.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When we roll back the curtain what do we see that State Labor left us?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: A few days before the budget we had surplus, surplus, surplus. The day after the election, what did we have? Deficit, deficit, deficit. They are the facts. That is what State Labor left us. What does that mean? What does this Government have to do? We have had to take action in relation to the Solar Bonus Scheme because Labor botched it. I know the Premier talks about sergeant over here, but he will always be my captain. I had to ask Treasury, "How did they get it so wrong? What was the budget process that was involved in managing the Solar Bonus Scheme?" I think all members of the House will be interested in this. I know that sometimes we get news we do not like to hear. Treasury replied, "Government considered the funding of the Solar Bonus Scheme via a submission to the budget committee in early January 2011."

Treasury advised that the financial impact statement was incorrect and incomplete." What happened at that point? You would imagine that the captain and junior master chef over there would have said, "Can we get the information into Cabinet. Can we actually understand what they are doing? Let's look at the numbers." But no, this is what the former Cabinet did: They said, "No further analysis was sought from Treasury from that point." They do not want to know the numbers. They do not want to know about the \$759 million. That is why we are in the position we are in today. With regard to wages, we have had to take action because Labor did not deliver. We have lost \$900 million in promised savings. This is not a hysterical policy—this is Labor's policy. A former Premier—he is actually one that is not now a member of this House—Morris Iemma, said that the policy released on 11 September 2007:

... is intended to maintain real wages by allowing for increases of 2.5 per cent per annum. Additional increases are available when employee-related cost savings are achieved.

Former Treasurer Roozendaal—I do not like to quote him—said that on 15 July 2009 extra margins above 2.5 per cent would be offset by employee-related cost savings. One simply has to look at Labor's wages policy. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition has read the policy, but here it is. The New South Wales public sector wages policy 2007 says:

Any increases to employee related expenses, including wages, allowances, superannuation etc, exceeding 2.5 per cent per annum must be funded through employee related reform measures and cost savings.

That's Labor's policy!

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: All this hysterical nonsense—

[Interruption]

It is your policy! We are making tough decisions. We are standing up for the taxpayers in this State, because \$900 million has gone missing. I ask every member in this House: Who could use \$900 million in their electorate?

Government members: Me!

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Who would like to see improvements in health services in their electorate?

Government members: Me!

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Who would like to see roads built in their electorate?

Government members: Me!

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Who would like to see improvements in transport services in their electorate?

Government members: Me!

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Well, there it is. I saw no arms raised and heard no voices over there. Labor had the opportunity. We are going to get this State back on track.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Has he, or his staff, or his department, or any of his Ministers, their departments or staff—

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

Ms LINDA BURNEY: —received any advice, formal or informal, from the law firm Freehills with regard to the Premier's proposal to allow Ministers to make regulations overriding the Industrial Relations Commission, on any policy on conditions of employment of public sector employees?

The SPEAKER: Order! Yesterday I ruled on the length of questions. I will make a ruling on this question, although it does not necessarily relate to its length. Points of order have been raised previously about multiple questions within one question. If all parts of the question are related I will accept it. However, the member's question contained several questions within it.

Ms Linda Burney: No, there weren't.

The SPEAKER: Order! I listened carefully to the question. I will allow the question on this occasion, but in future members should phrase their questions carefully and appropriately.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Madam Speaker—

Mr Robert Furolo: You don't trust him to answer that one?

Mr Brad Hazzard: I trust him. It's you I don't trust! Point of order: Madam Speaker, you properly pointed out that the length of the question was somewhat suspect. But also, the standing orders clearly state that questions must not seek comment with regard to legal opinion. Therefore I ask you to rule the question out of order.

Mr Michael Daley: To the point of order: The member for Canterbury did not ask the Premier to comment on legal advice. She simply asked whether he had received any.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra is correct. I will allow the question on this occasion. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I wish it were that simple. I wish the member for Canterbury had asked me whether I had received that advice, because the answer would be no. As members may recall, the member for Canterbury asked me about whether anybody—apparently, anybody in this whole building—received such advice.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For that reason, I will seek advice on the matter and report back to the House.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition needs to smarten up her questions. Whether today or yesterday, her questions have been absolute shockers; they are neither pointed nor political.

REGIONAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How did the former Government's wages policy impact on regional infrastructure and services?

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Myall Lakes was elected on 26 March with a whopping 78.6 per cent of the vote—despite his being confined to hospital for about the last three weeks of the campaign.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Myall Lakes is already fighting for better services and infrastructure in his electorate, including health services in Taree and The Great Lakes, and better and safer roads. Every regional member of Parliament and every regional community represented by those members are aware of issues relating to infrastructure and services in their electorates. After 16 years of Labor, things are starting to crumble and are not what they should be for the 2.5 million people who live in regional New South Wales. These shortcomings are a direct result of the financial incompetence shown by the Labor Party over the past 16 years, and, in particular, Labor's inability to control expenditure growth in the State Government. Public sector wages are a major component of expenditure in the State budget.

Mr Richard Amery: Oh, get away!

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I hear the member for Mount Druitt interjecting as usual. He is part of the new blood we were promised in the Labor Party! It is very selfish of you being here today, Richard—depriving some village of its idiot.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I do not think I need to describe my point of order. Madam Speaker, the nature of the comment should have been readily apparent to you.

The SPEAKER: Order! What was apparent to me was that the Deputy Premier did not make a specific imputation or personal reflection on a particular member. We may not have liked the comment, but there is no point of order. The Deputy Premier has the call. The member for Toongabbie will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I apologise to the member for Mount Druitt; the comment should have been directed to the member for Maroubra. Public sector wages growth in New South Wales has far outstripped wages growth in other jurisdictions in the public sector and also in the private sector. Since September 1977 real wages in the New South Wales public sector have exceeded those in the private sector by 11 per cent, and in the public sector in the rest of Australia by 6 per cent. That comes about despite the wages policy of the former Government that the Treasurer and the Premier have told us about today—that was actually a sensible wages policy. I quote from what former Treasurer Roozendaal told us during that infamous 2008 mini-budget when he said:

And a staff freeze ensures it shall not grow by stealth. I also confirm the Government's wages policy to require public sector wage increases over 2.5 per cent to be met through productivity improvements that deliver cost savings.

It was a good policy, but the former Government could never implement it. It could control expenses growth. Whether it is the Pacific Highway or the Princes Highway, or whether it is regional hospitals in Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Dubbo, Parkes or Wagga Wagga, the inability to rein in growth expenses growth has resulted in diminished services and infrastructure in regional areas. Unless actions match words on expenses the improvements that people throughout regional New South Wales are desperately seeking will be difficult to achieve. That is why the Liberal-Nationals Government has grasped the nettle, showing strong and responsible leadership, to ensure the sensible wages policy announced by Labor in 2007 is actually implemented. That is good news for the people of regional New South Wales. It is good news also that through strong and responsible leadership the budget will be brought back under control so that the Government can deliver on services and infrastructure.

NURSING STAFF NUMBERS

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health. In light of the Government's proposal to give Ministers the power to pass regulations overriding the Industrial Relations Commission on any public sector employment condition, how can the Minister guarantee that the increased nursing numbers agreed to in the new Public Health System Nurses' and Midwives' (State) Award will be protected?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: How pleased I am to get another question from the shadow Minister for Health, who has been silent on matters that really count when it comes to healthcare in New South Wales. He has been silent about the fact that his Government closed down a number of nursing positions.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The former Government cut 340 nursing positions from western Sydney, it cut 100 nursing positions from Central Coast hospitals—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —those hospitals the newly elected members on the Central Coast were so keen to fight for during the election campaign and we were given such a mandate that it has enabled us to pick up seats formerly held by Labor. We were very pleased that the nurses and ambulance unions signed up to their memorandums of understanding under multi-year agreements. The Government has made commitments to them and it will not walk away from them. The really interesting thing is the protests, the hysterical nonsense coming from those opposite about a policy that is theirs.

I have heard about the 2.5 per cent pay increase so many times. When the former Treasurer stood in this House to deliver the budget he would talk about the 2.5 per cent pay increases and associated productivity gains. Were there any? No. What happened every time was that the budget blew out. That is why we now have this \$900 million hole that needs plugged. As has been explained by the Premier and by the Treasurer, there are to be no changes to the provisions that those opposite implemented except that this Government will be serious. We will be serious about making sure that there are productivity gains and those gains will be used to pay—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —extra salaries for employees, including nurses and others.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The former Government absolutely ran down the nursing profession and others working in our hospital system. The morale in our hospitals is so low because of what those opposite did and the shadow Minister for Health knows that because he visited some of the hospitals, as I did. Since I became the Minister for Health I have been very proud to continue to do that with my colleagues. First of all I visited Tamworth Hospital, with the member for Tamworth, Dubbo hospital with the member for Dubbo, Nepean Hospital with the member for Penrith, Westmead, Campbelltown and most recently Wollongong. All those hospitals are very welcoming of the new initiatives being put in place by this new Government.

In contrast, the former Labor Government paid lip-service to nurses and others working in our system. It lied to the people working in the system about the services and resources they had. The thing that really gets to me is the duplicitous claim by the former Labor Government about valuing nurses when in fact what it did was cut nursing positions. That meant those that were left were run off their feet and many of them left without staying for very long. I hear members opposite who have not been in this place for long and who have never actually visited—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —one of these hospitals in their lives. I challenge them to go to these hospitals. I challenge them to go to Campbelltown to talk to the medical staff council and the nurse union leader at that hospital, as I did the other day. They are so pleased to at last have a Government that is standing up for them and a Government committed to providing them with sufficient numbers to allow them to do the right thing by their patients. A Government that is not playing havoc with their lives by asking them to do—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:—things that should be shared by greater numbers of nurses. Let us look at the number of nurses and midwives in New South Wales. One only needs to go to the annual report last published by that lot over there: 100,000 nurses and midwives in New South Wales. How many of them are prepared to work in our public system—39,000, only 39 per cent. Why? Because when that lot over there was in government they totally ran down the hospital system so they were burnt out. They did not want to work for you lot. They will come back in droves when our boards are in place and they have the authority. I can tell you the member for—

Mr Nathan Rees: They can't fix it.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: We are fixing it.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: You watch this space.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What has the Government done to deliver on the former Labor Government's broken promise of better transport infrastructure for western Sydney?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Smithfield for his question and I congratulate him on his election victory. I think his swing was about 80 per cent or something to that effect if I am not mistaken. I note also his determination and the determination of all our western Sydney members of Parliament to make life easier for the two million people who call western Sydney home. As members on this side of the House know, western Sydney is not only vast in terms of population and geography, but it is an economic powerhouse. It is one of the State's largest and most diverse economies, with a huge range of industries, businesses and services.

Mr John Williams: They don't like Labor out there.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: They certainly do not like Labor out there. Some 50 of Australia's top 500 companies, including BHP, Coca-Cola, Sony, Canon and Qantas have operations in western Sydney. The region's resident labour force is more than 900,000 and more than 600,000 people work in western Sydney. That is just a snapshot of the strength of western Sydney; a region that Labor took for granted for 16 long years. Those 16 years should have been spent investing in infrastructure, creating jobs and improving quality of life. Instead, Labor turned its back on western Sydney. It wasted millions and millions of dollars on promises that never happened and ignored the pleas of the local community for better services and more acceptable travel times. But as I alluded to yesterday, western Sydney turned its back on Labor because they were tired of Labor's endless pattern of broken promises. The facts speak for themselves.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Labor's record on transport infrastructure in western Sydney is nothing short of an absolute disgrace. How many families and businesses do we know that made significant decisions based on the promises of the former Labor Government? How many families bought homes in new developments because they believed Labor's pledge that, at long last, the rail line was going to be delivered or was on the way. We know that the former Labor Government was incompetent. But it was more than that, it was cruel. I bring to the attention of the House the case of CBD worker Darren Hayes, who settled with his family in The Ponds area near Rouse Hill and tackles an arduous commute because Labor failed to build the North West Rail Link, despite its repeated promises. His story was beautifully told by Paul Kent in the *Daily Telegraph* on 14 May. In his article Mr Kent made this observation:

For 10 years the Labor Government, which cared only about its own re-election, lied to the electorate about this train line that would bring something like normality to the lives of people like Darren Hayes.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Opposition does not care about western Sydney. A good government should make it easy for families to get on with their lives and for businesses to operate successfully. That is what the O'Farrell Government is all about. It is 60 days since western Sydney and the rest of New South Wales turfed Labor out. In that time we have already begun our work.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The O'Farrell Government has begun the work of establishing our integrated transport authority, which will initiate coordinated transport planning and delivery across the State and develop an integrated transport plan for western Sydney. We fast-tracked the North West Rail Link by establishing a project team focused on delivering this desperately needed link. We have set up a project team for the South West Rail Link to ensure that this project is delivered on time. In relation to the North West Rail Link, I am pleased to advise the House that a major tender has been called for the provision of engineering services and the project team is very close to finalising a lease on premises that will become the community information centre. In relation to the South West Rail Link, I am pleased to announce that the first piece of track has been laid. Labor used to boast about one million hours of work being done on that project yet they did not lay a single centimetre of track.

Mr Andrew Stoner: There are a fair few sleepers over there.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: There are.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In the 60 days of this Government the first 100 metres of track, which will form part of the connection between the East Hills line and the South West line, are already on the ground.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We are getting on with the job of building roads that are desperately needed by the people of western Sydney. Today the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Ports announced the awarding of a contract to build the \$55 million Erskine Park link road. If I had more time I would talk about that project and others. Regrettably, time has run out. [*Time expired.*]

PLANNING REFORMS

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Having acted quickly in relation to the excesses of part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, will the Minister advise what action he will now take in relation to the removal of local decision-making by the transfer of planning decisions from local councils to joint regional planning panels?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. The member has shown an interest in asking questions about planning issues in the State. How many Labor members are left? There are 19 Labor members of Parliament left, allegedly doing their bit for their communities. How many of them have sent me a single question on any planning issue? None, absolutely none, not one.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: That is probably because they are embarrassed about what they did to the New South Wales planning system. Even though they publicly talk about the wonderful changes they made to the planning system, they are probably privately embarrassed that their actions have utterly destroyed public confidence.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will come to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We can understand the embarrassment of the remaining Labor members. I hope the member for Lake Macquarie will excuse me if I briefly recount to the House a quote from the Housing Industry Association.

Mr Nathan Rees: Go on, do it.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I can give you a few quotes, if you want. I refer to a quote from the Housing Industry Association.

Mr Robert Furolo: How about you answer the question?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am coming to you, just you wait. I refer to the Housing Industry Association. Some quiet please, so the Labor members can hear. They will appreciate it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will also remain quiet.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Housing Industry Association [HIA] described the former Labor Government as "the worst State Government in history". The Housing Industry Association also said, "Through policy failure after policy failure they effectively killed off housing in this State and the economy has been underperforming year in year out as a result." It is unfair to refer only to quotes from the Housing Industry Association about the planning industry. I am tempted to use quotes from Liberal Party luminaries, but I might go with Frank Sartor speaking about his Labor Party colleagues. On 20 March 2011 Frank Sartor, in an open letter to that wonderful stalwart of Labor Eddie Obeid, said:

The government, and its head office mentors, became addicted to cosmetic politics. The political fix was what counted most. Good policy and considered responses to issues came a poor second.

Frank was not entirely fair. He could have been far more critical. Paul Keating had this to say.

Mr Greg Piper: Point of order: I refer to standing order 129. I ask that the Minister's answer be relevant to the question, which related to joint regional planning panels.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Minister is about to address joint regional planning panels, which were the subject of the question.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am happy to talk about joint regional planning panels in the context of a damaged planning system. In 2008 the Labor Party revised parts of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. At that stage Frank Sartor was under a great deal of pressure from his Labor Party colleagues in Sussex Street. Rather than conducting a full review of the planning legislation, a partial review was undertaken. That partial review resulted in the establishment of panels. Former Minister Sartor was keen to have independent hearing and assessment panels, which would allow councils greater involvement in planning decisions. After the corruption that occurred in Wollongong and the kebab table of knowledge, the former Government established joint regional planning panels. Those panels have been challenged in a number of spheres and continue to be a source of concern.

Our Government has indicated that it will completely overhaul the planning legislation through an 18-month review. We welcome input from the member for Lake Macquarie and, indeed, Labor Party members. We welcome all comers to have a say about the future of the legislation. The joint regional planning panels will be part of that review. In the short term the Government is looking at democratising the joint regional planning panels on an interim basis. We will make announcements in relation to that hopefully in the next few weeks. The planning legislation will receive a complete overhaul with a full review of the Act. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question and his sincerity about planning issues. I would have loved to have quoted Paul Keating but I will leave that for next time.

MARINE PARKS

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries. What action has the Government taken to ensure that marine parks policy is based on science, not politics?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question and congratulate him on his outstanding election victory with 77.2 per cent of the two-party preferred vote.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I recognise the commitment of the member for Coffs Harbour to ensuring that the protection of marine ecosystems is based on science, not politics of the day. Madam Speaker, as the member for South Coast, I also acknowledge your interest in this matter and your commitment to

ensuring that marine ecosystems are based on science. The former Labor Government made some appalling decisions, particularly in the lead-up to the election, with no proper community consultation and decisions made hastily with only the thought of the election result in its mind. That is not how policy should be developed in any portfolio. Unfortunately, marine parks were not immune to that, and five minutes before the election the former Labor Government introduced regulations to change the zonings of both the Jervis Bay and the Solitary Islands marine parks without engaging in proper community consultation.

Those who are living in that area who relied on or used that area would be rightly upset if they were not given appropriate community consultation about changes that would impact on them or on what they might be doing in that area. Today the Minister for the Environment and I announced that this Liberal-Nationals Government would move to disallow the Australian Labor Party's last-minute changes to the zoning plans for Jervis Bay and Solitary Islands marine parks. No consideration was given to regional communities when this last-minute bid for preferences was put through by the Labor Party—those preferences did not work for it anyway—and no consideration was given to the one million people in this State who like to drop a line into the water each year. Was consideration given to tourism operators or to those who conduct diving or whale watching activities? No proper community consultation process was undertaken in relation to the last-minute zoning changes.

The result of disallowing the changes will mean that zoning arrangements will revert back to the arrangements that applied in 2002 up until the beginning of March this year. There will be no abolition of marine parks or anything like that. It takes people a long time to learn where they can and cannot go. After nine years people were only just getting used to these new zones. One can understand that people were upset when five minutes before the election—and we have to assume it was all about preferences for the Labor Party—these changes were made. The member for Coffs Harbour referred earlier to scientific scrutiny. I agree with his comments wholeheartedly. We are committed to scientific scrutiny when it comes to changes to marine parks. We stand for science and not ideology. We want to ensure there is real scientific, independent input and genuine community consultation when it comes to any changes to marine parks.

Any marine park policy needs to strike the right balance between protecting marine ecosystems and providing opportunities for fishing, diving, whale watching, dolphin watching or any greater tourism activity that might be undertaken in those areas. Labor's policies do not achieve that balance. Labor sold out regional New South Wales in so many ways, and there is no way that this Government will follow suit. There has to be a far greater focus on addressing the real threats to our marine ecology such as pollution, inappropriate coastal development and introduced species and diseases. Those opposite laugh at any mention of recreational fishing, but it provides half a billion dollars worth of economic benefit to this State every year. When we think about how many people live in this State we realise that the one million people who drop a line into the water every year also deserve a voice. We are here to support regional communities and to stand up for community consultation. We will do the right thing by regional New South Wales and attempt to reverse the years of neglect that we suffered under the former Government.

Question time concluded at 3.14 p.m.

