

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Monday 30 May 2011

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 1.00 p.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALBURY ELECTORATE CULTURE AND ARTS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.00 p.m.]: Where can you live and enjoy the best of Australian culture and the arts? I am talking about the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Ballet, the Bell Shakespeare Company, the Archibald Prize paintings, the John Butler Trio, hip hop direct from Chicago or the Crusty Demons from Vegas? Sydney? Quite possibly. Canberra? Unlikely. Albury? Definitely. I am proud to say that I live in one of the cultural and arts capitals of Australia: Albury. In a competitive environment, members can imagine how hard it is for regional arts or sporting bodies to attract national and international events or acts. But Albury achieves the impossible. Albury is currently experiencing a golden year for the arts, much to the enjoyment of its residents and the increasing number of visitors. According to a new national tourism survey, visitor numbers to Albury are up by 37 per cent on the previous year. The reality is that on average 3,500 visitors spend the night in Albury. Fortunately they do not have to sit in their motel room watching television.

Stephen O'Connell, the Director of the Murray Conservatorium and President of the Association of New South Wales Regional Conservatoriums, has made a tremendous impact on the music life of Albury, and I take this opportunity to acknowledge his efforts, his success and his acumen. He leads a wonderful group of teachers and administrators at the conservatorium. In March the Murray Conservatorium helped bring the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, with its 65 musicians, to Albury. Approximately 5,000 spectators enjoyed the mesmerising performance under the stars at The Scots School oval on a perfect autumn night. Albury Entertainment Centre has been the scene of many of the highlights of this year's cultural program. The Q Brothers brought their hip hop version of *Much Ado About Nothing* from Chicago to Albury. In July the Australian Ballet's Dancers Company is performing *Don Quixote*. These treats have been brought to us through the inspired work of Brendan Maher, as manager, and Chelsea McGrath as events coordinator.

In April an exhibition of Max Dupain photographs opened at the Albury Library Museum. Of course the renowned Max Dupain is responsible for one of Australia's most famous modern photographs, the iconic "Sunbaker" from 1937. The Albury exhibition focuses on Dupain's architectural, industrial and advertising-related photography. This was his commercial phase—a time of abstract images of stacked metal pipes and stairwells. It was perhaps in this last category that, in the 1940s, Max Dupain met my mother, who was working with the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in Sydney. My mother, Joan Aplin, has told me of the times she went sailing on Sydney Harbour with Max Dupain and other friends. From January to March, over at the Art Gallery in Dean Street, you could take in the best of the famous Archibald Prize. Always stimulating, always controversial, this is a feast of portraiture. Our thanks go to Carina Clement, team leader for Albury Library; Pam Owen, team leader for the Art Gallery and collections; and Jacqui Hemsley, group leader for cultural services at Albury City Council. Thanks also to Murray Arts, whose chief executive officer is Vanessa Keenan, for assisting with arts development in our region.

All major cultural cities present their own writers' festival and in Albury this is called "Write Around the Murray". For five days in September there will be talks by prominent authors along with workshops and dinners. For the past two years the hard work of enticing established and emerging authors to our city has fallen to Robyne Young and in 2011 it now falls to Caitlin Tunstall. This year's festival promises to be bigger than ever. Several theatre companies present their shows at Albury venues. We have just enjoyed Nancy Hayes and Reg Livermore in *Turns*. In July it is Bell Shakespeare's turn with *Julius Caesar*. Here I would like to

acknowledge the wonderful work of Hothouse Theatre's Jon Halpin and Bernadette Haldane, and Livid Productions and Albury Wodonga Theatre Company, in particular for their musicals, from Monty Python's *Spamalot* in March, to the upcoming *Miss Saigon*, which opens in October.

The internationally renowned Flying Fruit Fly Circus trains in its new multimillion-dollar facility in Albury. The "Fruities" present a fabulous circus arts program for children at this centre too. Board Chair Peter Challis, General Manager Chris Pidd and Artistic Director Markus Michalowski are running a truly iconic arts organisation. And in the July school holidays an estimated 240 students will make their way to Albury from many parts of Australia, to join the thirty-seventh annual Border Music Camp. As you can see, in Albury we provide a rich cultural environment for children too.

A study recently published in the British Medical Association's *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* found that people who create art, play a musical instrument or simply attend concerts and museums are more satisfied with their lives, irrespective of how much money they have or their level of education. All of the individuals and organisations I have mentioned deserve our recognition and our thanks. They have made Albury a major destination for artists and lovers of culture. Truly, Albury is the place to live and work if you are searching for a more affordable and exciting lifestyle but do not want to sacrifice your need to experience great art, music, theatre or dance. Albury City Council has planned an expanded cultural precinct and with assistance from State and Federal governments this southern gateway to New South Wales will entrench its position as a regional centre for the arts.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [1.05 p.m.]: On the weekend I had the privilege of attending a Women of Culture dinner run by Affinity Intercultural Foundation at the Portofino Lounge in Wollongong. During the discussion on education and a number of other issues that affect women from various cultural backgrounds reference was made to the problems faced by mature age working women, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds and from blue collar areas. This got me thinking about the impacts on working women of proposed changes in the Work Health and Safety Bill 2011 and the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Bill 2011.

I recall from my days as a union official with the then Miscellaneous Workers Union, which became the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, that a very large proportion of the people I represented were mature age women from non-English speaking backgrounds who worked as cleaners and therefore worked outside what would be deemed normal working hours. They worked in very difficult situations, quite often alone and with heavy equipment. I recall one particular female, who was approximately in her mid-50s, working with a polishing machine that had a number of problems. The woman was using padding to protect her shoulders and back from injuries caused by the use of what was clearly an inappropriate piece of equipment.

These workers will be significantly disadvantaged by the proposed changes to the occupational health and safety legislation because unions will no longer be able to intervene and, if need be, to prosecute. It is important to note that this Government's first amendment to workplace safety legislation involves watering down protections, disregarding a layer of vigilance and emasculating an expert body in the Industrial Court, which was established to deal with workplace safety issues. I am not surprised that this Government has sought to do away with these protections, but I am surprised at the speed with which it has acted and that the amendments have been introduced without much consultation. The working men and women to whom I have referred have little industrial muscle and rely solely upon union representation. I am concerned about the speed at which the amending legislation has been introduced and the fact that it has been done without the consultation that those workers and their union representatives expect.

It is no surprise that this Government is targeting the unions, the union movement and the people they represent, but the speed at which it has done so is surprising. My concern for these workers was brought to the fore during my discussions with women from various cultural working groups at last weekend's function. I am very concerned that the Government's legislation proposes to do away with the right of unions to prosecute. If it is passed, it will lower workplace safety standards and offer fewer protections for workers. As I have indicated previously in this place, workers who cannot afford legal fees may well pay the price for amendments made too quickly and without sufficient consultation. It is imperative that these people are protected.

SOUTH COAST ELECTORATE ROADWORKS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [1.10 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak about roadworks that will be undertaken on the Princes Highway at South Nowra as promised by the O'Farrell

Government prior to the March election. I was also pleased to join with the candidate and now member for Kiama and Barry O'Farrell prior to the election to announce that a Coalition Government would commit \$74 million to start construction on the duplication of the Princes Highway between Kinghorne Street South and Forest Road at South Nowra.

The O'Farrell Government will upgrade 6.3 kilometres of the Princes Highway to four lanes between Kinghorne Street and Forest Road at South Nowra. This project will provide consistent four-lane conditions on the Princes Highway between Bomaderry and Jervis Bay Road, improve road safety by providing a central median strip, provide more opportunities to overtake slower vehicles safely, improve travel times and reduce vehicle operating costs through increased road and intersection capacity, improve access to many business properties, and improve safety and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The O'Farrell Government has committed to delivering this project in its first term and I am pleased that motorists of the South Coast are about to see construction begin.

I have recently met officers of the Roads and Traffic Authority to discuss the South Nowra duplication and I am pleased that progress is underway on this important project. The relocation of utilities will be completed in June and a tender will be awarded shortly. It is anticipated that construction on the duplication will begin by July. The duplication of the Princes Highway at South Nowra will relieve a heavily congested section of the highway that is regularly gridlocked, provide improved access to many businesses at South Nowra and enhance travel in the area by residents and tourists. I pay tribute to the Roads and Traffic Authority for its consultation about this South Nowra project and its willingness to listen to the community about issues such as the Flinders Road access, improved lighting at the intersection of Forest Road and the Princes Highway and pedestrian overpass issues at Park Road. The Roads and Traffic Authority has worked continuously to ensure that all members of the community have had an opportunity to make comment.

I also pay tribute to organisations that over a long period have highlighted the need to improve contentious and dangerous sections on the Princes Highway in my electorate and in the electorates of Kiama and Bega. One organisation that has fought hard for the upgrade is the South East Australian Transport Strategy. It has lobbied for many years and has consistently released strategies designed to stimulate and facilitate investment and transport infrastructure in south-eastern New South Wales, eastern Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory region. Its current policy strategy document includes policies on ports, transport, timber bridges, rail projects and, pertinent to this discussion, a focus on specific Princes Highway projects, including the South Nowra duplication. The PHocus lobby group and the Southern Councils Group, which represents local government from Wollongong to the Victorian border, has also consistently argued for highway upgrading.

I also note work undertaken by the Shoalhaven Business Chamber on ensuring that businesses based at South Nowra are not disadvantaged by the upgrade. In fact, the chamber has noted that the duplication will significantly improve access to many businesses along the South Nowra stretch of the highway and improve safety for pedestrians. Whilst the chamber has welcomed the duplication, concern has been raised over proposed traffic signals to be installed at Park Road. Members of the Shoalhaven Business Chamber note that a pedestrian overpass would be the best outcome for pedestrians because it would ensure that they could cross the busy highway without conflict with traffic and there would be no adverse impacts on traffic. Initial discussions with the Roads and Traffic Authority indicate that it is not opposed to the replacement of traffic signals with a pedestrian overpass. However, the impact on surrounding residents must be taken into account.

A pedestrian overpass in such a limited space will involve a large concrete structure and may impose upon surrounding residents and affect their amenity. I understand that the authority will take those issues on board. Although a tender is due to be announced shortly and construction is expected to commence in July, discussions will continue with interested parties on the pedestrian footbridge at Park Road. I look forward to continuing to work with Shoalhaven Business Chamber representatives, Shoalhaven City Council, the Roads and Traffic Authority and the local community to ensure that this long-awaited project is delivered on time and on budget, and as promised by the O'Farrell Government prior to the last election.

BRING IT ON FESTIVAL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.15 p.m.]: On 10 April I had the pleasure of welcoming the youth of the electorates of Cabramatta and of Fairfield, which are part of the Fairfield City Council area, to this year's Bring It On Festival. This is the tenth year that the festival has been held at Fairfield Showground. The festival is organised by Fairfield City Council as part of National Youth Week, which celebrates the talents of our young people. National Youth Week is the largest celebration of young people in Australia. It is a great opportunity to

acknowledge and celebrate our vibrant and diverse youth culture. The theme of National Youth Week this year is Own It! The festival has become the largest Youth Week event in New South Wales, with more than 12,000 young people taking part last year. We see more and more young people wanting to be a part of our city's favourite festival, which gives them the opportunity to showcase their talents and achievements. One of the great things about the festival is that it shows young people that they do not need drugs or alcohol to have fun.

Just in case it is the first time members have heard of the Bring It On Festival, I will tell them a little about why it is so different. Young people are very involved in the festival. Every year, young volunteers aged between 12 and 24 contribute to its planning and delivery. The volunteers have been attending regular workshops that have been developed under the Technology, Arts, Music and Entertainment Training Program. This year we have an even bigger team of volunteers as more than 130 young people have contributed to its success. The volunteers include young people from our local high schools, the Fairfield Youth Advisory Committee, Holroyd Youth Services and the LOUD!, and Tribe from the Parks Community Network. This year we also have students who are involved in vocational education and training courses as part of their secondary school studies. The volunteer program offers a fantastic experience for the young people of our city.

It not only offers opportunities to highlight possible career paths but also allows young people to feel a sense of belonging, to acquire leadership skills and, of course, to be part of New South Wales' biggest youth week event. I congratulate the volunteers who helped organise and run this year's festival. Their input helps us to better development community events and create opportunities for young people. Young people's talents are certainly on show for everyone at the festival to see, highlighted by various local entertainers, bands and dancers who were performing. There was a massive line up of entertainers and performances to watch, and activities to take part in on the four jam-packed live stages.

Mr Thomas George: Any rock 'n' roll?

Mr NICK LALICH: There was rock and roll. There was also the Own It school challenge where we watched our local high schools battle it out to be the best band groups.

Mr Guy Zangari: Any rap?

Mr NICK LALICH: I will get to that. You could watch as national top beat boxes battled it out in the grand final of the national beat box championships at the hip-hop stage. There is an event for the member for Lismore. This year one stage, the world stage, came alive with colour, music and cultural dance. You could check out the new health precinct or check out your skills on the green bike. By riding a green bike you can generate enough power to start a fan or even play a DVD. Best of all, all these activities were free. I thank our sponsors, community stakeholders and supporters. Our sponsors include Stockland Wetherill Park, Cabra-Vale Diggers, McDonald's Family Restaurants, Fairfield Advance, St Johns Park Bowling Club, AMF Bowling Centre Australia Pty Ltd, PAL College, Go Channel and Nitezone.

I especially thank council staff and special guests who have contributed to the success of this event. I thank also the council event team—Debbie Cameron, Peter Hope and Jo Reid. Local police kindly allocated resources to the event for the day. I thank all the wonderful volunteers and performers and I thank my parliamentary colleagues, Mr Chris Hayes, Federal member for Fowler, and Mr Andy Rohan, my council colleague and member for Smithfield, and Uncle Greg Simms, Aboriginal Elder, who gave us his wonderful Welcome to Country. I know the youth who attended on the day had a great time and will be all that more keen to be at Fairfield Showground for the Bring It On festival 2012.

TRINITY JUBILEE YEAR

TRIBUTE TO BROTHER BRIAN MURRAY

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy Speaker) [1.20 p.m.]: Last year Trinity Catholic College Lismore celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its foundation and this year is the centenary celebration of the establishment of St Joseph's Marist Brothers High School at Lismore as well as the 125th anniversary of the commencement of St Mary's Presentation College. These schools were amalgamated and currently form the college we have today. It is a credit to the Marist and Presentation community and the community in general that they are celebrating Trinity Jubilee Year. All anniversaries or jubilees are times of celebration, and they are making it happen this year. The year has been going very well and it will be a big weekend in Lismore this weekend. However, on 15 May Brother Brian Murray passed away. He had been teaching at Trinity Catholic College for some years.

Brother Brian was Brother Killian in his earlier life. I had the pleasure of being taught by him at Marist Brothers Casino. He was born in Griffith in 1923 to Henry and Rena Murray. He had two brothers go into the priesthood and two brothers go into the Marist Brothers, and he had two sisters who became nuns. His brother Father Ron Murray celebrated Brian's Requiem Mass, which was attended by the Bishop of Lismore, Reverend Jeffery Jarrett, and other priests who helped concelebrate Mass. Brother Brian started his career with the Marist Brothers with his appointment at Marist Brothers high school at Kogarah. Then he went to Auburn, Hunters Hill, Bowral, North Sydney, St Vincent's Boys' Home at Westmead and Marist Brothers at Casino where he got his best experience, I can assure members of that. He went to Switzerland for a year then came back and was sent to Penshurst, Ayr, Hawkestone Hall in the United Kingdom and back to Ayr. He spent a big part of his life in Ayr before he was transferred to Lismore.

Brother Peter Carroll, the current principal of Trinity Catholic College, and the Marist community were certainly saddened by the loss of Brother Brian. He was a special person—Brother Brian the magician. He could perform many tricks and was a great one to visit nursing homes to provide entertainment for those living in the nursing home. He was well and truly respected throughout the Lismore community. The Mass was attended by his family and representatives of his family who were saddened by the loss of Brother Brian. We know he has gone to his eternal life and I know he would be honoured to be up there. As his brother remarked at the funeral, "Brother Brian would be trying to find out how God kept Heaven away from him as a trick, but he will work it out."

I pay tribute to the Trinity Catholic College and the Marist Brothers because I owe much of my educational life to the Marist community. All the students who went through that system would be appreciative of the job that the Marist Brothers do, not only in Lismore but throughout the country. They provide a wonderful education and an opportunity for their students. Lismore is no exception. As they celebrate this Jubilee year I ask that they be blessed in their future and their next centenary. I know the community of Lismore and the community of the Northern Rivers are right behind the college celebrating its Jubilee Year and 125 years of education in Lismore.

ITALIAN SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANISATION

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.25 p.m.]: On Saturday I was given the pleasure of joining with a couple of hundred other people in the Keira and Illawarra broader community to celebrate the Italian national ball organised by our local organisation called It.So.Wel., which is the Italian Social Welfare Organisation. It.So.Wel. has been around for 30-odd years. It provides an enormous range of services to the people in the Illawarra. Keira has a large percentage of Italians residing within its borders. It gave me great pleasure to be there and meet again with the Italian community and listen to their concerns, but most importantly celebrate the 150 years of Italian unification that I know the member for Fairfield is going to talk about shortly.

It.So.Wel. is an important organisation. It provides a range of different services to the Italian community. It provides day care for the elderly, information and support for young people, information and support for those needing to access health and educational services within the community and, probably most importantly, it keeps, encourages and develops Italian culture and heritage within our local community, which is important to the people of the Illawarra and to the Italian community living in Keira and in the broader Illawarra region. It.So.Wel. is run by Giovanna. She is an inspiring, passionate woman who has been the executive officer for some time. She is dedicated to the service of the community. She networks with a range of different other groups. She is continually being funded from both State and Federal governments because her organisation does such a good job within our local community.

I pay particular credit to her, the volunteers and the committee. Those people who assisted on the night made it a very special occasion, not just for the Italian community who were there but also for the broader Illawarra community, who came to acknowledge the enormous contribution the Italian community has made and continues to make within the Illawarra region. It gave me great pleasure to attend as a local member of Parliament. It always gives me great pleasure to meet It.So.Wel., its board and community members and participants in its various day-care programs to ensure I have a very good understanding of the needs of the community and It.So.Wel.'s constituents. That is particularly the case for older people, who were the first people to set up home in the Illawarra.

A large proportion of Italian community members make the Illawarra and particularly the Keira electorate their home. It is very important to recognise their contribution and continue to provide support for organisations such as It.So.Wel. to ensure that community members continue to access the very best in health care, welfare and education as well as other services in the local community. It was a pleasure to attend as the local member of Parliament. It gives me pleasure to serve community organisations. I look forward to working with It.So.Wel. and its team in the future.

CLUBS INDUSTRY

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [1.30 p.m.]: I inform the House of the dire consequence that will prevail if the Federal Government's mandatory precommitment scheme is approved. If legislation for the scheme is passed with the support of the member for Lyne, Robert Oakeshott, quite simply clubs in the Port Macquarie electorate will be forced to close their doors. Introduction of the mandatory precommitment scheme will cost clubs dearly. There is no proof that such a scheme will work. When very few members of our community are problem gamblers it is difficult to believe what is being proposed, which will so desperately harm the club industry not only in the Port Macquarie electorate but also in areas across New South Wales.

In the past 10 years in New South Wales the incidence of problem gambling has decreased from 2 per cent to 0.4 per cent because of current harm minimisation measures. In the Port Macquarie area that equates to only approximately 200 people. Problem gamblers will simply set high limits on their precommitment cards. Evidence from trials in Nova Scotia shows that gamblers set higher than normal limits then feel compelled to spend up to that limit, thereby increasing the damage. Problem gamblers also may borrow cards or attempt to register multiple precommitment cards under the proposed scheme. The scheme just does not make sense.

Clubs play a significant role in both the social and economic life of my electorate and in the State. They are not-for-profit mutual organisations that are a social hub and community service centre for many people in regional areas. In the Port Macquarie electorate there are 12 clubs that employ 518 people. Those 518 hardworking local people pay taxes of \$6.3 million. Through their salaries they inject \$21 million into the local economy. Imagine the flow-on that the loss of that income will have on local businesses and employment. It will be a disaster for local jobs.

With Robert Oakeshott's support for the scheme, the 59,178 local members of clubs will not be able to get a cheap Sunday roast dinner for \$6.60 as they can at the Laurieton United Services Club, or rissoles and vegetables for \$7.90 at Port Panthers; nor will they be able to support the 32 local sporting facilities or contribute \$9.1 million to local community organisations. Each year our local clubs employ 518 people. Each year the Harrington Bowling Club, the Lansdowne Bowling Club, the Laurieton United Services Club, the Westport Bowling Club and the Panthers Port Macquarie club attracted 1.97 million visits.

If the clubs are forced to close their doors because they cannot afford to spend the \$12.7 million on installing the technology required for the mandatory precommitment scheme what impact will it have on Australia's entertainment industry? Where will singers and musicians hone their craft? Where will people go for a good night out? Most local clubs offer free live entertainment and others provide an opportunity to see first-class entertainers such as the McClymonts, Diesel, the Radiators and Glenn Shorrock, who are just a few of the people who have recently played at clubs in my electorate.

Some very significant events occur in local clubs, and the most significant of them occur on Anzac Day. Each year after the dawn service, which this year I attended in Port Macquarie, or the mid-morning service, which I attended in Kendall, like many thousands of people throughout my electorate I head down to the local club for a drink and a meal and to reminisce and swap stories of past war efforts. Under the proposed scheme that will be a thing of the past. RSL clubs as we know them will cease to exist and veterans will lose their well-earned support and Anzac Day activities.

It is difficult to keep the doors open and operating profitably with a 40 per cent reduction in net gaming profits. No-one is denying that more needs to be done to help problem gamblers, but introducing a mandatory precommitment scheme, which will force clubs to shut up shop, kick employees out of a job and prevent them from supporting sporting and community organisations simply is not the way to do it. The Liberals-Nationals will continue to fight against the Federal Government's plans that put jobs as well as community organisations that are supported by clubs at risk. I will fight to defend clubs in the Port Macquarie electorate, the services they provide to our communities, the organisations they support and, most importantly, the jobs they create.

