

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 17 June 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.00 a.m.]: Normally at this time the House would deal with General Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) and debate General Business Notices of Motions. However, this morning the Government has consented to the member for Northern Tablelands moving General Business Notice of Motion (General Notices) No. 15. Members are aware of the need to get deal with Government Business in order to get certain bills passed and sent to the Legislative Council. I thank the Opposition for its cooperation to date in that respect.

Mr Michael Daley: But you are going to do us over anyway.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I prefer to think of it as a partnership in the great effort of democracy, and I am heartened that the member for Maroubra wants to make New South Wales number one again given that for 16 years Labor did everything it could to ensure that it was not. Between 10.00 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. no divisions can be called, so I will not attempt to move the suspension of standing orders to facilitate Government business coming on at the conclusion of debate on the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands. It seems that the member for Maroubra is not as obliging this morning as he has been in the past. Perhaps that is due to the stress that comes with the end of a session. In deference to the member for Northern Tablelands and his contribution as the former Speaker of the Parliament, the Government will allow him to move his motion at this time.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I indicate that I am hopeful that private members' statements can be given this afternoon. I will know more about that around 1.00 p.m. as we see how Government business proceeds. The Government business that will proceed this morning after the conclusion of debate on the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands will be the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011. It is crucial, from the Government's point of view, that that bill proceed through the House this morning. I assure members that we will do everything we can to ensure that private members' statements are retained this afternoon. If that is not possible, I will talk with the member for Maroubra to see whether we can arrange for those private members' statements that would have been given this afternoon to be given sometime next week.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

Establishment

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.03 a.m.], by leave: I inform the House that in due course it is the Government's intention to formally establish a number of Legislative Assembly committees. Negotiations are on foot to finalise their memberships and when that process has been completed I will advise the House of them. The committees are:

- Committee on Children and Young People
- Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
- Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission
- Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption
- Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission
- Legislation Review Committee

Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety (Staysafe)
Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer-General
Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development
Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services
Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure
Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety
Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Regulation
Public Accounts Committee
Standing Committee on Legal Affairs
Standing Committee on Social Policy
Standing Committee on State and Regional Development
Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics
Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office
Standing Orders and Procedure Committee

POLICE NUMBERS

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.10 a.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the Police Association recommendation to raise police numbers in this State by 1,500 over the next four years.

The demands placed on our Police Force have increased significantly, and nowhere is that more apparent than in remote and distant inland areas of the State.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will leave the Chamber quietly. Members wishing to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: I would like to think that police numbers are important to every electorate. Police are being required to take on more and more work, including prisoner escort duties and transporting youths and mental health patients. They are now expected to do far more than what we would consider to be traditional policing. Their current role in our community means that they are often the first point of call to address not only safety but also social issues. We need a whole-of-government approach to that ever-increasing range of duties.

I acknowledge and commend the Minister for Police for announcing a review of local area commands. I encourage him to ensure that that review takes into consideration all of the functions that police officers now undertake, including prisoner escort duties. In my view, the Department of Corrective Services should play a much bigger part in the provision of that service. The transfer of that duty to police officers, especially in country areas, means police stations are often unattended. Local police officers who are required to escort prisoners can be away from their station for days, particularly in large electorates like mine where long distances must be travelled. To undertake a review of area commands and not to consider those duties would be a waste of time because they are a serious impost on police.

Modern policing is loaded with extra duties. I am sure that other members who contribute to this debate will agree with me, especially those who have spoken about their police service in their inaugural speeches and in other debates. Red tape is also a significant issue that is tying many officers to their desks. This is why I welcome this review, which I hope will be meaningful and will assist police in these critical areas. It must not be a review for a review's sake. This is an opportunity to fix many things that need fixing. I am reassured that that will happen because the person appointed to undertake the review is very good.

The most recent policing statistics indicate almost an epidemic of call-outs to domestic violence incidents. That is extremely labour intensive work for police officers and a serious issue for the entire community, and in many cases it is fuelled by alcohol abuse. We cannot turn a blind eye to these issues. Of course, the Police Force is often the first, second and third point of call in such situations. More input is required to forge stronger relationships with community groups. I acknowledge the work being done in that regard, but it is a constant issue, particularly given the incidence of alcohol-related crime, pre-fuelling and other factors involving young people that are causing major problems on our streets. These factors have all placed significant and further pressure on our police officers.

The impact of sick leave and stress leave on the authorised strengths of country area commands is also an issue. We cannot hide from this issue because it is causing major difficulties. I am not suggesting that we should withdraw benefits from our police officers, but surely we can speed up the process to allow those who

make legitimate applications for long-term stress leave and who want to exit the organisation to be dealt with quickly. Of course, they should also be able to access whatever benefits the system provides. We need to be able to fill the positions they have vacated as quickly as possible. Often the difference between authorised strength and actual strength is significant, and that imposes an additional burden on frontline police officers. We must fill those vacancies so that the consequent stresses imposed on the remaining frontline police do not cause even more of them to take sick leave and stress leave. I would like the review to address that issue.

Prior to the election the Police Association asked for feedback on its submission and invited members to sign a pledge of support. Coalition, Labor and Independent members all signed that pledge. When I sign a pledge, I follow through. One of the first things I did when Parliament resumed was to give notice of this motion. Candidates should not sign a pledge of support and then shy away from it when they are in the fortunate position of having been elected to this place. I know that many Coalition members signed the pledge, including the members for Tamworth, Penrith, Bathurst Murray-Darling, Campbelltown, Wollondilly, Barwon and Dubbo. The members for Dubbo, Campbelltown and Myall Lakes have great records of service in the Police Force. Like me, those members signed the pledge, and that is a credit to them. However, having signed that pledge, we must deliver on our commitment to support the Police Association's submission, which accompanied the pledge sent to me and other members.

The issues confronting the Police Force are significant, and the most important of them is the fact that we have insufficient police officers. Governments of the day talk about authorised strength and use many other terms that do not reflect the reality of the vast range of duties that police officers undertake. Of course, that workload causes officers to take stress leave and sick leave and that, in turn, creates enormous problems for local area commands in filling positions in a short timeframe given the need to ensure high visibility and to provide frontline policing. The community also expects police officers to be involved in a wide range of community activities and meetings.

Given the sick leave and stress leave issues and the attrition rate being experienced, and although employing an extra 1,500 officers over four years is a large budgetary ask, it is appropriate in the circumstances. I believe it would be money well spent in support of the community given the statistics and the corrective action that is necessary. Regional, rural and remote areas and some of the additional workload issues that relate to distance should be considered in this review. Members signed this pledge knowing that it was delivered with the Police Association's submission, which called for—as this motion does—the support of an additional 1,500 officers over a four-year period. The police deserve that support and the community expects it. I urge members to support my motion.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.19 a.m.]: I am privileged to speak on this most important issue, having had the honour to deliver my inaugural speech in this place earlier this week. In that speech I reflected on the fact that I served for over 21 years with the New South Wales Police Force.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Well served.

Mr TROY GRANT: Thank you; it was an honour. I pay a great credit to my brothers and sisters in blue with and under whom I served during that time. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this important issue before the House. I was fortunate enough during my tenure as a police officer to spend five years as the officer in charge of Tenterfield, which is in the Northern Tablelands electorate. I witnessed firsthand the great support that the member for Northern Tablelands gave to police in his electorate, particularly in my sector at Tenterfield. I think him again for that support.

Prior to the election the present Premier, Barry O'Farrell, announced that the Liberals and The Nationals would increase the authorised strength of the New South Wales Police Force by 550 officers over three years. As part of this commitment we committed to boosting the highway patrol by 100 positions. A New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will boost the authorised strength of the Police Force from its current 15,806 officers to a record 16,356 officers by June 2014.

This issue is significant and the many concerns that the member for Northern Tablelands spoke about in his motion are valid. If I could use an analogy: Considerations of where, why and when police resources are allocated are not as simple as making a decision to buy a product off the shelf at Kmart. This is a specialised product in relation to which deep consideration is given—and certainly the impost on government to which the member alluded is one such consideration. Many factors impact on the allocation of frontline police, in particular, to our communities. We cannot simply say that we need a certain number of police over a certain period of time without a methodology for determining where, why and how such an allocation should be made.

There must be a thought process to it. I say that with some level of insight given that for the last five years of my police service I was the human resource manager for the western region. In that position I got to see how the former Government, over the previous 16 years, relied on its methodology for determining where, why and how police were allocated across the State. I note the member for Toongabbie is sitting opposite. I acknowledge that during his time as Premier I had the opportunity to work with him—

Mr Nathan Rees: I opened Dubbo police station.

Mr TROY GRANT: Yes, that is so. He is also a supporter of the Aboriginal employment strategy of the New South Wales Police Force, and I thank him for that. I am not sure how many police Ministers there were during the time he was Premier; they changed so frequently. I do recall though that we remembered who the last police Minister was because his surname was Daley, and that was helpful for us. That is how we used to remember who was the current Minister.

I recall also that as human resource manager I received representations from the community, often through the local members, advising that some areas were struggling—particularly in the northern region. The member for Myall Lakes and the member for Lismore will know what I am talking about here; their regions have been struggling for frontline police resources for many years. And what did the previous Government do about that? It allocated resources on an ad hoc basis. No methodology or rationale was used to determine where or why police were allocated. That did not exist.

While I support, on behalf of the Government, the intent of the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands, I must say that the issue is not quite that simple. A great opportunity has been created by the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher—and I congratulate him on what he has done in such a short space of time. He has acknowledged that the answer is not as simple as adding water to a box of sea monkeys so that suddenly everything will be alright—which was the approach taken by former police Ministers. The Hon. Michael Gallacher has made a firm commitment to conduct a review of the New South Wales Police Force and to examine this very issue, so that we can come up with an answer for questions relating to where, why and how we should allocate police resources and to meet the issues raised by the member for Northern Tablelands.

The Minister has engaged retired Assistant Commissioner Peter Parsons APM to conduct that review. I commend that appointment. Retired Assistant Commissioner Peter Parsons is one of the most distinguished and experienced police officers this organisation has had over the years. He brings to that review, which is so vitally important—and I know the member for Northern Tablelands will support me on this—a knowledge of metropolitan, specialist police operations and an understanding of regional requirements, because he worked across all those fields. He knows the demands of all those areas of policing, which, as I said earlier, is a specialised science. The Government acknowledges that there is work to be done in relation to police resources—work that was not done by the previous Government. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is already on the front foot and is a long way towards achieving what the member for Northern Tablelands is seeking in his motion. In support of the intent of the member's motion, however, I intend to move an amendment to it. I move:

That the motion be amended by omitting all words after "That" and inserting:

this House supports the Government's policy to boost authorised strength of the Police Force from its current 15,806 officers to a record 16,356 by June 2014.

I move this amendment because the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands refers to an incorrect time frame. The motion states that the time period requested by the association was four years. The Police Association's pre-election submission, a copy of which I have in front of me, sought an increase in the authorised strength of police numbers of 1,500 officers over eight years. As the member for Northern Tablelands said, this is a complex issue for the Government, and my amendment will allow the review process to take place so that the Government can implement the appropriate methodology and rationale, and have a proper understanding for the allocation of police resources.

The member for Toongabbie said that as Premier he opened the Dubbo police station. If Dubbo were to be allocated an additional 200 police officers on an ad hoc basis, a number of cost implications would arise immediately. For example, could the new police station accommodate the extra police; are there sufficient lockers available for the additional officers to use; what would be the impact on the uniform budget of allocating the extra police? We need to take account of all considerations.

Mr Nathan Rees: It is called governing.

Mr TROY GRANT: That is right, but unfortunately it was not applied by the former Government. That certainly never occurred. I had a front row seat to witness the multiple failures of the previous Government with regard to the allocation of police resources, and our communities in regional New South Wales have suffered as a consequence—particularly in the northern region. We must rectify that situation. The Hon. Michael Gallacher is well on the way to doing just that. I commend my amendment to the House. It is essential; I believe this is the way forward. The Minister is on the right track and we should let him get on with the job.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [10.29 a.m.]: I speak in support of the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. No member in this place is more connected with his or her community than that member. If anyone knows what is required on the ground, it is the member for Northern Tablelands. With the greatest respect to the member for Dubbo, this is not complex: you create positions, fill them and build stations. It is not complex at all. We managed to do it in health, schools, education and with a range of government agencies. It is pretty straightforward. I need to take the member for Dubbo to task on his statement about failure of proper resource allocation as it relates to police force numbers across the State.

There is a very good reason governments and Ministers do not get involved in that, and that reason is the Wood royal commission. Twelve years later to the south of our border one sees, without a Wood royal commission, the Victorian police force in a world of pain. One of the recommendations arising from the Wood royal commission was a very clear demarcation between the role of the Minister and the government of the day versus the human resource managers of the day. A human resource manager for the police force does not want a Minister on the phone every day giving instructions on where the troops should be put.

Mr Troy Grant: Why did that happen?

Mr NATHAN REES: You need to take that up with your commissioner, if that was indeed the case. Numbers in the Police Force rose by 23 per cent over the 16 years we were in government in contrast to a 6 per cent growth in population across New South Wales.