MR JOSH MURPHY

The SPEAKER: I have an announcement which may be of interest to all members. It is a message from the President of the Press Gallery, Mark Tobin, who advises that Press Gallery member Josh Murphy, who underwent brain surgery yesterday, is today awake and talking.

OMBUDSMAN

Report

Mr Greg Smith tabled the report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled "Report under section 49 (1) of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 for the six months ending 31 December 2010", dated April 2011.

STATE CORONER

Report

Mr Greg Smith tabled the report entitled "Report by the NSW State Coroner into Deaths in Custody/Police Operations 2010".

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**.

Community Housing Mental Health Services

Petition requesting increased mental health support for people with mental illness who are tenants of Housing NSW and community housing, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Withdrawal of Business

General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 1 withdrawn by Mr Brad Hazzard on behalf of Mr Mike Baird.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Former Government Performance

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [3.15 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be given priority because reversing the damage caused by the waste and mismanagement of those opposite is one of the main challenges facing the new Liberal-Nationals Government as it endeavours to make the lives of people in New South Wales better—the people in New South Wales who are still paying the price for Labor's incompetence. We must cut waste and mismanagement in New South Wales while hopefully improving the quality and quantity of outcomes for the long-suffering New South Wales public. In other words, we need to do more with less and not follow Labor's sad record of doing less with more public resources.

Achieving more from less is something that businesses do every day as they strive to operate in a competitive economic environment. It is something that young unemployed persons have to do as they search for their first full-time job. It is something that a young husband and wife have to do to scrape together enough for a deposit on a new home. It is something that mums and dads have to do in order to provide that little bit more for their growing children. Doing more with less is something that a pensioner has to do of necessity just to pay for rising electricity heating costs as the cold of winter bites. Millions of people across New South Wales have had to do more with less while they witnessed the previous Labor Government doing less with more valuable, and often windfall, public resources.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: And that makes me angry. Those opposite may not care but it makes the people of New South Wales angry too. While waste festered under Labor and became a huge sore, the best that Labor could do was put on band-aids. Only recently have we seen a healing process begin with the election of a new Government. Meanwhile, we must also address a huge financial hole that Labor dug for many years. Labor regularly and recklessly overspent—according to budget figures, more than a massive \$12 billion over the past eight full financial years alone. Yet they delivered little. That has left the new Government with a lot of damage to repair and some difficult decisions to make. In many ways the previous New South Wales Labor Government was like a slideshow of projects, with pretty pictures but superficial plans. In other ways it was like a sideshow with a seemingly never-ending list of scandals and a revolving door of Ministers. Now we are left with largely a no-show with what remains of the Labor team.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Leader of the Opposition will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Speaking of no-shows, we have a Leader of the Opposition who has been missing WorkCover meetings and who also thoroughly mismanaged the Solar Bonus Scheme when he was the Minister for Energy. We do not call him Captain Solar because we think he is illuminating or bright, despite the fact that he does a good impersonation of a light bulb. He may well have seen a few bright sparks in his previous working life, but he is not a bright spark himself. While he is quick to attack the Premier and the Minister for Resources and Energy about the Solar Bonus Scheme, if he were to look in the mirror he would recognise that not only has he unfairly attacked the Minister but also he is more follicly challenged. He would also be forced to acknowledge that he is most responsible for the difficulties faced by the people of New South Wales because of the Solar Bonus Scheme. He mismanaged that scheme to the tune of more than \$1 billion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Keira will come to order.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: It is not surprising that former Labor Party leaders, including Morris Iemma and Paul Keating, think the Leader of the Opposition is not fit to hold that office. This is an important issue and I look forward to speaking further on it.

Police Working Conditions

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.20 p.m.]: It is easy to give the reasons this motion deserves priority over other business of the House because it seeks to protect the working conditions of the police officers on whom we rely while the business that the Government intends to pursue will see their protection ripped away. The Opposition believes that protecting and supporting our police officers should take priority over Government business that will undercut them. That priority is clear when we consider what police officers do for the communities we represent and why their current conditions of employment exist.

As a Parliament we ask our police officers to do some of the most difficult and dangerous work in our communities; we ask them to stand where we dare not stand so that we can be safe. We ask them to do that to preserve the safe order and security of the families and communities we represent. Surely those matters are a priority for this House. If members opposite are unconvinced, I will turn to the issue of why our police officers should be afforded decent protections and conditions. Frankly, without those protections and conditions police officers cannot do the job we expect them to do. Policing is stressful and dangerous and decent working conditions ensure that that stress and danger are balanced with safety, protection and a decent quality of life. Is protecting those conditions not a matter of priority for members opposite? If not, perhaps I should explain further. If those protections are removed, our police officers will be placed under additional stress.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition has a responsibility to demonstrate why his motion should have priority over all other business; he should not be arguing the substantive motion that he would seek to move if the House gave him permission to do so. He must demonstrate that in accordance with the standing orders and not argue the supposed merits of his case.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is about to give reasons why his motion should be accorded priority.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: All the points I am making establish the priority of my motion, which is about protecting police officers and their conditions. If members opposite want to use the time of the House to avoid conducting a debate about why it is so important to protect these conditions, shame on them. Surely the protection of our police officers, on whom we rely for protection, is a priority for this House. If that is not enough to convince members opposite, I will consider the issue of integrity. Integrity is critical in the performance of a modern police force. It is the glue that allows the contract between the police force and our communities to stand. It is also the glue that allows the contract between the police force and the Government to stand. Our force is without doubt one of the most integral in the world and this House should always support that as a priority. Where is the integrity of the Minister for Police in misleading police officers about this Government's—

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: If one standing order is quoted more often by members of the Opposition than any other it is Standing Order 73. The Leader of the Opposition is now making a direct reflection on the personal integrity of a member of the Legislative Council.

Ms Linda Burney: You need a haircut.

Mr Chris Hartcher: So does your leader.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Minister will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the motion but, more importantly, to Standing Order 73, which the member for Maroubra quotes to us each day, and ask that it be applied to the Leader of the Opposition.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am sure Leader of the Opposition has taken note of that point of order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Are you accepting the point of order, Mr Deputy-Speaker?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is aware of the standing orders.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: This House should always support protection for police as a priority. Where is the Government's integrity with regard to the contract it has with the police force? That contract appears to be broken. Addressing a breach of integrity should be a clear priority for this Government if it is to have any credibility in its partnership with the police officers of this State. That contract should be upheld and the Government should support our police officers. This matter deserves priority because it deeply affects our police officers, which means it affects the safety and security of every family and business in this State.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

Mr Anderson	Mr Flowers	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Mr Fraser	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Mr Gee	Mr Rohan
Mr Baird	Mr George	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Ms Gibbons	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Ms Goward	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baumann	Mr Grant	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Hartcher	Mr Smith
Mr Bromhead	Mr Hazzard	Mr Speakman
Mr Brookes	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Spence
Mr Cansdell	Mr Holstein	Mr Stokes
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Humphries	Mr Stoner
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Toole
Mr Constance	Mr Kean	Ms Upton
Mr Cornwell	Dr Lee	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Webber
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	Mrs Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Elliott	Mr Perrottet	Mr Maguire
Mr Evans	Mr Piccoli	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 23

Mr Barr	Mr Lynch	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Dr McDonald	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Daley	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Torbay
Mr Furolo	Ms Moore	Ms Watson
Ms Hay	Mr Parker	Mr Zangari
Ms Hornery	Mrs Perry	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Keneally	Mr Piper	Mr Amery
Mr Lalich	Mr Rees	Mr Park

Question resolved in the affirmative.

FORMER GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House condemns the former Government for its waste and mismanagement, and notes that while it has gone from office the people of New South Wales are left to pay the price.

Labor's waste and mismanagement have had massive adverse consequences on the State's finances, on the reputation of New South Wales amongst the business community and on the people of New South Wales who simply want a competent government. The people of New South Wales certainly made their views clear on 26 March when they overwhelmingly punished Labor and voted the New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals into power. The State Government must manage a huge range of areas delivering services to the people of New South Wales. It is charged with the efficient and effective delivery of public services, including planning, health, roads, public transport, education, law and order, electricity, water, housing, disabilities and emergency services. The existence of the embarrassing rump in that corner of the Chamber is a fitting reminder of Labor's failure to do so properly.

As the former chairman of the New South Wales Opposition waste watch committee I am acutely aware of the magnitude of the problems the O'Farrell Government has inherited from Labor. Under Labor project after project was neither on time nor on budget, if it was delivered at all. Labor lowered the bar to such a degree it became expected that projects would run over time and over budget and not deliver what was originally promised. Under Premier Carr, Premier Iemma, Premier Rees and Premier Keneally we saw five big categories of Labor waste and mismanagement, which I will outline. The first category relates to matters promised but never commenced, for example, the Spit Bridge expansion and numerous rail links, including the North West Rail Link.

The second category relates to matters announced, commenced and then scrapped, such as the Tcard and the CBD Metro projects. The third category relates to matters delivered but late and/or over budget. For example, the Chatswood to Epping rail link, parts of the Pacific Highway upgrade, the northern beaches hospital and the Solar Bonus Scheme. The fourth category relates to matters largely ignored, including the need for less backroom bureaucracy, substandard government procurement processes, the sustainability of wage growth control and the failure to accurately record vital health-related statistics like hospital waiting lists and hospital beds. The fifth category relates to matters that were delivered, but for Labor's own benefit, such as government advertising, travel, including overseas ministerial trips, and grants to the union movement.

As the now very capable Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, has highlighted, Labor's transport plans were big on promises but short on delivery—12 rail projects were promised and only half a project was delivered. That half was the Chatswood to Epping rail link, delivered three years late and a billion dollars over budget. Labor's record on track provision is utterly shameful. The South West Rail Link was first announced in December 2004, at a cost of \$688 million, to be completed—supposedly—in 2012. In March 2008 it was re-announced by Labor, at a cost of \$1.36 billion, to be completed in 2012. In November 2008 it was axed by Labor. In November 2009 it was re-announced, at a cost of \$1.3 billion, to be delivered by 2016.

In February 2010 Labor revealed that the total cost would blow out to \$2.1 billion. Therefore, the South West Rail Link under Labor was running four years late and tripled in cost, from \$688 million in December 2004 to \$2.1 billion in February 2010—a cost blowout of \$1.4 billion. It was truly amazing in March this year to hear former Premier Keneally boast about the progress of the South West Rail Link. Labor has no shame, and it is the people of New South Wales who lose out. If Labor had kept its promise we would have saved a lot of taxpayers' money for other projects. We could have had more front-line nurses, teachers and police, along with more hospitals, schools and police stations. If only we could do more with less, not less with more.

Another example of Labor's waste and mismanagement was the CBD Metro proposal. The New South Wales Auditor-General found that around \$400 million was spent on the CBD Metro with no apparent future benefit for the people of New South Wales. So the cost was not just in terms of dollars; it was also in terms of delays to other transport priorities as scarce resources were diverted to a wasteful project. The metro became a symbol of New South Wales Labor: big on promises and glossy brochures, but going nowhere at massive expense to New South Wales taxpayers. So desperate was the previous Labor Government to claim that it had delivered a project on time and on budget that it fudged figures and dates. It claimed, for example, that its unnecessary desalination plant was delivered within budget and on time when neither was true. Today that desalination plant costs each household in New South Wales more than an extra \$100 a year on their water bills.

Ms Gabrielle Upton: Shame!

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: It is a shame indeed. Over the past 12 years New South Wales has been the slowest growing State in Australia. While other States have benefitted from increased investment, increased job opportunities and increasing wealth, New South Wales has been left trailing the pack. Put simply, if our economy had grown as quickly as Victoria's economy over the past 16 years, it would be \$22.1 billion larger. We would have an additional 273,000 jobs and we would have received an additional \$6 billion in taxation revenues over those seven years. The New South Wales economy has been held back by high taxes, poor infrastructure, bad policies and a Government that was so inwardly focused it simply did not care about the economy, business or growth. New South Wales Labor's mismanagement has to stop, and we will make sure it does.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [3.43 p.m.]: I am reminded of a song from one of my favourite bands entitled *Short Memory* by Midnight Oil. It seems that those opposite are suffering from short memories. I am delighted to speak on this issue because it gives us a chance to reflect on Labor's record: record revenue and growth in New South Wales, record investment in health, police and education, an unequalled record of budget surpluses and an unequalled protection of our State's credit position. Let us not forget our very popular triple-A credit rating. Compare this with the waste and mismanagement that those opposite pioneered when they were last in government. The last Coalition Government increased the State's total liabilities by more than \$6 billion. It also produced six consecutive budget deficits, cumulatively worth more than \$5 billion. In 1995 the Coalition left net debt at \$12.15 billion, which is 7.1 per cent of gross State product, and Moody's rating agency placed New South Wales on credit watch in 1991. So it is important to reflect on the record of those opposite when they were last in government.

But let us talk about infrastructure, waste and mismanagement under the last Coalition Government. The former Coalition Government bungled the following projects—and this is not a complete list; it is just a taste. The airport rail link was promised at no cost to taxpayers but ended up costing the New South Wales Government \$800 million. The Lunar Park redevelopment cost the taxpayers \$54 million. Eastern Creek International Raceway cost the taxpayers \$135 million. The cost of Port Macquarie Base Hospital blew out from \$52.5 million to \$143.6 million. But what is worse, in the words of the Auditor-General in 1996, "The Government is in effect paying for the hospital twice and giving it away." Finally the hospital had to be resumed by the Labor Government in 2005, at a cost of \$80 million.

There is more waste and mismanagement. The former Coalition Government disposed of \$1 billion worth of public assets well below their market value during its first year in office. Who could forget the State Bank fiasco under the last Coalition Government? The former Coalition Government sold the State Bank of New South Wales for \$574 million in 1994. According to University of New South Wales Professor Bob Walker, the Fahey Government approved the sale of the State Bank of New South Wales for what turned out to be a bargain price, equivalent to only one to 1.25 times annual earnings when shares in other banks were trading at around 17 times earnings. Furthermore, the Coalition also guaranteed 90 per cent of the State Bank's bad debt, which meant that the final return—the net return for New South Wales taxpayers—was just \$160 million. This is despite the bank being valued at between \$2.6 billion and \$2.9 billion by Arthur Andersen. So let us put those figures into perspective. The final net return for New South Wales taxpayers from the sale of the State Bank was \$160 million, yet Arthur Andersen valued the State Bank at between \$2.6 billion and \$2.9 billion.

If we want to talk about waste and mismanagement, let us look no further than to when those who are in government now were last in government. And let us not forget the most ridiculous example of waste and mismanagement that the Labor Government had to undo. Let us not forget that one of the first items of business of the Carr Government was to undo the great Liberal plan: the plan for a Premier's penthouse at taxpayers' expense. Some members might remember this one. They might recall that the top floor of Governor Macquarie Tower is used by government for public events such as State dinners, receptions, media conferences and so on. But the last Liberal Government intended that it become a private apartment for then Premier John Fahey. Talk about waste and mismanagement; talk about abuse of power. Taking a public asset and using it for a private apartment for a Premier is just a disgrace. Famously referred to in the House by former Premier Bob Carr as the only plan the last Government had, the Coalition proposed a Premier's penthouse with vast bedrooms, entertainment areas, an area for antiques—all in all, a \$3.5 million fit-out at taxpayers' expense so that a Liberal Premier could ponce around in his bathrobe and admire the view. I prefer the view in my electorate.

But it seems that this largesse ran deep in Coalition ranks. When the Minister for Energy was environment Minister an amazing \$617,000 was spent on refurbishing his office—and bear in mind this was

15 years ago! The refit included: a custom-made Huon pine table costing more than \$156,000, a Huon pine servery, coffee table and built-in wall unit purchased for the sum of \$23,000, a built-in liquor cabinet, several expensive artworks—including an original Ken Done painting—a high-tech audiovisual system on which was found the former Minister's copy of the soundtrack to *The Adventures of Pricilla, Queen of the Desert*, designer art deco light fittings, not one but two fully equipped kitchens, and a specially built bedroom with ensuite complete with a Thomas the Tank Engine bedcover.

To add insult to injury, a few days before the 1995 election result was known the Minister's staff rampaged through this expensive fit-out. Cupboards were full of empty beer bottles. Every filing cabinet and drawer in the office was full of empty beer bottles. And a fire extinguisher had been discharged throughout the office. The cleaners took two nights to clean the office and subsequently lodged a complaint with the building's manager. You would think such waste and mismanagement would disqualify a member from holding ministerial office again. But, oh no, the member for Terrigal is back! Will we see a return of the Thomas the Tank Engine bedcovers? And how long before we see the Premier up on the top floor of Governor Macquarie Tower, armed with a tape measure and a hard hat and thinking the commute from Roseville is just too much these days? It is a bit rich for those opposite to talk about waste and mismanagement because their heritage in this area is unprecedented.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): It was remiss of me when I was in the chair earlier today to fail to acknowledge that the Minister at the table this afternoon, the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast, is celebrating his sixtieth birthday today. Congratulations.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [3.50 p.m.]: First, I say happy birthday to the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast, who turned 60 today. It is absolutely sensational, and the House congratulates him. The motion calls on the House to condemn the former New South Wales Labor Government for its waste and mismanagement, and notes that while Labor has gone from office the people of New South Wales are left to pay the price. The only thing I have in common with my parliamentary colleague opposite, the member for Lakemba, is *Midnight Oil* and *Short Memory*. Since 26 March Labor members appear to have lost their memory, which is terrible for them because they are now questioning us on our economic record. We are going to make New South Wales number one again after 16 years of State Labor's waste and mismanagement.

Just last month a CommSec report showed that when Labor was in office New South Wales was the worst economic performer compared with decade averages. The figures reflected the poor economic record of New South Wales. The CommSec "State of the States" report found that construction in New South Wales was weak over both the home building and commercial sectors—waste and mismanagement at its best. Out of all the States, we lag behind. At less than 10 per cent, New South Wales ranked last on economic growth, with Western Australia sitting at around 28 per cent. That is absolutely appalling when one considers that once upon a time New South Wales was the economic powerhouse of Australia. How shameful it is that after 16 years of Labor New South Wales is languishing at 8 per cent.

I want to speak about budget blowouts and remind our friends opposite that good governments are able to manage their budgets, as the O'Farrell-Stoner Government will demonstrate. New South Wales Labor consistently blew its budget, with budget overspending of more than \$12 billion over the past seven years alone. It was like throwing money in the air and wondering where it would land—on projects that meant nothing, went nowhere and delivered nothing to the people of New South Wales. Rather than investing budget overspend in critical infrastructure that would have protected New South Wales's future, Labor used it to prop up its broken budget bottom line. I will refer to a couple of the blowouts, delays and debacles that have occurred over the past 16 years of State Labor. First, I refer to the Rozelle metro. The project was announced in 2008. It was axed in 2010, costing taxpayers \$500 million. What do we have to show for it? Look around us. We have thin air—\$500 million worth of nothing! The Pacific Highway was another blowout.

Mr Donald Page: We could have built some hospitals with that money.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: That is right—\$500 million could have gone towards putting more police officers in uniform and increasing visible policing in our communities, as well as building infrastructure such as hospitals, roads and rail. We need to make New South Wales number one again; there is no doubt about that. This Government will rebuild the New South Wales economy. We will return quality services, we will renovate infrastructure, and with some of the money we will save we will upgrade our hospitals. In the Tamworth electorate alone, we are committed to providing funds for communities like Barraba, which has suffered because

it has no running water. This is 2011. A small community in my electorate has no clean, fresh running water. It has used bore water, which is totally unacceptable. We will turn that around; we will fix it. We have already committed funds to that project.