ITALIAN UNIFICATION 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.35 p.m.]: In south-west Sydney the 150th anniversary of unification of Italy was celebrated with a gala ball held at Club Marconi on Saturday 28 May 2011. Club Marconi is well recognised as an Italian institution among the Fairfield and wider communities. I support the sentiments expressed by the member for Keira regarding the function he attended in the Keira electorate and the contributions made by Italians in his electorate as well as in the wider Illawarra region. In my capacity as the

State member for Fairfield I represented the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson. I was honoured to take part in such an illustrious celebration that was well patronised by many other members of the House.

I was delighted to have had the opportunity to join with many of my fellow Italians from the Fairfield electorate to honour the courage, sacrifice and vision of the patriots who gave birth to the Italian nation. The gala ball comprised a traditional Italian four-course meal with a selection of fine Italian wines. The member for Drummoyne attended. My wife and I had the pleasure of being seated with the acting Chairman of Club Marconi, Mr Vince Foti and Mrs Foti, the Italian Consul General, Dr Benedetto Latteri and Mrs Latteri, the member for Drummoyne, John Sidoti, and Mrs Sidoti, and Monsignor McGuckin from the Diocese of Parramatta.

Mr Nick Lalich: It was a great night.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: It was a great night. Entertainment for the evening was provided by soprano Liza Beamish and two tenors, Andrew Pryor and Craig Atkinson. Their show was outstanding and they sang many favourite opera songs and folk songs. The official speakers for the evening were Mr Vince Foti, who is the acting Chairman of Club Marconi; Dr Gianfranco Cresciani, who is the President of the 150th Anniversary of the Unification of Italy Organising Committee; Marie Ficarra, MLC, who represented the Premier; and Gianludovic De Martino, who is the Ambassador for Italy.

I will provide the House with a brief history of Italian unification in 1861. It was an epic story of a chain of political and military events that produced a united peninsula under the Kingdom of Italy. The events can be categorised in five stages: prerevolutionary, revolutionary, Cavour's policy and the role of Piedmont, Garibaldi's campaign in southern Italy, and the creation of the Italian kingdom. The unification was a long and arduous process and there were many obstacles to overcome. In the end Count Camillo Benso of Cavour, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini became the founding fathers of the nation and were immortalised.

Like the fathers of the Italian unification, the early pioneers of Club Marconi had a dream, a goal and the vision to come together and celebrate the culture and traditions of the motherland. The establishment of Club Marconi is testament to the resilience and determination that can be described as quintessential Italian traits. The event commemorated not only a milestone in Italian history but also the fact that for many years Italians have played a big part in multicultural Australia throughout New South Wales and especially in Keira, Fairfield, Smithfield, Drummoyne and Balmain. They have introduced great cultural characteristics to New South Wales in the areas of design, fashion, food, cars and industrial machines. Italians have influenced many aspects of our daily lives. We can all now enjoy macchiatos, spaghetti, cannoli, cannelloni and, of course, salami—all of which have become readily available due to their popularity.

Mr Craig Baumann: What about concrete?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Concrete, of course. It is a great product. We need it.

Mr Richard Torbay: Paint it green as a lawn.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Watch where you go. It cannot be painted green; it has to be left in its natural grey beauty. The celebration of the Unification of Italy captures the true essence of Italian willpower. Italians are never idle, as history has proven. As we mark this important event in Italian history we also honour the efforts made to foster freedom and democracy throughout the world.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE FAMILY FUN DAY

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.40 p.m.]: I inform the House about the Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service Family Fun Day on 22 May and also the Red Balloon RFS Ball, which was held in February. No doubt other members agree that Rural Fire Service volunteers do a valuable job in protecting New South Wales from bushfires. Members would also be aware that the Blue Mountains is one of the most bushfire-prone areas of New South Wales. The Rural Fire Service identified a need to address the problem of fatigued firefighters driving home after finishing their shift. Often the family car is used to get to work, which means that the family is left without means of transport. As many Blue Mountains areas are not in close proximity to public transport, not having private transport isolates families and prevents family commitments from being fulfilled. A bus that transported the volunteers to and from work would be of great benefit. The driving force behind the fundraising

to achieve this goal was Maurice Cooper, OAM. He gathered together a committee comprising members of the Blue Mountains tourism, local business and rotary networks.

Local personalities Maurice Cooper, Randall Walker and Christine Killinger from Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism, and Ray Wiles from Blue Mountains Rotary networks worked together with the Blue Mountains City Council and local business representatives for this worthy cause. As the fundraising progressed, many members of the wider community and, of course, representatives of the Rural Fire Service came on board with generous help and donations of finance and in kind. The fundraising took place at the Red Balloon Ball and major sponsors included Fairmont Resort, Carrington Cellars—Carrington Hotel, Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa, Bygone Beautys and the Australian Army Band Giggin Diggers of Sydney. There was clearly wide community involvement. Many prizes were donated by local businesses and the always entertaining Blue Mountains Grammar School Quartet played on the night.

Having attended myself, I can attest to the hard work to put these events together and the great generosity of local business in their donations. Top hotels generously provided the venues for the balls, and events were held over a period of 2½ years. After this year's ball the group had raised a total of over \$42,700, enabling the purchase of a 24-seater bus for the use of the Rural Fire Service. The vehicle will be used for training locally and out of area as well as for emergency activities. It will carry signage clearly indicating the support of Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism. The highlight of the Family Fun Day on 22 May was the keys to the bus being handed over to David Hoadley of the Rural Fire Service with councillor Chris Van Der Kley, I and many Rural Fire Service volunteers, families and staff were present.

I was privileged to attend the free fun day that was held as a thank you to the Rural Fire Service volunteers and their families for the important and vital contribution they make to their local community. The fun day had games for children and adults, including plate spinning and thong throwing, a jumping castle for children, a free sausage sizzle provided by Central Blue Mountains Rotary, complimentary passes to Scenic World from owner Phil Hammond and a free concert by the Blue Mountains concert band. The St John's Ambulance volunteers did a great job as always and thanks must be given to the Blue Mountains Katoomba Christian Convention Centre for the use of the site. All in all this was a day focused on volunteering within the community for the benefit of the community—something that is done so well in the Blue Mountains.

It gives me great pleasure to inform the Parliament that I am the reigning women's thong-throwing champion of the day. The thong-throwing championship was a competitive event held on the Family Fun Day. Clearly, the mothers present seemed to have an advantage in the event with much practice no doubt on summer days with children running amok. Whilst some say that success is in the flick of the wrist and others say that the best method is the shoulder throw, I will not divulge to this place my method of thong throwing—members will have to wait until another time. Needless to say, I look forward to the next Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service Family Fun Day so that I may defend my title of Blue Mountains thong-throwing champion. A great day was had by all, with a great gift going to the Blue Mountains Rural Fire Service and community as a whole.

WARIALDA REVITALISATION PROJECTS

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [1.45 p.m.]: Last year I spoke in this House about an initiative to build population in the small town of Warialda in my Northern Tablelands electorate. The town followed the model used in Cumnock in western New South Wales, where its Rent a Farmhouse for \$1 scheme was so successful it doubled the numbers at the local primary school and reinvigorated the town. Since the project began last year the Warialda region has welcomed four new families and one single person through its scheme. Two families with five children, one with four children and one family with two children brought 16 school-age children to the district. Warialda Preschool and Warialda primary and Warialda high schools have benefited through new enrolments from these families. The increase in students for Warialda primary school was particularly important as it gave the school a reprieve from possible reclassification and saved the vital position of the PP5 teaching principal.

Earlier this year a family of seven moved from north Queensland to live on a local property. Recently I had the opportunity to meet with a number of these people at the Warialda show, which I had the honour of opening. Following on the theme of the previous speaker, I entered the show's celebrity cooking competition and I can say that people did come back for seconds of the Torbay stir-fry. A family from Toowoomba now live in a house in Warialda owned by the Gwydir shire and the father established a tennis coaching business in the community. A single woman from Port Macquarie has started working for a local delivery business and lives in a small cottage on a local property. A single mother with a family moved to a house on a property earlier this

year and has introduced a cake decorating business to the Warialda community, a service previously not available. This project run by local group Busy Bees is an example of the proactive steps taken by the community acting in its own best interest to tackle the population decline.

The key issue for the future of the rent a country home project is the availability of housing. With many vacant houses in the region, there is potential for more people to take up the offer of cheap housing. Gwydir Shire Council strongly supports this program and this is a good example of a successful council and community partnership. Population decline is a serious issue for inland regional New South Wales. I am pleased to say that the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show reasonable growth in the Northern Tablelands of 3.9 per cent over the 2004-2009 period. This compares favourably with other regional electorates such as Barwon declining by 3.28 per cent and Murray-Darling declining by 0.31 per cent. Even though Gwydir shire only recently experienced some population decline following the 2007 redistribution into the Northern Tablelands, there has been strong growth since 2008, no doubt partly due to programs such as the Busy Bees community program.

This results from community action addressing population decline: community members standing up and facing the issues themselves. From many perspectives it is important that young families relocate and revitalise the region. We also are facing a tsunami of a rapidly ageing population. Between 2005 and 2009 the number of people aged 65 years and over grew by 16.95 per cent in the Northern Tablelands and by 21.92 per cent in Gwydir shire. New blood is needed also to create a viable regional workforce to manage this demographic change and to ensure that small and large country communities develop skills to remain sustainable. As well as targeting programs to directly attract population growth, the Government should also offer taxation incentives.

Some good models have been proposed: regional taxation, zone taxation incentives to business and industry, improving transport services and promoting new technology such as the National Broadband Network and other technologies to make the regions a more compelling alternative for people who want to relocate. I acknowledge the initiatives that this Government so early in its term is pursuing for New South Wales, namely, the regional relocation grant of \$7,000 to encourage individuals and families to move from Sydney to regional New South Wales communities and the plans to relocate public sector jobs to the regions. These worthy policy initiatives are being pursued, but more needs to be done given the statistics I have outlined.

PORT STEPHENS WATERWAYS

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.50 p.m.]: Today I speak about a serious environmental threat to the pristine marine life and waters of the magnificent Port Stephens. I have spoken countless times in this place about the problem with sand movements along the northern shore of Port Stephens and the subsequent problems in the Myall River. After years of fierce lobbying the Myall River Action Group and indeed the wider Hawks Nest-Tea Gardens community and I are one step closer to finding a solution with the long-awaited study into the problem now on public exhibition at Great Lakes Council. The study was funded by the Government and Great Lakes Council and carried out by Dr Philip Haines and his team from consultants BMT WTM. Once Great Lakes Council has resolved to support one of the study's options for a long-term solution to clear the eastern channel of the Myall and to protect Jimmys Beach, I will be making representations to this Government for assistance.

While that study was being compiled last year I alerted members to the emerging environmental degradation at Halifax Point, one of the most popular and beautiful dive sites in Australia, on the southern shore of Port Stephens. Huge amounts of sand were migrating west from the eastern end of Shoal Bay and spilling onto the dive site, smothering delicate marine life. Port Stephens Council worked frantically to excavate sand from Halifax Point and relocate it to the eastern end of Shoal Bay until Christmas tourist numbers made the work dangerous and impractical. Some 20,000 cubic metres were relocated and we hoped for some breathing space until Dr Haines could conclude his study and apply his modelling to the shifting sands of Shoal Bay.

Around two weeks ago, after an inquiry from a local journalist, I was horrified to discover that Fly Point, to the west of Halifax, is being approached by a sand wave of thousands of cubic metres—sand that will destroy the pristine sponge gardens and marine life. I immediately met with Nelson Bay dive operators, Shane Murtagh, who taught two of my sons to dive, and Adam and Emma Shorter, along with Maryanne Samson of Nelson Bay Town Management, and my fears increased. Shane introduced one of his divers, Tim Austin. Tim is doing a doctorate through the Sydney University faculty of geosciences, and the subject of his doctoral dissertation is "Sand Movement in Port Stephens". Tim has been monitoring sand movement within the port for three years and I know his knowledge will be called upon as we find a solution to save Fly Point.

As well as the environmental threat, Port Stephens' multi-million dollar tourism economy is also under threat. The Newcastle *Herald* has highlighted the situation, with dire front page headlines declaring the reef is at risk and that our blue water wonderland has become a water wasteland. My gut feeling as an engineer is that the problems with sand in the Myall River and at Shoal Bay are part of the same problem, but I should emphasise that sand movement is not one of my strong suits and I admire anybody who can follow the science involved. On the Monday morning after that Saturday meeting I contacted Max Haste, the manager of the Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park. Max was entering a meeting with other agency experts to discuss this serious threat. I advised Max of Tim Austin's area of study and reminded him of Philip Haine's modelling, of which he was well aware. There are many issues that must be addressed so that we can save Fly Point and I know that Max and his team are working flat out to address these issues. The description of Halifax Park on Shane's Feet First Dive website reads:

At Halifax Park you are met by Frank, the huge Blue Groper, as you descend down past colourful sponge gardens to the 18m mark. There is one particular spot we call The Boobs, where you will see twin coral heads. During your dive you are likely to see thousands of fish, moray eels and occasionally a turtle. If you are lucky a dolphin may just swim by! This site drops down to 28m where the sand meets the coral gardens. It is easily accessible via a stone path onto a sandy area. This is a fully protected site—which means divers only!

That stone path access area is now completely covered in sand and where once there was a rocky vertical shore there is now a sand dune. We cannot let Fly Point suffer the same fate. The Chamber is familiar with my belief that the natural environment in my electorate is unique and that I have a propensity to refer to myself, quite rightly, as the member for Paradise. My belief that Port Stephens is indeed a natural treasure is shared by others—the site is rated as one of Australia's top five shore-dive sites. I have experienced firsthand this natural beauty by diving Halifax and Fly Point. The solution to protecting the Port Stephens marine environment will not come cheap. I know we have inherited an economic basket case from a financially incompetent Labor Government, but we will need to find funding to solve this potential environmental and economic disaster.

BALMAIN FERRY SERVICES

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [1.55 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of members concerns in my community about recent changes to ferry timetables, in particular, changes that apply to Darling Street wharf, Balmain East. Balmain residents and many Sydneysiders in general want to commute by ferry but peak service scheduling, timetable problems and poor integration are making that increasingly difficult. Residents of the Balmain peninsula value the services provided by Sydney Ferries and census data provides solid evidence of the high usage of ferry services by our local community. I recognise also the work of Councillor John Stamolos and the local precinct committees in highlighting these issues. While there have been some important improvements to services there remain fundamental concerns regarding morning peak services, evening peak services, the integration of transport services and night safety, as well as poor timetabling, in general, of ferry services.

Morning peak services to Circular Quay from Darling Street wharf are poor. The only useful direct service to Circular Quay is at 7.56 a.m. The new 7.21 a.m. service is far too early for most commuters and it takes an indirect route which is much less patronised than the previously available 7.37 a.m. service. Even so, the new schedule has a 36 minute gap in the morning peak service so commuters are now forced to go to Thames Street wharf, which has no bus connection. This is causing additional unnecessary traffic on the Balmain peninsula as well as parking problems around the Thames Street wharf. Evening peak services to the Balmain peninsula from Circular Quay are also poor. The service gap during evening peak time from 5.15 p.m. to 5.55 p.m. is excessive. In fact, the gap is the longest in the schedule for the entire day. The previous 5.45 p.m. and 6.05 p.m. services to Darling Street wharf should be reinstated. Those services were always well patronised and connected with bus services. The 11.30 p.m. service from Circular Quay to Darling Street wharf has also ceased.

The integration of transport services and night safety is also a matter of concern with the new timetable introduced late last year. Darling Street was where two ferry services and three bus services connected. The removal of the Woolwich ferry service from the Darling Street wharf has greatly reduced the benefit of the integration of bus-to-ferry and ferry-to-ferry services. After dark many commuters prefer to use the Darling Street wharf, given its connection with the bus service, unlike the now heavily patronised Thames Street wharf. Changes to Darling Street wharf services are based on the premise that more commuters now want to go to King Street wharf. If that is the case, why does it apply only to the Darling Street wharf? An efficient connection between Woolwich and Darling Harbour services at Darling Street would, in fact, support the premise for greater services to King Street wharf.

The Greens know also that there are significant problems with the Darling Harbour service because of tourist volumes that often make the ferries overcrowded and delay services. The Darling Harbour services take high volumes of tourists from Darling Harbour and Luna Park and, in particular, on school holidays and public holidays the weekend commuter volumes are also very high. During those times services can be delayed and ferries are often overcrowded. The Greens call on the Government to address those issues. In addition, the new timetable of ferry services is unique as ferry services arrive simultaneously at the wharf. That might make sense from a timetabling perspective, but when ferries bank at the wharf it leads to problems, issues regarding safety and delays.

I call on the Government to improve the morning and evening peak services to Darling Street wharf, to reinstate the 11.30 p.m. service to the Darling Street wharf, to correct the loss of the integration of ferry-to-bus and ferry-to-ferry services at the Darling Street wharf, and to highlight the fact that school and public holiday services are abysmal in relation to the Darling Harbour service, also known locally as the tourist ferry. Finally, I call on the Government to review the timetabling to avoid ferries arriving simultaneously at wharves. I look forward to this new Government addressing these important transport issues, improving commuter and leisure travel, reducing private car use and reducing pressure on our already overloaded bus network.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [2.00 p.m.]: I thank the member for Balmain for his very good contribution in which he summarised in five minutes 16 years of Labor failure in the transport area. The member for Balmain probably remembers the CBD metro that was working its way towards Balmain—the \$500 million wasted in an attempt to prop up the seat of Balmain. He is living proof of how unsuccessful that project was. I take on board the member's comments. As he would be aware, the Minister for Transport, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, is putting together an integrated transport model. I am sure she will also welcome his comments.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 2.00 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY BILL 2011

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills with amendments.

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendments set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor:

J. J. SPIGELMAN
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 29 May 2011

The Honourable James Jacob Spigelman, Chief Justice of New South Wales, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, having assumed the administration of the government of the Commonwealth of Australia, he has this day at 11.41 a.m. assumed the administration of the government of the State.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

[During the giving of notices of motions to be accorded priority.]

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.16 p.m.]

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Why will the Premier not publicly release the Fair Trading report on solar panel installations?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am happy to talk to the Minister about that, but it should be understood that this audit report was undertaken in February this year.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Who was in Government?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If my memory serves me correctly, those opposite were in government. I know the Leader of the Opposition is keen to push responsibility for this onto the member for Liverpool, but what happened the following month? What happened in March that might have encouraged those opposite to ensure that this report did not come to light until after a certain event?

Ms Noreen Hay: You misled the community in March.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Despite the concerns that the Minister for Energy raised in the House last week, despite concerns brought to John Robertson's attention and despite concerns brought to the attention of the former Government about the safety issues involved—safety issues because the scheme was filling up quickly, safety issues because—

Ms Noreen Hay: You don't care about safety, Barry.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is the pink batt again, right on cue, like the pink batts Building the Education Revolution program, which saw some shonks come into the industry and which threatened the safety of those people who believed they had been adequately served.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is not news in this place that if one extends the sort of largesse that one saw in Federal Labor's Building the Education Revolution program, or in the overly generous Solar Bonus Scheme put together by those opposite, some shonks will go into that scheme. The audit that was undertaken in Port Macquarie—represented by a fantastic new member since the election—found that 5 per cent of all installations were so shonky and dangerous that they had to be fixed by an electrician as a matter of urgency because of safety concerns. I hope that they find a better electrician than the Leader of the Opposition to do that work for them. If we extend that 5 per cent of shonky installations in Port Macquarie to the 100,000 people who are in this scheme, we find that potentially 6,000 families live with a risk delivered to them by those opposite—a risk of faulty and unsafe installations, and a lack of attention to detail relating to the Building the Education Revolution pink batt scheme, which saw fires break out and people die.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I say again to the families that are concerned: In addition to the extended audit that the Minister for Fair Trading has responsibly requested of his department, those who have had these panels installed should check their paperwork to establish whether or not they have a certificate of compliance from an authorised electrician stating that the panels have been installed correctly. If there is any doubt about it or that certificate is missing, they should ring the Department of Fair Trading and express their concerns to ensure that their safety is protected. I will raise the substantive part of the member's question with the Minister for Fair Trading. However, as far as I am concerned, I am happy to share with members as many of the problems as possible that were left to this State by those opposite.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr GLENN BROOKES: My question is addressed to the Premier. What action is the Government taking to reduce rail fares and to encourage people back onto public transport?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I welcome the question from the member for East Hills—and what a magnificent result he achieved in that electorate. I say to those students who are present in the gallery: What a message in persistence. In 2003 and 2007 Glenn Brookes was the candidate for the seat of East Hills.

Ms Noreen Hay: He lost then.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: On both occasions—almost like the member for Wollongong—he lost. But that did not deter him. He stuck to his principles; he stuck to his view that he wanted to be an effective representative for his electorate. He stood again in 2011 and he achieved a swing greater than 14 per cent. He comes into this House as someone who is across his electorate and someone who understands his electorate well, having campaigned there on three occasions and having spent more time in that electorate over the past eight years than the former member did in all the time that he was a member of Parliament. I can understand why Opposition members are embarrassed—No. 41 appears to be the most embarrassed of all—when Government members ask me a question about transport.

All members remember the \$500 million that was wasted on the Rozelle Metro. Was it to try to protect Verity Firth in the seat of Balmain? I say to the new member for Balmain that I suspect not: it was to divert public attention away from the safety risk posed by the black panther that was strolling through the suburbs in the lower Blue Mountains—a threat to life and limb that saw taxpayers' dollars spent trying to track it down. No. 41 is not alone. If those opposite had delivered on their promises there would be a railway link to Bondi Beach and fast rail services not only to the Illawarra but also to the Central Coast and the Hunter. If those opposite had delivered on their promises there would be additional capacity on the rail system across this city with the delivery of a second rail crossing of the harbour. In all, 12 rail lines were promised by those opposite, but in over 16 years just half a rail line was delivered.