Mr Thomas George: Where did they go to?

Mr NATHAN REES: I am coming to that. In response to the interjection from the member for Lismore, Clarence and Coffs Harbour were recipients of the biggest increase in police numbers.

Mr Thomas George: And they are still 30 short.

Mr NATHAN REES: That may be the case but you are in government now and you can fix it. The Government will get away with blaming the previous Government for around 12 months, I suspect, if it is lucky.

Mr Paul Toole: Twelve years.

Mr NATHAN REES: You are in for a world of pain before then. I will give you that tip.

Mr Troy Grant: Why didn't you adopt the workforce allocation model put to you?

Mr NATHAN REES: I can't hear myself think.

Mr Troy Grant: It is a simple question.

Mr NATHAN REES: This is a motion from the member for Northern Tablelands, not you, and I am entitled to respond to it. I point out that I did not seek to make political mileage of this issue 10 days ago, nor in relation to the most recent incident from your side of the House. The first set of crime statistics for the year show that when Labor left government in March 17 out of 17 key categories were stable or falling. The first set of statistics to come out since Coalition members have had their backsides on green leather show that five out of those 17 categories are going up. I was not seeking to make political capital at the time but given the opportunity—

Mr Thomas George: Why didn't you adopt the model put to you by the Police Association?

Mr NATHAN REES: In response to the member for Lismore, it says simply that you have dropped the ball. From memory, the Government has a \$2.6 billion budget to work with now and a motion to increase the force by some 1,500 over the next four years. New South Wales has the fourth largest police force in the world. Members might ask one of their former leaders, who went to election promising a certain increase in the police force only to be told by the then commissioner, "We can't train that many." The Coalition does not have much of a record on the planning of human resources heading into an election. The Government now has the opportunity to fix the alleged problems to which it has alluded. When Labor was in government it ensured that police had all the necessary powers to attack organised crime as it manifested itself through bikie gangs. We gave them taser guns. The Coalition has inherited the best equipped police force in the world. We had the toughest and the first unexplained wealth laws in Australia.

I will never forget the evening that we conducted a community Cabinet meeting in Wollongong and I had the opportunity to speak with a young lady, Kirsty, who had been the victim of a glassing incident. In the face of a great deal of controversy from the pubs and clubs I introduced a range of measures at the time with the then Minister for Police that saw the incidence of glassing go from 17 in one recorded period to zero in the next recorded period. Those measures included compulsory lockouts, compulsory water, compulsory food and the naming and shaming of the worst 50 licensed premises in New South Wales. Whether or not the clubs liked it, those measures had the desired effect and glassing incidents were reduced significantly. We support the motion from the member for Northern Tablelands. We know the good work undertaken by our police across the State. We do not want a similar situation to the one in Victoria. That is why there is always room for ongoing vigilance.

Mr Troy Grant: Do you support the amendment?

Mr NATHAN REES: I support the original motion and I support the amendment. [*Time expired.*]

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [10.35 a.m.]: It is a great pleasure to support the amendment moved by the member for Dubbo. The Government is truly blessed to have such a wealth of experience in policing. The Minister for Police is a former officer, the member for Dubbo and I were both commissioned officers previously and the member for Myall Lakes was also a serving officer. In my 27 years of policing I have served in general duties, public order, detectives, legal services, at headquarters and in the country out in the far west at Broken Hill. Our combined experience in policing gives us great insight into issues facing police.

I note that the Police Association of New South Wales in its pre-election submission sought an increase of 1,500 over eight years in the authorised strength of police officers. As the member for Dubbo stated, the original motion contained an incorrect time frame. It should be noted that prior to the State election Premier Barry O'Farrell announced that the Coalition would increase the authorised strength of the New South Wales Police Force by 550 officers over three years. As part of this commitment we are committed to boosting the highway patrol by 100 positions. This Government will boost the authorised strength of the Police Force from its current 15,806 officers to a record 16,356 by June 2014.

The Coalition is committed to providing police with the resources they need to protect their communities. Members might recall that prior to the election we indicated that we would undertake a comprehensive audit of police numbers across the State. We have established that audit, which will be undertaken by former Assistant Commissioner Peter Parson, APM, a well-respected officer. The recommendations will include how to best allocate the additional police numbers and resources to protect and serve our communities. When completed the audit will give the Government, the police and the community a much clearer picture of where our police need to be. At the conclusion of that audit we will be able to ensure that we have more police patrolling our streets and working effectively with their communities and neighbourhoods.

Labor's local area command model failed to serve communities in the rural and regional areas and some metropolitan areas by concentrating police in stations in large population centres at the expense of towns. The audit will address that matter. This has had big implications on communities at Campbelltown, the opal of the south-west, and the neighbouring electorate of Camden. They are served by large local area commands. In fact, the previous Government closed Eagle Vale police station, a brand-new police station designed to serve its local community. It is important to locate resources close to where they are needed. The police station was built and designed to service communities on the western side of the M5.

The previous Government closed the station but kept the facade open as a highway patrol garage. However, people needing police services had to press a button on the wall and ask to speak to police at

Macquarie Fields local area command. Then they would have to wait some 20 or 25 minutes—depending on the traffic it could be even more—for a police response to arrive. Yet they could have had police right there at their doorstep. I have always maintained that policing is best done for and with the community, not to and against them. That is why I strongly support the amendment moved by my good friend the member for Dubbo.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.40 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. I pay tribute to his continued focus on policing for many years in the Northern Tablelands region. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the former Premier, the member for Heffron, who opened Lake Illawarra Police Station in the lead-up to the last election. That police station is one of the newest, state-of-the-art facilities in New South Wales. I also acknowledge the work of a terrific former police Minister, the member for Maroubra, who is also in the Chamber. The Labor Government left for the Coalition a crime record that is the envy of the world—17 out of 17 crime categories stable or falling. One cannot deny that that is a record that any incoming government around the world would love to have. Indeed, you cannot get a better record—17 out of 17 crime categories falling or stable.

Mr Troy Grant: The police achieved that, not the government.

Mr RYAN PARK: We will get to the police in a minute. This is not about amendments or changes; this is about one thing: the Coalition Government's desire and commitment to pay. The Coalition has to stump up. Coalition members are in government now. They must say to the Treasurer, "We need more money. We need more police." For 16 years members opposite have been carping about police numbers, even though we on this side of the House achieved record police numbers—increases at four times the rate of the population growth. It is time Coalition members and the Treasurer coughed up and said to police, "We are going to give you more funding and we are going to give you more police."

I want to draw the House's attention to the New South Wales Police Force's annual report for 2009-10. It is an interesting report. I want to read from section 13—because Coalition members will never see this section in their police report. Section 13 says, "We improved pay and conditions for our staff." I do not think the police who were part of the 12,000 public sector workers who protested outside this Parliament the other day will be able to say that about members opposite in the next Police Force annual report. The Coalition Government is about reducing the pay of police and scrapping their conditions. When we talk to police in the next few weeks I want to make sure they understand that, unfortunately, section 13 of the annual report will have to be changed because the Coalition Government will not improve their pay and conditions. In fact, what the Coalition Government is about is slashing their pay and conditions.

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, which deals with relevance.

Mr Michael Daley: Standing Order 129 only relates to question time.

Mr RYAN PARK: Sit down.

Mr Troy Grant: Well, make your speech relevant.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Troy Grant: My point of order is that the remarks of the member for Keira are not relevant to the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Keira will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr RYAN PARK: I am happy to draw my attention to the motion. This motion is about increasing police numbers. We increase police numbers by ensuring police are well funded and well paid and their conditions are outstanding. That is what this side of the House does, but it is not what the other side does. So I will draw my attention to this motion. It is about police numbers. We support the member for Northern Tablelands, we support the former Minister for Police, and we support the work this side of the House is doing to support police.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.45 a.m.]: I speak in support of the amendment to the motion. The amendment will ensure that by 2014 we have a real increase in police numbers. A previous speaker

in this debate spoke about the police attrition rate. However, the Government's policy is to provide extra police strength on top of the police strength as it is today. The member for Keira said that just three months ago, under the former Labor Government, police numbers were sufficient for them to do the job. Yet today, three months down the track, he is calling for more police. It is simply not logical. But one would not expect much more from the member for Keira. After 16 years of Labor what have we seen?

Mr Michael Daley: Record police numbers.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: But where are they? They are in Sydney, not in regional areas. Let us look at the report that came out towards the end of last year that dealt with police strength compared with workload throughout New South Wales. Police numbers for every local area command were looked at. The report showed that regional area commands are vastly under strength. But surprise, surprise, surprise, the report showed that area commands in metropolitan areas are vastly over strength when police strength is compared with workload. What is a more equitable basis for allocating police strength than workload? I will give a couple of examples of anecdotal evidence. One of the great rugby players of the Forster-Tuncurry rugby club transferred down to Sydney last year and took up a position as a sergeant. He told me that he loves working in Sydney because there is very little to do compared with when he was working at Forster police station. Another example of anecdotal evidence is that when a plainclothes detective was transferred from the mid North Coast—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Opposition members will listen to the member for Myall Lakes in silence.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: When the detective came down to Sydney to broaden his experience down here, he found he had very little work to do compared with the work he had done on the mid North Coast. The report showed that the Manning-Great Lakes Local Area Command was 56 police under strength compared with metropolitan police stations.

Mr Michael Daley: Which one? Which metropolitan police station?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The report found that all metropolitan police stations, other than Mount Druitt, are vastly over strength compared with regional areas. For too long regional areas have had to suffer at the hands of the former Government, which has looked after its own electorates rather than looking after regional New South Wales. The Coalition Government is already taking a number of significant steps to improve the New South Wales Police Force. For example, it has introduced legislation to provide for mandatory life sentences for persons who murder police officers. This week the Legislative Council passed laws to strengthen existing move-on powers so they can be used for individuals, which will help police do their job. We have consolidated the highway patrol, traffic police and crash investigation unit into a stand-alone Highway Patrol State Command.

We are also working towards introducing the new offence of intoxicated and disorderly conduct under the Summary Offences Act. The Summary Offences Act was done away with by former Labor Attorney General Frank Walker. It was then replaced by another ridiculous piece of legislation, the Offences in Public Places Act. The O'Farrell Government will be bringing it back and toughening it up to help police on the beat. Let me give the House another example of what happened when that mob on the other side were in government. Police officers stationed in Sydney on long-term sick leave were being transferred to the North Coast whilst their positions were being filled in Sydney. In December, in the last allocation of probationary constables, two constables went to the Manning-Great Lakes command and 28 went to check on the fruit and vegies at Flemington Police Station. What a joke when regional New South Wales is crying out for police. I support the amendment.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.50 a.m.], in reply: What a great debate. I thank all members for their contributions: the member for Dubbo, the member for Toongabbie, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Keira, and the member for Myall Lakes. I acknowledge the unofficial contribution of the former Minister for Police from behind me—I heard 136 inappropriate interjections, but all showing his passion for policing in New South Wales. I wanted to stimulate debate about policing in this place to highlight the concerns facing front-line police and also community expectation. I am concerned about the terms "authorised strength" in the Government's amendment without acknowledging "actual strength". Actual strength and authorised strength must be acknowledged, as well as the problems involved with those two figures, because that is what the police and the community are saying to me. I do not accept the amendment.

Mr Troy Grant: One is fixed and one is variable.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: It may be variable but the reality is that those authorised officers are not working on the front line. Every area command has approximately 20 to 35 officers on leave at any given time. Those positions cannot be filled because of the archaic system for filling them and the timeframes involved. The member for Dubbo, like all members, signed the pledge to support the police association. If he were to move an amendment for the increase to be 1,500 officers over eight years—as suggested in the police association submission—that would be acceptable to me. It would be acceptable for the Government to say that was its response. But the difference between "authorised" and "actual" does not address the issues raised in this debate: the additional workload of police, particularly where distance and remoteness are involved. For example, it is unacceptable that escorting prisoners takes police officers away from stations such as Tenterfield—this was referred to by the member for Dubbo—resulting in police stations being closed for several days before the officers, having delivered the prisoners to court, can return. We need more police.

I acknowledge that Government and Opposition members were nodding profusely during debate. But there was also the politics of blame as to who had been the best and who had been the worst over the previous years. That is not my issue, nor am I seeking to apportion blame. I am interested in the future. I am interested in what can be done to fix the range of policing problems that have not been properly addressed and yet need to be. The issues go back a long way, and some cultural issues are also involved. I am not seeking to take away the rights of police officers; I am seeking to ensure that the procedures put in place are able to fill positions as quickly as possible so that "authorised" has a meaning.

The Government's amendment is shying away from the central issue. Let us deal with this so when do have record "authorised strength" it means something, and we do not have 20, 30 or 40 officers in each command on some sort of leave—which is their right—and their positions unable to be filled. This results in the services expected by the community not being provided. If the Government wants to move an amendment to make it 1,500 officers—as suggested in the police association submission—over eight years I would be happy to consider it. However, the pledge that all members signed, including the member for Dubbo, indicated support for the police. I urge Government members to remember that they all signed that pledge prior to the election.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 60

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

Noes, 20

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to.

PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY SUPERANNUATION FUND

Appointment of Trustees

Motion, by leave, by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That in accordance with section 14 (1) (b) of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1971 the following members be and are hereby appointed as trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund:

Richard Sanderson Amery
Gregory John Aplin
Daryl William Maguire
George Souris
Anna Watson

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.05 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit Government business to be considered until 2.00 p.m. and to take precedence of general business.

As I indicated earlier, the House is under pressure to conclude matters of Government business so that those matters can move to the Legislative Council. Members would be aware that the Legislative Council must have legislation from the lower House for so many days before it can deal with it. If the Legislative Council is to deal with matters of Government business in this session, this House must conclude those matters today. Before the member for Maroubra gets too excited, I acknowledge that this House has conducted its business over the past six weeks in a reasonable spirit.

The Opposition has been given a fair go on most occasions and it has been obliging to the Government in dealing with its legislation. For the information of Opposition members and the crossbench, if this motion is agreed to today's private members' notices of motions will be precluded from today's schedule. However, in a spirit of goodwill—I am not sure whether that will be returned—next week, if at all possible, today's private members' notices of motions will be substituted for Government business. Fairness and equity will reign supreme, regardless of what the member for Maroubra has to say.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [11.08 a.m.]: Madam Speaker, fairness and equity have reigned supreme in this House over the past three months because we have been more than cooperative with the Government. The Leader of the House and I have had many discussions about the situation the Government finds itself in. We have granted leave or acceded to every single request for a suspension of standing and sessional orders, until now. We are in our fifth week of sittings and we have acquiesced on every single previous occasion. We have had lunch and dinner breaks and we have sat around twiddling our thumbs for weeks, on occasions with nothing to do. Members spoke for two days on the Library Amendment Bill. They should not pretend that was important Government business.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Maroubra has the call. The member for Maroubra will address his comments through the Chair.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I began by saying, "Madam Speaker". Today private members' business will be cut in two—for members on both sides of the House. In the program for business during the week a very small time frame is allocated to private members' business. Today we will lose one and a half hours of that time. We will not debate motions that deal with issues such as healthy lifestyles, literacy and numeracy. The member for Wallsend wants to make a statement about Ronald McDonald House, which does a terrific job caring for children of families, particularly those from the bush.

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

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: We will not deal with motions dealing with emergency services volunteers, the Hunter Children's Research Foundation, compensation for farmers and environmental land. The Leader of the House and the Premier may not think those matters are worthy of debate but we do, and our patience has run out. We oppose this motion.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.10 a.m.]: Welcome to Opposition. Members opposite should have taken some notes. The Leader of Opposition Business has copied the exact speech that the member for Wagga Wagga gave regularly when the former Government did the same thing to the Coalition when in opposition. Lump it.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 60

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

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.18 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the introduction, without notice, and the agreement in principle speech on the Destination NSW Bill 2011 at this sitting.

In view of the fact that glasnost seems to have passed—I normally would have discussed this matter with the Leader of Opposition Business, but I have not—on reflection I have decided that this afternoon, instead of going straight into private members' statements—

Mr Paul Lynch: He's the Boris Yeltsin of New South Wales.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Coming from you? In view of activities this afternoon I have concluded that standing and sessional orders should be suspended to introduce the Destination NSW Bill. Although I am treating this matter with a degree of levity, the problem is that the Government must introduce this bill this afternoon. I do not propose that it will interrupt members this afternoon. I propose to introduce the bill immediately after the routine of business and question time, just after the giving of general business notices of motions and before we go into private members' statements. The agreement in principle speech will be delivered this afternoon. It should not be an imposition on members.

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

INFRASTRUCTURE NSW BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 16 June 2011.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.21 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the debate on the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011, which is probably one of the most important bills to be introduced into this Parliament. For 16 long years, the people of New South Wales were ignored by the disgraceful Labor Government and on 26 March the strength of their rejection of the mob that now occupies the Opposition benches is evidence enough in this House and the other place.

When I was elected to this place four years ago, New South Wales was in drought. I can remember Morris Iemma announcing that the unused rail tunnels under Hyde Park would be utilised to store harvested stormwater. I thought at the time that that was not a bad idea. Coalition policy in the lead-up to the 2007 election was the collecting, purifying and storing of stormwater. Of course, Morris went one step further and spent \$1.9 billion on a desalination plant at Kurnell. That is probably the most expensive and energy-hungry way of producing fresh water known to man.

The object of this bill is to establish Infrastructure NSW as a government agency for the purposes of securing the efficient, effective, economic and timely planning, coordinating, selecting, funding, implementing, delivering and whole-of-lifecycle asset management of infrastructure that is required for the economic and social wellbeing of the community, and ensuring that decisions about infrastructure projects are informed by expert professional analysis and advice. I spent just under 17 years in local government. That is the level of government that members opposite have spent the past 16 years kicking to death.

The former Government whinged and whined about how bad councils were. It shifted costs to councils, removed their planning powers, strangled them financially, treated them with contempt, and did all it could to make them look ridiculous in the eyes of their ratepayers. Despite that, all councils have forward works programs. All councils work through a priority list of new construction and maintenance projects. Those programs are developed by professional staff and endorsed by elected councillors, and provide long-term

forecasts. That is what this legislation really is all about. After 16 years of knee-jerk announcements, glossy brochures and very expensive studies without outcomes this Government has introduced legislation to provide for the orderly planning of infrastructure.

I mentioned Morris Iemma's great idea about storing water in the unused rail tunnels under Hyde Park. I remember a few weeks later Morris announced the North West Metro, a project designed to show the dynamism and energy of his Government. He spent millions of dollars on glossy brochures describing a fast train from Windsor to Sydney, so fast that it did not have time to stop for passengers. That was a good thing because the Sydney terminus was—wait for it—the same tunnels that he planned to flood. For 16 years the Labor Government created virtual infrastructure—virtual rail lines, dams, a CBD Metro. It also wasted \$500 million on a plan to prop up Verity Firth's seat of Balmain, arguably one of the best-served electorates in the State for public transport. The former Government became an expert in virtual infrastructure—why actually build something, when it can be announced over and over again?

The people of the Hunter were not fooled and the Coalition won three seats in what previously had always been Labor heartland. We also won Maitland, in no small part because the Labor member, Frank Terenzini, was obviously out of his depth and talked about quitting until he was bought off with a place on the frontbench. For members opposite, money overcomes principles every time. I do not include the member for Wallsend in that comment because she has always had the guts to do what she thinks is right. My 68-vote margin in the 2007 election is now about 10,000. Why did the Coalition do so well in the Hunter, the Central Coast and indeed in the rest of New South Wales? It was because the previous Carr, Iemma, Rees and Keneally governments demonstrated that they clearly were not there to govern but to use and abuse the people of New South Wales, and to fritter away the wealth that this once great State had.

In my electorate of Port Stephens, despite being Labor from its gazettal in 1988, the Labor Government quite happily promised infrastructure around election time but failed to deliver. Prior to the 2007 election, the then Minister for Police, John Watkins, promised to establish a Port Stephens Local Area Command. He did not mention it in passing; he promised it seven times in one interview. After the election, when David Campbell was appointed as the Minister for Police—probably one of the most incongruous appointments ever made—he said he did not promise to establish a local area command and we would not get one. Labor campaign strategy 101: Promise the world and then shuffle the ministry. The people of Port Stephens were not unduly surprised. A new police station for Raymond Terrace was promised before the 1999 election, again in 2003 and once more in 2007. Members opposite dithered and mucked around. The station should be opened next month.

Our dedicated and hardworking local police officers have been working out of an archaic and unsuitable station for 12 years longer than they should have been. The Iemma Government promised a new ambulance station for Nelson Bay in 2007, which took four years to build. It also promised a HealthOne Clinic in Raymond Terrace in 2007. The development application was lodged with Port Stephens Council in the past few weeks. These facilities are not luxuries. They are not art galleries or bronze statues. They are accommodation for our hardworking police, our hardworking ambulance officers and our hardworking medical professionals.

Nelson Bay Road is one of the busiest roads in my electorate with more than 20,000 vehicle movements a day. It is the only link between the Tomaree Peninsula and the rest of the world. For 10 years the Labor Government promised to provide dual carriageway between Bobs Farm and Anna Bay. That failure can be measured in blood. This is a goat track that kills people, but what did the previous Government do? It did nothing. The Coalition is committed to building this dual carriageway in this term of government. The Labor Government also did its virtual infrastructure trick on the F3 to Raymond Terrace link.

The former Government spent \$7.7 million on glossy brochures, again with nothing to show for it. This critical road link will help to clear one of the State's most critical bottlenecks—a bottleneck where the New England Highway and the Pacific Highway share the same four lane road, a bottleneck that closes two of the State's busiest highways when anything out of the ordinary occurs, such as a breakdown or accident. When Premier O'Farrell was in the electorate in early January, I explained the importance of this link and I will make a submission to Infrastructure NSW and Hunter Infrastructure to seek funding to begin planning and construction.

The F3 to Raymond Terrace link passes over some pretty unstable ground. Once the route design has been reviewed and property acquired, the ground will have to be pre-loaded. This involves placing about six metres of sand on top of the unstable ground to achieve compaction for the sub-base and it is time dependent; that is, it may be there for three or four years prior to any other construction taking place. That is why the

Coalition is different from the mob on the other side of the Chamber. My submission to Infrastructure NSW will be to proof and survey the route, acquire land as appropriate and then pre-load as required so that when the serious money is available the ground work will have been done.

We should be planning our State infrastructure and encouraging councils to plan future infrastructure. By the end of this term, for example, I would like to know where the two-lane parts of Nelson Bay Road will run in the future. The Labor Government had 16 years to plan something that the United States Government built during the Second World War to service its base at Fly Point. We must plan for the future, and that is what this bill is all about. I encourage members to support it.

Pursuant to resolution business interrupted for the presentation of an inaugural speech.

INAUGURAL SPEECHES

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [11.30 a.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I come to this place as the first Liberal elected to the seat of Rockdale. I thank the people of Rockdale warmly for their support. I also acknowledge the contribution made by the former member for Rockdale, the Hon. Frank Sartor, and wish him well. For me it has been a long and winding road that has led to this place. It is a great honour and privilege to be here.

I was born in the Royal Newcastle Hospital, the second of six children. My father was a colliery manager, so we moved around the coalfields, living in locations such as Wallerawang, before moving to the Hunter Valley and living in Cessnock, Maitland and again Newcastle, where I completed my tertiary education at the University of Newcastle. My father had always wanted to design his own mine and was given the opportunity in 1971. My father's design was a success and was very productive, so much so that Henry and Nancy Kissinger and David Rockefeller visited the mine in 1981 with a delegation from the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York.

My paternal grandparents settled in Australia from England in 1927. My grandfather was for some time manager of the John Darling Colliery at Belmont north and later a member of the Joint Coal Board, and a commissioner in the Royal Commission into the Queensland Collinsville mine disaster. My grandparents retired to Darling Point, and Flowers Drive at Catherine Hill Bay was named in my grandfather's honour. My mother's family had always had strong links with the St George area, with my grandparents moving into a war service home in Bexley in 1920 following the return of my grandfather from active service in France during the First World War. Although I never met my grandfather, we knew him by the music he had bought for the pianola, which brought us much pleasure. My great-great-grandfather had settled in the colony in 1853, arriving on the *SS Maidment*. He was from Scotland. My mother was born at Bexley and attended St George Girls High School where she was vice-captain in 1943. As young children we would go with our parents to the beach at Brighton-Le-Sands.

In 1976 I began teaching at Macarthur Girls High School at Parramatta but chose to live at Brighton where I had many fond memories. I was transferred to Belmore Boys High School in 1978 where I taught until 1996, and, after teaching for 21 years, chose to retire on medical advice. I then continued my interest in politics, as I had earlier realised that to make a difference in our community, you must take part in the political process. You cannot always leave it to others to do the hard work; you must play your part. I was elected to Kogarah council in 1999 and then Rockdale City Council in 2004 where I still serve as a councillor and served two terms as mayor.

I was mayor when, with the agreement of council, we built the Brighton boardwalk. We commenced the New Years Eve Botany Bay fire works, initiated city-wide flower displays, began upgrading town centres across the electorate, constructed the first skate park for our youth, created new open space with the demolition and relocation of the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol facilities at the end of Bay Street and relocated the Greek Sports Hall of Fame to the recently opened Millennium Centre in Brighton-Le-Sands. We introduced a new residential amenity improvement strategy delivering quality improvements to the built environment in Rockdale and created a new vision for the city of Rockdale that included a world-class pier and marina as well as linking the divided western and eastern sides of Rockdale. I am proud of what was able to be achieved while I was mayor.