We will broker a deal with local government. Under the new Minister for Local Government—who, I might say, is doing great things on his sixtieth birthday and is still going strong—we are also brokering deals with the Federal Government to get infrastructure going again in New South Wales. That is our plan. We will also restore accountability to government by giving people a say on issues that affect their lives. We will restore accountability and stop the waste and mismanagement. We will also return planning to the community—and we are starting to do that right now, which is the way it should be. People need to have a say in what is happening in their communities. We will reduce government domestic and international travel expenses by 25 per cent. We will reduce the waste and mismanagement. That is why the motion calls on this House to condemn the former New South Wales Labor Government for its waste and mismanagement, and note that while Labor has gone from office the people of New South Wales are left to pay the price. We will turn that around and make New South Wales number one again.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [3.55 p.m.]: The Government has a hide to talk about the people of New South Wales paying the price. Since being elected, this new Government has broken promises and failed families all over this State. Yesterday it was the Premier failing families by refusing to back away from retrospective legislation that will leave families who invested in solar worse off. And today we have another cracker. The latest announcement will hurt our hardworking teachers, police officers and nurses. Under legislation introduced in the other place, the O'Farrell Government will have unprecedented powers to slash wages and conditions for our workers. The proposed changes are worse than the Howard Government's WorkChoices laws. The Premier has outdone John Howard and Peter Costello with this unprecedented attack on the rights at work of nurses, teachers and police officers.

Let me be clear: the Premier's bill is worse than WorkChoices. Under these changes, the Premier could decide that from 1 July the Government's policy is to reduce annual leave entitlements for nurses, teachers and police—and the independent umpire would be bound to enforce it. Every single condition of employment is now at risk, including wages, penalty rates, nurse ratios, shift allowances, sick leave, long service leave and maternity leave. Never before has a government sought to so drastically reduce the ability of the independent umpire to resolve disputes between workers and employers. The O'Farrell Government has targeted the men and women in our community who keep us safe, who care for the sick and who teach our children. These changes put at risk the wages and conditions of more than 300,000 workers across New South Wales.

Mr Donald Page: Point of order: I draw your attention to the motion, which refers to the waste and mismanagement of the former Labor Government; it is not about industrial relations. I ask you to direct the member for Shellharbour to return to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I noticed the Minister was a bit reluctant to take the point of order. This is the first day the member for Shellharbour has been able to contribute to debate. The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. As I said, the O'Farrell Government has targeted the men and women in our community who keep us safe, who care for the sick and who teach our children. The worst part is not the bill, it is the deception. The Government said in its media release this morning, "The legislation introduced to Parliament on wages ensures the former New South Wales Government's policy is actually followed."

Mr Donald Page: Point of order: I am somewhat reluctant to take a point of order on a new member, but members must speak to the general subject of the motion. This motion is about waste and mismanagement under the former Labor Government; it is not about industrial relations laws. I ask you to direct the member to return to the leave of the motion.

Mr Richard Amery: To the point of order: Whilst I recognise that the wording of the motion may be restrictive, the member for Davidson made wide-ranging comments in debate. He singled out Opposition members and attacked every facet of the former Government's operations. In light of the broad-ranging nature of the debate, I believe the member for Shellharbour is in order.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: To the point of order: Whilst I could easily have savaged the industrial relations record of those opposite, I did not do so.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The motion accorded priority is about the former Government; it is not about a bill to be introduced. The member for Shellharbour will confine her remarks to the motion accorded priority.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I am attempting to do that. Nowhere in the bill is the word "wages" mentioned. What it does say is that the Industrial Relations Commission must give effect to any policy on conditions—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Shellharbour said, "Nowhere in the bill is the word 'wages' mentioned." The member for Shellharbour will confine her remarks to the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: What it effectively means is that any condition can— [*Time expired.*]

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [4.00 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Lakemba, the member for Tamworth and the member for Shellharbour for their contributions to the debate. I suggest that the member Shellharbour may have been given the wrong script because she seemed to think she was speaking about an industrial relations bill. This motion is about the former New South Wales Labor Government's waste and mismanagement and how even though, thankfully, it is no longer in office the people of New South Wales have been left to pay the price. The member for Lakemba endeavoured to stay within the broad terms of the motion—

Mr Michael Daley: You just do not like criticism; that is your problem. You just do not like any criticism.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: The member for Maroubra is interjecting already. He sits on the Opposition front bench and looks at the unprotected scalp of his leader with an air of anticipation.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I ask that the same strictures be applied to the member for Davidson as were applied to the member for Shellharbour.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Davidson will confine his remarks to the motion. I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times and distract the member with the call.

Mr Michael Daley: I cannot help it if he is weak-minded.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: Thank you. I have plenty of good lines about the member for Maroubra if he continues to interject. The people of New South Wales care about waste and mismanagement. They care about their money being spent wisely. They know, as evidenced from the result in March, that those opposite were reckless in the expenditure of public resources—often windfall revenue. The member for Lakemba attempted to impugn the wonderful record of the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, which inherited \$20 billion of Wran Government debt but reduced it to \$7 billion. That was despite being in government during the recession we had to have—brought to us by Paul Keating—and the "banana republic" comments.

Mr Daryl Maguire: I remember it well.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: The member for Wagga Wagga remembers it well because he and many other people lived through those times. Despite those difficulties at a national level, brought to us by Federal Labor, we had a very responsible economic manager in Premier Greiner, followed by John Fahey, and a Government that was able to manage finances and minimise waste and mismanagement. It is accepted that there will be a little waste and mismanagement in government but the extent of the waste and mismanagement in the past 16 years under Labor was absolutely appalling. We are still paying the price. Projects were not delivered. Legacy issues are being addressed by the current Government. We realise that we will need to make some tough decisions and it will not be easy, but things have been made much harder because so many billions and billions of dollars have been poured down the drain by those opposite.

The CBD Metro probably symbolises it best. What did we get for those hundreds of millions of dollars? Nothing. What did we get for the \$100 million spent on the T-card project? There was no ticket; nothing at all. The member for Tamworth highlighted some positive priorities and plans to be implemented by this Government, particularly the Five Point Action Plan, but a lot still needs to be done. Sadly, in recent years

the former New South Wales Labor Government was so bad that at times it made Federal Labor appear almost okay—and there is certainly a lot of waste and mismanagement there. The former Labor Government has left New South Wales with a price to pay for which it should continue to be condemned. For New South Wales residents, the price has been high and the value generated low. The Coalition will return confidence and competence to government in New South Wales.

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

Motion agreed to.

**MARINE PARKS ACT 1997: DISALLOWANCE OF MARINE PARKS (ZONING PLANS)
AMENDMENT (SOLITARY ISLANDS AND JERVIS BAY MARINE PARKS) REGULATION 2011**

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [4.05 p.m.]: I move:

That this House disallows the Marine Parks (Zoning Plans) Amendment (Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay Marine Parks) Regulation 2011 made under the Marine Parks Act 1997 which was published on the New South Wales legislation website on 27 January 2011 and tabled in this House on 3 May 2011.

These new zoning plans came into effect on 1 March 2011, less than a month before the very disappointing Labor Government suffered its humiliating defeat. It gives me pleasure at question time to look at the two small benches now occupied by Opposition members. It is a reminder to members on this side of the House of the terrible things done by the former Government to so many people. Its arrant disregard for regional communities was firmly reflected in the ballot box on 26 March. Three weeks before the election the former Government had the hide to make significant changes to the zoning of these two marine parks. Many people were rightfully upset. As I said to the House earlier today, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to a commonsense approach on marine parks.

We have to strike the right balance between protecting the marine environment and allowing recreational and commercial fishing in appropriate areas. Local people must have proper input into decisions that affect their community but we also must give due consideration where science dictates to the need for or preservation of ecological operations. That is the balance the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals want to achieve. The zoning plans that commenced on 1 March this year did not achieve the right balance. They were implemented after what can only be described as a flawed community consultation process. That is why the Minister for the Environment and I announced today our intention to move to disallow the regulation that was hastily implemented five minutes before the election.

The marine park zoning plans that were put in place by the former Labor Government in the lead-up to the election focused far too heavily on restricting the fishing activities of local community and industry. The heavy stick approach taken by the former Government to two valuable industries and particularly marine park management was not appropriate. We will focus on addressing the threats to our marine environment, such as, pollution control, inappropriate coastal development and introduced species and diseases. These are real threats to our fragile marine environment and we will examine these issues very closely. Protection of the marine environment cannot be achieved by locking up vast stretches of the coastline. By disallowing the regulation the new zoning plans for the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks will cease to have effect and the zoning plans that were in place before 1 March 2011 will be restored.

Unlike Labor, our approach to marine parks will be based on science, not on politics. We will not lock up vast tracts of land or marine areas just to obtain preferences from The Greens—which did not work in their case anyway. We will make sure that our policies on environmental matters are based on scientific processes. That is the most sensible way to approach these issues. No-one could oppose such an approach. In the lead-up to the election we made the commitment to disallow the regulation that was implemented so hastily by the former Government. Contrary to what the Opposition may say about the reason for this motion, we are meeting our election commitment. We are following through on a firm election commitment given by the former shadow Minister for Primary Industries in another place that when in Government we would move to disallow the new zoning laws. We are delivering on yet another election commitment, as promised to the community.

The Marine Parks Act 1997 provides the basis for the creation of a system of marine parks in New South Wales. Zoning plans are put in place for each marine park to conserve representative samples of marine biodiversity. Since 1998 marine parks have been established at Batemans Bay, Cape Byron, Jervis Bay, Lord

Howe Island, Port Stephens, The Great Lakes and the Solitary Islands. The Solitary Islands Marine Park was the first marine park to be established in New South Wales. The member for Coffs Harbour will speak further on this marine park in his contribution to the debate. The Solitary Islands Marine Park stretches over 75 kilometres from Mutton Bird Island in the south to the Sandon River system and Plover Island in the north. It incorporates estuaries and foreshores, and extends offshore to the three nautical miles State waters boundary.

The Jervis Bay Marine Park, which was established in 1998 in the electorate of the Speaker, the member for South Coast, covers 21,000 hectares. The marine park is home to a unique mix of species, including the weedy sea dragon, the eastern blue devil fish, whales, fairy penguins, fur seals and the endangered grey nurse shark. Recently, I took my family to the Jervis Bay Marine Park where I was hosted by the Marine Parks Authority and NSW Fisheries. I thank them for organising the tour, which I enjoyed very much. On the tour my children were delighted to see a pod of dolphins in the Jervis Bay Marine Park. The Government recognises that the Jervis Bay Marine Park is well established and popular with many sections of the community. We have moved to disallow the regulation because of the former Government's decision to change the zoning in the lead-up to the elections. We do not seek to abolish marine parks or consider that one process is right and another is wrong. The disallowance motion relates to the approach taken by the former Labor Government in making significant changes to the marine park zoning that affect the community and its flawed methods of communication. This was a significant issue in the lead-up to the election and that is why the Government is moving to disallow the regulation.

Marine parks, when based on scientific merit, can be an effective tool for conserving marine biodiversity. They should also afford suitable recreational opportunities and become locations where rapidly expanding coastal communities can enjoy the natural environment. Marine parks also can support research and education, which is important for the future of this State. They can also underpin growing tourism markets, which are another important sector of our community, and help conserve cultural heritage. Marine parks generally provide for better management of coastal development. For all these reasons the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government supports the retention of the marine parks system. But we have to get the balance right between protecting the marine environment and managing access to valuable fishing areas. Let me be clear, fishing is not the most significant threat to the conservation of marine biodiversity. Yet fishing is the main threat addressed by the zoning plans that commenced on 1 March this year. There can be no doubt that Labor's flawed zoning arrangements failed to achieve the right balance. I ask the House to support my motion to disallow the regulation.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [4.15 p.m.]: The Opposition opposes the motion moved by the Minister for Primary Industries to disallow the regulation that implemented changes to the two marine parks, which was gazetted in January, I believe. The Coalition has been in Government for two months and we are seeing its true colours emerge. They get clearer every passing day the Coalition holds office.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: You did it for Greens preferences.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: Greens preferences make no difference to me. That is one thing I make absolutely clear. The contest in Marrickville was between The Greens and Labor. I do not get The Greens preferences. They make not a zip of difference to me. I am sure that Jamie Parker, the member for Balmain, can attest that the same applies in Balmain. It is not relevant.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Marrickville will address her comments through the chair.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: Prior to the election the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, sought to portray himself as a friend of the environment movement, who understood the importance of conservation and had an activist shadow Minister that he was keen to promote and support. We all know what happened to her after the election. In the policy that the Liberals and The Nationals took to the election they claimed they were committed to protecting our unique environment and that they would "maintain the existing six marine parks" and place a "moratorium on the creation of new marine parks and fishing enclosures pending the outcome of an independent scientific audit." Yet, here we are, some 60 days after the election, and already we are seeing that this election policy has been junked. This policy is joining an increasingly long list of other election commitments that we have seen the Coalition break already. We have not seen the outcome of the scientific audit; we have not seen the balance that the Liberals and The Nationals promised; and we have not seen protection of the marine environment.

If the approach of the Minister for Primary Industries is based on science, as she claims today, then why is it that the scientific audit is not in place before the Government takes this action? Why has the Government not awaited the results of the scientific audit, which the Government claimed in its policy that it took to the election? The Government said that there would be a scientific audit before any changes were made; instead the Minister for Primary Industries is seeking to disallow the amendments to the zoning plans for Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks—amendments that were developed after extensive consultation and consideration of scientific evidence and community views.

Jervis Bay Marine Park on the south coast of New South Wales and Solitary Islands Marine Park on the mid North Coast were the first marine parks to be set up in New South Wales. I am very proud of Labor's record on the environment and I am particularly proud of our record with regard to the establishment of marine parks. There is no doubt that the responsibility of governments is to protect and sustain our environment, including our marine environment—that should be a given. We have a responsibility for future generations and when Labor was in government we took that responsibility extremely seriously.

There will be much discussion, debate and negotiation in an attempt to balance competing interests and views. That is a given when we talk about environmental policy and about making decisions. But it is possible to achieve balance, and the process to develop marine park zoning plans and the amendments to them is designed to achieve that balance. Concern over the impacts of human activity resulting in both a decline in the condition of marine ecosystems and the size and abundance of fish species has led to the use of marine protected areas to conserve our marine biodiversity. Zoning arrangements within our multiple-use marine parks help reduce the impact on marine ecosystems by protecting a proportion of all habitats and their associated species. This can result in increases in the size and number of fishing sanctuary zones.

The process to establish and amend marine parks in New South Wales involves extensive consultation. For example, in the two parks we are talking about today—Jervis Bay and Solitary Islands—there was extensive consultation, with a period of some three months for public comment, and that built on previous consultation in March and April 2008 for the Zoning Plan Review. I recall that because I was Minister for the Environment and Climate Change for some of that period. So the idea that the Minister has tried to promote, that these were last-minute decisions made just before the election, is simply laughable. The decisions date back to 2008. Frankly, if anything should be criticised it is that we took too long. There were 42 stakeholder meetings and 6,519 submissions on the Solitary Islands zoning plan, and for Jervis Bay there were 35 stakeholder meetings and a total of 3,064 submissions on the plan. It was not a sham consultation.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Yes, it was.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: It was not. Real and meaningful changes occurred as a result of consultation. We should look in detail at what these amendments to the zoning plans have achieved. For example, with Jervis Bay Marine Park, the total area of sanctuary zones has increased from approximately 4,200 hectares to 4,300 hectares, which will increase the representation of key intermediate reef habitats from 8 per cent to 14 per cent. The consultation process showed its value by being flexible to change where necessary and in response to comments from the community. In response to concerns raised by recreational fishers, key fishing locations around Stony Creek and Moes Rock were not included in sanctuary zones as proposed in the draft zoning plan.

In Jervis Bay recreational fishing will continue in approximately 80 per cent of the marine park, including in the vast majority of key fishing spots. About 270 hectares of near-shore waters and reefs that were previously closed to fishing as part of a sanctuary zone will become available for fishing under the new zoning plan, while popular fishing sites at Crocodile Head and Devils Inlet will still remain available. It is disingenuous for the Liberals and The Nationals to claim that they oppose these measures and yet somehow they are the great friend of recreational fishers. The reality is that recreational fishers benefited from these amendments and the Coalition is taking those benefits away from them.

Further to these positive changes the fishing rules were made simpler. If we look at the new zoning plan for the Solitary Islands Marine Park on the mid North Coast, again it is completely mystifying to try to understand why the Government seeks to oppose the outcome of an extensive community consultation process which involved rigorous research including public scientific studies and social and economic studies. The Solitary Islands Marine Park will see conservation areas increased at the same time as recreational fishing access is increased. Random community surveys conducted in 2008 showed strong support for this park, with 82 per cent of people in favour of sanctuary zones.

Although there is much apprehension about trawling in marine parks, in regard to the Solitary Islands Marine Park the draft zoning plan would remove all commercial trawling from the park within two years. As a result of the consultation there was a reduction of trawling to 30 per cent of the park—again further evidence that changes were made as a result of community consultation. The real question we must turn our minds to today is why, despite extensive consultation lasting a number of years, despite there being changes to respond to community concerns, despite there being benefits for recreational fishers and despite the Liberals and The Nationals promising a scientific audit before any changes would be made, today the Minister seeks to disallow these amendments.

One only has to look at the Liberals' and The Nationals' record and what they have done since they came into government. They dumped the shadow Minister, they abolished the Department of Environment, they reversed the fishing restrictions that protected the critically endangered grey nurse shark and they wound back protections of our precious marine environments. We know why: When it comes to the environment, with Coalition governments it is always The Nationals' tail that wags the Coalition dog. We see it time and time again and the people of New South Wales lose out. There is no commitment to the environment on the other side of the House and the Minister for the Environment should be ashamed to be a part of this.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [4.25 p.m.]: I speak in support of the motion to disallow the Marine Parks (Zoning Plans) Amendment (Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay Marine Parks) Regulation 2011, and I do so as the Liberal member for Maitland and as the Minister for the Environment. I cannot believe the member for Marrickville just spoke about Labor's proud record. Labor's proud record was seven Ministers for the Environment—a revolving door of Ministers. What sort of commitment to the environment was that? It was in and out, in and out. Most of the time the department had no idea who was representing it.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to the environment and we are committed to good scientific evidence. We are committed to supporting evidence-based science on marine parks. This motion is about removing some hasty amendments that were made on the eve of the election, and why those amendments were made. We are not changing marine parks; we are going back to the former zoning plans. It is the first step in putting community consultation and real science back into this process. It is the first step in taking politics out of environmental matters and protecting the marine environment. The plans were changed in the final days—thank goodness they were the final days—of the former Labor Government, without proper consultation with stakeholders.

This Government is reinstating the regulations that existed prior to the amendments made by the former Government that came into effect on 1 March. What happened on 26 March? That is right, we had an election, which members opposite lost. That timing is very suspicious. The Government is simply repealing the amendments to regulations affecting the Jervis Bay and Solitary Islands marine parks made at the last minute by the former Government. When the regulations are as they were in 2002 we can commence the important work of fulfilling our election commitment to a marine park policy based on science and free from politics, and this motion is the first step on that path.

The Government's election commitment and its view on marine parks are clear. We support marine parks, marine life and marine biodiversity. We acknowledge that marine parks should exist and, most importantly, we support consultation with stakeholders and community groups. We do not want sham consultation or politically motivated consultation; rather, we want zoning based on scientific evidence. The Government will enact its election commitment about a scientific audit—watch this space. Members will be able to see the difference between this Government and the former Government in respect of transparency and community consultation. I remember the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park sham consultation, which had nothing to do with the science behind marine parks. The Coalition supports marine parks based on accurate evidence and that is what it will implement. Members on this side of the Chamber have made it clear that our intention is to develop a policy that strikes the right balance between protecting our marine environment and allowing recreational fishing. It will be an evidence-based policy that will deliver tangible, long-term results.