In contrast, within weeks of being appointed to her portfolio, the Minister for Transport has established project teams to ensure that that North West Rail Link, to which we are committed, will be delivered. We will encourage people back onto public transport by providing better services, restoring some of the 135 services that were ripped out by those opposite, and providing financial incentives for people to catch trains. On 1 July rail fares across this city will drop by up to \$240 a year. That will assist people with the cost of living increases that they are facing and it will provide a real incentive for them to get back onto the rail system and, where possible, to leave their cars at home.

We are exceeding the commitment that we made during the election campaign—a commitment to cut the price of monthly, quarterly and yearly tickets. In some cases we will exceed our election commitment by double what was promised by the Minister for Transport. For instance, when travelling from the Central Coast to the city, travellers can save \$20 when buying a monthly rail ticket. That will be great news for the member for Wyong, the member for Gosford, the member for The Entrance and even the member for the marginal seat of Terrigal. Those who are travelling to the city from Campbelltown—an area in which voters deserted the Labor Party in droves on 26 March—will save \$17 a month.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: They do not know where R-O-O-S-E is though.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Minister for Transport should not tempt me. That is great news for the member who represents R-O-O-S-E and it is great news for the member for Campbelltown, the member for Camden and the member for Wollondilly who were in the area on the day that the Government made an announcement about this rail service. If people are coming from the Illawarra—another area that got sick of Labor members doing nothing—it will cost \$20 less for their monthly tickets, a saving of up to \$240 a year. That is great news for the only members we have heard from on this issue over the past six or seven weeks, the member for Kiama and the member for Heathcote, who are from the South Coast and the Illawarra. These savings will come into effect from 1 July. I can compare our actions with those of members opposite. Between 1995 and 2009, rail fares went up by 64 per cent when the consumer price index rose by only 37 per cent. No capacity, no concern, no attention to the cost of living increase—[*Time expired.*]

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Ms CHERIE BURTON: My question is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading. Will the Minister confirm that after he attempted to scare consumers into thinking that their lives were at risk from their solar panels he encouraged them to call a hotline that was not staffed that day?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Madam Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah and the Leader of the House will come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for her question and commend her for her interest in this area because it is the first time in 16 years that the Labor Party has taken any interest in fair trading. Forget about "Captain Solar" over there, it is now "Corporal Cover-up". As the House well knows, as a result of recent breaches of electrical safety standards in Port Macquarie I have directed Fair Trading to conduct a comprehensive compliance audit of solar installations. The audit will also be conducted in the Sydney metropolitan area, focusing on electrical safety, and will measure compliance with the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act and the Home Building Act. Our priority in government is to ensure that the people of New South Wales are safe and that electrical systems are installed in accordance with safety standards. We are leading the country on this issue, with the Western Australian Government following our lead in announcing a similar audit of solar panels.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I assure the House that appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against those who are found to be in breach of the legislation. I have asked Fair Trading to provide me with further information as soon as it becomes available.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: They won't be able to get out of it like she did.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We will be pursuing this, as the Premier said. As mentioned, in February 2011 NSW Fair Trading conducted a solar panel installation compliance campaign in the Port Macquarie area. Fifty-five solar systems installed by 36 electrical contractors were audited for compliance with the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2004 and the Home Building Act 1989.

Mr John Robertson: Were they licensed?

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Will the Leader of the Opposition show me his licence?

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I would not trust the Leader of the Opposition to install the batteries in my torch. The inspections revealed significant defects in three systems relating to incorrect polarity of the solar DC isolator.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: They can listen to the answer or they can keep chattering, but they might learn something. These 16 matters are of serious concern. When it comes to electrical safety consumers must be able to have confidence in relation to work conducted in their homes.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The Port Macquarie inspections also revealed that 35 installations did not satisfy the requirements of the Home Building Act in relation to contracts, home warranty insurance and deposits. Since the completion of the operation the electrical defects have been rectified. These red files keep appearing. We had to wipe a bit of sweet and sour sauce off this one—we know where it has come from.

Regrettably, I have to inform the House that between 8 June 2010 and 28 January 2011, to its shame, the former Government was warned on six different occasions about the problems with solar panel installation under the Solar Bonus Scheme. I would like to detail to the House, courtesy of these wonderful red files, warnings provided to the former Government.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On 8 June 2010, the Home Building Advisory Council raised its concerns regarding the installation of solar panels—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mount Druitt will come to order. Members will cease interjecting across the Chamber.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: —with reference to poor materials and audit practices. On 29 June 2010 the various New South Wales electricity providers raised their concerns with the department. In July 2010 the then shadow Minister for Fair Trading put a question on notice regarding the problems. On 27 July Fair Trading briefed the Minister's office regarding unqualified people performing below standard work or installing cheap, not-approved imports. On 28 September the Master Builders Association warned the Home Building Advisory Council about issues of licensing and product standards. Finally, on 28 January the Electrical Equipment Safety Advisory Committee warned about the issue with solar panel installation.

The former Government betrayed the legitimate installers in the industry by ignoring the serious concerns that were raised with them on six different occasions. An asthmatic ant would have moved more quickly on this issue. Those opposite failed to protect consumers, and they hid and covered up the mess that they created. All jokes aside, they have put lives at risk and wasted a tonne of money, like their Federal counterparts with the pink batts and Building the Education Revolution scandals. All this shows is that one cannot disrespect proper process because to do so means that corners get cut and advice is ignored. In response to the question: Yes, we will release the Port Macquarie report and the Sydney report, with pleasure.

CARBON TAX

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: My question is directed to the Premier. What action is the Government taking to protect New South Wales jobs and investment from the impact of the Federal Government's carbon tax?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I congratulate the member for Gosford on his win and thank him for his question. I will never forget turning up at Kariong Public School at eight o'clock on polling day and finding the Labor Party was not there. The member got a 17 per cent swing—it is no wonder he romped home. At a time when New South Wales is struggling with the highest cost of living in Australia thanks to the neglect and incompetence of those opposite it is incomprehensible that the Federal Government wants to impose a carbon tax that will impose even higher prices on Australian families.

Members will recall that at the election the Liberal Party and The Nationals strongly opposed the carbon tax. We made it clear we wanted nothing to do with a new tax that would not just put up prices but threaten jobs across New South Wales. By comparison, those opposite, led by the member for Heffron, supported the carbon tax. We now know that history shows that the people of New South Wales backed this side and backed the opposition to the carbon tax. We have no idea, despite that outcome, where the Leader of the Opposition stands on this issue. Two days before the election he said that a carbon price was needed to make gas-fired electricity generation competitive against coal. A month later, in April, he suddenly backflipped and said he wanted more information before giving a carbon tax his support. I am not sure whether he has got that extra information but I am certain he has not put out his policy on a carbon tax.

On Friday I received a letter from the Prime Minister outlining plans for the next Council of Australian Governments meeting in Canberra on 15 July. Today I have replied noting New South Wales' strong opposition to a carbon tax and asking her to use the Council of Australian Governments meeting to provide all first Ministers with a full briefing about how this tax will affect the States. It is an issue that warrants the nation's intention. If the Labor Party believes in this tax it should have no issue with our request. The fact is that New South Wales has the most to lose from a carbon tax. We have the largest energy market and the largest power generators so the tax will have more impact on jobs and prices in New South Wales than anywhere else in Australia. All the studies indicate that the Hunter Valley and Illawarra regions are likely to experience

significant loss of jobs and investment from a carbon tax. Frontier Economics found that the Hunter would lose more than 13,000 jobs and \$1.2 billion in economic activity to 2050. Job losses in the Hunter will be 2.5 times worse than the next most affected region.

The same research found that the economic cost to the Illawarra would be twice the national average. I have had talks with BlueScope Steel, which believes the carbon tax will decimate its operations in Wollongong. We believe that if a carbon tax is introduced our industries will be placed at a massive disadvantage in trade terms compared with manufacturers in countries like the United States of America, China, Brazil and Indonesia whose products will not be subject to a carbon tax. I am perplexed why the Commonwealth would want to place our businesses at such a disadvantage and put so many jobs at risk. Families cannot afford to pay bills if their breadwinners lose their jobs. As I indicated previously, a carbon tax will also impact on the profits of the State's generators and this will lead to lower dividends and tax revenue for New South Wales. So without adequate compensation, New South Wales will again be robbed of the funds we need to provide the services and infrastructure that State Labor starved us of for 16 years. Finally, a carbon tax will also lead to an increase in electricity, gas and food prices, so cost of living pressures will also rise.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He would be better trying to work out his position on a carbon tax. Once again, ordinary New South Wales families are being forced to bear the brunt of a Labor tax. In light of all these issues I will be asking for a full briefing from the Prime Minister so that we can put forward a case to help struggling families and businesses in this State. I make one last point. Cate Blanchett and Michael Caton have every right to express their views, and I have every right to oppose those views. I have to say in relation to Mr Caton that this is the man who opposed a rail link to Bondi Beach—which would have done much about the carbon footprint of people who visit that beach—and he is now supporting a carbon tax. He needs to be consistent. He needs to be not hypocritical and he needs to recognise the cost that will be incurred by families across the State.

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Ms ANNA WATSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading. Will the Minister confirm whether inspectors undertaking inspections of solar panels have been requested by his Government to concentrate on particular electorates or areas?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: This is certainly a great day for Fair Trading—two Labor members have taken an interest in 16 years.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: One thing I have found travelling around New South Wales and visiting Fair Trading offices is that no-one seems to remember a Fair Trading Minister visiting them before. I was in Tamworth the other day—

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition may claim that, as Minister for Fair Trading, she visited some of these places. She may have, but they seem unable to remember it.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: One lesson Labor did not learn is that when Labor members board QF1, crack the champagne and fly over rural and regional New South Wales on the way to London, to Paris or to the Cannes film festival, it does not constitute a rural and regional visit.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It still perplexes me why the former Government continued to take action with respect to the rollout of the solar scheme. We might have a pop quiz today. Was it (a) incompetent? Probably. Was it (b) inept, (c) lazy, (d) out of touch, or—what my money is on—(e) all of the above?

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: They are the same mistakes and the same ineptitude that we saw from their mates in Canberra.

Mr Andrew Stoner: The pink batts.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Yes, the pink batts.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The taxpayer is funding this new audit because of the former Government's ineptitude. I am not leaving it with politicians in an office; I am leaving it up to Fair Trading to determine based on the amount of the rollout and the number of uptakes within areas. That is how we will decide on those audits. Now, going back—

Mr John Robertson: Be careful what you say.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I am very careful. Those opposite were warned many times about this.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: They betrayed the industry, they failed to protect consumers, and they tried to hide the mess they made. They just plain stuffed up, and now everyone has to pay.

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

GAMBLING

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing—

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the member for Lismore; perhaps the Minister will not be able to either.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: What were the outcomes from the Council of Australian Governments Select Council on Gambling Reform in relation to sports betting and online gambling?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I thank the member for Lismore for his question and congratulate him on his re-election and his achievement of a swing of 14.3 per cent. I am pleased to advise that the Commonwealth has agreed with New South Wales and the other States and Territories to ban live odds promotion during broadcasts of sporting events. Stop squawking.

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: We are all concerned that high-profile commentators and sporting role models are promoting live odds during sporting coverage and are therefore urging vulnerable people and the young to gamble on bet types that involve in-the-run betting. New South Wales Labor watched this problem grow and grow during its 16 years in office. Council of Australian Governments Ministers representing New South Wales—the Minister for Family and Community Services and I—took the opportunity to describe this as an insidious development in live sports coverage and one that needs to be curbed. Our concerns extend to under 18-year-olds and those susceptible to problem gambling behaviour.

Live broadcasting controls are the responsibility of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth's response in the first instance is to provide the industry with an opportunity to address many issues through a tightening of industry codes. If after 12 months there remains a problem, the Commonwealth has agreed with us to consider imposing the ban by way of legislation. The initial response from gambling operators has been positive, with most indicating their desire to cooperate in the public interest. Nevertheless, the initiative must have a national approach with across-the-board application if it is to work effectively. Ministers acknowledge that racing will be excluded from these measures due to its longstanding relationship with wagering.

I have also noted the comments from the broadcasting industry that the new rules should not be limited to live television broadcasts and that they should be extended to other platforms capable of delivering the same information. This is undoubtedly an important matter on which the Commonwealth can deliver. At the same time the Commonwealth has agreed to the request from New South Wales and the other States and Territories to clean up issues in the online gambling area. Following our urging, the Council of Australian Governments announced that it will review the operation of the Interactive Gambling Act 2001. The review is to examine the effectiveness of the Act, and the consideration of international regulatory approaches and their potential applicability to Australia.

The review will also examine the improvement of harm minimisation measures for online gambling. This is a welcome response to the difficult problem of a growing number of underage and problem gambling Australians gambling online in what is essentially an unregulated environment. These measures follow the Liberal-Nationals Government position enunciated by my colleague the Minister for Sports and Recreation that negative exotic betting on sports is a threat to the integrity of the conduct of professional sports. It is the responsibility of all governments to meet community expectations by ensuring that sports are conducted with integrity and that there is a regulatory framework for associated betting that engenders public confidence.

My colleague the Minister the Sports and Recreation and I agree that to maintain integrity in sport it is necessary to address exotic betting and player conduct in relation to betting. Nevertheless, such exotic betting occurs largely on the internet and must involve a national approach and therefore the consideration of Commonwealth legislation. The Council of Australian Governments agreements promote a national approach so compliance can be achieved across the board. I acknowledge also that the sports bodies have demonstrated common sense on the issue. I ask wagering operators to do the same. They too must realise that a fair go is the Australian tradition and that a well-regulated business will enjoy public confidence. It is a better proposition than a sport tainted with nefarious activities—which all members opposite know about.

TWO WAYS TOGETHER PROGRAM

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I direct my question to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to listen to the question. The member for Clarence will come to order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In light of the report on Two Ways Together by the Auditor-General, which recommended the continuation and indeed expansion of the Partnership Community Program, why has the Minister denounced it as a failed program? Will he commit to its continuation?

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! An Opposition member has asked a question. Members will listen to the answer in silence. If they do not I will call them to order.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: When I went to western New South Wales, I listened to the communities out there. I went there within the first two or three weeks of my appointment as Minister. I deliberately went there without the media—I know that is not what members on the Labor side of politics are used to. They are used to walking up and down with the media circus in tow. During my visit people said that there were good aspects to the Partnership Community Program.

Mr Michael Daley: That is not what you said on Friday.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: If the member wants to hear my response I am happy to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will listen to the answer in silence. I remind them that if they do not I will call them to order. The Minister has the call.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Frankly, the people of New South Wales did not listen to his petulant interjections, and nor should I.

Mr Nathan Rees: I've got a bit of news for you.

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

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: You don't have much choice.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: That is right.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Some good things were said about community partnerships, and we will explore all those things on the back of Two Ways Together as we plan for the future. There is much to do in relation to the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio to reduce the gap.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: There is much to do to bridge the gap.

Mr John Robertson: Apologising is something you're not used to.

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

Mr John Robertson: You couldn't bring yourselves to apologise.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time. We will not have a repeat of last Friday's performance. The Minister has the call.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I think the sergeant over there should take some tips from the Serjeant-at-Arms in the Chamber. If he sat as politely and in as dignified a manner as our Serjeant-at-Arms does, he would have a lot more respect.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: As I was saying, there is much to do in the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio. We must work hard to reduce the gap. It is unacceptable that unemployment rates for Aboriginal people are 21 per cent compared with approximately 5 per cent for others.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Incarceration rates for Aboriginal people also are unacceptable. Juvenile Aborigines represent 4 per cent of the population yet 50 per cent of those who are in custody. These rates are unacceptable and the Government will work on improving outcomes. We will use the Auditor-General's Two Ways Together report.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: The Auditor-General's report contains independent findings, which are damning. Quite frankly, as a government we have an obligation to make sure that we act on those findings, and we will. The Liberal-Nationals' side of politics is determined to make a difference and to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: That's a first.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: It will come as a big surprise to the member for Marrickville. The Labor side of politics thinks it owns this space; it does not.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The specific question is: Will the Minister commit to the continuation of the Partnership Community Program that the Auditor-General recommended?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is answering exactly that question. There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: If Opposition members stopped interjecting, they would realise that I have already answered the question. But I will refer to the Auditor-General's report. The side of politics to which the member for Marrickville belongs thinks it owns this space, but quite frankly it does not. There are very good members on the Government side of the Chamber who want to improve the lives of Aboriginal people. We have good members and we are very determined to make a difference.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: The big difference between the Government's side and the Opposition side of politics is that we believe in giving people a hand up, not a handout. We believe in empowering people through growing the economic pie.

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

Mr Nathan Rees: You've a lot to learn.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: We know what Labor believes in. We have seen what the member for Toongabbie believes in. He believes in wasting money—half a billion dollars on the CBD Metro. That happened under the premiership of the member for Toongabbie.

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

Mr Nathan Rees: You get your magic wand out and away you go.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the third time. Members will come to order.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Let me make it clear that we will actively work on the findings of the Auditor-General. We propose to make serious headway into the problems and challenges facing the Aboriginal community. I will report further on this issue later.

MARINE PARKS

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries. What is the Government doing to ensure protection of the State's marine environment?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the member for Clarence for his very important and timely question. I also congratulate him on his wonderful election victory, which resulted in his receiving 81.4 per cent of the two-party preferred vote.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: It was a knockout blow.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: He is indeed a knockout; that is quite right.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I am very pleased to be able to speak about marine conservation because, unlike the former Labor Government, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to a commonsense marine parks and recreational fishing policy. The former Government imposed token measures on the community to win the Greens vote—we know that much—but we have said that will never happen again.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: The Government will sit down with the community and work out sensible and practical measures that will protect our marine environment while ensuring appropriate access to valuable fishing grounds.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from the Government backbenches.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I have heard people talk about numbers of meetings and how many submissions were received but I have not heard anyone talk about the major changes to the zoning arrangements following the so-called consultation. The public did not get a chance to comment on the changes until the policy was done and dusted. That is the typical Sussex Street style of consultation. The people of New South Wales have had enough of that. It went on for 16 years and it is time that Opposition members enrolled in consultation 101. The people of New South Wales deserve real consultation. We will make sure that community members have a chance to have their say on changes that affect their lives.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: As we promised in the lead-up to the March 2011 election, we have committed to an independent scientific audit of marine parks zoning arrangements. Currently we are finalising the appointment of an independent chair for the scientific audit panel. The audit will examine the best available science in New South Wales, other parts of Australia and internationally to make sure that our marine parks are managed effectively. The marine park zoning plans put in place by the former Labor Government focused far too heavily on restricting the fishing activities of local communities and industry. The type of focus that shuts out communities fails to address most of the real threats to our marine parks. We want to make sure that there is a cohesive commonsense policy that comprehensively addresses threats to marine biodiversity.

Mr Brad Hazzard: That's a bit of a change after Labor.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: It is a change after Labor. Our policy will address pollution, invasive species, diseases, habitat destruction, inappropriate coastal development as well as any impact from inappropriate fishing access. I note that the member for Port Stephens, who is paying keen attention to this answer, knows only too well the threats posed by habitat destruction. We have discussed that matter. I am very concerned at the alarming build-up of sand in the Halifax Point area of Port Stephens that has buried an important area of marine habitat. The Port Stephens community is rightly concerned about that because allowing nature to take its course could result in the loss of dive sites and degradation of the ecological values of the marine park. The Marine Parks Authority, the Department of Primary Industries, and the Office of Environment and Heritage have been working cooperatively to determine whether there are practical solutions to prevent further movement of sand onto the dive sites. This is just one example of the threats that we must address through a sensible marine parks policy. Locking out the community will not fix these problems.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will stop whatever it is she is doing: squawking or squeaking.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I do not know what she is doing over there. She sounds a bit like a fish. I make it clear that I am a strong supporter of well-managed marine parks because not only are they a valuable educational resource and important for conserving marine biodiversity, but also they afford excellent tourism and recreational opportunities—for example, diving, and whale and dolphin watching, to name a few. I am also committed to working with the community for the effective conservation of the grey nurse shark. However, the best and most effective conservation strategies are those that have the support of the community. We will consult closely with the community over the next three months to hear all the views and ideas about the best way to protect the grey nurse shark without unnecessary or heavy-handed regulation. This will be coupled with the best available science, as I have already outlined. By securing the support of the community we will be far better placed to work together to protect the grey nurse shark well into the future.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: The New South Wales Government's commonsense marine parks and fisheries policy will find the right balance to protect the marine environment and allow recreational and commercial fishing, be evidence based and put an end to the politicisation— [*Time expired.*]

TEACHER TRANSFER SYSTEM

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Education. Is the Minister still committed to maintaining the New South Wales teacher transfer system in light of the Federal Opposition leader Tony Abbot's comments describing it as an unconscionable restriction on the ability of principals and school communities to run their institutions?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: There was one Government in New South Wales that tried to get rid of the incentive transfer scheme a few years ago: the Labor Party, of which the member for Marrickville was a Cabinet member at the time. She did not raise any objection to that. I am sure it would have been fine for schools in Marrickville, in her electorate, but it would have been disastrous for schools in the electorates of Barwon, Murrumbidgee, Burrinjuck and Northern Tablelands trying to attract qualified and experienced teachers. We are committed to keeping the scheme. We said at the time that we were committed to keeping it and we remain committed to keeping it because it is one of the most important incentives provided to teachers to help staff our difficult-to-staff schools.