At the end of this parliamentary term I hope to have delivered in a similar manner on the issues raised by people during the State election. These include the return of the Rockdale police station, which was sold off

last year, finding a solution to the traffic congestion, the expansion of the Rockdale commuter car park, the installation of lifts at Arncliffe railway station, and the construction of a pedestrian underpass to improve the safety of the children attending the Al Zara College and the mosque. I know the \$30 million upgrade to the emergency department of the St George Hospital will be delivered.

I learned from being a teacher that it is by your students that you will be taught. This also showed me the importance of listening to your community. We all share a space that is infinitely big, infinitely small and infinitely complex, yet you can only do what you believe is right at the time guided by your life experiences and sometimes simple words such as decency, kindness, love and forgiveness. These help me when I ask what is in the public interest. Some say you can tell how advanced a society is by the way it treats its prisoners and equally by the type of education you give the children at home and at school.

Many of the solutions to society's problems are to be found in the way we treat our children. However, other solutions to community issues are encased by the economic problem of wants being unlimited and resources scarce. This causes us to look at the great battle of ideas. We all know that land, labour, capital and enterprise have as their reward rent, wages, interest and profit. But how do you combine these to grow the economy? The State Government is primarily responsible for the delivery of services. This does not mean it has no responsibility for economic growth. Services themselves should be delivered in a way that increases the capacity of the people of New South Wales to in turn be more productive. We know the socialist in all his disguises can never do this. We know the socialist fundamentally wants to redistribute everyone else's wealth except his own. They are well connected—with waste and mismanagement.

I have always had a strong belief in the rights of the individual and the need to encourage individual enterprise. Self-interest and the profit motive are powerful drivers of economic growth because they are reflective of life forces. Individuals make up society. They are all different, they are all unique, and they are all equal. I share Margaret Thatcher's view that the individual has a right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the state as his servant and not his master and that these are the essence of a free economy upon which all our other freedoms depend. This is the freedom that is enduring. It leads to economic growth, technological advancement, wealth creation and to higher standards of living, the end result of which is that we are all better off. I am also very mindful that while good people can make good things happen in this place, I hear the echo of Ronald Reagan when he said that the most terrifying words in the English language are, "Hello, I'm from the Government and I'm here to help."

I also believe that our highly evolved system of constitutional monarchy affords the best protection for all, through the separation of the responsibilities of the head of state from that of the head of government, effectively and efficiently partitioning power from glory. We say to the monarch, "The glory is yours to have but not the power", and we say to the head of government, "Elected power is yours to have but not the glory." Constitutional monarchy and the Westminster system are, of course, much more than this, but the stability and safety attached to them are the foundation of the prosperity that attracts people from all over the world to our shores.

The people of Rockdale come from many parts of the world. Of the 70,000 people in my electorate, 40 per cent were born overseas, 35 per cent were born in non-English speaking countries, 56 per cent have both parents born overseas, and 65 per cent have at least one parent born overseas. At home 49 per cent of the electorate speak a language other than English. I am continually humbled by the richness this cultural diversity brings, the pride they have in their countries of origin and the love they have for their chosen land. They have achieved success through hard work and strong family values. No matter from where they came, I will represent everyone equally, fairly, proudly and to the best of my ability. We are all better off for knowing and sharing the best each has to offer.

The Rockdale electorate extends from the Cooks River in the north to the Georges River in the south, from the shores of Botany Bay in the east to Bexley North and Bardwell Park to the west. It has a variety of housing styles. Tempe House and Lyndham Hall are fine examples of colonial architecture and are rightly protected by heritage orders. Some areas are low density residential and the residents are rightly proud of those beautifully kept suburbs and want to keep it that way. Some areas are medium density and those areas are fully developed. Wolli Creek has significant potential, and to achieve this requires more work. Some areas of the electorate are showing signs of urban decay and I will mention more of that now. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

To some extent the Rockdale of the past will not be the Rockdale of the future. We have to recognise a new reality. This is the rise of China and soon India, along with the spectacular new architecture and

developments transforming not only the Gulf States but our neighbours in South-East Asia. As great changes occur around us, it is better to adapt to the changes than to pretend they are not happening. During the term of the Coalition Government China will become Australia's largest inbound tourism market and Australia's largest trading partner. The middle class in China will number in the many hundreds of millions in less than 10 years. Not only are the numbers of Chinese visitors on a scale not seen before, but their average expenditure is greater than that of their American, British or other East Asian counterparts.

The tourism potential of a vast middle class from China and the subcontinent seeking new and interesting destinations cannot be understated or ignored. There will be new money in play. There will be much competition for those dollars. Much needs to be done to get them. Situated on historic Botany Bay, adjacent to Australia's largest airport and within easy reach of the city, I believe the western shores of Botany Bay have a larger role to play in Sydney's tourism industry. Through Kyeemagh, Brighton-Le-Sands, Monterey, Ramsgate Beach, Dolls Point, Sandringham to Sans Souci along the kilometres of Lady Robinsons Beach and Cook Park one can clearly see where Captain Cook of the Royal Navy sailed through the heads in 1770 and as a consequence gave rise to modern Australia. The full potential of this special location in Rockdale has not been realised. There is a lack of modern infrastructure to accommodate the economic opportunities that are coming. I believe this must change.

The Novotel Brighton Beach was completed 21 years ago and stands as a solitary reminder to what could have been. It was a good start, but the momentum stalled. By contrast whole national economies have been transformed in the 21 years since the construction of the Novotel. Various planning ordinances and local environmental plans have not encouraged the renewal and revitalisation that is necessary in key areas of the electorate. This is the case in both the public and private domain. In the Rockdale electorate The Grand Parade, with its 70,000 vehicle journeys a day, is like a river in flood, separating the community from its most beautiful asset, Lady Robinsons Beach and Cook Park. The residents want Rockdale to be a destination not a congested thoroughfare. They want a desirable and sustainable place to live, work and play that is aesthetically pleasing with a high standard of social overhead capital, improved commercial centres and improved tourist facilities. They want preserved green space in the F6 corridor.

Where there are unresolved issues that need attention we must set about fixing them. As the Sutherland shire and the Illawarra continue their growth, the need for a Botany Bay planning authority to plan and coordinate the traffic flows from the south and manage the container traffic from Port Botany, as well as develop and coordinate the untapped tourist and development potential of the bay region, requires urgent consideration. The Cooks Cove development in the Rockdale electorate adjacent to Sydney airport, which was designed to employ 12,000 people in high technology jobs, has been in the planning stages for 15 years. For economic development to occur it is essential that planning laws do not deliver planning paralysis, as has been the case in my electorate.

Zonings contained in local environmental plans, not just in Rockdale but also in New South Wales, require an appeal mechanism. Where we hold up values such as the rule of law, it seems unreasonable that appeals are possible to the Land and Environment Court on a development application but not on a zoning decision by a council. Housing affordability is determined by the supply and demand for houses. Inappropriate zonings can restrict the supply side of the equation, causing price distortions in the housing market. Rockdale is at the centre of these issues.

Brighton-Le-Sands is located close to the city and airport and is on the beach. Some unit blocks from the 1950s and 1960s detract greatly from the visual amenity of the area and by no means make the best economic use of the scarce resource of the land. There is no mechanism for these areas to undergo much-needed urban renewal. In the future the beautiful natural environment will have to be matched by an attractive built environment. This is not the case at the moment in parts of the electorate. The zonings contained in successive local environmental plans make this transition difficult to achieve. If our recent history is a guide, all we can be certain of is that nothing will happen, when something needs to happen. I repeat my earlier point: there is no place to complain when reason is absent from the planning process.

The substantive point is the orderly and timely preparedness of areas of my electorate to take advantage of changing times and the enormous opportunities that this will present sooner rather than later. I would like Rockdale to be awakened to its great potential, with the richness of its people combined with being located in the right place at the right time. The historical contrasts from the past are stark. In the past the beach was covered with people. In 1889 there was a steam tram from Rockdale to Brighton, a new hotel was built for the fashionable people from Sydney Cove and the baths doubled up as a promenade people could walk around.

There was a 500-foot long pier where people could catch a ferry from Brighton to Kurnell and tour the bay and the Georges River. All that remains is a low-tech net that serves as the Brighton Baths. We could be doing a lot better than this.

Peta Depena Reserve and Pine Park at Dolls Point require Centennial Park style modern dining facilities. There is no parking in many places where it is required, with the community being denied proper access to desirable locations they wish to visit. There are, of course, many lovely settled estates with first-class homes. These are not the issue in such a diverse electorate as Rockdale. What we desire is the best that we can achieve for our communities into the future. In some respects what we have is no longer the best we can do or be as a community, given the plentiful natural resources we have to work with. Where there is urban decay in the private and public domain we must admit it exists. Only then can we explore and prepare community-based solutions for a future that is rapidly approaching.

Special mention should be made of Peter and Elizabeth Antonopoulos, and Alex and Theodora, for without the iconic Le Sands restaurant and pavilion the area would be much the poorer. In any event, I would like to sincerely thank those who worked so hard for my election—my number one supporter over many years, Jan Brennan, who has been on this 20-year journey from the beginning; my mother for her unending love and support; my late father, with whom I had many political discussions; my brothers and sisters and their partners, Philip and Jenny, Deborah and Steve, Tim and Lisa, Kathryn and Brett, Peter and Cate; and my nieces and nephews, Evan, Madeleine, Alison, Bronwyn, William, Robert, James and little Sam.

I thank my campaign team—Petros Kalligas; Peter and Vicki Poulos and the Poulos family for their contribution over many years; and Michael Kitmiridis, who gave more than I thought it was possible to give. I also thank Paul Sedrak and his family, Matthew Manos, Sam Stratiopoulos, Ron Bezic, Chris Hall, Jennifer Havilah, Nicholas and Dorette Varvaris; all those who were up at the railway stations from 6.00 a.m. until 9.00 a.m., letterbox dropping and taking part in photo shoots; and my loyal branch members, especially Georgina Hrdina, and also the late Mercedes Clark and the late Councillor Gary Green. We miss you. To my friend Councillor Michael Naji, thank you for embracing change in Rockdale.

Thank you to my friends at Rockdale City Council and to Councillor Judy Feeney and Councillor John La Mela. Thank you to the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox and the Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones for your visits, and to Russell Grove and the parliamentary staff for your assistance since my election. I send a special thankyou to Premier Barry O'Farrell and Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells. I will conclude with the words from a poem by Minnie Louise Haskins that was quoted by King George VI in his Christmas Day broadcast in 1939:

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown,
And he replied, Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way.

INFRASTRUCTURE NSW BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [11.55 a.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak to the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011, which will lay the foundations for the coordinated, timely, efficient and, importantly, depoliticised delivery of infrastructure in New South Wales. We in the Hunter know all too well the damage that communities suffer when infrastructure is promised then never delivered. The previous, Labor administration in this State treated people in the Hunter like mugs. It makes true the adage, "Years ago, fairytales all began with 'Once upon a time'; now we know they all begin with, 'If we are elected'."

Let us have a look at some of the undelivered election commitments with which Labor tried to hoodwink the Hunter. In 1989 the Federal Labor Government misled the Hunter with the expectation of landing the Anzac frigates contract. This was a \$5 billion contract that our local shipbuilding industry was perfectly suited to fulfil. What happened to that contract? It went to Victoria to shore up marginal seats in that State. It is ironic that the Prime Minister at the time went on to break another of his promises when he famously said, "... by 1990 no Australian child shall be living in poverty".

At about the same time, the Hunter was misled again by the Federal Labor Government when we were expected to receive the Collins class submarine contract. Again, the Hunter's shipbuilding capacity made it

perfectly suited for this project. Again, the fact that the Hunter then had safe Labor seats led to the contracts being awarded to South Australia to shore up other marginal seats there. Again, Labor proved another old adage true: "It is useless to hold the person to anything he says while he is in love, drunk, or running for office."

In 1998 Bob Carr proposed a "fully costed high-speed rail link to Newcastle", due to be completed by 2012 at a cost of \$1.2 billion. This was part of the famous 1998 con job on the electorate called Action for Transport 2010. The same document also contained a promise to build the Chatswood to Parramatta rail line by 2006. After the 1999 State election the high-speed rail project was quietly shelved, with Bob Carr citing that it was only ever being costed, not promised. Once again, the Hunter had been deceived by the line "I'll still love you in the morning" from Bob Carr.

Just prior to the last Federal election the Federal Labor Party once again dusted off this high-speed rail project and tried it again in the media. The Federal Minister responsible, Anthony Albanese, was careful not to make the construction of this project a promise but funded a \$20 million study and called for "tenders for geotechnical investigation and financial and economic modelling". The first stage of this study is due for release by July 2011. So, according to this time line, the public has only 16 sleeps to wait for information that will determine if we have been hoodwinked again.

Another Bob Carr special was the phantom Austeel project. This was announced with great fanfare as the long-awaited revival of steel production in Newcastle following BHP's closure in the late 1990s. It was supposed to be worth about \$2.8 billion and 1,500 jobs were promised, with the State Government contributing about \$240 million mostly on transport works. Contracts were signed in February 2001, with Mr Carr promising "to cut red tape and to back this proposition at every turn". History proves that this did not occur. Given that Bob Carr fancies himself as an expert in United States history, it is appropriate that this promise reminds me of a legendary promise made by a former United States President, Herbert Hoover.