This Government will consult and it will listen to the concerns raised by all stakeholders and give local people a proper say in the decision-making process. It is committed to our marine environment and it acknowledges the many threats posed to its health. As the Minister has highlighted, it faces the threats of pollution, land-based impacts and introduced marine pests. However, we must ensure that our response is balanced and that it takes into account science and community interests. The Government will commission an audit and it will provide the details. That was an election commitment, so it should be no surprise to members

opposite. We have always said that we will review marine parks. Members opposite knew that that would happen as did the Marine Parks Authority. The people in the communities with marine parks also knew that would happen and they voted for the Coalition, and that is why we are in government. They want transparency and science-based, rigorous investigations. They want the zoning to be based on science, not last-minute political decisions.

This Government differs from the previous Government in that it will ensure that any changes to marine park zoning are evidence-based and that stakeholders are taken into account. Science and consultation will be at the centre of that process. Any future zoning amendments will be drafted in consultation with local stakeholders and will be subject to proper public consultation. Information will be made available for an extended period and everybody will be able to voice their opinion. The former Government rammed through amendments without consultation. It did ask for input about the amendments but refused to listen to what people had to say. I know that the member for Coffs Harbour will make a contribution to this debate because he lives in the local community and understands the marine park and what hasty amendments mean to recreational fishers and other stakeholders.

I acknowledge the thousands of people who have been involved in consultations and informed the Government about marine parks. They are interested in providing balanced evidence and they look forward to participating in an open and transparent process. I mention in particular the members of the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks advisory committees and the local volunteers who understand the essence of marine parks, what they are supposed to do and what zoning is supposed to deliver. This Government is committed to consulting widely and it will engage the community. It is also committed to allowing reasonable time to elapse before any other amendments are made. This disallowance motion simply reinstates the original park boundaries and members opposite should not beat it up as something else. This Government is committed to ensuring that marine park boundaries are based on the best evidence. It will use the vast range of scientific evidence available to protect marine habitats and biodiversity and to improve access not only to fishing but also diving, whale watching and the many other activities that generate opportunities.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.35 p.m.]: Let us be fair dinkum about this disallowance motion: It is not about marine parks; it is about members opposite pleasing their mates in the Shooters and Fishers Party by ramming through amendments to the Solar Bonus Scheme that they do not support. This motion is not about protecting marine parks or science. The only people members opposite have consulted on this issue are members of the Shooters and Fishers Party, who want the Government to ram through a solar rebate scheme that it does not support. Members opposite referred to consultation. Zoning plan reviews took place in 2009, not just before the election, and the former Government undertook extensive consultation in 2010. The review of Solitary Islands Marine Park attracted more than 6,000 submissions and the review of the Jervis Bay Marine Park attracted more than 3,000 submissions. The Solitary Islands Marine Park, which is off Coffs Harbour—I am sure the local member knows it very well—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Clarence will come to order.

Mr RYAN PARK: Ask your mates from the Shooters and Fishers Party. The Solitary Islands Marine Park protects more than 550 species of reef fish and 90 species of hard coral. The former Government's zoning plan reduced the area in the park in which prawn trawling is permitted and added several endangered species to the prohibited list. That list will include members opposite after the introduction of the Government's amendments to the Solar Bonus Scheme.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

Mr RYAN PARK: I point out to members opposite that 81 per cent of the park remains available for recreational fishing. The Minister's claims that recreational fishing will be destroyed as a result of the former Government's amendments are rubbish and members opposite know that. I wonder how many members of the Coalition have visited the Jervis Bay Marine Park. I have been there and I know that it is home to a unique mix of species, including whales, dolphins, little penguins, seals and grey nurse sharks. The former Government's zoning plan adjusted sanctuary zones to better protect intermediate reef habitats and prohibited commercial trawling and lift netting in the park.

Let us be clear about this: Members opposite are not interested in protecting marine parks. This motion is designed to ensure that the Shooters and Fishers Party supports the Government's amendments to the Solar

Bonus Scheme that members opposite do not support but accept they must pass. Government members referred to transparency. The Coalition's election policy promises that it will "immediately commission an independent scientific audit of the effectiveness of existing zoning arrangements in meeting domestic and international commitments to the conservation of marine biodiversity". It does not contain one word about any intention to wind back habitat protection zones.

It is like the solar scheme: What members opposite said to the community prior to the election is very different from what they have done in this place. They made all sorts of promises, but they have reneged on them since taking office. They said not one word about winding back habitat protection zones prior to the audit. The Government said that it will conduct an audit but it still wants to disallow this regulation. Will it conduct an audit, or will it wait until this regulation is disallowed and then conduct an audit? That is not science; it is kowtowing to its mates in the Shooters and Fishers Party to ram through a scheme that it does not support. Let us get this clear. The Government's election policy also stated:

... the audit will examine which lead agency (Fisheries or the Department of Environment and Climate Change) is the most appropriate to manage Marine Parks.

The Government did not wait to honour that election commitment. On day one it put marine parks into the Department of Primary Industries and it abolished the environment department. Despite what the Government said to the people of New South Wales prior to the election, what it told them about the Solar Bonus Scheme and what it would do to protect workers, it is now turning its back on the people of New South Wales. This is rubbish and members of the Government know it. It is currying favour with its mates in the Shooters and Fishers Party in the other place by ramming through legislation that it does not support.

Let us get something else clear. Government members want to compare their environmental record with the record of the former Labor Government. They have to be kidding. We established more national parks than this Government will ever establish. Not one Government member will be pushing an environmental agenda in the party room because from day one they muzzled the only person in the Coalition who wanted to talk about the environment. This motion is not about marine parks and it is certainly not about protecting them. The Government is doing a deal with the Shooters and Fishers Party to ensure it gets through a Solar Bonus Scheme that it does not support and the community does not want.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant Speaker) [4.42 p.m.]: I am proud to advise the House this afternoon that the Solitary Islands Marine Reserve was established by the last Coalition Government in this State with a view to protecting the environment. Unfortunately, in 1995 the Labor Government decided to turn it into a marine park and not a reserve. The community was consulted. I remember a meeting at Woolgoolga where more than 500 people turned up to discuss the formation of a marine park and whether it was needed. All but five people voted against the marine park and in favour of a marine reserve. Pam Allen, a former environment Minister who was staying in town at the time, but who did not dare go to the meeting, formulated a committee. The five dissenting voters—those who wanted the park—were appointed to that committee.

From day one consultation by the Labor Government was a thing of the past. It mimicked consultation by taking submissions that basically were roneoed copies from Green groups and that suggested what the Greens wanted, not what the locals needed and deserved. This last zoning plan was announced in April 2010 by the former Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor. In a radio interview with Nick O'Callaghan, news director at 2MC, Minister Sartor made some amazing statements. He claimed that increasing the sanctuary zone from 12 per cent to 20 per cent was a fairly minor change—a minor change that picks up all the reef areas within the park. The real clanger came when a question was put to Mr Sartor relating to the total prohibition of prawn trawling within two years, and he said:

I wasn't aware this was the case. My understanding is that we are just extending the sanctuary zone ...

The news director then read the Minister's media release to him which revealed he was prohibiting all prawn trawling in the park within two years. Mr Sartor terminated the interview. He had not even read his own press release. If the Minister made the announcement on that day where did his information come from and why was he doing it? As has been revealed today in debate, the Labor Government approved changes on 1 March just prior to the election. Why?

Mr Ryan Park: Extensive consultation.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I will come to that in a minute.

Mr Ryan Park: What consultation have you had?

Mr ANDREW FRASER: This pipsqueak, who has not been here for the length of a cigarette, should sit back and learn.

Mr Ryan Park: At least I stand up for what I believe in.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: This bloke is all smoke and no fire. Scientific evidence was given during the consultation process. Professor Kearney, the commercial fishing industry and the recreational fishing industry all put in papers. We came up with a plan that would have given absolute protection to the areas that needed to be protected. It would have kept alive a vibrant recreational fishing industry—which the Minister for Primary Industries said today is worth half a billion dollars in New South Wales—and it would have kept alive a \$16 million a year prawn trawl industry which supports the Sydney Fish Markets, and those prawns go on to the plates of all those Sydney Labor people who drink their chardonnay with them.

Mr John Williams: Silvertails.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: As the member for Murray-Darling said, the silvertails from the Labor Party, who love the prawns from Coffs Harbour, made a blue here. They got rid of prawn trawling in the park on the basis of political and not scientific evidence. If members opposite do not believe that they should contact Professor Steve Smith, who is at the Marine Science Centre based in Coffs Harbour and who studies the marine park on a daily basis. Professor Smith said publicly in a radio interview with the ABC that he was bewildered as to why the former Government moved prawn trawling out of the park. He was bewildered as to whether or not the scientific evidence was there to support the changes that had been made.

There is an Aboriginal cultural area at Arrawarra with which I do not have a problem but—surprise, surprise—that is the area in which the majority of rock lobsters are caught. That was not in the original proposal that went out for public consultation but it was in the final zoning plan that was released. A public meeting was held at Moonee which was attended by 500 or 600 people. The zoning plan withdrew the Moonee estuary and the beach at Moonee but included a sanctuary zone round Sandy Beach Headland, which was not in the document that was made public. I believe that the previous zoning plans and the one put forward this time did not honour the letter of the law. We as members of the public—and me as an interested person and the local member—were not given an opportunity to comment on arbitrary changes made to submissions put in by Green groups not yet circulated to those interested in making submissions to that plan.

The Aboriginal community made a submission which no-one else saw and which was received after the closing date for submissions. The Government made a decision on it but it did not come back to all those other people—the other 6,500 if one wants to put a number on the submissions—and tell them that it had changed the proposals. I believe it had a moral obligation to do so. We need sensible scientific research and science-based sanctuary zones. The member for Marrickville—who is in competition with The Greens and who got home only by the skin of her teeth—said that 82 per cent of people in the Coffs Harbour electorate supported the marine park. We do support the marine park. However, we do not support an arbitrary zoning system that was not the subject of proper public consultation. We support scientific evidence from people involved in marine science at the centre at Coffs Harbour, a nationally and internationally recognised centre with the crème de la crème of scientists. Professor Bob Kearney, who has provided scientific evidence, should be consulted. In the past I read onto the record a document of his because he has provided us with scientific evidence.

This disallowance motion should not be based on politics; it should be based on a viable industry. If members talk to Grahame Turk at the Sydney Fish Markets they will be informed of the devastating effects of this regulation on the Sydney Fish Markets, let alone the 50 prawn trawlers operating in the Solitary Islands Marine Park. The scientific facts, backed up by the Marine Science Centre, Bob Kearney and world science, is that there will be no detrimental effect on that park. I am fed up with members opposite telling us that these changes are being made because of the experiences of some obscure marine park overseas. This matter relates to Coffs Harbour. Let me touch briefly on Jervis Bay. People in Jervis Bay and in Coffs Harbour support the marine park and they are willing for the scientific evidence—not the political evidence—to be put forward in this zoning revision.

This Government is doing what it promised to do prior to the last election: It has gone back to the 2002 zonings, which I do not believe were done properly or scientifically. This Government has gone back to those zonings and it will ask for scientific evidence to back up its case for sanctuary zones. If the Ministers look

at the alternative plans put forward by fishermen in Coffs Harbour, in consultation with real environmentalists, they will find they will achieve a balance that will cover the environment and the commercial and recreational fishing industries involved in Solitary Islands Marine Park. This is something that is supported by my community. I commend Shane Geary and Geoff Parker from Coffs Harbour for the great job they have done. These Ministers listened to those who voted for them at the last election and they are now putting in place what they promised.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.52 p.m.]: Madam Temporary Speaker, I congratulate you on your elevation to that position. I and other Opposition members oppose this motion because it is a rort for two reasons. First, it is a breach of this Government's election promise and, second, this Government has done a tawdry, dirty, grubby deal with the Shooters and Fishers Party. It is reflective of this Government's determination to trash the environment and it follows from a number of steps and actions that it has taken. This Government dumped Coalition shadow environment Minister Catherine Cusack, a staunch opponent of the push by the Shooters and Fishers Party for hunting in national parks.

Mr Ryan Park: On day one.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: On day one. They needed the numbers in the upper House and Catherine Cusack was speared. On day one the second thing this Government did was to abolish the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

Mr John Williams: Renamed it.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: Government members are saying it was renamed. It is extraordinary that they are even putting that up as a suggestion. The third thing this Government did was to hand responsibility for marine parks and catchment authorities management to the Department of Primary Industries, in direct breach of its election policy. It also lifted bans on high-risk fishing methods that were designed to protect the grey nurse shark. When we scratch the surface what do we get? Government members are climate change deniers. That is their real view about the environment and Opposition members and the rest of the world know it. Government members are still pretending that they are not.

As I said earlier, this motion represents a breach of election policy. The Liberal-Nationals election policy promised "to immediately commission an independent scientific audit of the effectiveness of existing zoning arrangements in meeting domestic and international commitments to the conservation of marine biodiversity". This Government pretended it was serious about this stuff; it pretended that it cared. It referred to international standards in an attempt to reveal to the world that it cared. The Government moved this disallowance motion before the audit was carried out. If there was a shred of honesty or integrity in its claim that it was interested in getting scientific evidence it would have conducted that audit first. However, it has not done so and that means, first, that it breached its election policy and, second, that it is not prepared to be guided by the scientific evidence.

The second reason this motion is a rort is pretty obvious: This Government needs the numbers in the upper House. It has to get this morally repugnant retrospective Solar Bonus Scheme legislation through the upper House and it will do anything it can to do so. It will do whatever it takes to get its legislation through the upper House. This motion is a tawdry, grubby little deal to enable it to get the numbers in the upper House. Jervis Bay Marine Park, which was established in 1998, covers over 21,000 hectares. That marine park is home to an extraordinary mix of species—fur seals, little penguins, dolphins, weedy sea dragon, whales, the eastern blue devil fish and the grey nurse shark.

When changes to the zoning plan were first mentioned the new zoning plans were introduced on the basis that they would protect the important natural and cultural values of the marine park, while providing for a range of sustainable uses, including beach activities, swimming, surfing, commercial and recreational fishing, scuba diving, whale and dolphin watching, research and other activities. The changes included an adjustment to the sanctuary zone at Beecroft Peninsula to better protect intermediate reef habitat, and the removal of trawling and lift netting activities from the marine park. About 80 per cent of the marine park remains available for recreational fishing.

The new zoning plan followed a detailed review and two consultation periods—from 2008 and 2010. That included 76 meetings and information sessions and more than 3,000 submissions being received, providing feedback and comment from marine park users. Additionally, advice was received from the advisory committee.

It takes an Orwellian misuse of the language to say that that represents inadequate consultation. One really has to do damage to the meaning of plain words in the English language to do as the Government did and to say that that does not represent adequate consultation. It has been said that some Government members need to have things read to them because they cannot read. Those who can read should consult the dictionary to reveal the meaning of those words. It is just extraordinary.

Solitary Islands Marine Park, the first marine park to be established in New South Wales, stretches over 75 kilometres—from Muttonbird Island in the south to the Sandon River and Plover Island in the north. The marine park incorporates estuaries to their tidal limit, foreshores to the mean high water mark, extends offshore to the three nautical mile State waters boundary and covers about 72,000 hectares. The park includes over 550 species of reef fish, 90 species of hard coral and 600 species of molluscs. It is interesting to note the consultation period relating to changes to the Solitary Islands Marine Park. The new zoning plan followed a detailed review, two consultation periods between 2008 and 2010, included over 80 meetings and information days, and more than 7,000 submissions. That is what provided feedback and comment from marine park users.

Mr Richard Amery: You are not telling them that the world is round, are you? That is one of their proposals.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: With their Orwellian use of language, Government members would assume that round was flat and that flat was wise. They have this extraordinary incapacity to understand precisely the meaning of plain words in the English language. As I said earlier, this motion, which is a rort, breaks a commitment given by the Government. It reflects its Orwellian misuse of the English language and it is part of the sorts of corrupt and tawdry deals of which the member for Coffs Harbour is so much a part. Indeed, I would be surprised if the member for Coffs Harbour does not burn it. The motion is a tawdry, corrupt little exercise to try to secure the numbers for morally indefensible legislation in the upper House. The Government should be ashamed of itself.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.00 p.m.]: What a performance from new Labor as represented by the member for Liverpool and the member for Keira!

Mr John Williams: I think the member for Liverpool wandered down to Keira.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We were all invited to Keira. It was wonderful to hear from new Labor this afternoon. I look forward to the member for Toongabbie also making a contribution to this debate.

Mr John Williams: He is a fisherman.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: So is the member for Keira. I imagine the member for Liverpool is also a fisherman. This motion is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Government is committed to working with and listening to local communities and responding to the needs of coastal communities, in particular, in relation to marine parks. We have made it clear that we will not abolish marine parks, despite the campaign of members opposite. But what we want to do through the reviews, particularly with regard to the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay, is to go back to the community and to do this properly. It seems that those opposite, who have a long track record of pandering to the Greens with regard to marine parks, have not learnt anything in this debate. The issue has been debated for many years. In fact, it is something we experienced in relation to the implementation of the Batemans Marine Park when an 86,000-hectare marine park was implemented within a six-month period, compared with Jervis Bay, a 24,000-hectare marine park which was implemented over a four-year period.

I am well aware—and I am sure that the member for Port Stephens is well aware—that we cannot rush this review process. The statutory process relating to reviews is well known to every member in this House who has a marine park adjacent to his or her electorate. Prior to the election we gave an undertaking to go back to the communities that are directly affected and to ensure that this review process is carried out properly. The track record of the former Labor Government in relation to marine parks is shocking. It was based on politics rather than on local science and local consultation. That is the fundamental problem with how Labor has managed marine parks in this State over the past 16 years.

Mr Nick Lalich: We had more marine parks than the Liberals.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Labor's decisions have had major social consequences. The member for Cabramatta, in particular, might want to pipe up in relation to this point. I can assure him that it is heartbreaking to have the wives of fishermen on the other end of the phone talking about threats of suicide because they had their livelihoods stripped away as New South Wales Labor was busy in bed with the Greens. It is outrageous. As the member for Coffs Harbour knows only too well, the social impact of the way in which Labor has managed these marine parks has been devastating for those who have made a living out of fishing.

Unlike those opposite, the Government is not ashamed of supporting those people, who are salt of the earth, who are making a living from the natural resources we have to offer in this State. The salt of the earth people involved in the commercial fishing industry want to get food on our tables so we do not need to import the types of seafood from overseas that we do not want. We have a wonderful world-class product in this State that is being destroyed by the way in which the Labor Party worked to lock up marine park areas unnecessarily—not based on the sound science we need in order, firstly, to protect the marine environment and, secondly, to ensure the livelihoods and jobs of those in regional communities.

I state upfront that the Liberals and The Nationals are committed to protecting the marine environment but doing it responsibly. We have seen decisions relating to zonings that have led to a concentration of fishing effort, particularly outside the mouths of some estuaries, which is having a negative environmental consequence. It is all very well to talk about locking up areas. The member for Keira said that 80 per cent of these areas in marine parks are still available for fishing. However, in many cases Labor has locked up 60 to 70 per cent of the fishing grounds within that 20 per cent, and that has led to a concentration of fishing effort elsewhere.