We are committed to high-quality education in New South Wales. We are committed to bridging the gap between rural and remote schools compared with their metropolitan counterparts. Part of that is getting qualified, high-quality teachers into those schools. We have to provide incentives for teachers to go to those schools. The incentive transfer scheme allows teachers to spend time at a difficult-to-staff school making a solid contribution to those communities with the incentive that after a few years they can return to a region of their choice. We are committed to that because we know that we need high-quality teachers in our difficult-to-staff schools. That is why we are committed to it. One political party wanted to get rid of it.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Which one?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Labor Party wanted to get rid of it. That is why it is so hypocritical that the member for Marrickville should ask this question, given that she was in Cabinet at the time. The only reason the scheme was saved was the industrial action taken during the last teacher salary negotiations. I will return to that topic of teachers award salary negotiations by the former Government on another occasion. Fortunately, the scheme was saved in New South Wales. While ever the Liberals and The Nationals are in government the scheme will remain.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

Mr JAI ROWELL: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Can the Minister please advise the House on how many beds are available for emergency department patients requiring admission to New South Wales hospitals?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Wollondilly for his question, and his long-expressed concern about health services in his area. I had great pleasure along with the member for Wollondilly, the member for Camden and the member for Campbelltown in visiting hospitals in that region, most particularly Campbelltown hospital, during the election campaign. I was pleased also to revisit that area recently when we held our first community Cabinet meeting in Campbelltown. Before I inform the House about what I learned specifically about the Campbelltown hospital bed situation I will first refer to the fact that Labor closed more than 1,000 hospital beds when it was in office when the population grew by one million. It went the wrong way. Labor was very dishonest because since 2002 its bed closures included cots, bassinets, and recliner and other chairs

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: We've heard this a thousand times. It's still not true.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The former Minister for Health doth protest too much. Under her watch the Government claimed that there were 22,700 hospital beds.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I get into office and from departmental information I found that of those 22,700 beds only 11,800—that is half—of the beds Labor claimed were available were for patients from emergency departments. Let me run through what I have been told.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: What are you going to do about it?

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: There are 4,295 subacute or other non-acute beds unavailable for emergency patients and nearly 4,000 beds including recliner chairs, maternity beds, cots and bassinets. I would love Opposition members to try to get into a cot in the emergency department.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. I call the member for Fairfield to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Maybe we could send a maternity bed to the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The previous Government was totally dishonest when it claimed it was opening those extra beds last winter. I was with the new member for Maitland at that time and we were told that the beds the Minister earlier in the week had been saying were new beds under the Council of Australian Governments agreement were not new but were winter beds—the same beds that were available every winter. I was with the new member for Menai at Sutherland hospitals when we were informed that recliner beds not available for patients needing admission were included among its new beds. I return to my visit to Campbelltown hospital this week, where I met with fantastic doctors and nurses, and other supporting staff. As we walked around the hospital I asked how many of the 405 beds this Government claimed were available in that hospital actually were suitable for patients who needed admission from the emergency department. We went through them and gradually knocked out cots, maternity beds, bassinets, beds at Camden—

Ms Noreen Hay: He's knocking out cots too.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: There were 180 beds out of the 405 beds at this hospital. That is absolutely disgraceful.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who are on two calls to order will soon be placed on three calls to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I can assure this House that the previous Government has betrayed the doctors, the nurses and paramedics who work in our hospital system and have struggled for a long time with access block, which is when emergency departments are so blocked that beds cannot be found for patients. When I visited Campbelltown hospital 12 paramedics lined what they call ambo corridor where patients are on trolleys because beds could not be found. The Labor Government paid lip-service to these hardworking professionals. The Campbelltown ambulance officers said to me, "You're the third health Minister that has visited this place in recent years. You're the first one whose ever spoken to the ambulance officers." I was told the same thing on Saturday last week when I visited St George emergency department. Those opposite pay lip-service. They lie to people.

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Earlier in question time the member for Shellharbour asked me a question.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I advise that commencing on 6 June Fair Trading will undertake an audit in a number of selected suburbs. These suburbs have been selected based on existing information with Fair Trading with respect to complaints from consumers and information from industry about areas that have a high rate of installation of solar panels. These areas are being targeted by Fair Trading to assess whether the rate of uptake, and the pressure on installers to deliver, has put pressure on the supply of skilled and experienced installers and could contribute to safety concerns. Operation Winter Sun will run from Monday 6 June until Friday 17 June in the following north-western Sydney suburbs: Baulkham Hills, Kellyville and Blacktown.

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

MICROBIZ WEEK

Ministerial Statement

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [3.11 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to advise the House that today marks the start of MicroBiz Week, a New South Wales Government initiative. MicroBiz Week is a program of dedicated workshops and events for sole operators, home-based entrepreneurs and micro business people. This week the Government is offering those starting out in business a fantastic chance to learn from business experts at more than 90 free events throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales. I launched MicroBiz Week this morning and it will extend to 3 June 2011. This year's event will be the largest since its foundation and will highlight practical tips to help make micro businesses prosper.

Topics featured in this year's MicroBiz Week include using technologies for cloud computing, keeping a business cyber safe, social media networking, online marketing opportunities, maximising productivity and profit and also online seminars, which are called webinars, demonstrations and resources. Micro businesses in New South Wales represent more than two-thirds of all small- and medium-sized enterprises. New South Wales has approximately 585,000 businesses—it is one of the fastest-growing sectors of our economy. That is the group of people that we want to reach out to during MicroBiz Week. Micro business operators typify the entrepreneurial flair and endeavour that is the cornerstone of our economy but, despite their passion and enthusiasm, they still need assistance.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: A recent survey showed that the vast majority of small business operators spent the bulk of their working day on routine business processes at the expense of growing their business. MicroBiz Week is an excellent opportunity for small businesses to focus on growing their enterprise, expanding their skills and networks, and planning directions for the future of their business. The week will showcase a range of experts showing how micro business operators can increase profit and grow their business using cutting-edge technologies and also realistic implementation. As Madam Speaker knows, starting and running a small business can be exciting, but it is also extremely daunting when first starting out. MicroBiz Week is all about letting micro businesses know that they are not alone.

I understand that it is not always possible for business operators to attend events, so the online web seminars—webinars—are a good option to learn without having to leave their business. They can tap into the webinars, progress it along and, if interrupted, save the spot and finish it later. We want to make sure that our small business sector continues to be a dynamic and vibrant player in our economy, that small businesses are not unduly hampered by red tape, and that they get the support they need through advisory and information services. During MicroBiz Week, owners and managers of small or micro businesses from a variety of demographics can get practical assistance and expert advice, and exchange ideas and experiences with others starting out or in the growth stage of their business. Our aim is to help all business owners build their confidence so that they can invest and grow their business and subsequently create jobs within our communities.

For example, during MicroBiz Week there will be sessions on online marketing and embracing the digital economy, which are great examples of the skills and information that micro businesses need to get ahead. Whether it is learning about the fundamentals of finance, how to take advantage of the boom in social media as a marketing tool or learning more about the Fair Work system and modern industrial awards, MicroBiz has something for most small enterprise operators. The message for all members is that MicroBiz Week is a great opportunity for us. I urge all members to take this opportunity to spread the message to their local constituencies, advise their electorates that this is MicroBiz Week and make sure that they are aware of all the wonderful opportunities that are being brought forward by the State Government for this important week for small business.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [3.14 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I am pleased to show our support for MicroBiz Week 2011. Members on both sides understand the importance to our communities and to the strength of the New South Wales economy of the full gamut of small business. More than 650,000 small-to-medium businesses operate in New South Wales, with the vast majority—580,000—being micro businesses. Micro business is defined as an enterprise that operates with four or fewer people. And MicroBiz Week is a chance for those new, small and emerging business operators to access advice and information to help them succeed. MicroBiz Week enables us to recognise the contribution to our economy and the communities we serve, while also assisting home-based, small and micro business operators.

This week-long event includes a range of forums, seminars and networking opportunities on the many issues facing small business. Topics of the seminars include: how to start and operate a successful business, understanding the social media basics, and how to manage your financial fundamentals. This is the sixth MicroBiz Week and the former Labor Government was pleased to have initiated this important program for small business operators. Events such as this and our support for small business are further evidenced by our commitment to improving conditions for small business. Over the past 16 years we have provided sound economic management, a triple-A credit rating, four cuts to payroll tax in two years, indexation of the payroll tax threshold to consumer price index, reduction of workers compensation premiums by 33 per cent over five years—saving New South Wales businesses approximately \$1 billion—and establishment of MicroBiz Week, all of which demonstrate our support for small business.

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

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: I congratulate the Minister for Small Business on her support for MicroBiz Week, and on her support for the great work of the former Government.

CONDUCT OF MAGISTRATE JENNIFER BETTS

Report

Mr Greg Smith tabled the Magistrate's Response, dated 12 May 2011, as amended with certain deletions, to the Report by a Conduct Division of the Judicial Commission of NSW in relation to Magistrate Jennifer Betts.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Greg Smith.

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**.

Inner City Social Housing

Petition requesting that inner city social housing be retained, 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**.

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

Manning and Great Lakes Area Command Policing

Petition requesting an increase in police numbers for the Manning and Great Lakes Area Command, received from **Mr Stephen Bromhead**.

Dargues Reef Mining Proposal

Petition requesting that applications for mining at Dargues Reef be permitted only under certain conditions, received from **Mr John Barilaro**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Carbon Tax

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN (Newcastle) [3.19 p.m.]: There would not be a member of this House who has not been contacted by their constituents about the rising cost of living and, more significantly, their inability to pay their power bills. Those bills have increased by 60 per cent in the past five years, with a lot more increases to come if Labor gets its way with the carbon tax. Most members in the Chamber would have met with or listened to an elderly person who is fearful of not being able to pay an electricity bill: they turn off all power in their houses at night, the television and all the lights, and go to bed when the sun goes down—as does the member for Mount Druitt. Most members would know of a pensioner in their electorates who would turn off the refrigerator at night to save energy costs. These sad stories, as we all know only too well, are the result of mismanagement by Labor governments at State and Federal levels over the past few years.

Fortunately, the people of New South Wales put an end to Labor's incompetence at the State level in March this year. But, unfortunately, we must still suffer a Federal Labor Government hell-bent on introducing a carbon tax, which will serve only one purpose—to hurt the hardworking families that Labor is supposed to represent. But not only households will be hurt by the Federal Labor Government's devastating carbon tax; business and industry will suffer as well. People with businesses in my electorate, in the city of Newcastle in particular but right across the Hunter, in Charlestown, Wallsend, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Port Stephens, Swansea and Cessnock, will undoubtedly suffer the most. That is why we should discuss today the impacts that the carbon tax of Federal Labor, the close colleagues of those opposite, will have on regional communities, but on the Hunter in particular.

As the motion indicates, economic modelling shows that the gross regional product of the Hunter will drop by 20 per cent under Labor's carbon tax. It is frightening to think what this will do in the Hunter, but we must discuss it. What does the carbon tax mean for Hunter families and Hunter pensioners? How will it affect the families in my electorate and those next to it who are already struggling to meet their bills? That is why this motion should be accorded priority. We all know that those opposite will try to deflect from the issue and try to avoid the consequences of their Federal colleagues' disastrous carbon tax. We all know they will try to make this debate about the environment and climate change, and that they will faff about regarding who is and who is not a believer. We all know they will try to wash their hands of this and claim it is a Federal issue. Well, I am here to tell those opposite that this debate is not about climate change; it is not about that Federal issue. It is about the livelihood of families in the Hunter and the future of the local and regional industries and businesses that I represent—all of which are seriously threatened by Labor's carbon tax. We have economic modelling—

Mr John Robertson: Table it.

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: Labor had economic modelling about economic issues, such as the Solar Bonus Scheme and the public sector salaries blowout, but they would not tell us about that. We need this debate to hear what those on the other side have to say about the carbon tax. Do they support it, or do they not?

Mr John Robertson: Table your model.

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: Will they toe the party line and try to sell us this tax as something good? What are they really going to do? Will they do as they are elected to do and represent their constituents and their needs? As much as those opposite want to deny it, the carbon tax will hit families hard. It will hit big business; it will hit business in the Hunter. It is a slog for the communities and those who survive on those industries. Last year we saw what a difference the previous Government's decision was making with regard to the hydro aluminium smelter. It threatened to destroy that plant and the town of Kurri Kurri. This carbon tax is back on a grander scale, and it threatens to hurt the Hunter. I and my fellow Hunter colleagues often raise the disparity between the amount of money the Hunter generates for this State's economy and how much the previous Labor Government actually gave back. I ask those opposite: What happens if, as this economic modelling shows, the gross regional product of the Hunter Valley drops by 20 per cent under their carbon tax?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from the Opposition benches.

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: What then, I ask them? Last week I stood in this place and made my inaugural speech in Parliament. I told the House then that my job was to be the eyes and ears of the Newcastle electorate in this place; but it was also to be their mouthpiece.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: I will also speak for the people of the Illawarra—if the member opposite will not—and try to serve them as well in the context of this carbon tax. That is why I want the House to debate this motion today—to represent the people of Newcastle and of the Hunter and be their voice on this incredibly important issue. That is why this motion must be accorded priority.

Solar Bonus Scheme

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.24 p.m.]: This matter deserves to be accorded priority by each and every member of this House. The reason is that it represents a broken promise to the people of every seat represented in this House. More than 100,000 families from right across our State placed their hard-earned money into helping the environment and saving our State's energy burden. They did so in the full confidence that the Government program they were relying on had full bipartisan support. They did so in the full confidence that it was Coalition policy. They did so having heard and read promises by the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the member for Goulburn that an O'Farrell Government would uphold the contracts that had been entered into. How much more core can a promise be?

But that core promise was trashed for political expediency, and not a single member here has not felt the outrage coming from his or her constituents. Well, that outrage deserves to be respected and given priority by this House. Should the member for Port Stephens not show priority for Ian Sheppard of Medowie, who did everything by the rules until the Government rewrote the rules? Should the member for Manly, No. 44, not show priority for Michael and Christine Rennix, self-funded retirees of Freshwater, who described this act as "immoral, unjust and unlawful"?

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The member has gone well into the substance of his motion. He has actually read letters from constituents about an issue. The responsibility of the member is to establish why his motion should have priority.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: To the point of order: Each of these emails is testimony to the fact that this is a matter of great consternation in the community. Every one of them reinforces the need for this matter to be accorded priority.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will establish why his motion should be accorded priority. Members will come to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I am happy to table the emails, if that is the issue. They are all here for anyone to see. Should the member for Terrigal not support priority for Ken Gold of Terrigal, a real battler, on a very modest income—I will not record the income in *Hansard* for privacy reasons—who now has no hope of paying off his investment? He wrote:

... I would like to talk to my local Member about this but he has always been unavailable!

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The member is flouting the clear ruling of the Chair that he should establish priority. Once again he is reading emails onto the *Hansard* record.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member must establish why his motion should be accorded priority. It is impossible to establish priority without referring to the substance of the motion. The member may proceed on this occasion.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The substance of my motion is a broken promise. Coalition members broke their promise that they would honour every one of those solar contracts. The member for Terrigal does not like the fact that one of his constituents would like to meet with him but the member is unavailable. So the member takes a point of order.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: If the member wishes to relate comments made by someone in his electorate he must identify the writer and table the email. He is not entitled to quote from a document without identifying the author of it.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I am happy to table them.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has offered to table them.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: To the point of order: I offered to do that, Madam Speaker. I am more than happy to table all those emails.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will proceed.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Shall I table them, Madam Speaker?

The SPEAKER: If you wish.

Mr Chris Hartcher: You can't table them.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: So you do not want to see them? Government members interject all the time because they do not want to acknowledge the fact that they broke a promise, that they gave a commitment, and that broken promise is now having an impact on more than 100,000 families in the electorates of Terrigal, Coffs Harbour, Port Stephens and right across this State. They do not want to acknowledge that they made a promise that they have now walked away from. In their electorates they proclaim that they are going to Sydney to tell the Premier what they are hearing from their constituents but then they go into the caucus room and sit there like little sheep—like the member for Coffs Harbour who goes home and says, "I'm going to fight this," then comes down here and sheepishly toes the line. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion of the member for Newcastle be accorded priority—put and resolved in the affirmative.

CARBON TAX

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN (Newcastle) [3.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that regional economies will be hardest hit by a carbon tax;
- (2) notes that economic modelling shows the gross regional product of the Hunter Valley would drop by 20 per cent under a carbon tax; and
- (3) opposes the Federal Government's carbon tax.

As the Premier stated so eloquently in question time, in recent years Frontier Economics produced two reports that outline the devastating impact that Labor's proposed carbon tax would have on the Hunter region. I will refer, first, to the Frontier Economics report relating to New South Wales, which shows that imports and exports in New South Wales and in Australia would reduce as a result of a carbon tax. If a carbon tax were implemented gross State product would fall by \$10.4 billion and at least 47,000 jobs would disappear from New South Wales. The families of New South Wales do not want this carbon tax. These studies revealed also that placing a price tag on carbon would hit the Hunter—and I ask members to listen to these statistics—five times harder than the national average and cost the Hunter 13,000 jobs and \$1.2 billion in local economic activity. These figures are not just statistics that should be bandied around in this House today only to be forgotten about tomorrow. As recently as 23 April Sharon Grierson, the Federal member for Newcastle, outlined her support for a price on carbon.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Newcastle will be heard in silence.

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: The Federal member for Newcastle persisted with her devastating vision for the region despite the fact that her constituents actively voiced their dissatisfaction with the Federal Government's policy. In a poll taken by the Newcastle *Herald* as recently as 4 May this year, only 19 per cent of voters stated that they supported Labor's plan for a carbon tax. When I was elected as the State member for Newcastle I said I would represent my constituents concerns and beliefs with honesty and transparency. It is clear that Labor continues to ignore the community's views in favour of proceeding with its own self-promotional agenda. However, I make it clear to the House that the New South Wales Government opposes Labor's carbon tax—a tax that threatens tens of thousands of jobs and that will slug families with a \$500

increase in their electricity bills. Many families, pensioners and low income earners will struggle to find \$500 to pay for Labor's carbon tax on electricity bills.

The New South Wales Government is calling for the Leader of the Opposition to confirm his stance on Labor's proposed carbon tax as he has been all over the place on this issue thus far. Does he agree with his Federal counterparts and support their crusade, or does he side with the people of New South Wales, and in particular the Hunter, to oppose this senseless tax? At least the former Labor leader came clean and supported a carbon tax: she supported a new tax on the people of New South Wales. If the current Leader of the Opposition is genuinely concerned about the environment he would come clean and tell us what his position is on a carbon tax. On 24 March 2010, in an article in the *Australian Financial Review* entitled "NSW still backs putting a price on carbon", the current Leader of the Opposition stated:

I think there is a general view that everyone wants some certainty around the price of carbon.

We need a price on carbon to make gas competitive. At the moment, with no price on carbon, it just does not compete with coal.

On 3 April 2011 on *Insiders* the current Leader of the Opposition had this to say about the carbon tax:

I want to get more information from the Prime Minister on the detail of the compensation package before I arrive at a position.

Obviously the Leader of the Opposition does not know which way he wants to go in relation to this issue. The facts are in the economic modelling. Take out the politics and take the "he said" and "she said" out of the equation: the economic modelling is there. Carbon pricing will hit the Hunter and the Illawarra hard. In 2008 Frontier Economics performed modelling for New South Wales Treasury regarding the impact of a price on carbon. Back then it was called the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Alarming, the study found that carbon pricing would hurt the Hunter and the Illawarra regions in New South Wales considerably more than the Australian average. That should be enough for Opposition members to support this motion and to oppose the carbon tax.

Let me give members more details. The study stated that carbon pricing would reduce gross domestic product by 4 per cent. Members should take heed of these figures. Over a 40-year period the loss of gross domestic product would be worth \$2 trillion in 2007 prices. That is approximately the same amount as the cumulative Federal Government health budget over those four decades. Similarly, the cost of putting a price on carbon in that 40-year period would be equivalent to approximately two years of economic growth across the entire Australian economy. These statistics are nothing short of alarming. It beggars belief that three years after this modelling was done we are still debating a disastrous policy. However, as my motion states, regional communities would be hurt the most by putting a price on carbon.

According to the study, in the period to 2050, the negative economic impact on the Illawarra will be twice the national average. But, believe it or not, the outlook is even worse for the Hunter. It is amazing to think that a region that is home to the world's largest coal port could be hit so hard by this tax. The study found that the negative economic impact on the Hunter region would be five times worse than the national average impact in the period to 2050. In real terms what does that mean for us? It means that more than 13,000 jobs will be lost in the period to 2020—affecting the Hunter region 2½ times more than the next most affected region. What does that mean in real numbers? How many of those 13,000 people are the sole breadwinners in their households?

How many of those families have children, mortgages, perhaps a sick family member, or a child who needs expensive medical treatment? In addition, a Hunter Valley Research Foundation study reported that putting a price on carbon had led to several major employers in the worst-affected sectors, including aluminium, black coal, iron and steel, putting substantial new investments on hold. Essentially they said that they would put substantial new investments on hold. Currently these sectors employ more than 15,000 Hunter residents. Further, in the period to 2020 putting a price on carbon would cost the Hunter, in net present value, \$1.2 billion in economic activity, and gross regional production would diminish by almost 20 per cent in the Hunter by 2050 due to this carbon tax. How many small businesses do Opposition members want to destroy?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [3.37 p.m.]: The Opposition opposes the motion accorded priority that was moved by the member for Newcastle. I find extraordinary the fact that this is the fifth time a carbon tax motion has been accorded priority. One would have thought that this new Government, which has been in office for just on two months, would have been more interested in talking about its own agenda—about its plans for the future and about the initiatives it is putting in place. Day after day Coalition members come into this Chamber and they want to talk about the carbon tax, which leads me to conclude that they are having a great deal of trouble making that transition to government. As there is not enough business for members to deal with

we have spent many days talking about the Library Amendment Bill 2011, important though that piece of legislation might be. Day after day motions about the carbon tax are accorded priority and are debated, though I do not doubt that the issue of climate change and carbon pricing are important to the people of New South Wales.