In the shadows of the Great Depression, with unemployment rates heading towards 30 per cent, President Hoover bullishly promised to "put a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage". From a Hunter perspective I am glad we did not get two cars because one Bob Carr was quite enough. Morris Iemma learnt well from his former master. Prior to the 2007 election the Hunter was apparently to receive a car terminal as part of the port redevelopment but again this was soon taken away to shore up votes in the Illawarra. At the same time Mr Iemma, when faced with one of his Ministers being arrested for paedophilia, within a week announced the construction of Tillegra Dam as a diversion to take Mr Orkopoulos off the front five-pages of the Newcastle *Herald*.

Perhaps the most archetypal piece of Labor's deceit in the Hunter has been the Glendale interchange. This project has been mooted, hinted at, funded, unfunded and studied more times than any of us care to remember. It has had more retirements than John Farnham. It has taken the election of the O'Farrell Government to see a real commitment to the project, thus enabling Lake Macquarie council to take it to the Federal Government to see if it will match the funds provided by council and the current State Government. I hope our local Federal members of Parliament will actively support the project. Since the State election in March this year the Hunter has taken control of its own destiny and has broken the shackles that tied it to Labor. The difference has been stark.

Even Federal Labor members who have been hibernating for many years are emerging like bears from a cave, blinking in the sunlight and suddenly realising that spring is here. I hope their newfound media presence is reflected in strong representation in their party room for genuine Federal support for the Hunter. The O'Farrell Government is committed to the Hunter's future. We have a \$350-million Hunter Infrastructure Fund to help make up for some of the neglect our region has endured. The Government will be holding its first regional community Cabinet meeting in Newcastle on 27 June. Local Liberal members will work together as a team to deliver for our region. With this bill we have a proper mechanism to ensure that the State receives the infrastructure it deserves in the regions as needed. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.01 p.m.]: The Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 is yet another bill that sees Premier O'Farrell, and in this case Nick Greiner, directing, controlling and dictating infrastructure in New South Wales. This bill, which will shape Infrastructure NSW, was introduced into Parliament on Thursday 26 May 2011 by the Premier and, not unlike the Industrial Relations Amendment (Public Sector Conditions of Employment) Bill 2011, it will not be independent. Infrastructure NSW will be subject to the control and direction of the Premier.

Mr Acting-Speaker, make no mistake, the Premier will be the boss of Infrastructure NSW. This is despite statements made last month by Nick Greiner, the chairperson of Infrastructure NSW, that he had taken the job on the proviso that the Premier would publish all plans regardless of whether he adopts them. I remind the House that Nick Greiner was the Premier when the former Minister for Education from 1988 to 1990, Terry Metherell, who was the member for Davidson at the time, resigned from the Liberal Party in 1991 only to be appointed as a director of the Environmental Protection Authority on his departure from Parliament early in 1992. The matter of his appointment was referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, which made findings of corruption against the then Premier.

The actions of Nick Greiner led to his downfall, as he was found by the Independent Commission Against Corruption to have corruptly offered the position to Terry Metherell to force a by-election in the electorate of Davidson. Nick Greiner resigned as a consequence. As I have said, he is now the chairperson of Infrastructure NSW. That is good Liberal Party form and a really great decision by Barry—a job for the boys. We can all look forward to team Nick and Barry and the infallible infrastructure show. The member for Charlestown shared some facts with the House. I also would like to share a few by giving a comparison between the Greiner and Fahey governments and the 16 years of Labor Government.

Mr Paul Toole: Don't forget regional areas.

Mr NICK LALICH: No, I will be covering regional areas. Under the Greiner and Fahey governments 30 hospitals were either closed or downgraded. Under Labor every major hospital in New South Wales was rebuilt or redeveloped. Under the Greiner and Fahey governments 2,500 teachers were sacked from the public education system in the first year—exactly what this Government is now doing. Under Labor 3,000 more teachers have been employed since 1995, the average kindergarten class size has been reduced from 24 to 19 children, funding for literacy programs has quadrupled, and 82 public schools have been opened. Under the Greiner and Fahey governments 8,000 rail jobs were axed in the first year—exactly what this Government is doing—13 country rail services were terminated and 13 country rail lines closed. Labor provided new OSCar and Waratah trains and new Metrobus routes and built the South West Rail Link, Inner West and CBD light rail extensions, the Kingsgrove to Revesby quadruplication and the Richmond line duplication.

The promise of the Greiner and Fahey governments to declare 350,000 hectares of wilderness was broken and no new marine parks were declared. Labor doubled the number of national parks from 400 to 845—an area the size of Tasmania is now protected in New South Wales—and created marine parks at Batemans Bay, Cape Bryon, Jervis Bay, Port Stephens, Lord Howe Island and the Solitary Islands. The Greiner and Fahey governments cut 1,000 positions from family and community services and closed one in four community services offices. Barry O'Farrell announced before the election that he would cap the number of children taken in by the Department of Family and Community Services for protection. For example, if the capping is at 500 and abused child number 501 comes in he or she will be told, "Sorry, come back next year. Stay with the people who are treating you badly. We cannot take you because the number of people being taken into care has been capped." Labor delivered 47,000 new disability services over four years, and \$1 billion to build 3,000 new social housing homes.

I now turn to regional facts. Labor provided \$3.5 billion for regional and rural roads—that included \$1.5 billion for critical highways, including \$827 million for the Pacific Highway, \$62 million for the Princes Highway, \$345 million for the Hume Highway, and \$174 million for the Great Western Highway. Labor spent \$11.5 million on eight world-class police stations across rural and regional New South Wales—at Tenterfield, Kempsey, Walgett, Deniliquin, Parkes, Moree, Bowral and Tweed Heads. Labor looked after regional and rural New South Wales. The Minister for Roads in the other place, the Hon. Duncan Gay, has no idea what is going on in relation to Infrastructure NSW or in relation to the bill. That is exceptionally bad form from the Premier and a good example of how he treats his Ministers. He treats them with contempt, keeps them in the dark and feeds them Dynamic Lifter.

The Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 places all infrastructure projects at the direction of the Premier. He is then personally responsible for the delivery or failure of those projects. The bill does not take politics out of infrastructure decision-making, nor does it place infrastructure planning and decision-making in the hands of experts. It provides the Premier and Nick Greiner with the ability to control and direct Infrastructure NSW in the exercise of its functions. The Government has broken several of the promises it made to the people of New South Wales.

The Premier promised there would be an independent board. Not true. The Premier promised the independent board would provide direction for Infrastructure NSW. Not true. The Premier promised that

Infrastructure NSW would put in place rail lines, roads, ports and other infrastructure and the government of the day would examine that list, seek funding and tick them off. Not true. I refer to clause 35, entitled "Transfer of Infrastructure NSW managed projects to government agency", or the project divesting order. Subclauses (5) and (6) speak for themselves:

- (5) Before making a project divesting order that transfers any assets, rights or liabilities to a SOC [State owned corporation], the Premier is to consult with the following:
 - (a) the portfolio Minister of the SOC,
 - (b) the voting shareholders of the SOC,
 - (c) the chairperson of the board of directors of the SOC.
- (6) Failure to comply with subsection (5) does not affect the validity of the order.

What is the purpose of subclause (5)? Subclause (5) states that the Premier must consult with various people, but subclause (6) states that if he does not do so it does not matter, just carry on. Under the bill the Government cannot put a single plan in place, only the Premier can do that. This legislation takes decision-making away from the board of Infrastructure NSW, the Treasurer, the Minister for Transport, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the Department of Transport, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and this Parliament. That is not what the people of New South Wales expect or were promised. On 22 November 2010 the Deputy Premier promised that Infrastructure NSW would ensure "that our infrastructure spend is planned properly and it is not bugged up by politicians". That is not a nice way for the Deputy Premier to speak about the Premier of New South Wales.

The legislation also states that any project valued at more than \$100 million will be commandeered by Infrastructure NSW. That does not allow for a community consultation process. This is most disturbing and the people of New South Wales should be concerned. Plans and strategies are at the discretion of the Premier, as the legislation states that implementation of a 20-year strategy may be deferred until appropriate. That means appropriate according to the Premier—that is, when he thinks it is appropriate. Again, this is most disturbing for the people of New South Wales. And so the Barry O'Farrell takeover show rolls on and we all wait to see what the next instalment brings. This saga is to be continued.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.12 p.m.]: It was with great fanfare that the O'Farrell Government introduced a new dawning of creation, the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011. It is with equal enthusiasm, on behalf of the people of the Hunter, that I will detail to the House our present and future Hunter infrastructure needs. These are essential needs to improve the quality of life of our burgeoning population. The Premier said that the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 will renovate our infrastructure, improve our services, restore honesty and accountability to government and give people a say in decisions that affect them. The Premier summarised his Government's objectives in a five-point plan. I, too, have a five-point plan to renovate and improve services for the Wallsend community. I will take the House through those plans.

At this juncture I am compelled to mention how the Hunter Infrastructure Fund will fit into the Premier's Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011. The budget of \$350 million is touted by the Government as the total cost of our Hunter infrastructure needs. An amount of \$350 million is a very modest sum and I question whether it will cover our five-point plan of necessary infrastructure projects in the Wallsend electorate. Goodness knows how it will stretch to accommodate necessary projects in the wider Hunter as well. I will list our five infrastructure priorities in the Wallsend electorate and, if time permits, I will extol the virtues of many more development activities that are vital to the area.

I begin with our number one priority, the most important project in Wallsend and the Hunter, the Glendale road-rail interchange. Significantly, it was recently identified by 11 Hunter councils as their priority too and, I am pleased to say, was mentioned by the member for Charlestown. Glendale is situated centrally within the lower Hunter. It is the junction for the Lake Macquarie, Wallsend and Cessnock electorates, as well as a linkage to Newcastle. When I grew up in West Wallsend, or Westy, it was referred to as "the crossroads", and for good reason. All the local Liberal members of Parliament stated before the election that they were committed to building the Glendale interchange.

An amount of \$15 million has been promised by the current Government to build stage one, which is the Pennant Street bridge. Together with the \$10 million promised by Lake Macquarie City Council, the Government's money matches an application for \$25 million from the Federal Government. If that application for funding is successful we will have \$50 million towards a \$100 million-plus project for stage one. In tandem

with stage one of the interchange is stage two, a planned railway station, car park and bus interchange at Glendale. The benefits of this new interchange, with a new train station at Glendale, are manifold. We are looking at well over \$100 million to build stage two of the interchange.

I turn to priority two: road infrastructure and the creation of the Newcastle inner-city bypass. The bypass—which begins at Swansea and, when finished, ends at Hexham—will allow for a quicker, shorter and smoother drive from the outlying areas through to the city. The State Labor Government completed stages one, two and three. At present stage four, from Shortland to Sandgate, is well underway, having received funding from the previous Labor Government's budget. The budget for stage four of the Newcastle inner-city bypass also surpasses \$100 million. Our commuter community is naturally keen to have the final stage built, stage five, from Jesmond to Rankin Park. It will complete the bypass and, importantly, provide an additional entrance to the increasingly busy John Hunter Hospital. This final stage also will take some of the heat off local roads, such as Croudace Road and McCaffrey Drive, which are becoming gridlocked more frequently during peak hours. Of course, we will need another \$120 million-plus for this road.

What is next—priority three? The major regional hospital north of Sydney, John Hunter Hospital, is desperate for a number of new and updated facilities. A major commitment from the previous Labor Government was to build an intensive care unit for the John Hunter Children's Hospital. An amount of \$10.3 million was committed, if the Labor Government was re-elected. A number of the hospital's leading clinicians have indicated that the unit is a priority for health services in the Hunter and New England region. The estimated cost of an intensive care unit for the children's hospital is at least \$20 million. What other projects are important to improving the quality of life for Hunter citizens? The Mayor of Lake Macquarie, the Lord Mayor of Newcastle City Council and I have discussed plans for a regional cycleway.

Priority number four is a cycleway project linking Lake Macquarie to the Newcastle City Council area, from the lake to the beach in Newcastle. Fortunately, if we combine the availability of land with the ingenuity of Lake Macquarie City Council and Newcastle City Council we could build our cycleways off road. For our community the payback for building more off-road cycleways are many: a healthier community, increased fitness, fewer presentations to our overstretched hospitals and less traffic on our roads. They are a few of the benefits of off-road cycleways. A further inclusion in priority number four ought to be the creation of a criterium circuit at Blue Gum Hills Regional Park. This cycleway circuit would enable practical use of the fledgling regional park. A criterium circuit would allow for a training area for children and beginner cyclists as well as, at allocated times, a circuit track for competitive cyclists—all off road, of course.

I turn to our fifth and final point in our five-point plan for Wallsend electorate infrastructure. We must remember the vital need for an increased budget for both the John Hunter and Calvary Mater hospitals. John Hunter Hospital is the major regional hospital north of Sydney and the Mater hospital is a leading cancer research centre and cancer treatment facility. Their emergency departments are crying out for more space, more staff and more resources. In addition, increased overall budgets to our regional hospitals will increase staff and services to all departments and therefore reduce waiting times.