Mr Nick Lalich: Sixty out of 20; that's pretty good.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I know the member for Cabramatta is not the sharpest tool in the shed but I can assure him that if we leave areas where there are no reefs, or we leave areas where in essence there is a desert, these fishermen will not survive. We are about the worker. We are about sticking up for those who work in the commercial fishing and recreational fishing industries, but we are also about the environment. The Marine Parks Act is very clear in its objects about what marine parks should be there for—that is, protecting the entire marine biodiversity. Members opposite have made this debate about the regulation of fishing, whether it is commercial or recreational. There has been no effort on the part of the former Government to look at some of those land-based activities that are affecting the marine environment. The former Government has not looked at human-based pollution affecting the marine environment, nor has it looked at some of the run-off issues. As marine scientists will attest, some of those issues are having a far greater and more devastating effect on the marine environment.

I commend the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industries, who want to get the science and the consultation right. The former Government failed dismally in that regard. The member for Port Stephens and I, as the member for Bega, can attest to the fact that our communities spoke very clearly at the ballot box when it came to the way in which the marine parks were implemented in our local areas. We want to see marine parks work in the interests of all concerned. We do not want to see our green bureaucracy unnecessarily tying up millions of dollars in taxpayers' money. We know that a lot of science exists within the Department of Primary Industries through Fisheries in relation to fish stocks and fish management. More scientific research must be done in the area of biodiversity to establish how it is being affected in some areas, particularly in regard to some of the threatened species.

A very sad argument has been had over a long period in relation to this all being about fishing. It is not. That is the sad part, because the environment loses out, coastal communities lose out, fishermen, both recreational and commercial, lose out, and ultimately people's lives and livelihoods are affected. I urge members opposite to consider the fact that what the Liberal-Nationals Government is trying to do is to go back to the community and to do the reviews properly with regard to these two marine parks. Prior to the election we made a number of clear commitments in relation to marine parks, particularly regarding an examination of the science behind them. From my perspective, I want to see good local science backing any decision regarding a zoning.

Mr Nick Lalich: Well, do it first.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Guess what? The former Government did not do it first when it came to the implementation of a whole heap of marine parks. What a silly thing for the member to say! We want to go back to the existing boundaries, do the reviews, and work with the local community—unlike the former Government. All it was interested in doing was pandering to the Lee Rhiannons of this world, and look where that got us! It got coastal communities absolutely nowhere.

Mr Greg Smith: Bob Brown must be delighted to have her down there.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Yes, he is really looking forward to her presence after 1 July—and the country will be no better for it. This disallowance motion is worthy of support. I urge the Labor Party to reflect on how it has treated coastal communities over the years and to use some common sense and support the Government.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.10 p.m.]: I am proud to support the motion for disallowance moved by the Minister for Primary Industries. It is not about giving marine parks open slather; it is about going back to the regulations that existed before the former Labor Government changed them five minutes before the last election in order to appease The Greens. It reminds me of the old saying: The man who fed the crocodile was the last man eaten. Members opposite have been feeding The Greens. Poor old Verity is gone but I am glad that poor old Carmel is still here. The Greens are the crocodile and while members opposite continue to pander to them they will continue to be eaten. It is like a cancer.

The Government has listened to the community. I walk into local pubs in my electorate where recreational fishermen are doing their weigh-ins and I listen to what they say. I listen also to the tourist operators at Wooli and Red Rock-Corindi. That is why there are 69 members on this side of the House. Labor members listen to no-one; someone gives them a bit of paper to read from. That poor little bloke from Keira will deadset need a distemper shot after his recent contribution. Our little mate the member for Keira does not even know where the Solitary Islands Marine Park is, yet he talked about it. I am sure he is the illegitimate son of Paul Pearce—there is a problem there. He has passion but not much knowledge. One thing I recognise—

Mr Nathan Rees: Snatched defeat from victory.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Yes, he snatched defeat from victory. Members on this side are committed to marine parks and the science behind them. The decision to lock up the Solitary Islands and Port Stephens marine parks was influenced by a miniscule organisation from Sweden or Switzerland. We want local input and local knowledge backed by scientific knowledge, not political gain. The former Government was badly mistaken in chasing The Greens vote. It is a cancer. I miss Verity—and I was afraid for a while that I would also be missing Carmel.

Mr Greg Smith: I don't.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: I do. I think Verity was a good member—she has got to be better than what has been put in her place. Why has the Minister for the Environment announced that the Government will abolish Labor's last-minute changes to the zoning plans for these marine parks? It is because they need abolishing. Before the election we announced our policy on existing marine park zonings. Our move to abolish Labor's dud policy—which is exactly what it was—will mean the use of marine parks for recreational purposes will revert to the rules that were in place before March 2011. This decision will be welcomed by fishers of all ages up and down the coast.

[Interruption]

I would love Labor members to visit my electorate. I would love to take them fishing or diving off the coast. I often go diving around Red Rock-Corindi and Minni Waters. There is a great little shark spot there. The sharks will not touch me because I am too mean and lean—and I think those opposite would be pretty safe too. Good government is about listening to the people, which is what we have done. At the recent election the Minister for Primary Industries received 81.8 per cent of the vote, the Minister for the Environment received 63 per cent, the member for Coffs Harbour was on 78 per cent, the Minister for Ageing received around 80 per cent, and the member for Port Stephens got 73 per cent or 78 per cent of the vote, while the member for Marrickville received 50.0001 per cent and a couple of others got 50 per cent if they were lucky.

I am proud to speak for professional fishermen. The Minister for Ageing touched on how fishers have suffered. There was a huge flood earlier this year and then, bang, just before the election the new lock-ups came in. Fishermen have come to my office—one bloke was in tears—and I have had phone calls from family members who were in tears. It is not a joke; it is serious. These guys and their industry face certain demise. Their lives are tied up in their fishing boats. They were locked out of major parts of fishing zones and then told, "Sorry, but you will get some compensation." The last compensation package was \$15,000 for businesses worth \$150,000. Tourist operators at Wooli and Minni Waters have said that they may as well shut down their little

town. The professional fishers went five years ago and now tourism is under threat. The town has about half a dozen businesses that rely on fishing tourism, and the Labor Government wanted to lock out the fishers, with no consultation.

I visited the Red Rock-Corindi Fishing Club before the election. I was told that at the end of last year the draft plan clearly marked where recreational fishing could occur but suddenly a dark blue line appeared that indicated no competition fishing was allowed. At Red Rock-Corindi there is a bowling club, a little shop and a caravan park. Fishing clubs visit the area. They have competition fishing with bag limits—it is all above board. There have never been any problems but suddenly there is to be no competition fishing. The clubs were not involved in any consultation because as far as they knew everything was okay; they were happy with the draft plan. But just before its implementation they were told, "Sorry guys, you had plenty of time to put a submission in and now it's too late." Red Rock will close down. In fact, the policy has already had a major impact. This disallowance motion will revert to the rules that applied before March 2011, and allow for proper consultation. It will allow people to make submissions and consider proper, local science—not the science of some minuscule organisation headquartered in Denmark or somewhere else. I commend the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Primary Industries for bringing this urgent issue to the attention of the House.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [5.18 p.m.]: I oppose the motion for disallowance. Overfishing, climate change, habitat destruction and degradation, and pollution are causing detrimental impacts in our coastal marine waters and pose serious threats to future marine habitat and biodiversity. If we do not protect our marine ecosystems our food supply and fishing industry will be at risk. While the World Conservation Union has set a target for sanctuary protection of 20 per cent to 30 per cent of global waters, less than 7 per cent of New South Wales waters have such protection. Marine parks and sanctuary zones have overwhelming scientific support. "No-take" marine sanctuaries have shown to double fish and invertebrate densities, triple biomass, increase mean fish sizes by 20 per cent to 30 per cent, boost the number of species by 23 per cent, quadruple catch per unit efforts in nearby waters, and make marine ecosystems 21 per cent less vulnerable to environmental change. Marine sanctuaries also provide tourism, education and research opportunities.

The Marine Parks (Zoning Plans) Amendment (Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay Marine Parks) Regulation 2011 provides some improvement to previous protective zonings in the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks. The region is home to the grey nurse shark, which is critically endangered, and has a range of ecological values, including rocky reefs, invertebrates, special fish assemblages, mangroves, high molluscs and seagrass beds. The new protections were introduced following a statutory five-year review that involved extensive community consultation. While the regulation provided improvements, environment groups were concerned that it did not go far enough and left critical habitat unprotected.

The Government has committed to an independent scientific review of sanctuary zones and has stated publicly that it will abide by the outcomes of that review. Environment groups support an independent and scientific process. If protective zones are scaled back, moved or removed, scientific assessment of their benefits becomes difficult. Sanctuary zones are effective only if they are permanent, as marine ecosystems take time to replenish and revert to their normal state. The decision to reverse the existing protections that came out of a statutory review does not appear to be scientific. There is widespread concern that it could have more to do with local politics and appeasing the Shooters and Fishers Party and its anti-marine park agenda. That is the fear in the community.

Government polls show that 85 per cent of New South Wales residents support marine parks. I share widespread community concern that without fully protected marine sanctuaries the marine biodiversity of New South Wales could disappear, with many species lost. Sanctuary zones protect nursing grounds and feeding habitat, which benefit anglers and the fishing industry as fish stocks adjacent to sanctuary zones increase. Protecting marine ecosystems should be a priority for this Parliament. I agree with the Minister that we need a range of solutions to address the many threats to biodiversity in our waters, but I disagree with her response to remove the existing protections we have under a proven system.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.21 p.m.]: I support the motion to disallow the regulation. New South Wales is committed to national and international agreements to conserving the diversity of marine life. It is also committed under these agreements to ensuring that marine resources are carefully managed for the use and enjoyment of people today and in the future. The Marine Parks Act 1997 provides for that careful management. The provisions of the Act allow for marine park management that is responsive to conserving the diversity of marine life and, at the same time, ensuring that the community can use and enjoy the parks. The Government has committed to commissioning an independent scientific audit of the effectiveness of the zoning arrangements in our existing marine parks.

It is expected that the independent scientific audit will be completed by 31 December 2011. The audit will consider all matters that can impact on marine parks. This could include threats such as pollution, inappropriate coastal development and introduced species and diseases. In my local area we have an issue in the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park with migrating sands, which closed the eastern channel of the Myall River. This stopped normal tidal flow in the lower Myall, reducing salinity dramatically. Oyster leases in the lower Myall had to be abandoned and fish were being caught with red spot disease. The eastern Myall River separated Corrie Island from the mainland. Corrie Island is a Ramsar wetland. At low tide feral animals were able to walk across what was once a deep river, such was the extent of the sand movement. What did the former Government have to say on this issue? On 18 March last year the then Leader of the House, John Aquilina, said:

Corrie Island is already fully protected as a nature reserve under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

What was he thinking—that rangers with shotguns were forming a picket line at low tide? The Labor Government refused to accept that a serious environmental crisis was developing. More recently, migrating sand smothered a pristine marine environment at Halifax Park on the southern shore of Port Stephens, destroying one of the best dive sites in Australia. At the time the Labor Government just watched. I will read an excerpt about Halifax Park from a book entitled *Nelson Bay Simple Shore Diving* by Mike Boyce. It states:

FEATURES The dominant feature of this site is the scattered dramatic drop offs and bommies bursting with growth. The "Fish Rock" boulder area also has drop offs with nooks & crannies. Another feature is the man made pyramid of rocks at a depth of 5m north of the exit point which is a good place for the safety stop.

The site that was five metres deep now has about two metres of sand over the top of it. The safety stop, which is usually six metres deep, also has two metres of sand over it. The book continues:

PROMINENT MARINE LIFE Large Eastern Blue Groper—

I assume it swam away—

Ascidians-Soft Corals—

corals do not swim too well—

Variety of Sponges-Pencil Urchins-southern Featherstars-Great variety of Nudibranchs-Schools of Bream and Bullseyes ...

The list goes on. The marine life that could not swim was lost. Two weeks ago I was advised that a sand wave is moving towards Fly Point, probably the best dive site in Australia and an aquatic reserve since 1983. Just like Ned's Beach on Lord Howe Island, people can hand feed the myriad fish species that live there. I will expand on that problem at a later time in the House. If the sand continues to move we again will lose countless varieties of nudibranchs, sea pens and massive sea hares. The wobbegongs and blind sharks will probably swim away but the soft corals cannot. This marine paradise is under threat.

At the western end of the D'Albora Marina at Nelson Bay is a dive spot called the Pipeline. For sand to get there means it is no longer flowing off Shoal Bay, it is coming from somewhere else. So far the breeding sea horses apparently have been wiped out and species such as sea pens, cauliflower corals, sponges, tube anemones, featherstars and urchins are all under threat. The Marine Parks Authority, the Department of Primary Industries and the Office of Environment and Heritage have been working together to find practical solutions to prevent further movement of sand onto the dive sites and to protect our pristine marine environment. We need to find a solution that will protect the important ecological values of the marine park, as well as the valuable dive tourism.

The Government's planned audit of marine parks will be immensely useful in providing sound information on which to base decisions about current and future zoning. The independent audit will provide valuable information that can be used to find the right balance between the need for protecting the marine environment and allowing appropriate access to valuable fishing areas. The audit will recommend steps for improving the effectiveness and performance of marine parks, including existing zoning arrangements for conserving marine biodiversity. Until the outcomes of the scientific audit are known the Government will not establish any more marine parks or put in place any new fishing restrictions in existing marine parks.

The Government has committed to further public consultation on the zoning plans for the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks once the audit has been completed and its recommendations have been

considered. It is appropriate that the zoning plans passed by the former Labor Government should be disallowed to enable the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government to take into account the findings of the scientific audit. We need to manage our marine parks using good science, not the political science that the former Government used. We are here to protect our marine environment, not just talk about it. On this basis, I support the disallowance motion.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions]

Mr Daryl Maguire: I draw the attention of the House to Standing Order 55, which states that a member must rise to seek the call. I remind new members in this place that they must rise in their place and seek the call otherwise under Standing Order 55 they will not be recognised by the Chair.

NATIONAL SORRY DAY

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.41 p.m.]: National Sorry Day during National Reconciliation Week highlights issues that should be significant to all Australians. A year ago the Keneally Government, with bipartisan support, amended the Constitution to acknowledge and honour the Aboriginal people as the first people and nations of the State. That amendment further recognised the special contribution made by the Aboriginal people to the identity of our State and their spiritual and cultural bond with their traditional lands and waters. Today I note the great value of this profoundly reconciling act in creating an environment of deep and genuine respect and allowing for healing, restoration and affection to flow between the Aboriginal community and the wider community. I am also proud to remind the House that it was the Federal Labor Government that offered an official apology on behalf of the nation to the Aboriginal people. Who will ever forget the outpouring of emotions, and in particular the tears that flowed down the faces of the elders and other members of the Aboriginal community, as they gathered to hear the Prime Minister speak?

Each of us has a duty to continue this work of healing in our respective electorates and communities. It is incumbent upon us to embody the respect and goodwill that has been offered thus far and to be forever mindful of the unique and invaluable place that the Aboriginal people occupy in our community and in the history of our nation. As important as these symbolic acts are, nothing can replace meaningful actions and policy initiatives that make a difference at grassroots levels. It is therefore incumbent upon all governments to continue to invest heavily in programs, services and infrastructure initiatives that are developed in partnership with Aboriginal people that engage the Aboriginal community and that keep them at the forefront and driving initiatives and ideas.

The theme of the 2011 National Reconciliation Week is Let's Talk Recognition. Of course, the objective is to increase the recognition of the past experience and present contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. First, I recognise the achievements and contributions of great Aboriginal Australians both past and present, including two who passed away this year. The late Lionel Rose, whom we recently honoured in this Parliament, was the first Indigenous Australian to win a world title in boxing. That was the best known of his many achievements. Who could forget his stand on apartheid? The late Bobbi Sykes, the Indigenous Australian poet and author, was also a life-long campaigner for Indigenous land rights as well as human rights and women's rights. Our own Linda Burney was the first Indigenous woman to be elected to the New South Wales Parliament and the first Indigenous woman to become Deputy Leader of an opposition party. Of course, one must also mention Pat Dodson, the leading Aboriginal activist.

Tomorrow is the fourteenth anniversary of the tabling of the Bringing Them Home report in the Federal Parliament. No-one can say that they no longer know about what happened and we cannot ignore our shameful past. That report was a watershed in this nation's history. Recognition of the problems has paved the way to

reconciliation. However, as we talk about recognition, respect and reconciliation, we must also talk about commitment to recognising and striving to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this State. We must recognise that the social, educational, health, law and justice outcomes for our Aboriginal community are significantly lower than for the non-Aboriginal population. It is this high level of disadvantage that plays such a significant role in Aboriginal young people coming into contact with the criminal justice system much earlier than non-Aboriginal young people. As we talk about recognition, respect and reconciliation, we must also remember that it is a well-documented fact that Aboriginal people in New South Wales can expect to live shorter lives than non-Aboriginal people. Disadvantage plays a significant role in the health outcomes for Aboriginal people. We must continue to build on the programs and initiatives that have been implemented. They are just the beginning.

National Reconciliation Week is a time for all Australians to reflect on our shared histories and past contributions. Each year on 27 May we remember and apologise for the past discrimination and mistreatment of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As I said, this year's National Reconciliation Week theme is Let's Talk Recognition. I find it hard to do that while Aboriginal people continue to suffer great disadvantage. We cannot talk about recognition and reconciliation until we are prepared to continue our journey in truly recognising Aboriginal Australians. We must bolster and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Australian Constitution and our institutions. Ted Baillieu's recent actions are very disappointing and could be said to be a backward step in reconciliation. It is not appropriate for the acknowledgement of Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of this land to be optional. That acknowledgement demonstrates respect for all Aboriginal Australians and it is an integral part of the reconciliation movement. I encourage all elected representatives to ensure that it is common practice. True reconciliation cannot be achieved unless we understand the task ahead and work to remove the disadvantage facing Aboriginal communities. During a lecture Professor Dodson talked about moving beyond symbolism to a framework ensuring accountability for Indigenous justice. He said:

The challenge is that, as a nation we are called to act for the rights of Indigenous people and all Australians. We all have a role to play in pursuit of Indigenous justice that goes beyond saying sorry.

We now have the opportunity before us to begin our next chapter for the story of our journey to having a national identity that includes full reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Let us not lose this opportunity.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [5.48 p.m.]: I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I also extend my respect to all Aboriginal elders, past and present. I am deeply honoured to pay our respects to the stolen generation and their families for all that they have endured, through recognition that tomorrow is Sorry Day. Sorry Day is a national day of commemoration and remembrance, promoted by the National Sorry Day Committee. By taking time in each of our days to acknowledge Sorry Day, Australians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, can support members of the stolen generations who, in the past, were forcibly removed from their families.

"Sorry" is only one word but it is such an important word. It is a universal word. While it may carry different meanings in different contexts, tomorrow is recognition of the wrongs of the past, which must be acknowledged so the same mistakes will not be part of our future. It is a day to pay our respects to the oldest continuing culture in the world. It is a day to recognise them for their suffering and their loss, for their resilience and ultimately for their dignity. Sorry Day was established as a response to the release of the Bringing Them Home report, a Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report. The report was dedicated with thanks and admiration to those who found the strength to tell their stories to the inquiry, a painful insight into the impact of the forced removal of children.