In reality, putting a price on carbon is the responsibility of the Federal Government and there is very little that this Parliament can do about that. I cannot understand why the Coalition wants to spend so much time of the House debating this issue rather than talking about its own plans, perhaps to address climate change or to address other issues. It leads me to conclude that this Government is still struggling to make the transition to government. The Coalition seems much more comfortable opposing things than outlining a positive agenda. We know, as I have said on the previous three or four occasions we have debated this issue, that the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action. For example, ClimateWorks Australia's updated Low Carbon Growth Plan for Australia makes it very clear that if we delay taking action on climate change there will be far greater costs to the people of Australia and to the people of New South Wales. Its report states:

Losses from delayed action will increase rapidly as it becomes harder to catch up over a declining number of years. If no further action is taken before 2015, the cost of reaching the 5% reduction target within Australia in 2020 will increase by \$5.5 billion per annum for businesses and households.

The cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action. Coalition members would have us believe that they believe in climate change and that they are not climate change sceptics but they just do not agree with the proposed course of action being put in place by the Federal Government. If that is the case it is incumbent on Coalition members to outline what they would do to address climate change. It is incumbent on the Coalition to outline the action that members opposite would take to protect the people, businesses and communities of New South Wales from the impact of climate change. We do not hear that from the Coalition. All we hear is opposition to the carbon tax. There are things that rightly belong within the realm of State governments and I would like to hear from the Coalition what its position is on those issues.

In the meantime we see an increasing number of people and organisations coming out in support of a price on carbon. We know, for example, that the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Industry Group support a price on carbon. They are two organisations that have in the past been far closer to the Coalition than they have to Labor. We know also that John Howard, the former Prime Minister, took an emissions trading scheme policy to the election before last. We have seen today also that two former leading lights of the Coalition, John Hewson and Malcolm Fraser, no less, have supported a price on carbon. It is interesting to see what John Hewson, a former Coalition opposition leader, had to say on 8 February:

The magnitude and urgency of the challenge is being lost in short-term political point scoring.

Members opposite would do well to listen to the words of John Hewson, a former leading light of the Coalition parties:

The real challenge is for leadership on such a fundamentally important issue. Our political leaders have a responsibility to provide it, and the media has a responsibility to call for it, and to reward it, rather than to just wallow in the "colour and movement" of grossly irresponsible politicking.

That is what John Hewson had to say—grossly irresponsible politicking. There is no doubt that climate change will impact on the people of New South Wales. The motion refers in particular to regional New South Wales and we know that it is likely that the impact of climate change on regional communities, particularly regional communities in coastal areas, will be greater than the impact on metropolitan communities: for example, rising sea levels, increased flooding, soil erosion, a hotter climate and more adverse weather events. It is the case that people in regional and rural New South Wales may well bear a greater brunt of climate change than people in metropolitan areas. That is why it is so important that the Coalition says what it is going to do to protect constituencies from the impact of climate change.

With regard to a price on carbon, we all know that the Federal Government has made it very clear that a price on carbon is part of a transition to an emissions trading scheme. We need to cut pollution levels and reduce our carbon emissions and our carbon footprint, and the most economically responsible way to do that is through an emissions trading scheme. Any number of respected commentators agree that an emissions trading scheme is essential and putting a price on carbon on the path to such a scheme is an economically responsible way of doing it. I note that the Federal Government has made very clear that there will be generous compensation to households. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [3.44 p.m.]: I thank the member for Marrickville for her contribution to debate on this motion. As someone who attended the University of Sydney many years ago and was a onetime constituent of her electorate I understand that she is representing the views of her electorate on this matter. However, I do not think it represents the views of regional New South Wales. I point out the stark differences between her electorate and that of the member for Cessnock, who is sitting next to her. The motion relates to regional New South Wales. As the member for Newcastle so eloquently said, a carbon tax will devastate the Hunter. It is a pity such eloquence is needed in relation to such a disaster for our region. Frontier Economics produced a report in 2008 outlining the effects of pricing carbon on the Australian economy.

As my colleague stated, the impact on the Hunter would be five times greater than the national average. Our economy would lose 13,000 jobs in the period to 2020. It would cost the Hunter \$1.2 billion in the same period. These are our constituents, our neighbours and our friends. I say to the Prime Minister: Not on my watch. I say to all our Federal colleagues on both sides of politics that I, and I am sure the member for Newcastle, will not sit idly by as our region's future is sacrificed for the sake of personal vanities in Canberra. The New South Wales Government opposes Labor's carbon tax, a tax that threatens tens of thousands of jobs and will slug families with \$500 increases in their electricity bills. Many families, pensioners and low income earners will struggle to find the \$500 to pay for Labor's carbon tax.

The former State Labor Government has already increased electricity bills by up to 60 per cent over five years and there will be more increases to come under a carbon tax. The introduction of a carbon tax would have a devastating effect on the Hunter economy. It would crush local manufacturing. I note that Paul Howes has called for special relief for the steel industry. I appeal to the member for Wallsend and the member for Cessnock not to listen to Paul Howes. They should listen to their local Australian Workers Unions representatives who represent the workers at Hydro Aluminium and Tomago Aluminium. Their members are terrified of losing their jobs if this tax comes to fruition. They live in all our electorates in the Hunter and we need to protect their jobs.

A carbon tax will drive their jobs offshore where aluminium production will be far more carbon intensive, a bad result for the environment and a disaster for the Hunter. The Hunter would be in grave danger of losing these high-skill jobs for absolutely no environmental gain. These industries are already facing problems such as coping with the high Australian dollar, which reduces their international competitiveness. A carbon tax would completely cripple their ability to compete against other nations that are, shall we say, less financially magnanimous than we are. I will not sit idly by while this crippled Federal Government drives another nail into the coffin of Australian manufacturing. Unfortunately this is a classic case of Labor economics: tax it until it suffocates and then subsidise it to bring it back to life.

On 26 March this year the Hunter broke with 100 years of electoral tradition and took control of its own destiny. While the people of the Hunter have been ignored through the incompetence and laziness of the Labor administration in Macquarie Street, their futures are now under active attack by a Federal Government hell-bent on pursuing an ideological agenda. I believe in anthropogenic climate change and everyone believes we need to take care of the environment for our children and our grandchildren. The economics of how to address climate change is still a work in progress and I will actively oppose this underhanded form of enviro-communism that threatens the future of my region.

All we will do is offshore our emissions—a disaster for the environment—and, more importantly, we will offshore jobs in the Hunter. Hydro Aluminium, Tomago Aluminium and our various steel manufacturers will all be at risk. Smaller specialist manufacturers and the families that operate the sandwich shops next door will be at risk. For 16 years business in New South Wales has been trying to operate with the millstone of an inept Labor government around its neck. Just when there is light at the end of the tunnel with the election of a new Liberal-Nationals Government, the dead hand of an ideological tax appears to be crushing business and again impacting on jobs. There is no quicker way to reduce our carbon footprint than by increasing unemployment. If the Federal Government thinks it will not adversely affect the Hunter it will fail. It will affect not our carbon footprint but Labor's Federal electoral footprint in the Hunter.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.49 p.m.]: On 18 March Barry O'Farrell made a statement regarding climate change and the need to act upon it. During an election debate with Kristina Keneally he was asked by Quentin Dempster whether he accepted the science on climate change. His answer is worth noting in full:

Absolutely. I accept climate change. I accept the impact of man on climate change and if we are elected to Government I am committed to using the energies of Government to limit that impact and reduce those emissions.

Our present Premier, a man who fully accepts the man-made reality of climate change, promised to do something about it in government. He has since been elected to government so where is his commitment now? We do not get a plan to reduce emissions or to tackle climate change, and we do not even get a ministry for the environment. We get a Government that is still acting like an opposition and that is unable to make the transition to government. Instead of developing a practical and cogent policy for New South Wales it is playing second fiddle to Tony Abbott on a Federal issue. Perhaps Government members need an introduction to the New South Wales Constitution. I know they are new to this concept but they seem to have no idea about what taxation matters are or are not in the control of this State.

If members opposite want to start acting like a government they must develop policies of their own and not just oppose everyone else's policies. If they want to talk about climate change we will talk. If we accept that there is climate change we have an obligation to do something about it. Apparently the Government accepts that there is climate change but it does not want to do anything about it. So much for responsible government. It is clear to anyone who knows anything about this sector that the absence of a carbon price has led to incredible uncertainty in investment. How do we address that uncertainty? What on earth are we to do in the long run about the more expensive and less efficient carbon reduction schemes that are run by States right around the country? The Government does not have any answers to those questions. How can this Government develop a serious policy on this issue when some people in its ranks either deny that the issue exists or simply chuck in hand grenades in the hope of avoiding it? The man that Barry O'Farrell promoted to Government Whip in the other place said:

I foresee a future where, for example, perhaps dragons are made responsible for global warming.

I think Government could well fund in the future a \$10 million draconian research institute, whereby peer-approved papers could be produced which would demonstrate that dragons are responsible for global warming.

Dragons should be investigated even more deeply with regard to their role in climate change, because it has the same sort of scientific relevance as carbon dioxide.

That is the kind of leadership that Barry O'Farrell thinks is acceptable in his team. What a joke. But the Government's words are worse than its actions. It took the Premier only a week to axe the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, to demote the director general and to hive off responsibility for marine parks and land care to Primary Industries. There is a public statement in actions such as that—the actions of a Government in axing departments, demoting officials and dealing with climate change as though it does not exist. The department has been abolished. Those actions speak louder than words. It makes New South Wales the only State or Territory without a department of the environment. I suspect it shows where this Government's priorities lie and it is probably a portent of things to come. Without a policy, without a plan and without leadership this Government is failing the people of New South Wales. It is ironic that the Government talks about the impact of a carbon tax on regional communities when—

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: The member for Cessnock should advise us who wrote this speech for him.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Cessnock has the call.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I refer to the words of the Federal Minister for the Environment, Mr Greg Combet, who said:

The most pressing point, however, in the current public debate is undoubtedly the price impacts that may be faced by households.

The Government has already committed that every cent raised from the carbon price will be used to assist households; support jobs in the most affected industries; and to encourage the transition to a clean energy future.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that we will put households first.

There will be general assistance for households to meet costs that may be passed on by the companies that are paying for their pollution—

[Time expired.]

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN (Newcastle) [3.54 p.m.], in reply: First, I thank members from both sides of the House for their contributions to debate on this motion.

Mr Andrew Cornwell: You are so gracious.

Mr TIMOTHY OWEN: I know I am gracious. However, this motion is not about climate change; we are talking about a carbon tax and the impact of that tax on regional Australia. I reiterate that that means more than 13,000 jobs will be lost in the period to 2020 in the Hunter alone. That is 2½ times worse than the next most affected region in Australia, which is the Illawarra. The member who represents the Illawarra region is not present in the Chamber but that obviously does not worry her. What does that mean in real numbers? How many of those 13,000 people are the sole breadwinners in their households? How many have children, mortgages and family members who are sick and require expensive medical treatment? The list goes on. They may not—and probably will not—have jobs in the future.

In addition, as I mentioned before, the Hunter Valley Research Foundation reported that putting a price on carbon has led to several major employers in the worst affected areas of our region—including aluminium, steel, coal and iron—putting substantial new investments on hold. Currently, those sectors are employing more than 15,000 Hunter residents. Further, carbon pricing will cost under \$1.2 billion in economic activity at net present value in the period up to 2020, and gross regional product will diminish by about 20 per cent in the Hunter by 2050 due to this carbon tax. That is what we are talking about today. We are not talking about climate change; we are talking about a carbon tax. I look forward to seeing how those opposite will respond to these statistics. Will they deny them? Will they try to tell everybody that it is okay, that the carbon tax is a wonderful idea and that we should all embrace it?

Is that the view of the member for Cessnock and the member for Wallsend whose constituents could be gravely affected by the pricing of carbon? Will they tell us and the people of the Hunter that they can afford to see 13,000 additional people unemployed? Will they tell us that the Hunter can afford to lose \$1.2 billion in economic activity in the next decade? That is the question that they have to answer—not whether or not they support climate change. I know that the people of Newcastle, and I am sure that the people of Charlestown, so ably represented by my erstwhile colleague, do not think so. The members for Maitland, Port Stephens, Swansea and Lake Macquarie and the members for Wallsend and Cessnock would not agree that their constituents could afford to lose so many jobs. I commend my motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

LIBRARY AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 25 May 2011.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [3.59 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I support the Library Amendment Bill 2011. The member for Liverpool laughs, but he does not understand the importance of library resources in country New South Wales. In Sydney, people have access to what are basically libraries of the State whereas in country areas people have difficulty accessing library materials. A number of years ago I was very disappointed when Coffs Harbour City Council withdrew from the Clarence regional library, which extended from Nambucca to the Grafton-Clarence area. A feature of the arrangement was shared resources. If one council could not afford to have a sufficient number of research books on the shelves, they were always able to obtain resources from surrounding libraries or from another source. As a result of that cooperative arrangement, people in the Coffs Harbour, Clarence, Nambucca, Bellingen and Dorrigo areas received a far better service than they would have received if each local community had had only its own library.

Currently Clarence has a regional library service that incorporates the Clarence, Nambucca and Bellingen libraries. The President of the Local Government Association, Keith Rhoades, who is also the Mayor of Coffs Harbour, issued a media release welcoming the legislation that has been introduced by the Minister for the Arts, George Souris, because it will re-establish regional library services and put in place an arrangement whereby libraries will work collaboratively to provide better library resources across local government boundaries. The challenge now is for Mr Rhoades to put his money where his mouth is and rejoin Coffs Harbour to the Clarence regional library to ensure that the Coffs Harbour electorate enjoys a wider choice of resources. The Coffs Harbour librarians are phenomenal people and they provide great services and resources not just to students but to people who suffer some degree of visual impairment. The Coffs Harbour library has special computers to provide larger print so that all people can gather knowledge and information either from fiction or research resources.

It was part of my upbringing to use libraries, and subsequently I encouraged my children to utilise libraries and develop greater research abilities, which is very helpful for school and university assignments. Information that can be accessed through a library is not necessarily available from other sources. I realise that in this computer age people can use search engines such as Google and find information on whatever subject they like, but there is nothing more satisfying than reading a book. Two of my daughters are currently travelling throughout the world and one of the first things they do when they are about to board a long flight is go to the local bookstore and select a book to read during the flight. Computer access is either too expensive or not possible on long-distance flights, and it is certainly not available on short flights. The Harry Potter series of books has made our younger generations aware that computers are not the be-all and end-all. That very popular series has given our younger generations the opportunity to sit back and read.

Mr Deputy-Speaker, you would appreciate that on the North Coast, and in regional areas of New South Wales especially, many families cannot afford \$50 to buy a book for their children to read. Naturally, children want to read the books that their school friends are reading. As a result of this legislation, all families will have access to shared library resources through regional libraries. It is fortunate that children from impoverished families will be able to access regional libraries and borrow books such as those in the Harry Potter series. This legislation will enable local government areas that wish to work collaboratively to provide library services in remote areas. During many debates in the House, western New South Wales is described as isolated, but there are places on the North Coast, such as Dorrigo, Lowanna, Ulong and Coramba, that also do not have public transport. Families in those areas who do not have a car, or have only one car that mum or dad needs for work, do not necessarily have an opportunity to visit the library in Coffs Harbour.

At one stage the schools at Boambee and Lowanna were outreach centres for the Coffs Harbour library. That after school hours service enabled children and parents to regularly access good collections of fiction and research material from the Coffs Harbour library, and previously the Clarence regional library. I encourage North Coast councils to work together. I also encourage the Mayor of Coffs Harbour to heed the words of his own media release and talk to Clarence, Nambucca, Bellingen and Coffs Harbour local government authorities with a view to reinstating the Clarence regional library. By incorporating all those areas into one regional library, wider benefit can be derived from the magnificent library resources, such as at the Coffs Harbour Education Campus on Hogbin Drive, which comprises the Southern Cross University, a senior high school and a TAFE college. If councils work collaboratively and cooperatively, they can share a greater collection of resources and extend to outlying areas of Coffs Harbour and Oxley a borrowing program that would be second to none. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.07 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I join in debate on the Libraries Amendment Bill 2011, which amends the Library Act 1939. Although the Opposition does not oppose this amending bill, we are concerned that it is silent about who controls resources when libraries are outsourced. Councils are concerned that outsourced providers will take control of council assets as a consequence of this bill. The Opposition will seek to amend the bill so that councils will have ultimate control, irrespective of outsourcing. In the Cabramatta electorate, which includes the City of Fairfield of which I am mayor, there are five libraries—in Cabramatta, Smithfield, Bonnyrigg, Wetherill Park and Fairfield. The library at Cabramatta was appropriately named the Whitlam Library in honour of the great man himself, our former Federal member for Werriwa and former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. Mr Whitlam has been a great advocate for libraries. He is now 95 years of age but in the past, whenever he could, he would attend the library bearing his name to lend his support to a book launch or a new program.

Funding from the State Government is \$1.83 per capita, which amounts to \$360,000 in revenue to Fairfield City Council. That level of funding was provided by the former Labor State Government, and I hope that the new Government will increase funding instead of merely tweaking legislation. Give us some more money so that we can help our communities. Our library also provides literary access for our residents through an online service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The member for Tweed, the member for Clarence and the member for Murray-Darling spoke on this debate last week and focused on regional and country councils. But City of Fairfield libraries contain books written in approximately 16 different foreign languages. Presently we share our Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese books with the adjoining and nearby councils of Bankstown, Liverpool, Auburn and Canterbury. My local library staff have told me that they would be quite happy to bulk loan those foreign language books to any regional or country council. I might add that Fairfield and Griffith city councils are sister councils. We support our regional and country brothers and sisters.

Fairfield City Council's flagship library at Cabramatta has wi-fi connections that anyone can use. Cabramatta library's seating for 240 is filled daily. Fairfield and Cabramatta in particular have a tremendous

multicultural community and on any given day one can see people from many different nationalities sitting reading books. The exam results of our children speak volumes about the library service we provide. Those associated with the library and dedicated mums and dads make sure that young children obtain as much information as possible. The people of Fairfield are thankful for the way our libraries operate and we do not want to lose control of them.

Fairfield City Library runs a program that captures oral history from its pioneers—those who have lived in the area for 50 and 60 years. A young lady aged 101 years gave a recitation of her history and her knowledge of Fairfield and Cabramatta 60 or 70 years ago. Those recitations and memories are captured on CDs, tapes and DVDs so that future generations will be able to access them to learn about our history. If we do not remember our history, we have nothing: no culture, no traditions—we lose everything. Our great libraries are important in providing this worthy service. Each year the Fairfield library loans at least one million books to the people of Fairfield. In the past 12 months library membership has increased by 8 per cent, to 105,000 users. During the same period there were 23,000 visitors to our library.

As I said earlier, our multiculturalism is what makes our library different. People from 130 different nationalities—the people who make up the tapestry of our city—take advantage of the service provided by our libraries. We focus also on the young people in our area. The library has a homework centre program for young people with tutors. Each year 14,000 students take advantage of face-to-face tutoring with teachers who help them with their schoolwork. Higher School Certificate lectures are also held in the library to help students get through that important part of their lives. Online assistance called "Your Tutor" is provided through the library and can be accessed from home. Each year approximately 6,000 students take advantage of that service. Fairfield library also provides literary classes for 700 students each year as well as computer classes and online computer training.

The housebound readers program enables access to our library services and facilities by those who are sick and infirm and who cannot attend the library. The library's mobile service plays a valuable role in keeping such people connected to our city. At the end of each year we hold a Christmas party to thank them for their patronage, which enables them to join in the celebrations and feel that they are part of our city. The camaraderie of everyone involved with the library service demonstrates that they understand the plight of the housebound, and the library helps them keep in touch with the rest of the world through its books, magazines and newspapers. Fairfield libraries carry just about every world newspaper. Authors also attend the library and speak to students and residents on topics such as how to become a writer and where to get books published. I have attended a few of these lectures and they are always well received. The living history project about which I spoke earlier enables people to book time to spend with those authors who have made an oral history of their memories in order to learn more about their personal understanding of how Fairfield and Cabramatta evolved.

Mr Guy Zangari: Have you been booked yet?

Mr NICK LALICH: Not yet, but I have offered to be available once a year. Those involved with the oral history projects do not have to answer all questions because some things may be too difficult or perhaps too personal to speak about. The Opposition does not oppose the bill, but we want a clause included that gives councils final control so that our library services are not outsourced and removed from local government.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I congratulate the member for Cabramatta on the establishment of Fairfield City Library's oral history project, known as the Living Library. I am the patron of the Lismore Living Library, which was the first in Australia.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [4.17 p.m.]: I support the Library Amendment Bill 2011. The object of the bill is to amend the Library Act 1939 to enable two or more local councils to enter into arrangements for the provision, control and management of libraries and library services in any of the council's areas. This is a commonsense amendment. It is not surprising that as a former public school teacher I support the bill. No-one needs to explain to me the importance of libraries. The bill will provide flexibility and potentially will increase funding to our local governments to enhance the many services offered by public libraries across New South Wales. This amendment will provide increased support for local governments, which are increasingly burdened through cost shifting. We should embrace the proposal rather than be cynical and criticise it, which those opposite seem determined to do.

The public library cost burden for local governments has increased dramatically, from \$7.11 per capita in 1980 to \$45.81 per capita in 2008-09. We need to acknowledge that public libraries provide more than books—something to which many members have alluded. Libraries allow members to borrow CDs, magazines,

videos, DVDs, large-print books and audio books and as such provide information, education, inspiration and amusement. Port Macquarie has the largest growing population and the fastest ageing population in the State and its libraries provide an essential service, particularly to the area's older population. In fact, our libraries are the most used per capita in this State.

It is also important to note that all families, particularly low-income families, should have access to the resources that can be found in our local libraries. I come from a working class family with three girls who were all at high school at the same time. That placed a heavy burden on my family to provide books, particularly in the days before computers and other technology that is around today. It was important for my family to be able to access an encyclopaedia, for example. I was a member of a local book club, which are becoming more and more popular these days. If we had 10 members we would need 10 copies of the same book, and not everyone could afford to buy their own copy. Members will acknowledge that new releases, in particular, are not cheap these days. So we would often go to our library and check out which books it had multiple copies of.