We in the Hunter are looking forward to the delivery of the Government's promises to renovate our infrastructure and, as its oft-repeated slogan says, to make New South Wales number one again. We look forward to the Premier meeting his commitment of giving Hunter people a say in decisions that affect them. When we review our major five points for Wallsend's priorities—public transport, roads, health, education and hospitals—we see that the modest \$350 million allocated for the Hunter Infrastructure Fund is just a drop in the bucket compared with the needs of the Hunter. We deserve more.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [12.19 p.m.]: On the surface the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 is about concrete: building massive things—highways, railways, major construction projects and the like. Thinking more deeply, we see that it is about the arteries of our society: how we move things across this vast land; how we get work done smarter and faster; how we establish a structural framework that will lead to affordable housing; and how we provide energy for homes and industry. But at the bedrock layer this bill is also about something equally fundamental to the health of our society: trust. No-one in this place will have been immune from the harsh criticism that is routinely dished out to politicians in Australia. Politicians, as we know, might work long hours, travel huge distances each year, meet with thousands of people, work on the development of new laws and help right wrongs that affect their constituents—they are all good things—but it has come to pass that, despite all this effort and work, politicians as a group have lost much of the trust of the Australian people.

It will be a slow climb to win back that trust. This bill is a serious step in that process. Because infrastructure projects involve so much money and can deliver major economic benefits to individual localities

I believe they figure highly in the development of public opinion about the work of politicians and of Parliament itself. Without wanting to focus too much attention on the Opposition, its handling of infrastructure proposals became legendary. Will we ever forget the \$500 million of taxpayers' funds wasted by Labor on the abandoned Rozelle metro? So much public money has been lost on infrastructure projects that were announced, planned to some degree, and then cast aside uncompleted. This is not money that comes out of the sky; it comes out of the pockets of taxpayers, and it has been wasted.

Each year a survey is taken to find the professions which Australians rate as trustworthy. Published by the *Australian Reader's Digest*, the survey is carried out by an independent research firm on its behalf. The most recent published results for 2010 rate ambulance officers as the most trusted profession—for the seventh year running. Firefighters, nurses, pilots, doctors, members of the armed services and farmers all head the list of 40 rated occupations. Journalists, at 35th position, were just pipped at number 34 by roof insulation installers. Perhaps that is a further commentary on the ability of politicians to taint the credibility of a process or, indeed, the credibility of a profession. I make no further comment on that. Lawyers were ranked 30 out of 40.

I am sure the House will want to know the bottom five. In descending order of trust they are real estate agents and sex workers, followed by politicians, car salesmen and, in last position, telemarketers. We have been put in our place—third from the bottom. So what are we going to do about it? The Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 makes positive moves to take political taint out of the handling of major infrastructure projects. It does this by "ensuring that decisions about infrastructure projects are informed by expert professional analysis and advice". In other words, experts will be put in the driving seat, and there will be greater coordination of infrastructure planning and funding across the many government departments and budgets that invariably contribute to a successful major project.

Moving beyond the issue of restoring trust, this bill is also, bluntly, about New South Wales restoring its lost competitive edge. This Government sets out to achieve economic growth and development through strategic infrastructure investment. My electorate of Albury is home to many businesses that enjoy success not just locally but throughout Australia and in overseas markets. Our road transport links, airport and rail facilities have made Albury an economic base of choice. In Albury we are vitally aware of the transforming effect of well-planned major infrastructure projects. We have benefited greatly over the years, particularly from Federal Government support for our network of highways and roads. It is also why I keenly support this bill.

A new authority, Infrastructure NSW, will be responsible for functions such as the preparation of infrastructure strategies; reviewing proposals from government agencies for the development of infrastructure across the State; preparing infrastructure plans and statements that will be presented to the Premier; overseeing project delivery; and advising the Premier as to how infrastructure projects will be funded. The proposed 20-year and five-year plans will be valuable for all businesses that seek to time their own expansion with the availability of new roads, facilities and utilities. These plans will also encourage citizens to stick with the Government and to wait their turn until their local projects can be commenced.

The people of New South Wales are tired of empty promises and of having projects which are never quite reached in the pecking order. The people are looking to put their faith in a government that sticks to a fair and affordable infrastructure plan for the State. For too long the people of New South Wales have had a situation where the words "Government announces new infrastructure project" are automatically associated with the words "Government abandons new infrastructure project". Infrastructure NSW is an organisation charged with the serious duty of taking the politics out of delivering infrastructure projects across the State. Along the way I hope that it will also play a substantial role in elevating the trustworthiness of politicians in the eyes of the people of this great State.

I know that the people of the electorate of Albury will also be watching closely to see that infrastructure projects that have lingered long on lists unreached by the previous Government—such as a replacement ambulance station, the upgrading of the dangerous rail-road interchange at Tynan Road and the energy-saving biomass co-generation project for our paper mill—are placed on work lists that are genuine and authoritative. Business development relies on accurate information about government infrastructure plans. That is one way the Liberal-Nationals Government will stimulate economic development across the State. It is how we will unplug the blocked arteries of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.26 p.m.]: Madam Acting-Speaker, I thank you for giving me the call against all the very keen Government members who want to give the House another barrage of clichés, mistruths and exaggerations. The Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 has been before the House for some

time, which has given many Government members an opportunity to say a few words, which probably support the statistics of the member for Albury that show that members of Parliament are rated so lowly in the community. If the community had been listening to Government members over the past three months I am surprised we came higher than last. The overview of the bill states:

The object of this Bill is to establish Infrastructure NSW as a government agency for the purposes of:

- (a) Securing the efficient, effective, economic and timely planning, co-ordination, selection, funding, implementation, delivery and whole-of-lifecycle asset management of infrastructure that is required for the economic and social well-being of the community, and
- (b) Ensuring that decisions about infrastructure projects are informed by expert professional analysis and advice.

It sounds great, but the Government has been in office for three months and it has not cemented two bricks together yet. It has not issued a contract to build anything yet. Every month we will keep a running tally of that. The first thing I say to members opposite who are keen to make their speeches—and they could hit us with something really new instead of continually saying that for 16 years we did nothing; that there has been no infrastructure built for 16 years; that planning was so bad that nothing was installed and nothing was approved—is: Have you ever questioned this nonsense by asking yourself how a government gets 16 years in office if it is so bad?

In the 1991 election a Coalition Government lost its majority; in 1995 it lost government. The Labor Government majority increased in 1999, it was retained in 2003 and in 2007 it had a healthy majority, and, yes, we lost, as Government members keep telling us, in 2011. But have Government members ever thought to challenge their own grey matter and question how a government—and it is something the Liberals in New South Wales have never done—stays in office for 16 years if it is not building anything and has not done anything? From all the comments the Government makes about the former Government one would think that the whole Cabinet was in jail.

The background to this bill is part of the rhetoric that the Liberals used in the lead-up to the election. That is, of course, that nothing has been built. They have also said that this infrastructure organisation will be totally independent. There will be no politics or greedy things like government involvement in the construction of these public works projects. The process will be completely independent, but the first thing the Government has done to ensure that is to appoint the former Liberal Premier of New South Wales as its head.

Mr Chris Spence: He was a great Premier.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I understand that he is the only Premier who has been brought down by his own creation. There was a lot of fanfare for the announcement of Nick Greiner's appointment. He is a nice enough guy; if members meet him in the corridors they can always have a good chat with him. He was a successful Liberal leader. He did what they rarely do: He won an election. He did not stay around long, but he was there. In support of his appointment, the *Daily Telegraph* published a glossy pictorial history of his term in office. It portrayed him standing in front of all the projects he had initiated. If members were to examine those photographs they would see that every project featured was initiated by a Labor government.

I will provide the detail. Every photograph was of a project that he criticised in opposition. The first photograph that comes to mind is the one of Nick Greiner opening the Harbour Tunnel. Given that he moved innumerable critical motions and asked many questions condemning that project it is surprising that he would have the hide to officially open it. However, that was his *modus operandi*: He would open any project that the Labor Government implemented. I am sure this Government intends to do the same with Labor-initiated projects that are currently underway in this State. No doubt Premier O'Farrell will be only too happy cut the ribbons. Any historian—

[*Interruption*]

I think the member is trying to make a speech. I do not know whether the member for The Entrance is smiling or suffering from wind. If he were to stay quiet he might learn something. What was the big project of the moment in the 1980s? I will give members a hint to save them scouring old copies of the *Daily Telegraph*: it was the Darling Harbour project. Members opposite probably have not heard of it; it is a little concrete place not far away. That project was the subject of a huge number of condemnatory motions moved by the Coalition in opposition.

Mr David Elliott: You're showing your age.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I was subjected to a lecture a couple of days ago from a former Coalition member about what the Hawke Government did with a submarine contract in either 1989 or 1899. That shows how desperate the Coalition is to pin something on a Labor Government. The Darling Harbour project was the subject of repeated allegations of government corruption and it was said that money spent on that project should have been spent elsewhere in New South Wales. Apparently it was an appalling project, but—surprise, surprise—Nick Greiner opened it. I attended the opening only because I wanted to see how thick a political hide could get. I had listened to him criticise the project for years, but there he was opening it.

[Interruption]

Members opposite keep interjecting, but I do not know what electorates they represent. I hope they stay around long enough for me to learn. Nick Greiner has been appointed to head Infrastructure NSW and he has been marketed as pro-infrastructure. Members opposite referred to some rail projects that Labor governments did or did not do. One example is very important. During the 1980s Labor governments built concrete bridges along the Richmond rail line, installed new tracks, completed extensive electrification and erected stanchions. The only thing left to do was to install the wires.

However, when the Greiner Government was elected its first move was to cancel that project. Journalists from the *Sydney Morning Herald* could not believe it. They took photographs of the stanchions that had been erected from Riverstone to Richmond, but which had no wires. If it were not for the Hawke Government providing tied grants to New South Wales, that project would not have been completed and we would still be talking about electrifying the line from Riverstone to Richmond. Given that Coalition record, I am worried about how many projects Infrastructure NSW will ever build.

[Interruption]

If the member wishes, I will provide more examples.

Mr David Elliott: What about Mt Druitt police station?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I am glad the member has mentioned that. Not only did the Labor Government give us the police station and convert it to a division in the 1980s but it also announced that a new police station would be built. I am awaiting confirmation that that project will proceed. I am sure Infrastructure NSW will confirm it, but I will not hold my breath. Coalition members, who get their speech notes from the Premier's office or the Minister's office, have been repeating the mantra about the former Government not building any infrastructure. The Labor Government was in office for 16 years because of its record infrastructure program.

At every election, locally and across the State, Labor candidates went to the people with a list of major projects that had been completed not only in Sydney but also in regional and rural areas, and in the outback. We have a proud record. We spent more than \$1 million a week installing water and sewerage infrastructure in country towns. We also added small towns with populations of fewer than 500 to the list. The former Liberal Government did not do that when it started that scheme.

I could spend all afternoon providing members with extensive lists of Labor Government projects. I will not do that, but I will provide a practical example of how Sydney has changed since 1995. In the 1980s and 1990s many members stayed in Parliament House overnight. Of course, in those days the House sat much later. However, we also stayed because it took so long to get to western Sydney, to places like my electorate and further west. We no longer stay overnight in our offices because the major infrastructure work that has been undertaken around Sydney means that we can get home more quickly. Most of that work was initiated by Labor governments.

Members opposite like to take credit for the M4. It was built in many stages, but the only stage for which they can take credit is the one that includes the tollgates. The first stage was opened in 1979 by Neville Wran. Bob Carr opened the next stage. Members opposite can take credit for the toll section. The Labor Government inherited that section, but it implemented a cash rebate and added an extra lane. I must acknowledge that the Coalition is responsible for the M2, but the contract covering it is worthy of debate in

itself. As I drive into Sydney each day on the M7—another Labor Government project—I see the extensive work being done on the M2, including the construction of an additional exit lane to Pennant Hills Road and the exit lane to Windsor Road. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Members from western Sydney can now drive home in the evenings because, generally speaking, the structure of Sydney's transport and urban development has change dramatically since the mid-1990s as a result of Federal Government and State Government funding commitments. The fact that newly elected members stand up in this place and say that nothing has been built over 16 years condemns them as ignorant and somewhat stupid. What members say in this place is recorded by Hansard and future students of infrastructure in New South Wales will chuckle at the nonsense members opposite have spoken. Our infrastructure budget over the past few years was \$65.5 billion.

There has never been a time when New South Wales's infrastructure spend was greater. The 1940s McKell Government and succeeding governments provide some competition in that regard with dam-building projects, highway projects, schools projects and various other projects throughout New South Wales. They were big infrastructure projects, but they were not as big as the infrastructure projects of the past 16 years. Government members have forgotten one little thing—the Olympic Games. It is that event where a lot of people compete in sport; they might have read about it somewhere. Who constructed that and finished the venues on time, on budget and with no debt to New South Wales? It was a Labor Government that had the required infrastructure expertise. I do not know if there has been an official opening of the desalination plant on the coast.