On 26 May 1997 the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families was tabled in Federal Parliament, and the Bringing Them Home report revealed the extent of the forced removal policies, which went on for more than 150 years and into the 1980s. The cornerstones of the report included consultation, acknowledgement and responsibility, which I believe are still extremely relevant to the fight to close the gap in Aboriginal disadvantage today. The Bringing Them Home report detailed unquestionable evidence about the forced removal of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities. The report documented numerous case studies outlining the impacts of child removal policies on indigenous individuals, their families and communities and also examined the contemporary legacies of those policies that are present in the disadvantage gap that exists today between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The report revealed the shattering effects of these policies in terms of broken families, diminished physical and mental health, loss of language, culture and connection to traditional land and also revealed the transgenerational impact and damaging effects that these forced child removals continue to have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities from whom those children were torn. Three years ago the current New South Wales Premier, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, spoke in this place about the apology offered by this, the oldest Parliament in the nation, the first Parliament to offer an apology to Aboriginal Australians. He said that no-one in this place could be satisfied that the outcomes and the hopes, the energies and the goodwill that were clearly expressed in that exercise had been delivered to the people in our State. We must now hold governments to account for the failings of portfolios. Frequently we fail to understand the impact of those failings upon communities across the State. Mr O'Farrell reminded the House that what at times might be issues of great conflict between political parties in this place are matters of life and death, care and treatment, and protection and nurture for those weakest and most vulnerable in our communities. On 8 September last year the current Premier spoke of the proposed amendment to recognise Aboriginal people in the New South Wales Constitution. He said:

Giving people a real say and what they deserve in a democratic system is what citizenship is meant to be about. Reconciliation has no meaning if it does not mean equality of opportunity, if it does not mean better educational and health outcomes, if it does not mean greater life choices.

In response to the report 14 years ago, the New South Wales Parliament apologised to Aboriginal people stolen from their families. The National Sorry Day Committee stated in regard to the apology:

The speeches of government and opposition members in reply have been heartfelt. This has done much to restore dignity to those whose dignity was trampled on by the removal policies.

Several indigenous leaders have said that since these apologies there has been a noticeably greater understanding of and concern for the problems their people face in areas such as health and employment. Many of the Bringing Them Home report recommendations apply to State government policy and, although some States have begun to implement these recommendations, there is still a long way to. While tomorrow will be a day of acknowledging the past, I believe it is more about the future. The recognition of National Sorry Day brings together thousands of Australians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to recommit to healing, reconciling and moving forward together. I believe it is significant for all Australians. All individuals, no matter where they are from, have a need to understand their past to be able to move forward. It is about having a sense of belonging. It is about sharing our stories with one another. It is about listening to one another.

The importance of knowing where you have come from to find out where you are going was solidified in my mind in my recent trip to Moree. It was here I met the Principal of St Joseph's School in Walgett, an amazing school that has successfully integrated language and culture into the school curriculum. It comes back to the basic elements integral to the human race, no matter where you are from: identity, pride and self-worth are core facets that make up the human spirit. Community leaders said to me that knowing where you are from and being proud of it shows where you can go. I believe this is particularly significant on Sorry Day, a vital part of the reconciliation process, to recognise the value and to be proud of Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. The New South Wales Government recognises the strengths of the members of the stolen generations and their families. I acknowledge the strengths of Aboriginal communities, those foundations of family and kinship and the excellent results we can gain from working together.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [5.55 p.m.]: I note the gallery is filling for one of the inaugural speeches. As members in this Parliament we will be remembered not for our rhetoric or which bills we pass; we will be remembered by future generations for whether we have cared for those in greatest need. Our past treatment of our Indigenous brothers and sisters was little short of disgraceful and, for that reason, this Sorry Day is a great day to reflect on what will be a change for the future. I would like to read a few words of Kevin Rudd's long overdue apology to the stolen generations. He said:

... today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were the Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by writing the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

...

... for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We need to do more than say sorry, because today in Campbelltown I know of three-year-olds who will have shorter life spans than other three-year-olds in Australia. I know that because we have done studies on the health indices that will prove that to us. If the status quo remains—we continue to treat our Indigenous brothers and sisters as previous generations have—we will entrench a generation of disadvantage. As the Minister said, this is a matter for all employees and for all levels of government. It is not rocket science but it requires appropriate recognition of the disadvantages that the Aboriginal population still suffers and it requires every one of us to make a true commitment to closing the gap in life span and opportunity. That is still the reason we needed to say sorry and what should still drive this Parliament in addressing disadvantage. The stolen generation still reverberates every day in the Aboriginal community. It affects all areas of family life. Anyone in the Aboriginal Health Service will say that the stolen generation still causes pain, because the one thing that matters to every human being is kinship, and that is what we destroyed.

Sorry Day reflects also the 1967 referendum, which is the start of our journey towards equality for the Aboriginal population and 3 June is the anniversary of the High Court delivering the Mabo decision that overturned the status quo of terra nullius. The Mabo decision enabled the recognition of native title, a major milestone in the battle for land rights. Since the publication of the Bringing Them Home report all six State governments, the two Territory governments and the Federal Government have formally apologised to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for their past mistreatment. We need to continue to increase recognition of the past experience and the present contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2011 is Let's Talk Recognition. How each of us interprets it is entirely up to us. We all have our different views. This can be by organising a local event, or members of all parties can choose whether to speak about the changes in Victoria to the recognition of the Aboriginal people. But recognition is not just about the referendum. It is all to do with reconciliation; it is all to do with redressing the imbalance that the young Aboriginal people who I see every day still suffer in education, in health, in opportunity and in recognition. It is time for all of us as a government and as a Parliament to put our actions where our words are and to practise truer reconciliation.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [6.00 p.m.], in reply: I too acknowledge the many people in the gallery in the oldest Parliament in this country. It is fitting that I remind everyone here tonight that it was this oldest Parliament that last June in a bipartisan manner recognised the Aboriginal people as the first people of this State and this nation. Tomorrow we will recognise National Sorry Day and I thank all members for participating in a true discussion about the future and not just the past, which is what National Sorry Day is about. I also acknowledge Minister Dominello and the member for Macquarie Fields, both of whom raised some very important issues. It is fitting and it is right that we look to right the wrongs of the past, but we can only do that in a bipartisan way in this place. That is my view and a view that I will continue to hold.

This matter is beyond and above politics. If we want to improve our history and our shameful record, we will have to work hard together at all times, acknowledging and engaging with the Aboriginal community to ensure that it is an active part of anything that we might do. As I said earlier, we might lose an opportunity but I do not believe that we will. We need to look forward. When I talk about looking forward to the future I am reminded of some of the words that Prime Minister Rudd so eloquently spoke in his speech about the stolen generation when he said:

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians indigenous and non-indigenous to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

Once again I thank all members for participating in this significant matter of public importance.

Discussion concluded.

Pursuant to resolution business interrupted for the presentation of inaugural speeches.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN (Newcastle) [6.05 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): What an incredible honour it is to be here today and to be the first Liberal member for Newcastle to address the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in almost a century. Friends and supporters from Newcastle in the gallery tonight probably thought they would never see that occur, which makes this event all the more significant and all the more humbling for me. The people of Newcastle have taken a leap of faith after years of neglect, and it is my duty to ensure I represent their wants and needs to this Parliament without fear or favour and to the best of my ability. I would, however, like to acknowledge the previous member, Jodi McKay.

I am normally a man of few words about myself—you might find that hard to believe—but I consider it is important for the members of this Parliament and the constituents of Newcastle to know something about the person who has been elected to represent that great city, so I will take a few minutes to explain who I am and importantly the principles that have shaped my life and will continue to do so throughout my term in this institution. After 32 years in the Military, and a short time as a chief executive officer in commercial industry, standing here tonight is the beginning of an exciting and new journey in serving my community. But further, it is the culmination of a tradition of public service in my family dating back many decades. It is a duty that has been part of me for my entire life. I see it as a product of the hardships my parents experienced and their firm belief in working to deliver a better life for those around us.

My father, a Jew, was born in Vienna in 1921, where he enjoyed a happy upbringing in an affluent family, until March 1938 when Austria was annexed to the German Third Reich. Desperate to escape the looming social disaster of that war, my father, with his parents and sister, fled Austria on foot over the Alps to Switzerland—encountering hardships few of us in this Chamber could imagine. They left behind 50 relatives, none of whom survived the ghettos and concentration camps of that war. The four surviving members of the family were relocated to the United States as displaced citizens—and so began my father's career in the military and his first steps to a better future. For three years he fought with the United States Marines in the Pacific and served with honour and distinction; fighting for the freedoms we all enjoy today, a value he instilled in me from the earliest age.

It was during an R&R visit to Australia that my father met my mother, Denise Blake. She was the widow of an Australian airman, Phil Benson, a solicitor from Sydney, who was killed while flying for the Royal Air Force over Belgium. It is little wonder then that I was inherently drawn to a life in the military and to a life where the protection of the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the world, and particularly of this wonderful country, were and are always foremost in my mind. My mother, a Chatswood girl, was a very strong and resilient woman with a passionate faith in social justice. She was robust and outspoken—traits that are hereditary, a warning to my colleagues. There is a long-held belief that men marry women just like their mothers. It is a hard truth for many of us blokes to come to terms with, but I am proof of that theory. My wife Charlotte, too, is a strong and independent Danish woman who has a great strength of character and a fierce commitment to social justice and independence. She is an exceedingly smart and capable woman, who is a leader in her chosen field. She has been a rock and a mentor for me—a relationship and a commitment from her that I will be eternally grateful for.

We met in Canberra in the early 1990s and were married a few years later. Twenty years on, we are now happily settled back in Newcastle with three sons, Daniel a carpenter, Andreas an apprentice electrician, and Nikolai who is on a gap year and who possesses a rare talent for jewellery design. My family is made up of individuals, but as a unit we are extremely close. Each of my sons is very much his own person and that certainly leads to robust discussions around the kitchen table, which I hope has prepared me well for this august institution. But so has the military. After spending much of my teens and early twenties on the rugby field, I joined the Royal Australian Air Force in the late 1970s, starting my military career at the same place it ended—just north of Newcastle at the RAAF Base at Williamtown.

My career has been a humbling experience. I have been fortunate to have commanded at every level within the Royal Australian Air Force, both on operational duty in theatres of war and in a domestic sense in Australia and overseas. These command opportunities have been enormously fulfilling in themselves. The obligation to do the best for the people who work for and with you, and whose lives you are entrusted with, is an enormous responsibility, but the experience is hugely rewarding and uplifting. Having to take tough decisions that could put the lives of the people you lead in danger is a character-defining experience and one that you can never be fully prepared for. What it taught me as a person was the need to be decisive but always to temper tough decisions with sensitivity and humanity—never shirk, but never be reckless when the wellbeing of others is at stake.

I have been very fortunate to have lived and worked throughout Australia, the Asia-Pacific, the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe in my military career. But more recently I served as Deputy Commander of the Australian Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. In preparing this speech, it was suggested to me I should talk about a specific profound experience or memory from my time in the military, particularly in places like the Middle East. But it is not so much a specific experience or memory from Iraq or Afghanistan that has really stuck with me; it is the profound knowledge and understanding of just how lucky we are to live in a free and democratic country like Australia. To be able to have an election, as we did in March, carried out without conflict or riots, violence or death, is something we must never take for granted. To have an election determined and accepted, and a new Parliament introduced seemingly overnight, is a process we all must cherish.

To say my time in the Middle East was a life-changing experience is an understatement. It changed, for me, my very perception of what is important in life. It is an old cliché, I know, how we tend to find happiness from the cars we drive, or the shoes we wear, or the size of the plasma television screen we watch. But in these places, people struggle to be safe, warm and dry, and to feed and educate their families. While based in Baghdad I came to know a man who worked in a stall at markets near the base where I was stationed. Once a week he would give me a plate of dates. In return I gave him a half of my daily operational allowance. For me, it was cash I could very easily do without. But for him it was vital. It meant he could support his family—he could feed them, clothe them, educate them and house them. It left an indelible and enduring print on me.

I was not alone, of course. There were many soldiers, sailors, airmen and Federal police who helped out the locals like this. And that was what that war meant to me—seeing the very worst and the very best of humanity and society each and every day, the terrible oppression and devastation people can inflict on others, and the incredible character of the men and women who serve this country and who strive to better the life of others. They are a special breed of whom we should all be very proud.

In the military, we do not make promises we cannot keep. If we promise those brave men and women something we cannot deliver, at the very best we lose their confidence and trust; at the very worst we put their lives in danger. It is a principle that is ingrained in me, and I intend to exercise the same value in politics. I will not make statements because they sound good at the time or in that particular political climate. I will commit only to what I know I can deliver. It is not my style to raise expectations with false promises. What I promise is that I will strive relentlessly to serve the people of Newcastle.

As in the military, I now find myself surrounded by a committed and hardworking team. Without doubt, the people of Newcastle, the Hunter and indeed the State will soon see for themselves the reality of the change they set in motion when they voted for a Liberal and Nationals Government headed by Premier Barry O'Farrell. That desire for change was perhaps felt most profoundly in Newcastle, where voters in so-called Labor heartland elected the first Liberal in close to a century. For our city this is a momentous break with the past and, accordingly, I feel immense responsibility to ensure that we as a Government keep the faith and deliver on the demand for change that the people of Newcastle so clearly expressed at the ballot box.

We have a great team in the Hunter, from all sides of the political spectrum in this State. I look forward to working closely with my fellow Hunter Coalition members of Parliament—George, Robyn, Craig, Andrew and Garry. I look forward also to a healthy and productive working relationship with Hunter members opposite—Sonia, Clayton, and our independent colleague Greg Piper from Lake Macquarie. Together with the respective Federal members and the leaders of local government, I firmly believe we can all work collectively to drive the Hunter's growth and development. Since the election my core focus has been to begin to build a united approach to the betterment of Newcastle. The people of Newcastle voted for decisive action, and that is what I intend to deliver. My vision for Newcastle is one that draws on all the city's qualities. There is more to Newcastle than a coal port. Newcastle also has stunning natural beauty and a gutsy, authentic quality, which I want the world to know about.

We have the idyllic and untouched Stockton Peninsula; the community-focused suburbs of Wickham, Islington, Tighes Hill, Mayfield and Maryville; the beautiful and historic suburbs of Carrington, The Hill and Cooks Hill; the vibrant and energetic atmosphere of The Junction; the colourful suburbs of Broadmeadow and Hamilton; the superb coastline along Merewether and Bar Beach; and the family-oriented communities of Lambton, Adamstown, Georgetown and Waratah. Beyond that, the stunning beauty of Port Stephens is just to our north, the peaceful Lake Macquarie is just to our south, and the picturesque and always entertaining Hunter Valley is to our west. On top of these splendid attributes, Newcastle is also the commercial and industrial focal point of the region, incorporating the world's largest coal port, and it is the

engine room, from a resource perspective, for the State of New South Wales. How many other 47 square kilometre electorates on earth can boast all this? As the wonderful and dedicated Novocastrian the late Virginia Chadwick, AO, once opined:

Newcastle, like any area, is more than a checklist of industries and resources. It is people, the quality of life to which they aspire, and the standards they achieve, which provide in equal measure the litmus test of success and progress.

Our plan for Newcastle is to see greater investment in cultural development like education and the arts—a brilliant complement to the industrial character and natural beauty of the city. I am going to drive people and investment back into our CBD so it is a place that Novocastrians can once again be proud of. To do this, our Government has committed \$25 million towards moving the law and business faculties of the University of Newcastle into the city. This will draw 4,000 students and teachers into the CBD. After years of neglect, Newcastle will thrive on businesses and people returning to the city's streets and it will once again become the thriving hub of the region. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

We have committed also to an exciting prospect for Newcastle and the Hunter: to host the 2017 International Expo in Newcastle. I am working closely with Events NSW to bid for the expo, as it aims to promote the exchange of ideas and development of the world economy, culture, science and technology. Hosting the 2017 International Expo would obviously be a rare and wonderful opportunity for our city to gain international exposure and for our community leaders to be introduced to some of the best innovators from around the world. I am committed to finding a solution to the rail line issue, which is dividing our city, both literally and metaphorically—and has done so for decades through inaction. Our Government, as well as our Federal and local counterparts, are for the first time working together with the Newcastle community to find a solution that best meets the needs of the people of our city. I want to take the politics out of the issue and deliver the best outcome for the revitalisation of Newcastle. It is imperative that we work this issue hand in hand with the renewal of the east end of Hunter Street, in this current term of the O'Farrell Government.

I am focused also on securing funding for the Newcastle Regional Art Gallery and our burgeoning public art program. While Newcastle is known around the country for our great sports men and women and industrial pursuits, it has produced some outstanding artists of all ilks. I do not believe enough attention or money has been invested into harnessing the talents of our creative men and women. The time has come for this to change. Other projects that I will work tirelessly to see underway include developing the Anzac Memorial Walk ready for the 100th Anzac anniversary in 2015, increasing cycling paths in the city, and revitalising our crumbling surf life saving facilities. These projects will capitalise on the electorate's natural beauty, encourage a healthier lifestyle within the community, and improve our attractiveness to out-of-town visitors. Health and education are clearly portfolios where I will be beating a path to the responsible Ministers' doors to ensure that we receive an improved share of the essential development and resourcing our Government has committed to those portfolios.

Newcastle would not survive without industry, like the further essential development of our port and diversification of our industrial base. We have such great opportunities for increased employment and economic growth in our city and close surrounds. I will strongly support both the government and commercial interests to encourage the growth of our employment and industries, but I will ensure that development is done in harmony with our community. I see my role as the member for Newcastle as securing the Hunter its fair share from governments at all levels. That is something that I, and I am sure my other Hunter colleagues who sit behind me today, want to see addressed. The Premier's announcement and commitment to the Hunter Infrastructure Fund is the first step towards that.

As the member for Newcastle, I will serve my constituents with passion, conviction and an unwavering commitment to their best interests. Before the election I told the people of Newcastle that if elected I would conduct myself in an open and transparent manner—a promise I intend to keep. Serving as their eyes and ears and voice in government I will stand up for the people of Newcastle. We will no longer be the forgotten city. As I have said before, being elected as the member for Newcastle is both a great honour and a privilege. A number of people were central to making that possible, and I would now like to acknowledge their contributions. First, I thank my family. My wife Charlotte and sons have been the rock on which my entire career has been built. They have loved and supported me unconditionally through sometimes challenging times in my career, and wholeheartedly I thank them for that. Without them I would not be here today.

I thank also my small but loyal campaign team members who sit in the public gallery today: Josh Hodges, Hugh, Lauren and Rosemary Thomson, Luke Grant, Hans, James and Maggie Gause, Ted Hayes,

Colleen Hodges, Glenys Keir, Phil and Karen Mc Kenny, Sophie Mill, Angus Harker, Laurie Tabart, Don and Colleen Pyder, and Dean Tyler. They gave up many hours, days and weeks during the election campaign. They were by my side from early morning until late at night, doorknocking, handing out pamphlets, manning booths and so much more. Without their commitment to my campaign, and ultimately the city of Newcastle, I would not be standing here tonight as the member for Newcastle. My thanks go also to the hugely enthusiastic team that manned all our electorate booths on 26 March 2011. It was the first time in the party's history in Newcastle that we had manned every booth and outgunned any other party in numbers. Their contribution on the day was a defining moment and a fitting summation of the Liberal campaign in Newcastle this year.

I thank my Liberal and Nationals colleagues for their help and support during the campaign and for their continued support following my election. In particular, I thank Mike Gallacher, Mike Baird, Clint McGilvray and Rod Bosman—thanks guys. I apologise in advance to the Ministers of this Government because I will be bashing down their doors. Above all, I thank the people of Newcastle for taking that giant leap of faith and electing me as their member for Newcastle. Let us work together to make Newcastle even greater than we already know it to be. At the end of it all I will be content if I have managed, if only in some very small way, to follow the example of Sir Roden Cutler, VC, one of the greatest Australians to have ever lived. It was said of him:

He was committed to a lifetime of service to his country and his fellow Australians. Both in war and peace, he displayed physical and moral courage of the highest order, linked to a lively intelligence, an embracing compassion, a keen sense of humour, devotion to his family, an uncompromising commitment to duty and humility, and one who always put others before himself.