The Port Macquarie library in my electorate celebrated 10 years in its new location on Grant Street, a very central location. It is an absolutely fantastic local facility. I will illustrate how important the library is to our local community. Approximately 2.3 million people have walked through the doors of the library since it opened in 1999, and some five million items have been borrowed. Since it moved to its new location borrowings have increased by 4.6 per cent. In 1999 library staff issued more than 387,000 items to borrowers. Just 10 years later, in 2009, borrowings had increased to 565,000 items. It is an absolutely fantastic library, as are other libraries across the State. As a responsible Government we should do whatever possible to support our libraries. Not just registered library members share the benefits of libraries. Others in the community can use the various facilities and services provided by our libraries.

For example, people can access the reference collections for research, read newspapers, use computers and the internet, and research local history. They can access these library resources without having to borrow items. As we all know, libraries should be very quiet places. About five or six years ago I was a mature-age student doing my nursing degree. I had a young family and a busy household, and the library became a place where I could get some peace and quiet and study uninterrupted. Library services are so important to local communities, but unfortunately not all people can access these great facilities. I refer specifically to Lord Howe Island, which is in my electorate—the uniqueness of which I described in my inaugural speech. Each time I visit the island local residents express their wish to have access to library services. Unfortunately, they have no formal library services at present.

I am working to get a memorandum of understanding with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council signed off this year so that island residents can begin to share our fantastic resources—and on top of the list is sharing library services. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend the Friends of the Port Macquarie-Hastings Library. Those volunteers are out there supporting our local library so it makes perfect sense that we should be supporting them. They describe themselves on the organisation's website as, "People who know that a community with a first-rate library is a better place to live". Let me highlight for members the objectives of this great organisation, the friends of the library.

They are to maintain an association of people interested in books and libraries, to promote the use of Port Macquarie-Hastings Library services and appreciation of its value as an asset to the community, to encourage and support the extension and improvement of library services in the Hastings, and to support the freedom to read and access to free information for all. Additionally, the friends of the library believe the services public libraries offer are so important that they held a Meet the Candidates night in the lead-up to the State election on 26 March to make sure they had the support of all candidates. It was a great event held in our local library, and I commend the friends of the library for this great initiative. It is a very active and supportive local voluntary organisation so is it not commonsense that we support it? I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.26 p.m.]: I am disappointed that many members who spoke earlier in the debate on the Library Amendment Bill 2011 did not affirm the great work of librarians, who are the lifeblood of the library service. I commence by paying homage to librarians. As a young student and later as a teacher and a local constituent, I know how librarians help and make life easier. If Mr Deputy-Speaker casts his mind back a few years to when he was a little schoolboy—he probably attended a Marist school up north—he will probably remember walking around the maze that was the library. When he was lost—maybe he was looking for the *Bible* or some other religious resource—who did he turn to? He probably turned to the librarian.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Sister Joan.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: In my case it was Sister Mary. All members in this great Chamber will agree that librarians are dedicated, committed, great teachers as well as community builders. They make people want

to read and to learn. They help students, teachers and parents. In my former life as a teacher for 17 years in the western suburbs of Sydney I know how they helped us in the classroom. When parents take their children to libraries on a rainy day or when things are hectic at home libraries give them a hand, and we commend them.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Probably the Campbelltown library.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Especially the Campbelltown library—the opal of the west, is it?

Mr Bryan Doyle: That is correct, the south-west.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: My apologies. Senior citizens also benefit from using library facilities.

Mr Daryl Maguire: They can't afford to turn on the heaters so they go to the library.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: No, they go to look at the various foreign language books and magazines that are provided in the great libraries of the local government areas of Fairfield, Holroyd and Bankstown in the Fairfield electorate. Resource sharing is vital, and it has been happening in my electorate for many years. Fairfield, Bankstown, Liverpool, Auburn and Canterbury share non-English resources. As the member for Cabramatta pointed out, 16 foreign languages are catered for in the libraries in the Fairfield electorate. I will refresh the minds of those Government members who have not been to a library for a while as to the make-up of libraries. They have books—the member for Wagga Wagga might remember chiselled tablets—that are printed on paper. I feel sure the member for Wagga Wagga would have read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. It is a great read.

Mr Daryl Maguire: It may have mentioned you.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I was the star; my kids love it.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Fairfield will direct his remarks through the Chair. Government members will control themselves.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I will try to calm the masses. With the introduction of CD-ROMS—those circular disks produced in 1986—kids really enjoyed learning their alphabet and numbers. They could put them in their players at home, flick on the computer and off they go and start learning. They also borrow those from libraries, of course. In addition, they can take out on loan DVDs—such as those produced by National Geographic, or on the Vatican or the Vatican museum. Magazines might have been of interest to the rev-heads in the Chamber—like *Top Gear*. Yes, there are plenty of fishing, hunting and craft magazines in libraries. Not only does the library have books, magazines, CDs and DVDs; volunteer groups use libraries for tutoring sessions.

As a former teacher and a parent, one aspect of our local libraries that I find most interesting is that volunteers use them, off their own bat, to tutor children in English, mathematics and other subjects. We really need to support that. Wi-fi connections, theme days like Book Week and Higher School Certificate tutorials cover many, many subjects. Groups from various schools share resources. That is fantastic community building, with the students of Fairfield in particular sharing the resources of government and non-government schools. Of course, our local libraries are history hubs, and Fairfield has a significant and proud history.

Libraries are the building blocks of knowledge. We would all agree that children must be given the chance to explore the maze of the library. As I have pointed out, we can get lost and learn in a library while reading about and finding out interesting facts about our areas, or any interesting topic. Libraries provide a chance to explore. Games are available too. Many families with young children borrow games for use at home. Tertiary students have an opportunity to study in a great, and quiet, environment. Many of my former students, when doing the Higher School Certificate, would go to local libraries and use them as a point of reference and a place to facilitate their study. Once again, the library provides that great learning environment.

Libraries, as I have said, encourage families to be together. We have to admit, no matter what side of the Chamber we sit on, that that is a positive for our communities. The library creates a healthy environment in which mums and dads, boys and girls, grandmas and grandpas can get together to read and learn. Being building blocks of knowledge, libraries provide a collaborative approach to learning as well as independent learning. It is a place where young boys and girls can get lost, in a good way, in the wonderful maze of a library. Library culture is promoted by schools. I ask members to cast their minds back to when they were school. How happy

were you when you received your first library card? The member for Campbelltown has his library card from St Marys, or was it St Patricks?

Mr Bryan Doyle: Christian Brothers.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: That is right, St Patricks. He still has his library card; I think that is it hanging from the lanyard around his neck. He is not allowed to use that to get onto level 10. Who could forget the days when we used to make library bags out of calico, and how proud we were when we made them.

Mr Ray Williams: Was yours any good?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Mine was fantastic—10 out of 10. That is why I became an industrial arts teacher and taught textiles as well. Well, it was pretty good.

Mr Daryl Maguire: I hope you didn't have any overdue books.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: No; I handed them all back. As we are talking about what it is like to be at school as a student, I should note that the library provides a sense of belonging and ownership for learning for young students. They feel they are part of something special. That helps them later on in life, particularly as primary school students. Cast your minds back to the excitement of library day, with students getting really excited that they would venture into libraries to borrow the fantastic books and resources, and of course learning the responsibility that comes with borrowing books. Secondary students use the school library for assignments and homework, but also the outside library, because when everyone is doing similar assignments at the same time it can be difficult for students to get access to a resource.

Then, obviously, there is the outside library, whether it be in my electorate of Fairfield or in surrounding suburbs of Bankstown and Holroyd, where students can go to borrow these wonderful resources. That is supplementary to the school library. Tertiary students use library premises as a quiet area that is not too busy, particularly during assessment time. At university, everyone will be gunning for the same book, and that might be available at the local library. Local libraries, in my area and in regional areas, are specialist libraries. I speak from experience. During my studies at the Australian Catholic University there were times, when assignments were on, that people were after certain books. Although I was living at Five Dock, in the Drummoyne electorate, I would venture off to Hurstville where the library had a resource section that specialised in religious education.

There was a great sense of supporting each other and supporting others from outside areas. As parents, my wife and I take our family to the local library to facilitate their learning and at the same time to have fun, because there should be fun in learning. I acknowledge that members of this House representing regional areas have spoken about the distances between communities and libraries, when making the point that sharing is vital. Within the electorate of Fairfield, as was pointed out by the member for Cabramatta, we are only too happy to lend resources to people in outlying areas. In conclusion, I am concerned that the bill will take these services from council librarians and outsource them to private companies. We must not take jobs from our good librarians. They are great facilitators of learning in our communities; we do not want our councils to lose control of libraries.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.37 p.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker, it is great to see you in the chair again, upholding the process of government in this wonderful House of democracy. It gives me great pleasure to speak to the Library Amendment Bill 2011. First of all, I pay my respects to and congratulate all local government areas across New South Wales on the marvellous job they do catering to the needs of our ratepayers through the implementation and funding of our libraries. That does not come cheaply. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the mayor of a local government area, the new member for Londonderry, who presides over the Hawkesbury City Council area. The council has two libraries to fund, one at Windsor and one at Richmond, both of which are extremely well serviced. Full credit goes to you, Mr Mayor, and the other councillors of the local government area of Hawkesbury, for recognising the importance of ensuring that our libraries are well maintained for the benefit of everyone who lives in our shires, but certainly for the younger generation, who are the greatest beneficiaries of our libraries.

I am very proud to say that probably the newest library in New South Wales is now at Rouse Hill, in the new Rouse Hill town centre, known as none other than the Vinegar Hill library. Vinegar Hill has a long history in Australia. The battle of Vinegar Hill in the early 1800s was instigated by the first shipload of Irish political prisoners, as they were known, who arrived in this country in 1796. The reason I know that was the

date they arrived—they travelled from Ireland to Sydney, to the new colony—is that my ancestors were on that same boat. The first of our Irish ancestors to arrive in this country was Robert Allen. Fortunately for our family, Robert Allen was not involved in the uprising of the battle of Vinegar Hill, where the prisoners marched from Parramatta Goal and out through Castle Hill, and then met up with General Johnston at the site that is now recognised as a cross between Rouse Hill and a little bit of Kellyville, where historians believe the battle took place. Many of the escaped prisoners were rounded up and were subsequently hung for their actions. It was a particularly awkward chapter in the early years of the new settlement of this country. Great historians have recorded that battle in many chapters of the books that are now in our library.

The interesting thing about the name "Vinegar Hill" is that no government area was particularly interested in taking it up. Community consultation revealed that many people felt the name would create adverse feelings towards a suburb called Vinegar Hill; no-one was particularly keen to take up the name for a suburb. Some time ago communities in the Kellyville Ridge area considered whether they would like to take on the name, but alas, at this point no-one has been keen to take up the name of Vinegar Hill. Therefore the Baulkham Hills Shire Council, now known as the Hills Shire Council, was quite proud in 2005-06 to give that name to our library at Rouse Hill. The library has been nothing short of a huge success. It sits very proudly in Civic Square with the new community centre. It is an attraction for the entire populace that frequents the Rouse Hill town centre. It is very accessible and very friendly. Many children who are there with their parents can simply wander upstairs and go to the library at any time they want.

From time to time people have asked me what I like to do with my time when I am not immersing myself in politics and in the concerns of my constituents. Like so many other people, I like to read. What do I like to read about? I like to read about politics; I have quite a few political biographies, not the least of which is *Betrayal* written by Simon Benson, one of the journalists for the *Daily Telegraph* if memory serves me correctly. It is a fascinating book because I was, I suppose, part of the history of the book. For example, pages and pages are written about the time Michael Costa was having some conflict with the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. It was extraordinary to read it. There were some deep-seated issues; there was some resentment. Obviously, Kevin Rudd resented the fact that Michael Costa knew what this State needed.

Michael Costa was very much a straight shooter. Michael told it the way it was—he did not believe in climate change so he told his party he did not believe in climate change. To be fair, I think Michael Costa was quite an intelligent person, and he would tell the Prime Minister of the day, Kevin Rudd, what New South Wales needed. New South Wales needed funding for transport; it needed funding for roads. Every time Michael Costa raised these things the resentment of the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, would grow and New South Wales would get nothing. Time and time again Michael Costa and Morris Iemma, who was Premier at the time, would come home empty-handed from Council of Australian Governments meetings, even though we had a Labor Federal Government with Kevin Rudd at the helm and a Labor State Government.

You would think they would have worked in harmony. You would think that would have brought great benefits for the people of New South Wales, but it did not. That part of the book was interesting reading. I could not help but feel sorry for the people of New South Wales because we were the ones who were let down. Obviously the people involved were more concerned with their parties, their own jobs and ongoing factional problems than they were with getting outcomes for New South Wales. There is a lesson in the book for anybody who is interested in politics: do not do what the Australian Labor Party did in New South Wales, the results of which we are seeing now.

Mr Guy Zangari: Have you got a copy?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Absolutely

Mr Guy Zangari: What section?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: What chapter? Does the member want chapter and verse? I am happy to go through it chapter and verse. I probably could have brought it into the Chamber. It is in my office. I love to go back and read about the different aspects.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I remind the member for Hawkesbury that he has only six minutes left.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I am happy to seek an extension of time. However, I will move on. I have many other political biographies in my library. I am always fascinated to read the Australian Labor Party

biographies. One book that fascinated me years ago was *Whatever It Takes*. Who could ever forget *Whatever it Takes*, which sits proudly on my shelf? It is the book on Graham Richardson. He goes back to the time of Australian Labor Party stalwarts; people like John Ducker, or brother Ducker as the comrades liked to call him. He learnt his trade of manipulating people to get better outcomes and hence the title of book. It is a fascinating read about how the Australian Labor Party works with its union colleagues. Graham Richardson was a member of the Right. He detested the Left. At every opportunity the Right would oppose the Left, but every now and then the Right would have to work with the Left to get outcomes. It was a fascinating read. I keep that book because from time to time I like to go back into history just to brush up on it. I do the same thing with my book on Paul Keating, which was written by John Edwards. That is another fascinating book.

Mr Guy Zangari: You should join the Labor party. Come over. Come and join the Fairfield branch.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: The best way to win a war is to understand your enemy, and that is why I like to become well versed in the trappings of our enemy. The first couple of chapters of John Edwards's book on Paul Keating are absolutely fascinating. Keating talks about his early branch-stacking days around the seat of Blaxland, I think it was, and perhaps Bass. Keating was quite amazing. To become a member of an Australian Labor Party branch at that time and a fully-fledged voting member, you had to attend three branch meetings. Paul Keating was getting these people into branches to shore up the stocks so that he could win preselection. According to the book he had a great big sheet of paper on his wall. Every morning he woke up—

Mr Troy Grant: That book is in the library?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Absolutely. The only place you can get this book is the library, and that is the place for it. It is in the seniors section of the library, but it is there. When Paul Keating woke up in the morning he would look at the sheet of paper on his wall with names of all the members listed across the top. Down the side would be the branches. He would look at them and line them up and say, "I've got to get Mr and Mrs Smith to go to this branch meeting tonight." He had a complete wall of them. It was absolutely fascinating. There was chapter after chapter on the branch stacking exploits of former Prime Minister Paul Keating. The things you can find in a library never cease to intrigue me. If you have the time to go to a library these are the sorts of books you can get. Of course, I have read many other political biographies. Tony Blair's biography interests me. I thought Tony Blair was probably the best Labor figure I ever saw.

I thought Tony Blair was a very progressive Prime Minister and worthy of praise for bringing peace between Northern Ireland and Britain, especially after all the problems with the Irish Republican Army. He can be credited with that and I think he will go down in history for playing a major role in that area. Sometimes we find Labor people who are worthy of credit and we have to recognise them and give them that credit. Tony Blair's book was a particularly good one, but I have to say that the piece de resistance when it comes to political biographies that you can find in libraries is *Lazarus Rising*. That can be found in just about every library across New South Wales. One of the amazing things about John Howard is that he wrote it in his own words and I believe he edited it himself. There are a couple of grammatical errors—far be it from me to pick on them. Sometimes he says "Janette and me" and it should be "Janette and I". He did that a few times. Everybody has their faults but John Howard does not have too many. The book was just wonderful. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I request an extension of time.

Extension of time not granted.

I am very upset about that and no doubt former Prime Minister John Howard will be upset as well because I was going to speak for another six minutes and praise his book. I thought it was wonderful. I noted the way he treated people with whom he served, such as former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, about whom he spoke in glowing terms, which is interesting. *Lazarus Rising* is another book people would find in the libraries around New South Wales.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.52 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support the Library Amendment Bill 2011. Listening to the member for Hawkesbury was enlightening. It was wonderful to hear about the excellent resources that our libraries have. I remind members what the bill is about and what it will do. The object of the bill is to provide for greater flexibility in the management arrangements for regional libraries, which play a very important role in our communities. The bill provides that local councils may enter into alternative arrangements for the provision, control and management of a library, library service or information service in the area of any council that is a party to the arrangement. Such an arrangement cannot be entered into

without the approval of the Minister for the Arts, who must have the agreement of the Minister for Local Government.

The Minister for the Arts is a fantastic regional Minister. The Minister for Local Government is also a country member. This is something we have not seen for many years—strong Ministers who are regional Ministers. All members would have to agree that having country members of the Coalition as Ministers is fantastic. The Minister for the Arts, whom we are supporting on the Library Amendment Bill 2011, is my neighbour, which is even better. Quite often the Minister for the Arts, who has been a member of this House for many years, is a very strong advocate. The approval process in the bill will ensure that any alternative arrangements meet the objects of the Library Act and are consistent with State policies, including legislation and policy for local government.

The bill is needed because of the 16 years of neglect by Labor. Sadly, I do not think Labor members went into very many libraries. I will advise members of some of the wonderful libraries we have in our region. At present the Library Act 1939 unduly limits the management arrangements for regional libraries. Section 12 of the Act enables one council to manage a regional library or an aspect of its library service on behalf of all councils participating in an arrangement. The bill is based on the Library Amendment (Arrangements for Mutual Provision of Library Services) Bill 2010 introduced by the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC. That bill lapsed without debate due to the prorogation of the Parliament. Under this Government we will breathe life into libraries. So many people in our communities want to go to libraries because they offer an expansive service.

There are 16 libraries in the central northern regional libraries cluster and they provide a wonderful service. Nine of those are in the Tamworth electorate: Barraba, Boggabri, Kootingal, Manilla, Narrabri, Nundle, south Tamworth, Tamworth and Werris Creek libraries. Most of them are open five days a week and some of them open on weekends. They not only provide great service for school students who are researching projects—we see some people in the gallery today listening intently who probably use the libraries in their communities to do research about Parliament, for example—but they are also an excellent resource for newspapers. Quite often you will see people wander into a library, find a nice quiet spot, sit down and peruse the newspaper, which is nice. They have peace and comfort and quiet. That is why librarians quite often speak quietly. You go into a library and they say quietly, "May we help you?" "Yes, I am looking for a book on fishing, thank you."

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Maybe we should take a leaf out of their book.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: That is an excellent suggestion. If you like I can drop my voice a few decibels and emulate the library scene. This is the beauty of libraries. Some of the resources available include online databases, e-nets, e-books, e-audio and the internet, all of which are becoming an increasingly valuable and much-used resource. People can search other libraries and find information about agriculture and gardening, art and photography, literature and film, health and sport, history, law and business, and music. As members know, Tamworth is the country music capital of Australasia and the festival runs for about 10 days in January. It is a wonderful festival that is rated one of the top 10 festivals in the world, and we have it right here in Australia. Some of the people who perform at the Tamworth Country Music Festival include Golden Guitar winners Lee Kernaghan and Adam Brand, who is now married to Jade Brand who is on *Dancing With the Stars*.

Matches are made in heaven and on television as well. They are all connected to country music and you can find all this information and read about it in the library of your choice. When one is searching for books on music one often finds books on country music. Many members would be aware of the wonderful music festival that is held in Tamworth each year. I encourage all those members who have not attended that festival to visit Tamworth and to participate in it. Other resources and information that are available in our libraries include history, law and business, science and technology. One can do a great deal more in a library than one realises. On many occasions authors or musicians visit Tamworth library and talk about their books or their music. Members might remember the author Monte Dwyer, a former Channel 9 weatherman.

Mr Mark Coure: Yes, on the *Today* show.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: The member for Oatley is correct. Monte Dwyer, a former weather presenter and broadcaster, branched out into writing his own books on his travels around Australia. Monte put his stories into a number of volumes that are called *Read in the Centre*, and that are now available in the library. On the *Today* show Monte used to give us little snippets or excerpts about his travels around Australia—wonderful little spots in Sydney, Myall Lakes, Penrith or Dubbo. The member for Dubbo might remember that Monte gave us an excerpt about his travels to the Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo. All his stories have been included

in his books entitled *Read in the Centre*. During his travels Monte stopped in Tamworth and sang his wonderful song entitled *Read in the Centre*. I encourage members to visit Monte's website www.monte.com.au and to read his books. Monte visited the Tamworth library and read excerpts from his books about his wonderful travels around Australia which enlightened people about the beauty of Australia. Let me give members another example of how libraries attract the very best. Members would be aware of the fantastic vocals of Guy Sebastian. Do members remember Guy Sebastian?

Mr Troy Grant: *Australian Idol*.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: He won *Australian Idol*; I thank the member for Dubbo for jogging my memory. As part of Library Week Guy Sebastian visited Tamworth, sang a song and did a book reading for young kids, which was fantastic. Young kids got a chance to see their idol, Guy Sebastian, and to listen to him reading to them. Libraries in central and northern New South Wales provide other services. In addition to author talks and podcasts there are reading groups, book group resources and readers advisory services. The Country Women's Association Country of Study and Friends of Libraries—a community organisation—is another services provided by our libraries. I am sure many members will have branches of Friends of Libraries in their electorates, which provide morning teas, sponsor events and invite people to look around their libraries—a wonderful service.