Mr Chris Spence: That was a great move.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: You do not like it? Then close it down and sell it as scrap. Desalination plants are being commissioned throughout Australia and throughout the Western world. As the population of the world increases—it has increased from about three billion in 1960 to nearly seven billion now—desalination will be the way we supply water to most of the world. The New South Wales Labor Government was a major leader in that significant capital works project. The member for Cabramatta made an interesting speech a little while ago, putting on the record what was going on. The person who will head Infrastructure NSW has the worst record on infrastructure of any government leader in this country.

Mr Nick Lalich: Bob Askin?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: No, it is Nick Greiner. Bob Askin built a couple of bubblers somewhere, but I do not think Greiner did anything at all. One of the things I am proud of, being a Labor member in this place, is our work in western Sydney on the construction or upgrade of hospitals. I cannot think of one stand-alone hospital that was built by a Liberal government. I stand to be corrected if someone can name one. Perhaps by interjection members on the government side could name one.

Mr Dominic Perrottet: Westmead.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Westmead was one of those great Western Sydney urban development policies of the Whitlam Government—for those who do not know much about history, a Labor Government. Westmead is a credential of the Whitlam Government. Labor governments have rebuilt or upgraded almost every major hospital emergency department in the State. That includes St Vincent's Hospital, St George Hospital, Sutherland Hospital, Prince of Wales Hospital, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Nepean Hospital, Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals. The interesting thing about Blacktown Hospital is that we not only built the new one a couple of years ago but we also built the original one in the 1960s. That is not too bad from a Labor government that does not build anything. In transport we opened the Epping to Chatswood rail line and the north-west transit way. The projects go on and on.

Since 1995 we concluded the motorway orbital network by completing the M5 East, the M7, the Eastern Distributor and the Lane Cove Tunnel. I remind Government members that these things are called infrastructure projects. We completed 35 new police stations and refurbished a further 16. Today works are underway for a further 19 new stations and 14 upgrades. No doubt some of these members will stand with the Liberal Premier, Barry O'Farrell, at the opening of many of the stations. Of course, they will take credit for them. The *Daily Telegraph* will probably give them a photograph of them standing in front of all these big structures as though they were their projects, but history will show they were always Labor projects.

We will not divide on this motion. This is one of the big bills that the Government is bringing in like the one we debated last night to replace one planning structure with another and the library bill, one of the most

significant pieces of legislation in the history of the Westminster system that was debated for days and days. Members talked about this in opposition and they want to give some legislative basis to what they were talking about. The test of this bill and of the Government will be in a few years when we ask what the Liberal Government built—not what it opened, not what ribbon it cut on someone else's project, not some project that the Federal Government gave it money for but what project it built. Not two clay bricks have been cemented together in the first three months of this Government; but I should give it a chance, it has only been in office for a short time. We have heard a lot of talk about what was not done and what it is going to do. The Government has appointed all its mates to all the big committees—

Mr Chris Spence: You ought to talk about jobs for the boys.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Give me another extension of time and I will tell the member about a few more of his mates. The test for Infrastructure NSW, the test for the O'Farrell Government, is not all this waffle and nonsense Government members have been talking about in the past 15 or 16 years; it is what this Government builds or at least starts to build in its first four years in office. I look forward to reading about that list in a few years.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [12.46 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak to the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011. So many members of the Government are present during this debate because they are interested in infrastructure, but even after the long-winded speech by the member for Mount Druitt there are still only two and a half members of the Opposition present. There is great interest in this bill in the community. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Deputy Mayor of The Hills, who has been walking in and out, Councillor Justin Taunton, who represents a shire that has desperately suffered from Labor's lack of infrastructure spending. Also in the gallery is the Mayor of Auburn, Ronney Oueik, a fine mayor of that great city, a city I went to school in. He represents the many mayors in New South Wales who have been neglected by Labor's lack of infrastructure spending. The state of finances in New South Wales is appalling. That is why we need real leadership when it comes to infrastructure. We have the slowest economic growth of any State.

We have the slowest jobs growth of any mainland State and we have the lowest level of business confidence of any State. I congratulate you, Acting-Speaker Hornery, on your forthright speech earlier in the day in which you identified the five major projects that you would like completed in your electorate. Unfortunately, my list in Baulkham Hills, after 16 years of Labor, goes beyond five. I wish you very well in your ambition to get those five projects completed. I am sure the Government will do everything in its power to ensure they are delivered. The major ambition of my electorate of Baulkham Hills and in the north-west, as the members for Castle Hill, Riverstone and Londonderry know, is the North West Rail Link, a \$7 billion to \$10 billion project that should have been running by now but is not because of Labor's lack of attention to detail and its re-announcement after re-announcement of that project.

New South Wales needs Infrastructure NSW; we need a coordinating body. Any major project that is put before the people and the Parliament needs a plan. I can speak about my experience as the chief executive of the Civil Contractors Federation, a position I held over the past three years. I took that position after consulting with the nation's first Federal Minister for Infrastructure, a man well known to the member for Marrickville. That was trailblazing stuff from the Federal Government and something I have always commended the Federal Government for.

Despite Labor's opposition in this place, the Government is seeking to mirror the important attention to detail demonstrated by our Federal counterparts. My experience with the Civil Contractors Federation highlights the importance of having a group that will address consistent delays in projects. The Government believes that only an independent coordination authority will assist in alleviating delays with projects. I state with authority that major infrastructure projects have not been coordinated between government departments or within levels of government. Ideally Nick Greiner will be able to bring together government departments and levels of government—no other man would have respect from members on both sides of the House and all levels of government.

My experience in infrastructure over the past 3½ years is that a major frustration is the continued cancellation of projects. Opposition members would be aware that the high level of regulation imposed on businesses in this State over the past 16 years has made the tendering process a very expensive exercise. Indeed, it is often noted throughout the industry that up to 10 per cent of the cost of a project is mirrored in the tender process. That ridiculous cost is borne by the industry and increases the cost of the project. Hopefully the certainty brought about by Infrastructure NSW will reduce the tendering cost and the provision of infrastructure. It will provide more certainty and transparency to business when preparing tendering documents for projects.

Another tragedy of the past 16 years was the change in roads Ministers—four Ministers in three years—creating great uncertainty and a lack of consistency within the public service. We cannot have one Minister one day giving industry an assurance about provision of infrastructure, only to have that Minister replaced, and all bets off. An independent authority such as Infrastructure NSW, headed by Nick Greiner, who will there for the long run, will provide certainty and transparency in the provision of infrastructure.

Members of the infrastructure fraternity have raised issues concerning confusion between government departments. Regulations and government vision may differ between government departments. For example, the interpretation and meaning of "asbestos" or plans for a project within the construction sector may differ between government departments. Infrastructure NSW will address these issues. Government members were entertained by the contribution of the member for Mount Druitt, who took advantage of the fact that many Government members are a little younger than he is and probably do not recall the historical significance of some of the events he mentioned. However, we are always judged by our last battle and that was the Sydney metro. We could not understand why a Labor Government would spend \$5 billion on a metro, charged to the people of New South Wales at \$1 million a metre and then cancel it.

That is \$500 million that I am sure the member for Castle Hill, the member for Riverstone, the member for Londonderry and I would have been happy to receive to commence the North West Rail Link. My challenge to Infrastructure NSW for The Hills district is simple: We demand a North West Rail Link. Why is it that everyone else in metropolitan Sydney can have easy access to electronic trains but us? It is time that the north-west of Sydney, The Hills shire, and those who live in the greater north-western Sydney area were given their rail link. Constituents in my electorate have lobbied for a footbridge over the M2 at Windsor Road and more commuter car parks for people using buses along the M2. All Government members understand the neglect of tourism infrastructure in this State, hence the Government's decision to go ahead with a new convention centre even before it was elected. Infrastructure NSW is essential to our vision for New South Wales and I commend it to the House.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [12.55 p.m.]: I support the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 and welcome its introduction and intent. It is a long-term, not ad hoc, strategic approach to address the infrastructure needs of New South Wales that goes beyond the political spectrum. How could one not welcome such intent? The community would also be supportive of such an approach. The bill raises budget surpluses versus infrastructure investment. This is always a balance. It is far too simplistic to say that we should have budget surpluses because investment in infrastructure is critical. Often some debt is necessary to achieve the infrastructure and outcomes that we seek.

I welcome, in particular, the appointment of Nick Greiner—much more can be done in this State with a strategic approach to private-public partnerships. As a former member of the Public Accounts Committee, I can attest to the fact that we do not have a good record with some private-public partnership arrangements, but someone of the calibre of Nick Greiner and someone with his experience will make a significant and positive contribution when opportunities are available. I look forward to the intent of this legislation being delivered. That will be the real test, and I welcome it.

I have listened to the debate over some time and I note that all Government members have stated that establishing a statutory corporation with an expert board separates the politics and allows infrastructure to be considered on its merit. That is a good thing. That independence is the very reason that I support the legislation. It is about engaging experts, obtaining a frank and fearless assessment of the circumstances, providing certainty to the government and non-government sector entering arrangements—partnerships or otherwise—or those using the services. That is a good thing. That is the same reason I opposed industrial relations legislation. The Government says it is important to have this independent and robust process but it has done the opposite with industrial relations.

In all other portfolio areas, such as health and infrastructure, the Government has made positive moves towards maintaining industry expertise and independence in the process. It should have maintained that with industrial relations because it is the positive way forward. As a country member of Parliament I am interested in regional areas receiving their fair share of the State's infrastructure spend. I concur completely with the statements of the member for Baulkham Hills, who referred to approximately \$500 million in planning being lost. That is a disgrace and a waste of money in any circumstances, despite the persuasion of the government of the day.

As a country member of Parliament I believe regional areas should have their fair share of infrastructure. I want those assessments to look at a major upgrade of health services in Armidale, Inverell, Glen

Innes and Tenterfield. I want to see support for projects that local government has in my electorate right across the eight local government areas I am honoured to represent. Recently the Attorney General referred to a development application having been approved by council for the new courthouse in Armidale. I thank him for the Government's ongoing support for that very important major infrastructure project, which will serve the Armidale community and the Northern Tablelands area in general.

It is important to support projects such as the new library that is proposed by Armidale Dumaresq Council and basic infrastructure that councils provide, and to partnership such projects. It is not sexy to talk about sewerage and water. But you cannot grow communities without that sort of major infrastructure investment, particularly in regional and rural areas. I support this legislation, which looks to a 20-year strategy. A similar proposal should be considered for every portfolio area. I welcome the legislation, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [1.01 p.m.]: I speak in favour of the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 and agree with the sentiments expressed by the member for Northern Tablelands. The bill will ensure an independent, transparent and coordinated strategic approach to infrastructure decision-making in this State. All members of this Parliament and those in local government know that major project funding cannot be undertaken by one level of government alone, particularly when it relates to cross-border infrastructure. That is why Infrastructure NSW will coordinate funding submissions to the Commonwealth, including to Infrastructure Australia, so we can ensure our fair share of funding.

Under the previous model we saw cost-shifting, announcement after announcement and re-announcement after re-announcement. This new body will replace an ad hoc approach with a strategic approach, and an unprofessional approach with a coordinated, professional approach. More importantly, it will replace infrastructure pork-barrelling with an evidence-based system of infrastructure planning. We have seen what Infrastructure NSW will do.

I will now speak about what we have not seen under the previous system. For too long Labor was about the next election. And—you guessed it—the chooks have come home not only to roost but to roast. The lack of integration, poor planning and inefficiency led to unnecessary costs and budget overruns. Projects were serially delayed and have been announced and re-announced, and then not delivered at all. In my electorate of Drummoyne the Iron Cove Bridge duplication was delivered two years late and, at a cost of \$175 million, was drastically over budget—so much so that when the then Premier was to perform the official opening it was not done in the usual fashion with fanfare and hoo-ha, it was done in "drive-by" style: a bus was driven over the bridge. That was the extent of the official opening, because it was a monumental mess.

Motorist travel times have not improved, amenity has been lost, and compensation payments have been made to some businesses in Drummoyne. This is the style of project we saw under the last fractured government. Then we saw the CBD to Rozelle metro promised in 2008, then axed, and nearly \$500 million of taxpayers' money wasted. Not a single dime of that \$500 million is left, and there is not a centimetre of track to show for it. This lack of a detailed infrastructure plan for the future, coupled with a planning system that was perceived as being about access and donation as opposed to planning merit, has seen suburban roads in my electorate reach breaking point and has transformed suburban streets in my electorate that were once playgrounds for kids into thoroughfares now too dangerous for people to walk upon.

In the Rhodes area in my electorate we have seen the imposition of 25-storey apartment buildings with no infrastructure upgrades—just one road in and one road out. From 2007 to 2009 traffic on the M4 increased by 6 per cent and the average travel speeds on the M4 and Parramatta Road during morning peak hours was just 28 kilometres an hour. That is totally unacceptable by anyone's standards. The people of North Strathfield in my electorate were asking for an easy access program at Strathfield station. Promise after promise was made by the previous member for Drummoyne that the project had been funded, but it was never built.