Colleagues, thank you for your indulgence this evening.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I remind the House that the member for Swansea is about to make his inaugural speech. The House should extend to him the normal courtesies.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [6.27 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): Parliamentary colleagues, family members, dear friends, I should warn you that I may get a little emotional during my speech. I stand here, in this place, the most honourable of all places of government, the most hallowed of all parliamentary chambers and the oldest of all such chambers in our great Commonwealth. Place yourself in the minds, if you will, of our very first elected members to this Chamber. I believe it would be reasonable to assume that each and every one of those honourable gentlemen—as they were at that time—when addressing this Chamber for the very first time, as I do now, gave some thought to us, our generation and pondered: What might I be able to do to prepare for the generations to come? That is exactly the question I ask myself today. For I am not here to prepare for today; that was a task for previous generations in this place. My task is to prepare for future members of this place and for the communities they will represent. However, the reality is that this ethic has been squandered and opportunities lost at the hands of Labor administrations over the past 16 years.

To stand in this place today is both an honour and a humbling experience; elected to this place to represent the people of Swansea—the first ever Liberal representative in the history of our electorate. The people of Swansea have entrusted me with their exasperations, their frustrations and, most of all, their aspirations and expectations. On 26 March 2011 the people of Swansea gave us loudly and clearly a message: We have been given a once in a generation opportunity as an alternative to the arrogance, the ineptitude, the neglect, the corruption and criminality of the past 16 years. The people of Swansea gave us a mandate to plan and to build for the future, a mandate that the people of Swansea have never before given to a conservative party.

The electorate of Swansea was one of those Labor heartland seats, a seat that Labor could never lose. It was, and to a large extent still is, an electorate populated by coalminers and people who were previously steelworkers, people who until 26 March 2011 religiously supported the Labor Party. But these people have now turned their collective back on their traditional political representatives and placed their future in our hands. But our mandate has come with a caveat which states, "Earn and maintain our trust, or we will see you out just as we saw you in." I take this opportunity to acknowledge the former member for Swansea, Mr Robert Coombs, and I wish him and his family well. I also offer my congratulations to my fellow newly elected parliamentary colleagues, as well as those who have been returned to this place to form the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales.

This Parliament, with its leader Premier Barry O'Farrell, has already started its four-year journey of recovery and rebuilding. We have begun a most challenging era of endeavours for the people of New South

Wales and confronting the challenges, no doubt, will result in profound and great new beginnings for the people of this great State. For my part on this journey, I look forward to achieving great things with all my parliamentary colleagues but, in particular, working for the benefit of our region as a whole with my local colleagues Minister George Souris, member for the Upper Hunter; Minister Robyn Parker, member for Maitland; Craig Baumann, member for Port Stephens; Andrew Cornwell, member for Charlestown; Tim Owen, member for Newcastle; as well as my local colleagues across the floor, they include my mayor from Lake Macquarie City Council and friend, Greg Piper, member for Lake Macquarie; Sonia Hornery, member for Wallsend; and Clayton Barr, the recently elected member for Cessnock. Because the electorate of Swansea extends south to the Central Coast, I am also in a position to have as my colleagues the Central Coast members: Darren Webber, member for Wyong; Chris Spence, member for The Entrance; Minister Chris Hartcher, member for Terrigal; and Chris Holstein, member for Gosford.

I note that several of my colleagues in their inaugural speeches have tried to convince us why their particular electorate stands out, including bizarre characteristics such as the way the inhabitants walk or whether God speaks to them directly or through someone else. I have to say that they have wasted their time because Swansea, which extends from Jewells—what a great name—in the north to Budgewoi in the south, is bounded by Lake Macquarie to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east. Our coastline contains some of the most pristine beaches in the world and Lake Macquarie is the largest saltwater lake in the Southern Hemisphere. And, of course, Lake Macquarie is the home of that institution of all institutions—and I note some representatives from the institution are here tonight—the famous Belmont 16 Foot Sailing Club, host to numerous national and international regattas and a fabulous venue for weddings, parties and conventions, just call Kylie or Adam.

In regard to my comments about the Belmont 16 Foot Sailing Club, corner of The Parade and Ross Streets, Belmont, please note my declaration of pecuniary interest. But there is more. We are just a short drive from the world-famous vineyards of the Hunter Valley. It is known that the original inhabitants of Swansea are the Awabakal people. It is said that the Awabakal people, amongst other things, would race their bark canoes up and down Swansea channel. Several decades ago an archaeological excavation at a known Aboriginal campsite at Swansea Heads unearthed human remains. These remains were subsequently carbon dated at almost 8,000 years. Clearly, the Awabakal people knew well before any of their neighbours what a wonderful place Swansea was to raise the kids, after all, they have not moved in over 8,000 years. So, sorry Charles, Strathfield just does not cut it.

Two weeks ago I met with some lovely children from Nords Wharf Public School who interviewed me as part of a writing competition by a local newspaper. One of their questions was why I had entered politics. My answer was that the lack of expenditure on asset maintenance within the electorate over 16 years needed to be addressed, assets such as sewerage and drainage and roads urgently needed upgrading and provision for future works needed to be made. In addition, the last Government's cost cutting to local government had caused local councils to face major cuts in services that traditionally were provided by that level of government.

Like many electorates across this once great State antisocial behaviour, law and order, is the major single issue of concern for the people of Swansea, especially elderly constituents. Swansea has had an unmanned police station for almost seven years. Our community deserves the security of having police on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We will work towards that end in the short term. Our electorate is heavily dependent upon small business. In particular, there are many registered clubs within Swansea and these clubs provide employment for thousands of our constituents. Legislation affecting registered clubs needs to be relaxed, and red tape cut, not made more restrictive.

To put more obstacles before clubs will mean not only job losses but also huge cuts to many volunteer organisations that traditionally have been the beneficiaries of huge grants from the many registered clubs. These organisations in our electorate include surf life saving clubs, the Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue, a myriad of various types of sporting clubs and even local hospitals. As I have alluded to, Swansea is extremely fortunate to have many volunteer organisations. These organisations are heavily dependent upon the success of their local registered clubs. The members of these organisations contribute selflessly to their communities and also to the benefit of visitors to those communities. These volunteer groups include again surf life saving clubs, the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue and our very own Sailability. We must guarantee the sustainability of these organisations; we must not threaten their very existence.

The Pacific Highway runs entirely through our electorate. It (the Pacific Highway) already exceeds capacity at several locations. About two years ago the previous Government advised Lake Macquarie City

Council that it required the council to apply to the then planning Minister to have a road corridor rezoned in order that the corridor could be disposed of. The corridor had been on the books of the Roads and Traffic Authority for some 70 years. This corridor, which would be crucial to future communities within our electorate, has now been abandoned. Failure to provide this critical piece of infrastructure clearly would be a failure in our duty of care towards these future communities. It is my ambition to have this road corridor reinstated by our Coalition Government. In this regard, I will work hand in hand once again with the member for Charlestown, Andrew Cornwell, and the member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, as the bypass traverses through each of their electorates as well.

Several people have had a major impact on my life and they have helped to shape the person that I am today. One such person passed away 40 years before I was born. That person was my maternal great-grandfather, David Scott. My great-grandfather Scott was a member of this House. In fact, he was the Mayor of Carrington and he went on to be the member for Newcastle from 1891 to 1894—an honour, I am pleased to say, that has now been bestowed on my good friend and colleague Tim Owen. David Scott was the driving force behind the illumination of the streets of Newcastle. In fact, he was chair of the parliamentary committee for that very initiative. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

He was also a successful businessman and operated an iron foundry in Newcastle, the site of which is said to be the present-day Civic Park in King Street, Newcastle. Great grandfather Scott came to Australia as an immigrant from Fife in Scotland, I suspect to prospect for gold, because at one time he left Australia for California, presumably to do just that, and was absent for four years. He returned possibly because he realised that the only people making any money in the gold rush were those selling the shovels. As a child I would be enthralled by the stories of great grandfather Scott as told to me by another person who had a great influence on me: my late aunt, Phoebe Ellen Roberts nee Scott. She had an enormous influence on me as I was growing up. She gave me love and guidance in abundance.

My paternal grandfather, Frank Edwards, died when I was fairly young so I did not have the opportunity to know him well. But certainly as I grew older I developed a respect and admiration for him and for what he had done for us. During World War I he celebrated his eighteenth birthday on the battlefields of France as an artillery cavalry sergeant. Not long after arriving in France he suffered severe injuries from an explosion whilst riding the lead horse of a gun carriage. He was sent to a military hospital in England and upon his recovery returned to the battlefields of France. But as his luck would have it, he once again suffered severe injuries from an explosion, once again whilst riding the lead horse of a gun carriage. This time following his recovery in England he was repatriated home to Australia.

I acknowledge both my parents, Keith and Betty Edwards, who are in the public gallery. As for my mum, I thank her because when I was about three or four years of age she apparently took a huge swing at me but did not make contact; she lost her balance, fell and broke her arm in seven places—thanks for not making contact, mum! I also thank my mum for regularly calling me in from playing street cricket from about the age of five so that she could teach me how to clean the bath and iron clothes. She would always say, "If something happens to me, you need to learn these things." I'm proud to say that today I am a most proficient ironer of shirts—a skill that comes in handy for a busy parliamentarian. One thing my mum discovered about me early on was that when she asked me to weed the garden it very quickly became denuded of all vegetation—a ploy that ensured I had a very short gardening career.

I also thank my dad for everything that he sacrificed in supporting me, my mum and my brother, Ken. Dad served in the Navy throughout the South Pacific during World War II, and when he returned home money was very scarce, as it was for many people. Dad worked six days a week to provide for us—my mother, brother and me—and my parents were lucky enough to be able to buy a Housing Commission home in Dundas Valley, Sydney, in about 1957. As a child my brother had severe health problems. He was diagnosed as having a hole in his heart and required open-heart surgery at the age of five. At that time he was the only survivor out of three young children who underwent the same procedure at Camperdown Children's Hospital. Although we had little money, dad managed to send both my brother and me to a fabulous school, Oakhill College at Castle Hill, which was run by the De La Salle Brothers. I acknowledge some of my colleagues who are also old boys from De La Salle schools. It is good to see that the brothers have done their work well and produced a number of members of this House.

From about the age of nine I became involved in surf lifesaving with the Corrimal Surf Club in the Illawarra. At the age of 15 I transferred to South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club, along with my dad. The Swansea electorate has four surf life saving clubs, and I intend to work very closely with each and every one of them. I recall as a young 15- or 16-year-old when my dad asked that I go to work with him one Saturday

morning. He took me to work and we drove to a little old bootmaker's shop in Cleveland Street, Moore Park. I had no idea what we were doing there. My dad introduced me to the old chap in the bootmaker's shop—I believe his name was Perce. Perce measured my feet, whereupon my dad told me, "Perce handmakes football boots for all of the South Sydney Rabbitohs players". Perce measured my feet to make handmade white leather running spikes. It was just unbelievable that dad was paying for me to get white leather running spikes. That year I set a senior 800 metres record on the Sydney Cricket Ground at the combined De La Salle schools athletics—a record I am proud to say stood for 20 years, making me the first De La Salle student in Australia to run 800 metres under two minutes. I think my dad was pretty damned proud of that! So thanks for the running spikes, Dad. I would probably still do them justice.

After leaving school I continued to play rugby for a while with the Dundas Valley Vikings. I was pretty accident prone so my career did not last that long. I reached the lofty heights of second division rugby union and played in one grand final—only to lose it after being undefeated for the entire season. I married my late wife, Lynette, in 1974 and we had two daughters, Julia and Loretta. In 1997 Lynette succumbed to an 18-month battle with breast cancer. Following Lynette's death my younger daughter, Loretta, advised me that she wanted to move to Newcastle and attend the Marie Walton Mahon Dance Academy. Loretta hoped to follow in the footsteps of her late mum, who was a classical ballerina. Had it not been for Lynette's passing it is highly doubtful that I would ever have moved to the Hunter, and therefore would never have set foot in this place.

Before moving to Newcastle I ran a conveyancing practice, having not quite completed my law studies through the Solicitors and Barristers Admissions Board. I have worked in legal practices for the past 25-odd years. In recent years I have become involved in local government. Currently I am a councillor and deputy mayor of Lake Macquarie City Council, a role that has given me insight into the important issues affecting my electorate at both local and State levels. Two of the joys of my life are my granddaughters, Bridgette and Kaela. I am also reliably informed that I am about to welcome my first grandson in August this year. And for that I thank Loretta and Carl—well done, good job.

There are many people I wish to thank for their ongoing support and commitment. First, I acknowledge my partner, Pat. If it were not for Pat assuredly I would not be here. For a number of years Pat dedicated time to my political activities instead of putting time into revenue-raising activities. She has kept me on the straight and narrow. Pat put my State campaign together in 2007 and she repeated the effort this year. Pat had each and every one of our Swansea booths manned in 2007; it was the first time that every booth had been manned in the campaign for the Liberal Party in Swansea. Had it not been for manning each and every booth we almost certainly would have come in second and I would not be standing in this House today. Only I will ever know the extent of Pat's contribution to our success—and I mean our success, thanks babe!

Thank you to all our friends from Newcastle, Belmont, Swansea, Ashfield, Venezuela and the Philippines—we have got them all—who came up on the night before the election and were awake at dawn on the day setting up polling booths. Thank you to Dey and Edna, and our battleground coordinator and sometime travel agent, Rod Bosman. Also a very special mention to campaigner extraordinaire Sylvia Lee, who was out and about at all hours, in all types of weather, letterbox dropping and knocking on doors. Thanks, Syl. I also thank Graham Rogers, Anthony Birt, Anthony Delore and their wives for allowing them to devote so much time to the campaign. Thanks also to June Turner, Katherine and Ale, Paul Maydon, and Mike and Rosey Scully, who are here tonight. A number of family members have also travelled to be here tonight—my brother, Ken, my cousin, Cherylynn Norris, as well as Helen Young and her husband, Graham, who have come all the way from Valentine and Swansea to be here tonight. I thank you all.

Also here are Allan and Lyn Benson, who have travelled from Belmont. I appreciate the friendship and assistance of Lake Macquarie City Council General Manager Brian Bell and thank him for all his encouragement. I look forward to having an even closer working relationship with Mr Bell and Lake Macquarie City Council now that I am the member for Swansea. To my colleagues and fellow directors at that institution called the Belmont 16 Foot Sailing Club, I thank you for your ongoing support not only for me but for the Swansea branch of the Liberal Party; you never hesitate to provide us with accommodation for meetings and fundraising functions, sometimes at very short notice. I thank the chief executive officer, Scott Williams, president Dave Berriman, vice-president John Flannigan, commodore Troy Dobinson, captain Lloyd Mulholland and fellow directors Alan Grey, Mike Scully, Brian Ellis, Sean Harris, Craig Corke and James Griffiths.

Thank you to Mike Gallacher, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, for his ongoing support and encouragement. Thank you to Chris Hartcher, Minister for Resources and Energy, and Jillian Skinner, Minister

for Health. Also special mention goes to Minister Gladys Berejiklian who, upon setting eyes on me for the very first time in Parliament House recently, informed me that the last time she met me was at a meeting at Belmont and that when she left she thought to herself, "That's the last time I'm going to see that bloke. We will never win Swansea." Thank you, Gladys.

Mr Acting-Speaker, colleagues on both sides of the House, I thank you for your courtesy in listening to this speech.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I join all members of the House in congratulating the member for Swansea on his inaugural speech and welcome him to the class of 2011. Before I call the member for Riverstone, I remind the House that this is the member's inaugural speech and ask the House to extend to him the conventional courtesies.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [6.54 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I rise today for the first time to address this, the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales, conscious of the great privilege and the great responsibility bestowed on me by the people of the Riverstone electorate. It is wonderful to stand here as a member of a Government led by Barry O'Farrell and Andrew Stoner. The trust placed in me is humbling, the challenges ahead are daunting and the opportunity to do good is exciting. As I stand here I thank God for the talents He has given me, for the upbringing and education that have allowed me to develop those talents, and for the opportunities that He has presented to me throughout my life to this point.

First, let me reflect on the wonderful thing that is democracy in New South Wales and Australia. We are so blessed to live in a country at a time when we enjoy peace, stability and freedom. We live in a State where the views of citizens can find their expression in this place and where we are all afforded the benefits of the rule of law, freedom of association and religion, freedom of speech, and the opportunity to lead our own lives according to our own vision. These blessings have largely been inherited rather than earned. We owe so much to so many generations who went before us. We owe more than we generally recognise to our Christian heritage, from which the moral basis of our law and culture has evolved and which has driven much of the enlightened and compassionate reform of western societies.

We owe a great deal too to the British heritage that spawned the institutions and constitutional arrangements in which our freedom has prospered. We owe an enormous debt to those who have fought for this country to protect those freedoms. I note that today this House acknowledged the ultimate sacrifice made by Sergeant Brett Wood on behalf of our country earlier this week. We also owe a great deal to those many good men and women over generations who have served in our parliaments, courts, public service and free press, because freedom must be nurtured and supported to survive. We cannot take for granted that our State and country will always enjoy the political freedom we now have. It is our duty to carry out our responsibilities in such a way as to pass on this blessed heritage to future generations of people in New South Wales.

For those reasons I encourage people, especially young people, who are considering making a contribution to the political process at whatever level to take the plunge and become involved so that our democratic system is constantly reinvigorated and refreshed. If more people take an active part, our democracy can only be the better for it. My working life has been spent in the worthy vocation of education. As a high school teacher I had the privilege of helping young people discover their talents and abilities. It is a delight—and has been for a number of years now—to come across former students who have done well for themselves and who are making worthwhile contributions to their community. While dealing with adolescents all day can have its challenges, I can honestly say that when I moved from classroom teaching into the "back office" of educational administration, I missed the interaction with the kids whom I used to teach.

While working for the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Parramatta, I was fortunate to have as colleagues an array of people of talent, principle and commitment, whose service to the children and young people in that diocese has been outstanding. From them I learnt lessons about service, responsibility and integrity, which I trust will assist me in my new role. The founding director of the Catholic Education Office in the diocese of Parramatta, Ann Clark, used to remind those of us who worked in Catholic education that we stood on the shoulders of giants—those who had founded the system of Catholic schools in Australia. In the same vein I can say that I have had the privilege of working alongside giants in the schools and in the office during my time at Parramatta Catholic Education.

Prior to entering Parliament, I was fortunate enough to serve my local community as a councillor in local government. In this role, I have enjoyed being able to make a difference to outcomes for people in a hands-on and up-close manner. It has been inspiring to meet so many generous people engaged in voluntary activities, in many cases serving their local community over many decades. The experience of working with

good-hearted local volunteers can be inspiring and enriching. As other local councillors such as the Acting-Speaker Mr Gareth Ward will know, there is also the reality of regular scrutiny and criticism to keep one humble. It is, of course, impossible to please all of the people all of the time.

My election as member for Riverstone would not have been possible without the help of my family. I could not be standing here today without the role played by my wife, Cathie, over many years. It has been a long journey for me and there have been some difficult moments in that journey. I pay tribute to Cathie for the role she has played in keeping me on the straight and narrow—keeping me standing up throughout it all. Our six children, Jessica, Joe, Patrick, Megan, Ben and Olivia, and my parents, Clarrie and Joan, have been an immense source of strength and support over the years that I have engaged in the political journey that has seen me arrive here in 2011.

As I first ran for Parliament in 1999 and had been involved in Federal, State and local campaigns since I joined the Liberal Party some years earlier than that, polling booths and election campaigns have been a very large part of my family's life. I cannot thank them enough for their support, enthusiasm and patience. In 2010 and 2011 Pat, in particular, made a huge contribution to my campaign and can take credit for a fair share of the 30 per cent swing we achieved. At two years old and two months old, my little granddaughters Millie and Lexie, who are here tonight in the gallery, are a tad too young to be press-ganged as booth workers, but they definitely help me to remember what life is all about and have opened up to me the joys of being a grandparent.