Volunteers in our community do a fantastic job. Some members referred earlier to putting a price on volunteers but that cannot be done because volunteers are priceless. I thank the Friends of Libraries right across the State and, in particular, pay tribute to the nine branches of the Friends of Libraries in my region and in the Tamworth electorate. I appreciate their great work. Libraries are also great for the youth of today. Often we talk about what our children can do, where they can go and what they can do to occupy their time. I suggest that they should go to a library and look at some of its fantastic resources. There are children's programs, junior links and youth options. Manila, which falls within Tamworth Regional Council, has a sensational section in its library that houses about six or seven computers.

I encourage young people to go to the library where they can access these sensational resources. They can go online, do some research and obtain some really up-to-date information through this wonderful service. I inform members of the Home Library Service—a great initiative of the Central Northern Regional Library—which provides delivery services for homebound clients. I am not sure whether other libraries provide a similar service but it is certainly available in my electorate. I am sure that the member for Myall Lakes, who is somewhat incapacitated with his broken leg, cannot get out too much. If he wants to read a book or to do some research I am sure he keeps up to date by simply ringing his local library.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: The history of rugby in the Manning Valley.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: In that way he is able to obtain information about the history of rugby in the Manning Valley. All members would be aware that about three or four years ago the Barbarians played rugby in the Manning Valley?

Mr Stephen Bromhead: The All Blacks in 1920.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: If time permits I will refer to that issue later. Every month, on a Tuesday, the Tamworth Regional Council library delivers books to those who are unable to visit Tamworth city or the south Tamworth branch libraries. People have to meet some criteria. They cannot just sit at home, have a cup of tea and expect to have their books delivered; they have to have an illness or a disability—and the condition might be temporary, recurring or permanent—that prevents them from visiting a library. In addition, people might be unable to visit a library because of frailty or a disability. This is a great resource. Many frail and aged people in our community do not have access to a library but the Home Library Service, a wonderful initiative, enables them to do so. Books, magazines and the spoken word can be delivered once a month by library staff members and community volunteers.

I refer again to our wonderful volunteers, the Friends of Libraries. Without our volunteers society would be much worse off. We are measured by the way in which we look after those in need—those who are confined to their homes. They looked after us when we were growing up and we should look after them by providing an extension of the Home Library Service. It would be fantastic if the Home Library Service was a statewide initiative. The internet is the way of the future. There is always a place for the beautifully bound books that surround us but the internet is the way forward for young people. I encourage them to get off the

streets, to go into their libraries, to check out the internet and to learn more about these wonderful resources. Some of the key words include: browsing, matching, author, title and subject searches, and also advanced searches. Libraries offer a magnificent range of information and resources. We must give our libraries every support that we can purely because they play an increasingly important role in our community. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.07 p.m.]: I thank members from both sides of the House who spoke in favour of this important Library Amendment Bill 2011. I support the bill, the object of which is to provide greater flexibility in the management arrangements for regional libraries, that is, libraries that operate on behalf of two or more local councils anywhere in New South Wales. The bill provides that local councils may enter into alternative arrangements for the provision, control and management of a library, a library service or information service in the area of any council that is a party to the arrangement. Such an arrangement cannot be entered into without the approval of the Minister for the Arts, who has done an outstanding job of introducing this bill so early in the term of this Government, and the Minister for the Arts must obtain the agreement of the Minister for Local Government. The approval process of the bill will ensure that alternative arrangements meet the objects of the Library Act and are consistent with State policies, including legislation and policy for local government.

As part of the bill's implementation, guidance will be available to local councils on alternative arrangements. A template agreement for joint management arrangements will be available from the State Library. The Library Council will advise the Minister for the Arts on applications for approval of alternative arrangements. At present the Library Act 1939 unduly limits the management arrangements for regional libraries. Section 12 of the Act enables one council to manage a regional library or an aspect of its library service on behalf of all councils participating in the arrangement. That would work well in my electorate where there are three local libraries—the south Hurstville library, the Kogarah library and the Oatley library—and in the St George area where there are a number of libraries, including Hurstville and Penshurst in the Hurstville council area, as there are in the Rockdale council area. The member for Rockdale and former mayor, who is present in the Chamber, no doubt will inform the House of library services and facilities in his local authority area.

The bill represents a commonsense approach to the expansion of library facilities. I congratulate the Minister for the Arts on introducing the bill. During the debate several members referred to the important role of the State Library in the New South Wales public libraries network, so I will elaborate on State Library achievements. The State Library of New South Wales provides reference and research information services as well as support, advice, research and professional development to the network of New South Wales public libraries, including administration of public libraries grants and subsidies. In practice, the major functions of the State Library of New South Wales are already well known and include public library services. I have been advised by the Minister's office that in 2009-10, \$25.5 million was provided through the State Government to assist local authorities in the provision of public library services. The State Library provides consultancy services and assists with planning, library building advice and professional development.

I was surprised to learn that the New South Wales public library network comprises 374 libraries and 22 mobile libraries. Mobile libraries are important. They operate in all electorates and visit local senior citizens halls or hospitals. People who may wish to borrow books but who may not be able access a library, such as the member for Myall Lakes, receive assistance from mobile libraries. They are important not only for people who live in remote areas but also for frail and elderly people in our communities. The State Library's NSW.net Services specialist team negotiates cost-effective subsidised broadband internet services for councils and community libraries to support the provision of free internet access for the public. I know from being an alderman of the Kogarah Municipal Council that there are a number of computers at the Kogarah, Oatley and South Hurstville libraries that offer free internet services for people who are studying for the Higher School Certificate. Last year was the second year the Kogarah library had a number of students using the free internet and study service for their School Certificate and Higher School Certificate studies. That service will be continued over the next few years.

The State Library also negotiates competitively priced access to online databases, e-audio and e-books, and search tools, et cetera. Many of the libraries in my electorate, not just public libraries, provide those tools. Recently I visited local libraries and noticed the number of elderly people in my electorate who utilise the online databases and e-audio, e-books and other search tools. The Government wants to ensure that libraries are available for every person in our community, and I am pleased that the bill aims to achieve that. In fact, many of our libraries are already achieving that. The Outback Letterbox Library provides services either by mail or by

courier to isolated residents of the Central Darling shire and the unincorporated area of New South Wales through funding to the Broken Hill City Council.

Mr Daryl Maguire: I am having breakfast with them in the morning.

Mr MARK COURE: There we are. Access is a major function performed by the State Library. In 2009-10 there were 796,283 visits to the State Library's reading rooms and more than 200,000 client information inquiries were answered. In 2009-10, 2.13 million people visited the State Library's websites, and there was an increase in online access to 161 online products and 257 databases that are accessible on-site and remotely. The library managed an observation and interview study with clients to improve its capacity to address client needs.

It is pleasing that 86 per cent of clients rated their State Library experience as good or very good, which is certainly outstanding. Another major function of the State Library is a specialised library service that runs the legal information access centre, druginfo@, the family history services, and multicultural services through books and audio books in 40 languages. Of course Sydney is a highly multicultural community and it is good that the State Library offers audio books in 40 different languages. In terms of collection management, the State Library's collection is valued at \$2.1 billion.

Mr Troy Grant: Really?

Mr MARK COURE: Yes, \$2.1 billion. It includes more than five million items, such as monographs, pictures, posters, sheet music, talking books, maps, CD-ROMs, newspapers, films and videos, computer software, kits, recordings, photographs, coins, postage stamps and other objects. I welcome the presence in the House of the Minister.

Mr George Souris: That is the first time it has ever happened.

Mr MARK COURE: I welcome the Minister to the House. The State Library's 115 kilometres of collection material is increasing at the rate of two kilometres a year. In 2009-10, at a cost of \$6.7 million, there were 51,500 acquisitions which included an amazing World War I diary and 201 personal letters of a young surveyor and explorer from 1817 to 1822. Some members may know already that I am a history buff. I love history and I love collecting coins, rare books, stamps and political autobiographies, which I will deal with later. The library's collection of nine First Fleet journals was inscribed in 2009-10 on the UNESCO world register. Another service provided by the library is e-records. In 2008 the library began converting its card catalogue to an electronic catalogue. In 2009-10 more than 300,000 e-records were created.

The library also scanned and digitalised more than 36,000 images from a collection of maps, rare books, pictures, heritage books and reference titles to preserve them and to make them more accessible to everyone. I had the privilege of noticing some of them when I was studying for the Higher Schools Certificate approximately 16 years ago at the State Library. Another State Library function is the facilitation of community learning. The library designs, develops and delivers curriculum support for students in K-12. Earlier I mentioned that libraries in the St George area, such as those in the Kogarah, Rockdale and Hurstville councils, provide similar support for students. In 2009-10, 810 students from 21 schools throughout New South Wales visited the State Library. Some of them I know were from my community. I am sure many schools in the electorate of the member for Myall Lakes have visited our local libraries.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: All the time. And the member for Coffs Harbour used to take children there for a day visit.

Mr MARK COURE: Of course, also the member for Coffs Harbour. I know the importance of libraries: I am happily married to an English teaching coordinator at one of the Five Dock high schools. She is always visiting the local libraries with students from her English class. I hear daily of the importance of books and libraries to her students. The State Library holds events and exhibitions and I have attended one or two over the years. Although all five galleries were closed in 2009-10, 89 events held included "One Hundred—Celebrating the centenary of the Mitchell Library". [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

In 2009-10 community awareness of events increased significantly to 96 per cent. Only recently I attended my local library and saw a number of books, including *The Latham Diaries*. I noted from the back of this book that it had not been borrowed for a couple of years. Another book I saw, *Whatever it Takes* by Graham

Richardson, had never been borrowed. The \$1.50 second-hand bookstore price tag was still on the back. They are just some of the many books in my local library. I happened to read today in the *Daily Telegraph* an article about a book that I will rush out to purchase for Christmas. It is, of course, Frank Sartor's autobiography. No doubt it will be a tell-all book about New South Wales politics. The article stated:

It promises to be ... [a] tell-all book about NSW politics written by one of the state's most colourful—and at times controversial—characters.

At the time I wondered whose book it was because the other side has quite a few controversial characters. Of course, it was Frank Sartor, who has a lot to tell after 16 years of Labor failure. I am sure it will be a tell-all book and will be released before Christmas. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [5.22 p.m.]: I am delighted to take part in this debate and commence by commenting on how impressed I am with the number of members who have contributed to this debate. The debate on the Library Amendment Bill highlights the importance of libraries in our communities, whether regional or city based. So much participation in this debate underlines that we all value our libraries, and the continuing work of librarians and library staff. This bill will enhance libraries and give them greater flexibility in management. It will allow regional libraries particularly to operate on behalf of two or more local councils. The bill provides:

That local councils will be able to enter into alternative arrangements for the provision, control and management of a library, library service or information service in the area of any local council that is a party to the arrangement. Such an arrangement cannot be entered into without the approval of the Minister for the Arts, who must have the agreement of the Minister for Local Government.

The approval process contained in the bill will ensure that any alternative arrangements meet the objects of the Library Act and are consistent with State policies, including legislation and local government policy. This bill is particularly important for regional libraries, of which I have first-hand knowledge. The Riverina Regional Library operates under the old Act with nine local government areas servicing some 108,000 constituents. The Riverina library's participating councils and shires are Coolamon, Cootamundra, Greater Hume, Gundagai, Junee, Lockhart, Temora, Tumut and, of course, Wagga Wagga. The Riverina Regional Library service comprises 13 stationary library branches and one mobile telecentre that services 28 communities.

The Riverina Regional Library was established in 1978 and grew from an initial membership of four additional councils. For some years it has been considered a leader amongst regional libraries. It has participated in a number of statewide projects and been represented on various State Library of New South Wales committees. It also has contributed to the development of policy and other documentation at State level and introduced a range of service and technology innovations. The Riverina Regional Library also has taken a lead role regionally and has instigated a number of collaborative training initiatives with other libraries in the south-west zone as well as acting as mentor for smaller libraries in the zone.

Currently this library operates under sections 11 and 12 of the Act, which this bill amends. The model works well, but the Government is being asked to introduce this amendment to allow councils to participate differently. Currently the councils appoint an executive council, which, of course, is Wagga Wagga City Council, to administer the Riverina Regional Library. I do not pretend that changes are made smoothly as there always are discussions about funding and issues about managing the library. The purpose of a regional library's members is to advocate for better services for their communities. This bill will help those councils to be part of that management system.

I know of the good work of the Riverina Regional Library and Robert Knight, who has been the executive director for quite some time, is passionate about this work. I suspect that in some way Robert would have had a say in this particular piece of legislation we are debating. I commend the work of all librarians, whether they are in the mobile library that has operated for quite some time or one of the stationary services. I commend them for their continued work and the way they embrace innovation to bring more advantage and access to communities that traditionally would not have a mobile library service.

The mobile library visits 28 communities on a weekly or fortnightly schedule in the four member council areas: Coolamon, Greater Hume, Lockhart and Wagga Wagga. The service is utilised well. With technology rolling out across the State and the world, people need access to the internet via a local library or mobile library and this also involves the escalating costs of books, magazines and all other associated costs. Reading the latest book—the new book of recently retired Frank Sartor that will be published before Christmas—the book of betrayal, a recent publication or a reference book comes at a cost. Libraries are a way

for people to defer that cost to access information to further their studies. A child or individual can have no greater gift than the gift of an education.

Learning is a lifelong experience. We must make sure that people can continue to learn, whether they are eight or 80, by allowing them access to information. That is why this service is so vital. Libraries bring programs to our communities. The Riverina Regional Library brought the Wiradjuri language to the Wagga Wagga community. Publication of the second edition of the Wiradjuri language dictionary was sponsored by the Riverina Regional Library, with funding from the Department of Housing. On Friday 27 May 2011 the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced that he would investigate Aboriginal culture and linguistic opportunities. I attended the launch of the Wiradjuri dictionary in Riverina Regional Library at Wagga Wagga. Its authors have put an enormous amount of time and effort into compiling the Wiradjuri language dictionary, which is used in schools.

The Minister said that, in addition to libraries, he will consider creating Aboriginal cultural centres as hubs for teaching and sharing Aboriginal culture, language, heritage and history. He said that at such centres students and other community members could access Aboriginal cultural knowledge. The centres may also showcase Aboriginal culture and history to the wider community. I say "Hear! Hear!" to the Minister. A library should be viewed as a keeping place. That is most important for Aboriginal culture because it has been demonstrated that knowledge of the Aboriginal language gives people a greater sense of identity, pride and self worth, which are core factors in helping them to bridge the gap, do well in our community and succeed. I believe this initiative could add to our libraries. I am pleased that the Minister made that announcement on the back of Wagga Wagga Regional Library's sponsorship of the Wiradjuri dictionary, which is used to teach children in schools.

Brungle Public School has a keeping place where Aboriginal language, stories and history are taught. The school is recording tremendous academic, social and artistic results as well as good results on the sporting field. In the past 10 years, Brungle school has made incredible advances because of the way in which the children are taught and, importantly, because they learn about their identity and history. Its pupils greet visitors in their Wiradjuri language, which should be encouraged as it creates a pathway for success. In October and December, Wagga Wagga Regional Library was flooded, causing a lot of damage from which it is still recovering. It is important to preserve a community's precious papers and books. To the city council's great credit, it has put in an enormous amount of effort, together with library staff, to restore the library. I congratulate everyone on working to provide access to the building so quickly after the floods.

The Library Amendment Bill 2011 is brief. Opposition members claim that it contains only a minor amendment, but I suggest it does not. This legislation will allow communities to go about delivering services and to do what we encouraged them to do through the regional organisations of councils—that is, share resources to deliver cost savings and better service delivery. I think Opposition members have demonstrated poor sportsmanship as the former Labor Government had many years in which to introduce legislation to enable rural and regional communities to make decisions about the delivery of their important library services. Importantly, councils can use this legislation to share resources—and I encourage them to do so. As I said, access to information and education is important, and libraries play a vital role in their provision. I congratulate the Minister on introducing this legislation so quickly.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy Speaker) [5.35 p.m.]: I have pleasure in speaking to the Library Amendment Bill 2011, the object of which is to provide for greater flexibility in the management arrangements of regional libraries to enable two or more local councils to provide library services in their council areas. The bill provides that local councils may enter into alternative arrangements for the provision, control and management of a library, library service or information service in the area of any council that is a party to the arrangement. Such an arrangement cannot be entered into without the approval of the Minister for the Arts, and must have the agreement of the Minister for Local Government. The approval process in the bill will ensure that any alternative arrangements meet the objects of the Library Act and are consistent with State policies, including legislation and policy for local government.

I congratulate the Minister for the Arts, who I note paid tribute to the Hon. Catherine Cusack for bringing these issues to the attention of the former Government—which did nothing. The Minister for the Arts was appointed on 2 April 2011—54 days ago—and he has already introduced this legislation to fix the problem. He is getting the job done, which is what the people of New South Wales expect from this Government. Sadly, the Richmond-Tweed Regional Library was probably the catalyst for this legislation because in June 2010 Lismore City Council announced that it would take over the network and disband the library committee that comprised councillors from the Ballina shire, Byron shire, Lismore council and Tweed shire. The council argued that the then law meant that Lismore was assuming all the legal and financial risks associated with the

committee's decisions. The Library Amendment Bill 2011, a direct response to Lismore's takeover of the network, will allow councils to pool their resources and manage the network jointly.

The Northern Rivers community was excited to hear about this legislation, which offers legal protection. People will now be able to have a properly constituted body that will provide direction and protection into the future. The legislation will update the Act, and Lismore City Council will be protected and should be able to move forward with decision-making. The legislation stipulates that both the Minister for the Arts and the Minister for Local Government must work together, which is important because for too long various government departments have refused to work together. Through the strength and goodwill of the Minister for the Arts in taking this measure forward, we will now have an Act that will be able to protect libraries, certainly regional libraries, and improve the level of service that they provide to the public. I commend the work that is done in our libraries and the staff and volunteers who provide the services that are not only appreciated but needed throughout our electorates and communities. It is with great pleasure that I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [5.40 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate on the Library Amendment Bill 2011. It is very gratifying to see that so many members are passionate about public library services. I also thank those members who have indicated their support for the bill. There were 32 speakers on this bill.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Name them.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: It would be difficult to name them all and summarise their contributions, but the fact that approximately one-third of members of this House spoke to the bill is indeed gratifying. I take this opportunity to thank those members. The extent of the debate and the commitment to this topic that members displayed during the debate has been more than heartening for me. The quality of our newly elected members, as well as those who had previously been elected, speaking in such considered ways on a piece of legislation really does augur well for our future. As an older member, I am gratified to see this taking place. Despite the Opposition's complaints about process, the shadow Minister for the Arts said he believes that flexibility in regional library arrangements is "admirable".

The member for Auburn, on the other hand, questioned the need for the bill at all and suggested that it was a response to an issue in one regional library. She appeared to be arguing that councils already collaborate in many areas, including planning. The member is missing the point. Section 12 of the Library Act is more restrictive than the options available under section 355 of the Local Government Act. The bill will enable councils to collaborate with their libraries on the same terms on which they collaborate on other council functions. As a former Minister for Local Government, she would be aware of that. Opposition members asked for more information about the detail of arrangements that may be entered into under the bill. They queried whether there has been a move away from the mutual provision of library services envisaged under the private member's bill and whether the bill will lead to outsourcing and privatisation of public libraries and the closure of rural and regional libraries.

The Opposition has also asked about the impact of the bill on public library employees and education services. The Government is delighted to have the opportunity to respond to the issues raised by the Opposition to stop any scaremongering and make it plain that this bill will not compromise library services or the employment of people working in regional libraries. Before I return to this point, I will refer to an item in a newsletter dated 26 May 2011 produced by the United Services Union to highlight the extent of misinformation that has been produced over what is, obviously, a bill that will improve the situation, not the opposite. The segment I refer to, under the heading of "Changes to the Library Act", says:

The O'Farrell government has put legislation on the table that would allow local councils to contract out library services to private providers. If this legislation passes, it could mean job losses, huge cuts to working conditions as library staff would no longer be on the Local Government State Award, and significant cuts to services. Libraries are an essential community service that all local councils must provide, and we will not accept the contracting out of library services or the contracting out of our valued library staff.

I have read that because some comments that I will now make will clearly indicate that an item such as that in this newsletter does not accord with the facts, and indeed does nothing more than create scaremongering, which I propose not to allow continue. The Government has no agenda to privatise public libraries. We recognise this is core business for local councils and there are no plans to change this. No council is required to enter into

arrangements under new section 12A. An alternative arrangement would need to be proposed by two or more councils. The bill creates capacity for two or more councils to agree to seek government approval of new arrangements for public library services. It will make the mutual provision of library and related services, by two or more councils, possible. The bill does not prescribe the nature of the alternative arrangements that may be approved and each group of councils will need to propose the new arrangements that would work best for them.

However, it is not open slather and the approval processes under the bill will ensure consistency with the Library Act and with the State's policies for local government. Councils wanting to enter into new regional library arrangements under new section 12A 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. The collaborative arrangements can take several forms, as set out in the Division of Local Government's "A Guidance Paper: Collaboration and Partnerships between Councils". The nature of the legal entity responsible for a regional library under alternative arrangements will be determined by councils on a case-by-case basis but it must be anchored in the Library Act 1939 to secure subsidies and be consistent with the Local Government Act 1993. As is currently the case, councils will not be able to form a corporation without the approval of the Minister for Local Government.

The Government acknowledges the expertise and value of the staff in regional libraries. This Government is interested in stimulating employment in regional areas, not seeing regional library jobs cut. The savings arising from new arrangements under this bill could place councils in a position where they can improve library staffing numbers in regional libraries. The commitment of this Government to public libraries in the way I have just stated was evident from the depth of debate of Government members. The Local Government Act enables local authorities to contract out functions. This is available for use by regional libraries under section 12 and would also be available for arrangements approved under new section 12A. Whether or not councils choose to contract out some library functions is unchanged by this bill. I am advised that local councils already contract out some library-related services, for example, procurement, cataloguing, courier delivery and preservation of original materials.

Information technology support is regularly contracted out by councils at present. This is practical administration at the local level and it will not change under the bill. Many libraries, including Riverina Regional Library, use Local Government Procurement for the purchase of their book stock. Others specify that book suppliers provide the books "shelf-ready", which means that the purchased collections are covered and barcoded prior to delivery. This type of contracting out frees up staff time to provide direct services to the public, rather than having staff spending time on these traditional backroom tasks. In a report by the State Library of NSW entitled "A benefit cost analysis: outsourcing of acquisitions, cataloguing and processing in NSW public libraries", published in 2010, Canterbury City Library featured as a case study.

Ms Linda Burney: Great library.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: The report states that this library began outsourcing its collection acquisition, processing and cataloguing tasks in 2002. I am delighted to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition commend the work and current practices of this library. Outsourcing such tasks is not new and the shadow Minister, had he been genuinely interested in this issue rather than in scaremongering, would have addressed them when he was Minister for the Arts. I suggest that he speak to his colleague in the shadow ministry, the member for Lakemba, who in his other role as mayor of Canterbury would be fully aware of the facts surrounding the outsourcing of certain library operational tasks and their benefits. It has also come to my attention that library acquisitions are partly contracted out by Bankstown City Council.

The shadow Minister could speak to the member for Bankstown, who is also mayor of Bankstown, about the benefits of a partial outsourcing of library functions—a situation which occurs under the old Act and which will remain unchanged. The same report also reveals that contracting out these functions can free up staff time allocated to backroom functions to provide enhanced direct customer services. This is especially important as our public libraries are becoming busier year on year. The State Library advises that it would be hard to find a public library that does not contract out some aspect of its services. In light of the explanation I have just provided, I encourage the Opposition to reconsider its position on this bill. The bill merely provides the option of additional flexibility for local councils. They will not be required to enter into alternative arrangements; it is up to them.

The New South Wales Government's support for our public libraries is already evident. The Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW are on the public record as supporting the bill because it represents a new option for councils that have been seeking a different way of running regional libraries. In a media release issued on 27 May, the President of the Local Government Association, Councillor Keith Rhoades, AFSM, said the new section 12A of the Library Act is a:

... new and flexible section [that] will allow councils to explore new frameworks for sharing responsibilities and managing regional libraries, if and when needed.

It symbolises a fantastic new chapter for the 3.2 million public library members in NSW. We're delighted that the State Government has seen the importance and need for different options for councils and has acted so soon in its legislative program.

The President of the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, Councillor Bruce Miller, said this:

The Local Government and Shires Associations highlighted the need for reform and more funding for libraries in the lead up to the State election in March in our NSW Election Priorities 2011, so we are pleased that councils now have more flexibility available on how they run and provide their library services.

We have been heartened by the fact that the State Government have been continuing to conduct developmental work in this area and look forward to working with them to develop more support for our public libraries.

As promised, we have acted quickly to introduce this bill, which, I am pleased to say, is strongly supported by local government and public library stakeholders. I note that those opposite in their response to the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW survey stated before the election that the then Keneally Government was focused on:

... assisting public libraries to improve their buildings and collections.

The bill allows local councils, if they choose, to enter into partnerships to achieve these improvements. It provides enhanced flexibility for councils while ensuring proper consideration of library policy issues and alignment with the State's local government policies. The Government acknowledges that the current regional library arrangements generally work well, but the bill provides the platform for even greater collaboration across local government areas in the provision of aspects of library services. The Government looks forward to engaging with local councils interested in taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the bill. I cannot let this moment pass without commending the work in Opposition of the Hon. Catherine Cusack in another place whose private member's bill provided the original source and the anchor point for the Government's ultimately bringing forward this piece of legislation. I again thank members for their contribution to this debate, and 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.

COURTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

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

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): It being before 7.00 p.m. the House will now deal with Notices of Motions (General Notices).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! It being before 7.00 p.m. the House will now consider the matter of public importance.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [5.57 p.m.]: It is an honour and a privilege to speak about National Reconciliation Week. Reconciliation involves the building of mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. National Reconciliation Week is an annual event that celebrates the rich culture and history of the First Australians. It is a time for all Australians to reflect on shared histories, achievements and stories. The annual celebration, between 27 May and 3 June, is anchored by two significant events. On 27 May 1967, 44 years ago, a referendum was held at which 90 per cent of people voted to give the Commonwealth the power to make laws for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and include them in the census. The second event, on 3 June 1992, is the High Court of Australia's landmark ruling on the Mabo decision, which legally recognises that Indigenous people have a special relationship with the land that existed prior to colonisation and continues today. This paved the way for the Indigenous land rights we now call "native title".

There are two very important reasons why this is such a vital week. If we look at the statistics we can see that there is a lot to be done to close the gap in areas such as education, life expectancy and employment. The statistics show that the life expectancy gap needs to be closed. Indigenous males, for example, die at an average age of 59—some 18 years earlier than non-Indigenous males. Indigenous females live to only 65 on average compared to 82 for non-Indigenous females. Despite the fact that the mortality rate of Indigenous Australian babies is declining it remains at more than 12 for every 1,000 live births, a rate nearly three times that of non-Indigenous infants. Official figures show that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is 14 per cent compared to around 4.9 per cent for other Australians. These figures do not represent the full story. Many Indigenous people do not show up in the unemployment figures because they live in areas where there are very limited opportunities to get paid or take part in employment programs.

This means that although the official figures say there are something like 25,000 Indigenous Australians who do not have jobs the real figure may be much higher. In education, by the end of 2010 there were around 25,000 Indigenous graduates in Australia, but this still lags behind the numbers for non-Indigenous people. Based upon a steady growth of enrolments and completions these numbers are projected to swell to more than 50,000 Indigenous graduates by 2020 and more than 100,000 by 2050. We need to concentrate on year 12 attainment and completion. It is worthy of note that the first Rhodes scholar in 2011, South Australian Rebecca Richards, is the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australian to receive the prestigious Rhodes scholarship in its 108-year history. Rebecca will enrol at Oxford University in September 2011 and study for a Master of Philosophy degree in material anthropology and museum ethnography.

University and vocational education and training qualifications are important for gaining employment and building economic independence and prosperity. With economic independence, individuals and communities will have increased opportunities and a broader range of life choices. Achievement in higher education may also lead to improved social and health outcomes. A recent study by the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with university qualifications were more likely to be in the labour force and employed full time; had considerably lower rates of smoking and alcohol abuse; were less likely to live in overcrowded dwellings; and were less likely to have been arrested in the last five years. There is a clear link between unemployment and other aspects of disadvantage that reduce life expectancy.

Unemployment is linked to poor health, poor living standards, low self-esteem, imprisonment and substance misuse. Unemployment also has a generational effect, which means children who grow up in a household or community with high levels of unemployment are less likely to be employed when they are adults. Reconciliation and closing the gaps are about creating a shared future for all Australians, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are given the same respect and have the same opportunities to live a good healthy life as other Australians. In the commemoration year 2000 around 300,000 people walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge and hundreds of thousands of people around the country demonstrated their support for reconciliation as part of National Reconciliation Week. Since then much has been achieved by Reconciliation Australia, the independent not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2000 by the former Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Reconciliation Australia is the peak national organisation building and promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians for the wellbeing of the nation. This desire to see it through

is very much at the centre of the New South Wales Government's commitment to work with communities and the non-government sector to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal people. The New South Wales Parliament was the first in Australia to apologise to members of the stolen generations. By apologising to the Aboriginal people of this State, the New South Wales Government was the first in Australia to formally acknowledge the need for a focus on reconciliation.

The New South Wales Government operates on the premise that the best results are gained in Aboriginal affairs policy when Aboriginal communities drive the solutions. Government policy and service delivery should be created in close partnership with the Aboriginal community. Allowing communities to identify, develop and implement strategies and projects within their own communities is key to the O'Farrell Government's approach and will be key to our approach in Aboriginal affairs. There is real strength in Aboriginal communities and we will continue to build on this strength to build the partnerships required to achieve the targets and close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [6.04 p.m.]: This is National Reconciliation Week and National Reconciliation Day was 27 May. The day before that, 26 May, was National Sorry Day. One of the most wonderful and memorable days of my life was when the bridge walk took place, to which the member for Parramatta just referred. Sir William Deane said in his Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture:

The past is never fully gone. It is absorbed into the present and the future. It stays to shape what we are and what we do.

That is very much what this matter of public importance is about. In 1991 the Commonwealth Parliament showed vision, leadership and unity when it voted unanimously in a bipartisan way to form the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and start a 10-year national reconciliation process in Australia. It should be pointed out that reconciliation is not something unique to Australia. The most well-known process happened at about the same time as ours: the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reconciliation processes have also been undertaken in places such as Rwanda and Timor. They are serious processes; they are about addressing the past as well as charting a new way for the future.

The mass mobilisation of people on that cold day, 28 May 2000, was quite remarkable. I put on record that my participation in reconciliation in this country has not been an academic one. I was a member of the Second Council for National Reconciliation between 1995 and 1997 and I was the co-chair of the New South Wales Reconciliation Council for many years. I was also on the national executive and was responsible for putting on the 1997 National Reconciliation Convention, as well as co-chairing the committee that put together Corroboree 2000 and the bridge walk. As I said, this is a serious business. One of the things that concern me slightly about the reconciliation process now is that in some quarters it has almost become a brand name. We know that reconciliation is about a number of things: the most important is that it is about truth telling. It is about this nation coming to a point where we can own, accept and go forward with the truth of the history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia. This Chamber does not need to be reminded of that. We know what it has been.

Reconciliation is also about restitution, which fundamentally means putting things right. In many ways that is the more difficult part of what the reconciliation process is about. It means individuals as well as governments and institutions understanding their role, the history that that has produced and the outcomes about which the member for Parramatta has also spoken. I well recall on 26 May 1997 the then Prime Minister, John Howard, being at the opening of the National Reconciliation Convention, which was attended by about 2,000 Australians. It was at the height of the Federal Government's winding back of native title. It was a very difficult morning, but one of the most powerful and bravest statements I have ever heard in the context of that convention was made by Patrick Dodson, who was the chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation at the time. He said in front of the Prime Minister and the assembled 2,000 people, "You cannot have reconciliation without social justice."

To me, that lies at the heart of our work as people who make laws in this nation. Of course, also at the heart of reconciliation is bipartisanship. It cannot be a true process unless it is bipartisanship that takes us forward addressing those social justice issues. I take this opportunity to say that has not been the case in this Chamber over the past couple of days. It would do us all well, including for the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, to understand the approach of governments and oppositions in this country for the past 16 years and probably longer. It is bipartisanship, and I would like get back to that to deal with the disadvantage and the reconciliation process in New South Wales. I finish by reflecting on some of the past council members'

statements about reconciliation. If the House will indulge me I would like to read a quote from my late husband who, of course, was also a member of the National Council for Reconciliation, Mr Rick Farley. This is what Rick said about reconciliation:

I believe that most Australians now support the principle of reconciliation. They understand that Indigenous people won't go away and that their aspirations somehow must be accommodated within Australian society. The challenge now is to translate that broad public support into specific initiatives that will protect and celebrate Indigenous culture and combat the appalling levels of disadvantage that shame us all.

Shame us all they do. I will conclude by reading a quote from Esme Saunders, an elder from Tasmania, and her statement goes to the heart of it:

To me reconciliation means bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia in a spirit of unity, based on an agreed position about change which embraces equity and justice and maintains mutual cultural respect

That captures what we are talking about today. As I said, this matter of public importance is timely because it is National Reconciliation Week. As the member for Parramatta said, it is an annual event. It is an annual event for all Australians no matter what our heritage, no matter what our story, to recommit ourselves to what is one of the most fundamental processes in this nation.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [6.11 p.m.]: It is a great privilege to speak on this matter of public importance about National Reconciliation Week. Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has two limbs. It has a practical limb, one of ensuring that the opportunities that non-Indigenous Australians enjoy are also enjoyed equally by our Indigenous cousins. It also has a second limb, one of building respect and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. As the member for Parramatta highlighted, there are many aspects of Indigenous disadvantage that Australia and New South Wales need to address to close the gap in opportunity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and to achieve what I call the first limb of reconciliation, practical reconciliation. We know these sorry statistics of many aspects of Indigenous life in Australia. We know from the Australian Bureau of Statistics data for 2009 that life expectancy for Indigenous Australians is about 11.5 years lower for males and 9.7 years lower for females than for non-Indigenous Australians.

We know between 2002 and 2006 Indigenous children under five died at about three times the rate of non-Indigenous children. We know that Indigenous children are less likely to participate in early childhood education. In 2006, year 12 completions for Indigenous Australians were about 45 per cent compared with 86 per cent for other Australians. In 2006, at the time of the census, 48 per cent of the Indigenous workforce-age population was in employment compared with 72 per cent for other Australians, a gap of 24 per cent. People under the age of 25 make up about 10 per cent of deaths of Aboriginal people compared with 2 per cent among non-Aboriginal people. We have this great gap that all Australians want to close by way of practical reconciliation and ensuring equality of opportunity that will give a hand up to our Indigenous cousins so they enjoy the same opportunities that Australians of a non-Indigenous background enjoy.

The second leg of reconciliation is one of relationship and respect. Some Australians, like me, when growing up did not know any Indigenous children. I know you, Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Geoff Provest), were a year ahead of me at primary school and you are probably in the same camp. For many non-Indigenous Australians—and I do not say this pejoratively—there is a position of comparative ignorance about our Indigenous cousins. That is why something like National Reconciliation Week is important. It is important to build up respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and that involves a mutual understanding and, might I say, a mutual knowledge. Although reconciliation, achieving practical outcomes and addressing Indigenous disadvantage, is important, it is not the whole story. You could be in a comparatively wealthy society like Belgium and have a fundamental schism between different parts of the population because of a lack of respect or lack of understanding.

Making sure that Australians of Indigenous background overcome their socioeconomic disadvantage is not the end of the story. We need to understand each other's culture. We need to understand the history of Aboriginal dispossession and disadvantage, and respect the culture of a group within our society, a special group within our society, that has been here for tens of thousands of years and for that reason alone, if for no other, deserves especial respect. The theme of National Reconciliation Week this year is recognition—Let's Talk Recognition. That involves, in my view, non-Indigenous Australians learning more about Indigenous culture, reaching out to our Indigenous cousins and understanding not only their history and their struggles and their family situations but also the circumstances they find themselves in. So, I heartily endorse what has been happening this week and since 1993, when the week of prayer for reconciliation began.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.16 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Cronulla for his supporting comments and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for sharing her experiences and her supporting comments. Reconciliation is about social justice. I will give members a quick quote from the New South Wales Reconciliation Council website:

At the most basic level, for indigenous peoples, social justice means that our lives will not be dominated by a foreign rule of law which fails to adequately support or take into account our unique identities and aspirations. It means that our voices will enter into a dialogue from which all peoples in a society negotiate the type of society they live in.

That was from Professor Mick Dodson, co-chair of Reconciliation Australia. Social justice is about making sure that every Australian, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, has choices about how they live and the means to make those choices. Social justice is grounded in practical, day-to-day realities of life. It is about waking up in a house with running water and proper sanitation, offering one's children's education that helps them develop their potential and respect their culture. It is about the prospect of satisfying employment and good health. Social justice also means recognising the distinctive rights that Indigenous Australians hold as the original people of this land. Some of these rights include the right of a distinctive status and culture that helps maintain and strengthen the identity and spiritual and cultural practices of Aboriginal communities.

This is crucial in the effort to turn around the poor school participation and attendance rate that exists in some communities with a high population of Aboriginal people. The loss of this right to live according to a set of common values and beliefs and to have that right respected by others is at the heart of the current disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people in New South Wales. The right to self-determination is a process whereby Aboriginal communities take control of their future and decide how they will address the issues facing them. The right to land provides the spiritual and cultural basis of Aboriginal communities.

New South Wales has the reconciliation tagline of "You, Me, Us". The tagline is specific to New South Wales and refers to Reconciliation being a people's movement centred around building understanding at an individual level. Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders comprise 2.14 per cent of the population of New South Wales and 0.86 per cent of the population of the Parramatta electorate. In 2006, 664 people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage lived in Parramatta. A wide variety of events have been organised and are being held across New South Wales that feature art, music, veterans affairs and ceremonial as well as social functions. Barry O'Farrell has always been committed to closing the gap. In 2007 during Reconciliation Week, he stated:

I regret that on behalf of the Aboriginal communities of this country the hope they had in 1967 and the reality that we still find today has an enormous gap between it. None of us should be happy about that, which is why this Parliament was the first to say sorry. It is the reason that in the three most recent inaugural speeches by members on my side, the member for Barwon, the member for Murray-Darling and the member for Pittwater mentioned their practical involvement in their Aboriginal communities.

The real reason that will make me sympathetic on this issue and drive me to try to get change—change that will, hopefully, deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal people and not simply be words—is that Aboriginal people, on average, have a life expectancy of 17 years less than most of us who sit in this House. That is a matter of great regret and distress.

And today, Barry O'Farrell and his Government remain committed to closing the gap. There can be no equality of citizenship without equality of opportunity. There can be no equality of opportunity until people in Aboriginal communities have the same life choices and life expectancies as the rest of the community. Achievement of equality will require a clear commitment. It will require a focus on results. It will require transparent and honest measurement. It will require a commitment to direct resources where the problems exist. I am optimistic. I believe that people are our assets. I believe that the role of government is to create an environment for people to fulfil their potential because, Aboriginal or not, that benefits us all. I understand that in achieving that we need to focus on the provision of fundamental services and infrastructure upon which people and enterprises seek to build their lives.

Discussion concluded.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The matter of public importance having concluded, the House will now proceed with private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

M5 TRAFFIC NOISE

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [6.22 p.m.]: An election promise of the O'Farrell Government was that the M5 would be widened to three lanes from Bankstown to Liverpool. The Minister for

Roads and Ports, Duncan Gay, announced on 18 May that the next phase of planning is underway and that the preferred project report is now on public display. An additional five kilometres of noise barriers is proposed and approximately 15 kilometres of barriers will be increased in height. Submissions are due to close on 1 June. However, the Georges River bridge is not in an area identified as requiring noise barriers. I have been contacted by Dara Bonic of Casula, who is concerned about the effects on her health by the traffic noise being generated. For many years Ms Bonic, and her husband, Ned Ticic, have been vocal about the noise from the M5. Their life and those of their neighbours is affected by the M5 traffic noise. Their concerns relate to the lack of noise barriers on the Georges River bridge, which affects the residents of Liverpool and Casula due to the volume of traffic, leaving Liverpool and Casula as a noise sink, and that is made worse by railways such as the Main South Line and Southern Sydney Freight Line. Their letter dated 24 May states:

Re: M5 Widening Project—Non Inclusion of Noise Walls on Georges River Bridge

The area of Liverpool and Casula Links was founded in the 1970s with the majority of houses built before 1980. It was a peaceful hillside enclave on the banks of the Georges River and ... [provided] entree to the Links Golf Course.

Since that time, the level of motor traffic noise experienced by these residents has increased to **unsafe levels recorded of up to 100dba** [decibels]. There are near on 100 houses in the area directly affected by traffic noise from the M5 Georges River Bridge.

... it is reported that traffic volumes in 2023 will increase from 124,542 to 179,613 vehicles daily, making this section of road the **busiest on the entire M5 network for both cars and trucks** for the next 20+ years.

Local residents have complained about **unsafe traffic noise levels since the inception of the M5** and have continuously sought remedy via the implementation of noise walls on the Georges River Bridge.

This time around, local residents represented the largest number of submissions of all other submissions put together. The local residents overwhelmingly **objected to the non-inclusion of noise walls on the Georges River Bridge**.

Noise testing was not done in the Liverpool and Casula Link's area; rather computer modelling was used to predict current noise levels and future noise level. Previous noise reports such as Interlink Roads/M5 South West December 2003 and RTA commissioned report in August 2006 **do not complement** current modelling results.

In fact, the RTA Report in August 2006 conducted at 20 Lakewood Crescent, Liverpool Links produced results showing **daily noise levels regularly exceeding 8dba** which is 20-25 dba above DECCW criteria and is equivalent to 'loud music played at home'.

The Wilkinson & Murray Report May 2011 states that only one site in Narwee was tested for 'Maximum Noise Levels' in this regard. Further, they state that the other site in Hammondville had a 'device malfunction'. **Neither location is representative of the Liverpool and Casula Links.**

Once again, the RTA Noise Report of 2006 produced results for the Liverpool Links **showing LAmax of 100dbal**, with an average LAmax of 85dbal, **being reached daily between the hours of 10.00pm and 7.00am.**

Wilkinson & Murray themselves are of the view that more should be done on the Georges River Bridge and residents **would 'no doubt benefit'** from Noise Walls on the Bridge. The **reduction of noise levels would be 'significant'**.

NSW Planning Authorities have had ample opportunities such as the M5 East, M5 West, M5 Casula Links projects, to remedy unsafe noise levels **in Liverpool and Casula Links**. However, the gross failure of such departments means local residents need to appeal to our elected Politicians to do what is **morally correct and remedy the problem once and for all.**

If this was a **new bridge proposed**, the NSW Government under legislation **would automatically have the money** to construct a new bridge with noise walls. However, as it stands today, this is the only bridge on the entire motorway network with no noise barriers.

For 20 years the concerns of the residents of Liverpool and Casula with regard to traffic noise have fallen on deaf ears of governments at all levels and of all political parties. I urge the Minister to re-examine this issue based on the health effects of noise that is impacting upon the people of Liverpool and Casula Links.

Private members' statement concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.27 p.m. until
Tuesday 31 May 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