I am indebted to an enormous number of Liberal Party members, friends and supporters. There are so many people who deserve my thanks that I hesitate to mention some people and not others, but I really do have to put on the record my gratitude to Helen Russell, who was an absolute dynamo in the campaign office, Chris Winslow, Elizabeth Banks, Nathan Zamprogno, Brett Sprague, Sean Fannin, Jared Jacobsen, Jaymes Diaz, all of the Diaz family, Wal Smith, Judy and Bob Newland, and June and Barry Locock. There were so many others—hundreds of others—who were willing, energetic and generous of their time and effort to help me to complete this task and achieve the goal that I had set myself on behalf of the people of Riverstone. I am thankful to all of them for that.

Special thanks must go to Mark Hrycek, Chris Stone and Mark Neeham of the Liberal Party campaign team. I have never seen a campaign managed better. I thank also Paul Fakes, Eric and Joan Jordan, Ian Gilbertson and Rod Rose, who were so generous in their support of me in earlier campaigns. I need to acknowledge too the generous support of Mike Gallacher, Greg Smith and his family, Marie Ficarra, David Clarke, Chris Hartcher and many other members of the Liberal parliamentary party. My thanks go as well to Louise Markus, Kerry Bartlett and Alan Cadman, who have been friends and supportive colleagues over many years. I would like to record my gratitude for the support and trust shown to me by Peter Debnam in the 2007 campaign.

In recent months I was delighted to receive warm encouragement from a number of religious, ethnic and cultural communities represented within the Riverstone electorate. I thank Yadu Singh and Jagwinder Virk of the Indian community, Prasan Ulluwishewa and Lal Rankothge of the Sri Lankan community, Manny Villon of the Filipino Australian Cultural Centre at Schofields, Mahmood Ahmed of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community at Marsden Park and Zahir Ahmed for their assistance. I am looking forward to working with each of the various ethnic, religious and cultural groups within my electorate so that together we can help to make a better life for all members of our wider community. The Riverstone electorate was created in 1981 and has been represented by three members prior to my election, all from the Labor Party. The first of those who I acknowledge in the Chamber this evening now represents the seat of Mount Druitt in this Parliament. I acknowledge too the contribution made by my predecessor John Aquilina, who retires after 30 years with widespread respect and regard within the community. I wish him well for the future.

As members of the class of 2011 have been making their inaugural speeches, there has been something of a competition among them in praise of their electorates. I am not going to argue, as the previous speaker mentioned, with the member for Strathfield when he claims that people in his electorate walk faster than anywhere else, and I will allow the member for Blue Mountains her rhapsody over the beauty of the rugged mountain scenery in her electorate, but I do believe that in Riverstone we have a combination of heritage and youthful dynamism unmatched anywhere in the State. Throughout the electorate of Riverstone there are numerous sites at which it is possible to find evidence of the long history of the Darug people who lived in western Sydney for so long before the arrival of Europeans. In the townships of Windsor and Riverstone, at Rouse Hill and elsewhere we have everyday reminders of the early days of the colony of New South Wales.

The town of Windsor was established in 1794 as the settlement of Green Hills. An ancestor of mine, Thomas Gosper, was one of the pioneer settlers, albeit an involuntary one, who received a land grant in the district at the time. The fine public architecture of Francis Greenway, the humble homes of early settlers and the industrial architecture of the Riverstone meatworks each tell their story about the early days of the district, as does the Richmond railway line, which was built in the 1860s linking Windsor with Sydney via country stops at Riverstone, Schofields and Quakers Hill, pretty much as it does today. The newer suburbs of Acacia Gardens, Glenwood, Stanhope Gardens and Kellyville Ridge are dynamic places bristling with energy and ideas, as is the Nirimba education precinct at Quakers Hill. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Since the 1980s thousands of people have moved to these suburbs in search of a good life for themselves and their families. Elsewhere in the electorate we have some of the most rapidly developing parts of the State, with new housing springing up in The Ponds and Colebee almost as I speak. As a result, the electorate has the largest number of enrolled voters of any in the State. Whichever one of these localities people live in, they are proud and protective of their neck of the woods and they expect no less of their Government than communities anywhere else in the State.

Rapid growth provides the context for many of the challenges facing the electorate. The timely provision of necessary infrastructure, especially in transport, is foremost among these. The lack of a rail line serving the new suburbs, the lack of an overpass at Riverstone and the traffic bottlenecks throughout the district remain to be confronted. The need for new schools, a police station, extra hospital capacity and other services loom as issues for the term of this Parliament. I mean to be a persistent and consistent advocate for the people of Riverstone in meeting these and other needs as they present themselves. It is wonderful to see that already steps are being taken to progress the much-needed North West Rail Link.

A particular challenge facing people in the northern and western parts of the Riverstone electorate is the risk posed by major flooding. While the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system has not experienced a major flood since 1992, we all saw in late 2010 and early this year what floods can do when Queensland, parts of northern and southern New South Wales and Victoria experienced major downpours. Should the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment one day experience rainfall on the scale that affected south-east Queensland in January this year, the devastation across western Sydney would be immense and the risk of large-scale loss of life very real. Planning to address these risks cannot be overlooked.

Much of what happens in this Parliament occurs on an adversarial basis and it often appears that members of different parties or factions are enemies. While there certainly is plenty of rivalry in politics, I believe that my real enemies are not other members of Parliament but those things that would undermine the welfare of and reduce the opportunities available to the people of New South Wales. These enemies include poverty, disease, homelessness, corruption and the breakdown of family relationships. It will be my goal to confront those enemies on behalf of the people I represent and to do whatever I can to maximise the opportunities for a good life for all. In particular, I want to contribute to policies which will support marriage and family life and which assist people to build communities that are nurturing and supportive of their members.

I am proud to be a member of the Liberal Party. This is the party that respects both the rights and the responsibilities of individuals. It is committed to personal freedom and to the protection of those unable to fend for themselves. The Liberal Party is not the party of any one interest group, but is broad based and draws support from across the full spectrum of the community. Its members comprise small business people, self-employed people and employees, people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and faith traditions, city and country folk and the young and old. Importantly, it spans the conservative and liberal traditions within Australian politics and respects the conscience of individual members.

Liberal philosophy and values have much to offer in the task of ensuring that our State is a great place to live and offers the best chance of a good life to all its citizens. I would like to think that when my time here is done I will be able to look back and say that I have made a positive difference both to my local area and to the people of New South Wales. I would like to think that I will be able to say that I stood by my principles and contributed to good government based on good values. I look forward to working with everyone of goodwill in this place for the betterment of our society in New South Wales.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I join with members of the House in congratulating the member for Riverstone and welcome him to the class of 2011. Before I call the member for Charlestown, I remind the House that this is his inaugural speech and ask members to extend to him the usual courtesies.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [7.15 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): In the Speaker's Square just outside this Chamber is a memorial plaque for a former member of this House, William Matthew Currey. Bill Currey, as he was known, was the member for Kogarah from 1941 until his untimely death in 1948. The plaque was paid for with money raised by his constituents in recognition of his service. Bill Currey is the only Victoria Cross winner to have served in the New South Wales Parliament. He was a humble man who led an extraordinary life. Bill attended Dudley Public School located in my electorate of Charlestown. Dudley Public School holds the extraordinary distinction of having produced two Victoria Cross recipients—the only school in New South Wales to do so and part of a very select group worldwide. Bill Currey and his fellow recipient, Clarence Jeffries, both attended Dudley Public School in the early part of the twentieth century when Dudley was a mining village surrounded by bush and was several hours horse ride from Newcastle. A humble community had produced two giants of the First World War.

Bill received his award for extraordinary gallantry during actions in the Somme in 1918 and despite receiving serious gas wounds went on to make a substantial contribution to New South Wales. Clarence Jeffries was not so fortunate. At Passchendaele on 12 October 1917, Joshua and Barbara Jeffries lost their only son, our community lost a noted cricketer and keen horseman and Dudley Public School lost one of its finest. Clarence is buried in Tyne Cot Cemetery, West Flanders, Belgium. Dudley is no longer an isolated mining village. However, the strong sense of community that produced two such selfless men is just as evident in Dudley today.

My electorate comprises a dozen or so of these nineteenth century villages that have coalesced over the past 130 years to form the link between Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. Each of these townships has its own individual character, but they all share this same sense of community. For the past 13 years I have had the enormous privilege to serve one such township, Cardiff, as a local vet. This role is in some ways not dissimilar to being a member of Parliament. One gets to meet people from all walks of life. This may be at a time of great joy or during times of great personal crisis. However, the most rewarding aspect of both is that people have asked you to serve them. They have entrusted you with the job of providing advocacy, advice or assistance, and sometimes all three. I have always tried to approach this with sincerity, honesty and compassion as a vet, and I hope to approach my new role as local member with the same qualities.

The wonderful characters that one is blessed to encounter throughout a career help to shape one's own character and make every day enjoyable. Duncan Diplock was one such personality. Despite being in his early nineties, Duncan would regularly tuck his trusty Chihuahua Rocket under his arm and walk several kilometres to the veterinary hospital. He had one of those unfailingly cheerful dispositions and upon entering the room would always greet me with the same line: "Just remember, it's Duncan not drunken." Rocket's heart was starting to fail but Duncan would be at the surgery every month to have Rocket's health checked and his medication adjusted accordingly.

One morning Duncan arrived at the surgery with a new pup, which is generally a bit presumptuous when you are in your early nineties. One of my nurses was able to glean from Duncan that Rocket was no longer with us. As Duncan entered the room I expressed my sorrow that Rocket had passed away. Duncan's cheerful expression vanished and he firmly informed me, "Rocket didn't pass away, he was murdered." Obviously I was a bit taken aback at Duncan's choice of words, however he proceeded to inform me that the neighbour's goat had jumped the fence and chased the elderly Rocket around the yard, leading to his demise. The last time I saw Duncan was on Anzac Day 2008, proudly marching with his fellow veterans. Despite his diminutive stature he stood tall and proud, his right arm obviously strengthened from carrying Rocket to Cardiff. I still smile every time I see one of his family members and the image of his cheerful disposition still brightens the room. In many respects Duncan is a metaphor for my electorate. He was humble yet had a rich story to tell; he was independent yet he possessed a great community spirit and his legacy still brightens people's lives.

I place on record my thanks to the people of Charlestown for placing their trust in me to represent them. I will always honour that trust. The people have in me someone who will work hard for them, who will listen to them and represent them, and who will respect and defend the values and traditions that have made our region great. The electorate of Charlestown straddles two local government areas, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. It possesses a rapidly expanding town centre, Charlestown itself, which should continue to expand as one of the major service and retail hubs of the Hunter and New South Wales. The electorate possesses numerous smaller town centres—Cardiff, Warners Bay, Kotara, Windale, Mount Hutton, Whitebridge, Kahibah and Adamstown. They contain the butcher, the florist, the dentist, the GP, the pharmacist and the newsagent.

I note that on their visit to Cardiff on 24 March this year the Premier and several members of the shadow Cabinet took time to call into Impact Tattoos. I also note that Scott from Impact Tattoos has informed

me that he has a vacancy for the member for Willoughby to receive her "make New South Wales No. 1 again" tattoo. These small businesses, and more importantly the people in them, are a daily point of contact for all of us who share our community. We need to support these businesses by ensuring our main streets are safe and comfortable environments for their patrons and therefore ensure people use these public spaces. Social media such as Facebook cannot replace the personal contact your main street provides. Each of the communities within my electorate deserves to have town centres to be proud of. We must help to provide a decent built environment, and equally we must ensure the New South Wales economy is competitive so that small business can flourish. The Premier understands this all too well as he has just taken over the running of a rundown small business called New South Wales. However I, along with most of us here, believe it has the potential to grow.

In the Hunter, business growth has been stymied by a failure of government to invest in infrastructure. Our region produces more than 20 per cent of the State product, has 10 per cent of the population, and yet receives less than 5 per cent of government investment. Call me cynical, but the fact that the Hunter has been a bastion of safe Labor seats has not helped. There has also been a history in the Hunter of local members having competing interests and priorities. This has resulted in a disjointed message being presented to Cabinet, and as a result there has been a failure of decision-making in our area. We have been treated like fools in the past with grandiose schemes being promised prior to each election and then quickly shelved shortly after with a scoping study that conveniently questions the project's viability. Fast trains, submarine contracts and steel mills have all been dusted off prior to an election, but quietly consigned to the bottom drawer afterwards. On 26 March this year the Hunter consigned years of faithful political trust to the bottom drawer and took control of its own destiny.

Over the next four years I will work collectively and collaboratively with all Hunter members to ensure we deliver the best possible outcomes for our region. We will do this by making the important decisions, rather than sitting on our hands. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to methodically begin to plan for our region's future, to examine projects on their economic and social merits, and to deliver infrastructure that will unlock our region's enormous, unrealised potential. We in the Hunter have been doing our share of the heavy lifting for many years. Provide our region with the tools and we can drive the New South Wales economy through this century. We have a skilled workforce. We have a world-class university to help train that workforce. We have a strong work ethic. Our region is blessed with fabulous natural resources in a breathtakingly beautiful environment. The townships in my electorate are separated by bush corridors, which enable each area to have its own unique identity. We possess two magnificent coastal parks with expanses of heath on the cliff tops and patches of littoral rainforest around hidden waterfalls. Most importantly, we possess people with the will to make the Hunter a better place to live. We do have it all.

As a consequence our region is a great place to spend your childhood. I had a very blessed childhood. I was raised in a happy home by two loving parents, Brien and Alida, with my younger sisters Helen and Jane. My parents always emphasised the value of hard work, and they sacrificed to give my sisters and me a quality education. These are views that I hold today and I see it as a key responsibility of a State member of Parliament to ensure that constituents have access to world-class public education. Access to great teachers in well-resourced schools provided me with the opportunity to enter the University of Sydney in 1988 to study veterinary science. Achieving the marks to gain entry to this field is difficult and I applaud recent efforts to change the possible entry paths. Many students who would make fine veterinarians have previously been unable to do so because they are competing for entry with students who have come from positions of relative educational advantage. If you want to increase the numbers of veterinarians working in regional areas then you need to increase recruitment from west of the "sandstone curtain."

Following graduation I had the great privilege of working in Griffith in the Riverina with David Harding. David is one of those fabulous people who have dedicated their lives to serving their community. David was one of the first vets to establish a practice in what was considered a relatively remote area. David was awarded an Order of Australia in 2010 and has recently retired. His commitment to service is still an inspiration to me and I hope to mirror his dedication in my new role as a member of Parliament. The long hours associated with being a country vet often involve the telephone ringing at all hours of the night. It did not take me long to discover that personal counselling seemed to be a bit of a theme in the late-night phone calls. One particular client who had been attending our vet hospital for around 40 years springs to mind. He was wizened from a lifetime of working under the Riverina sun; possibly a bit too wizened as he was a bore driller who generally worked in the nude. Given the isolated areas he worked in this was generally not a problem. He used to boil his billy in the clinic car park while he waited, as he detested town water. About 2.00 a.m. one day the phone rang. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

It was one of those rare occasions in the Riverina when it was pouring with rain and thus I answered the phone fairly unenthusiastically. He proceeded to tell me a litany of woe about how his wolfhounds were in the tent due to the rain and what problems they were causing. After about half an hour I asked him, "What can I do for you?" He said, "I just had to talk to someone, mate; it's getting me down." As a vet these situations generally make the job worthwhile, with the possible exception of phone calls at 2.00 a.m. After several years working in veterinary practices in England I returned home to Australia. Rather than choosing the more sensible route—that being a Boeing 747—two colleagues and I chose to attempt the journey by public transport. Remarkably we were able to cross Europe, Russia, China and South-East Asia until we reached West Timor and could go no further. It certainly poses the question as to why we have found it so difficult in the Hunter to provide public transport that serves community needs. That said, I do not believe the Minister for Transport is about to revive the mule as part of an integrated public transport system. Public transport in the Hunter is disjointed and semi-functional. It will require significant willpower and investment to ensure it meets the community's needs in the coming decades. I am committed to ensuring that happens.

I returned to the Hunter in late 1997. After working in several practices in the area I eventually settled in Cardiff, joining my now business partner, Gail Melliush. If partnerships are a marriage, mine has been a particularly happy one and I thank Gail for her understanding as I undertake my new role. Soon after returning to Newcastle I met my beautiful wife, Samantha. Sam is the most talented, caring and understanding person I have ever met. We were married in 2005 and she has been a steadfast partner during our whole relationship. Sam was more than just a wonderful support during the campaign; she was a fabulous campaigner in her own right. Her hard work, advice and unfailing support enabled us to achieve the wonderful result we did.

I also thank my two children, Harry and Lachlan, who endured their father's absence during a long campaign. They are energetic, kind, adventurous and joyous. They have given me a new perspective on life. I want my children to grow up in a safe and nurturing society that provides them with opportunities—if they are prepared to work for them. I think every parent in New South Wales is entitled to feel the same. We should strive to ensure future generations have the opportunity to live in an even better society that we currently have. I should also add that my children's adventurous sides have ensured that I am very familiar with the Accident and Emergency Ward at John Hunter Hospital. This has certainly given me an understanding of the pressures our hospital staff face on a daily basis. Our commitment to provide extra beds and nurses should enable our professional staff to provide even better patient care.

They say victory has many fathers. However, in this case there are genuinely many people who deserve their share of the credit. Winning this seat was achieved by having a tremendous team behind me during the campaign. First I thank Mike Gallacher for his encouragement and support. Mike always believed this was achievable, yet without his assistance it may not have been. The longstanding members of the Liberal Party in our region must take enormous credit for keeping the flame burning through many long years. This victory belongs in a large part to them, and to people such as Virginia Chadwick who blazed a trail in a region traditionally dominated by the Labor Party. My magnificent campaign director, Rod Bosman, also needs particular thanks. Rod's experience, calmness and methodical approach ensured that our time was always spent as productively as possible. Clint McGilvray worked tirelessly, ensuring the electorate heard our positive story.

My family all took ownership of their various roles. My parents, Brien and Alida, worked tirelessly for many months and went beyond the call of duty. Thank you to my mother-in-law, Wendy, for moving in with us to help with our family during the campaign, and to my father-in-law, Beau, thank you for lending her to us. My sisters and their partners all provided invaluable expertise and manpower. My magnificent team of volunteers are far too numerous to mention individually; however to every one of you, I cannot thank you enough. You all believed in change, and both collectively and individually you delivered change. It was also an enormous help to have been surrounded by five fantastic Liberal candidates running strong campaigns. We worked as a team then, and we will continue to work as a team to deliver the best outcomes for our region, so to Robyn Parker, Tim Owen, Craig Baumann, and Garry Edwards, thank you and congratulations.

The most important thanks must go to my wife, Sam, and children, Harry and Lachlan. You are all the light of my life and I could not have achieved this without you. I wonder if these are similar to the thoughts William Currey had when he first won the seat of Kogarah all those years ago. He would have thought about his wife, Mary, and two daughters. Surely he must have reflected on the sacrifices that had been made by his mates on the fields of France, Belgium and Turkey. A humble man from Dudley, now part of the electorate I have the

privilege to represent, also had the opportunity to stand in the oldest Parliament in one of the world's great democracies. His selfless service to his community is a lesson to us all and if I can go some way towards emulating it then I will have repaid my community's trust.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I congratulate the member for Charlestown and welcome him to the class of 2011.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 7.35 p.m. until
Thursday 26 May 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