Lucas Gardens School, a school that caters for some of our most vulnerable, disabled and handicapped kids, was promised \$300,000 for a hydrotherapy pool by the previous Labor Government. Indeed, I have seen footage of a DVD depicting the then member congratulating the then Treasurer on the funding for the project. However, that funding was never forthcoming. I ask the members of the Opposition: Where is that \$300,000 for Lucas Gardens School? I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House. I am sure it will eliminate the type of behaviour engaged in by the previous Government with regard to infrastructure planning in this State.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [1.05 p.m.]: It is important to point out to the House that the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 is about the future. It is not about history lessons, it is not about the past; it is

about the future. It is about this Government making New South Wales once again the premier State in this country. The only way that can be done is with bold vision. The establishment of Infrastructure NSW creates the vehicle by which bold vision can resurface to allow us to rethink investment opportunities in this State.

The electorate of Penrith spoke loudly on 26 March this year to send a very clear message that mere history lessons are not good enough, that as we move forward we must continue to strive further and reach higher. That is exactly what this bill will do. The people of Penrith recognise that their location in the metropolitan space of Sydney is one of great opportunity. Penrith is on the western edge of the metropolitan area. It provides a fantastic place to set up transport and logistics-oriented businesses. It is only with the assistance of the State Government that we can create the infrastructure that will bring those opportunities to life.

The people of Penrith also recognise that the unique combination of a teaching hospital and a university provides the opportunity to create a health industry park in their location. However, if the health industry park were connected to the M4, that precinct would really flourish. At the end of the day, such investments will lead to an increase in the number of jobs in that western Sydney region, and that in turn will see a reduction in the number of people who are forced to work outside the region. Every day 67 per cent of the people in the Penrith local government area leave that local government area to find work elsewhere. That is no longer acceptable to the people of Penrith. Only with the support of a body such as Infrastructure NSW will we be able to create a 20-year strategy with five-year plans to ensure that projects are actually delivered.

As I said, this bill is about the future. It is not about looking into the past; it is not about scoring political points on who did what. It is about getting things done. In the context of western Sydney, the bill is about ensuring that we start to think about the western Sydney orbital—that is, not just the M7 but further west. That will create opportunities for the movement of logistics and transport from the southern States. It will facilitate the way we work with other States such as Victoria and Queensland. It will allow improved movement of trucks that clog up our roads, by diverting them further west on major arterial roads. Anyone who wants an example of how such a road link has been applied in other States should get on a plane and fly to Melbourne, where they can observe the way in which that State's ring road system facilitates these types of movements. That ring road system was implemented in Melbourne because the Victorian Government—regardless of whether it was a Liberal or Labor government—had an infrastructure plan and stuck to it.

This State and the people of Penrith have suffered for too long because of the absence of an infrastructure plan. There is great opportunity in western Sydney. I acknowledge the work of my colleague the member for Northern Tablelands. I also acknowledge the work of the members of the Government who represent The Nationals. Penrith is in an ideal position to be used as the gateway to regional New South Wales. We do not want those who live east of Penrith to go west for a holiday; we need to bring those who live west of Penrith to come over the mountain for their holidays. That means that I need to work with the members for Bathurst, Orange and Blue Mountains to ensure that we have a suitable crossing over the mountains so that people in regional New South Wales can come to a location like Penrith to do everything they want to do—from shopping to engaging in business activities.

Infrastructure NSW will provide the opportunity for those types of projects to be built. For too long projects have been half completed. A clear example of this is the M4 motorway, which stops at Strathfield. It is critical that Infrastructure NSW acknowledges that this unfinished link must be completed. Together with many of my colleagues from western Sydney I will be lobbying to ensure that the M4 extension is at the top of the list of infrastructure priorities for this State. It is with hope and optimism that I support this bill. I am optimistic that this State with a 20-year strategy and those five-year plans will pick itself up off the floor and start to build the projects that we so desperately need and that will bring bold vision back to governance in New South Wales.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [1.10 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011. One of the important roles of Infrastructure NSW will be to take politics out of infrastructure decision-making. It is an unfortunate but sad reality that as a result of the decisions of the former Government we have seen a rise in public cynicism and a decline in public confidence in governments to make decisions in the best interests of the State. The former Labor Government should not be proud of this erosion of public confidence in government decision-making; we, as a new government, will certainly learn from that experience. The role of this Government will be not only to restore transparency and accountability to infrastructure decision-making but also to restore public confidence in the New South Wales Government.

The establishment of a dedicated statutory body to oversee infrastructure development and to assist and guide government decision-making is a start. It will go a long way to restoring public confidence in government

decision-making. It is unlikely that there is any New South Wales community more adversely affected by poor infrastructure decisions by those opposite over the past 16 years than that of north-west Sydney, in particular the electorate of Castle Hill. The planning policy of the former Government, combined with its promise to build the North West Rail Link, led to thousands of people flooding to the north-west back in 1998. I can clearly remember it because in 1998 I was at school—in year 10. I still remember the buzz in the school ground when the people of the Hills district were told they were going to get a rail line. Unfortunately, that excitement did not last long.

In 2005, seven years later, the Labor Government announced that the North West Rail Link would be postponed from 2010 to 2017. If this project had not been delayed, trains would have been pulling into Castle Hill last year. If Labor had kept its promise, the younger boys I went to school with would now be jumping onto trains, easing the gridlock on Castle Hill Road, Showground Road and the M2—which as members from the north-west know is an absolute car park every morning. But the former Government's betrayal of the Hills District did not end there. In 2008, 10 years after announcing the North West Rail Link, the former Government axed the rail line. Rather than say it was not going to provide a north-west rail line, what did it do? The spin doctors came in and the project was rebadged as the North West Metro. It was going to be a revolution. I have sourced a copy of a media release on this project by former Premier Morris Iemma. It states:

The North West Metro is just the start for Sydney. It will change the way that Sydney works, lives and breathes. People in the north-west will experience a revolution in travel times.

I am reminded by my colleague the member for Newcastle that the only revolution we have seen in the north-west is one that has caused things to go backwards. It now takes one three times longer to get around the region than it did before the Labor Government proposed the project. This project did not last long either; five months. In October 2008 the former Government axed the North West Metro because of insufficient funds. But it was reported that former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was believed to have told the State Government that it would not receive government funding as there were no votes in Sydney's north-west for Labor.

If there was no money available to build the North West Metro, why then one month later was the Rozelle Metro announced by the Labor Party, which was to cost \$5 billion? Apparently there was not enough money for the North West Metro but there was enough for the Rozelle metro. But that project did not proceed either. The people of the north-west have suffered as a result of a lack of infrastructure funding for many years. I am proud to be part of a government that will put infrastructure funding back on the table for people in north-west Sydney. Infrastructure NSW will go a long way towards providing adequate funding and restoring public confidence in infrastructure decision-making in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [1.16 p.m.]: I will speak briefly to the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011 to allow others to contribute to this important piece of legislation in the short time that remains in which to debate it. The contribution of the member for Mount Druitt failed to accurately portray some of the history of the former State Labor Government, particularly as regards its record on the Central Coast. I shall read to members a media release that was issued on 11 August 2010:

The F3 to M2 upgrade will be a new link between the F3 and the Sydney Orbital, with a preferred alignment for an upgrade being the corridor along Pennant Hills Road. This is Sydney's major freight and commuter route going north.

These projects have been identified in the NSW Government's Metropolitan Transport Plan, and are part of the integrated transport plan for Sydney.

Through the current Nation Building Program, Federal Labor has budgeted \$150 million for planning work for the F3 to M2.

That media release was issued by the Federal Government before the last Federal election—it bears the Australian Labor Party logo. But just as it did with its carbon tax policy, it changed its mind as soon as it was re-elected. Interestingly, on 17 August 2010, six days later, the *Mount Kuring-Gai Industrial* reported this in relation to the Federal Labor Government:

Wary of the state government's reputation for mismanagement and poor service delivery, Ms Gillard has demanded the NSW government work with Infrastructure Australia.

That did not get us very far because only two weeks ago the \$150 million that was allocated for the F3 to M2 missing link was pulled by the Federal Government. Deborah O'Neill, the Federal Labor member for the Central Coast, was quoted on 25 May 2011 in the *Express Advocate* as saying:

... she wanted a ... "political consensus" on the issue and announced she would form a community alliance group to lobby for the missing link.

She could not even lobby her own government. The \$150 million was taken away. She was reported also as saying:

For a \$5 billion project like the F3-M2 link, the only way we can move forward is by locking in state funding and private funding, as well as federal funding.

That funding is now gone. But this is not a lone indiscretion by the Gillard Government and its representatives. The promised \$840 million for a dedicated freight rail line has also vanished—but that is another story. Labor has promised the F3 to M2 link every year since 2007; it has now been pushed back until 2016. It was promised in 2007, 2008, 2009, and again in 2010. There will be no funding for that project until at least 2016. This is straight out of the New South Wales Labor playbook. In addition to all that, in 1998 Bob Carr also promised a high-speed rail link between Sydney and Newcastle. Labor's record of failing to handle the funding for the F3-M2 link is a long one. In 2008 a submission was made to Infrastructure Australia for funding for this project. It was evaluated but not included on the National Infrastructure Priority List; nor was any funding allocated.

In 2009 the Rees Labor Government submitted 12 infrastructure projects to its Labor mates in Canberra for funding from the \$20 billion National Building Fund. Amongst the projects that received no Federal funding were the M4 East extension, the Rozelle metro, the northern freight line, the M5 upgrade and, of course, the F3-M2 link. In 2010 the Keneally Government tried again with its Labor mates in Canberra. This time no projects in New South Wales received funding. Unlike Labor, this Government knows the value of quality infrastructure. The F3-M2 link will be referred to Infrastructure NSW, which will ensure that our applications for funding to Infrastructure Australia are delivered.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.20 p.m.]: The Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011, which establishes Infrastructure NSW, is an important step for this Government in ensuring its capacity to deliver appropriate and urgently needed infrastructure to communities across New South Wales. The creation of Infrastructure NSW will fill a current void in New South Wales through the construction of a dedicated statutory body to oversee infrastructure development across the State. New South Wales has experienced a chronic infrastructure deficit. The implications of this infrastructure deficit are specifically evident in the State's public transport facilities.

Over the past 16 years Labor promised to deliver new rail infrastructure and upgrades. These commitments experienced immense cost blowouts, and were significantly delayed or were axed completely. One primary example is the South West Rail Link. The South West Rail Link is a vital piece of infrastructure that will service my electorate of Wollondilly. Labor announced in 2004 that this rail link was due to be completed by 2012 at a cost of \$688 million. This commitment was withdrawn by the previous Labor Government in 2008, only to be re-announced by Labor the following year, with an extended completion date of 2016 and a cost blowout to \$2.1 billion. The development of Infrastructure NSW will ensure that infrastructure developments will be delivered on time and on budget.

The development and implementation of vital infrastructure in Wollondilly was a primary concern for me throughout the recent election and continues to be a high priority. The quality of local roads across the entire electorate is at the heart of many infrastructure requirements within the area due to the growth that Wollondilly and the region is experiencing. Subsequent to this growth, the residents of the electorate have identified road upgrades as critical initiatives. The upgrading of Narellan Road is one such initiative. We have worked very hard with the Minister to get that project going. The connection of sewerage to large towns within Wollondilly is another infrastructure need that I have fought for on behalf of my constituents.

The towns of Bargo, Buxton, Douglas Park, Wilton and Yanderra, for example, remain without sewerage, as 16 years of Labor resulted in a failure to deliver this fundamental form of infrastructure to these communities. These are some of the largest towns within New South Wales that do not have sewerage connection. The choice of the previous Government not to fulfil this need within Wollondilly is simply not acceptable and is a major reason why many people in towns such as Bargo left Labor in droves.

Due to the past inaction by the Labor Government, these families are now suffering tremendously. They not only suffer from increases in electricity prices and general increased cost-of-living pressures, they also continually pay for pump-out fees. Some families are paying in excess of \$100 per fortnight in pump-out fees. A family I met during the election told me that every member of the family was unable to have clean water when washing each day. In fact, so bad were the cost-of-living pressures on this family—which became worse because Labor failed to deliver the sewerage connection to the town—each night the family members would take turns as to who had the clean bath water.

The luxury for the four kids in this family was that on the seventh night the child who had behaved the best during the week got a second night of fresh water. This is absolutely appalling and is a direct result of Labor's failure to deliver on vital infrastructure. Labor turned its back on the people of Wollondilly and New South Wales in relation to infrastructure. It did not deliver for these communities. It would do nothing for 3½ years, arrive at an election, promise the world, and once re-elected renege on its promises. Infrastructure NSW will ensure that this Government delivers the infrastructure for the people of New South Wales over the next 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 years. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [1.23 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011. As shadow Minister for Infrastructure for three years during the last term I became sensitised to the former Government's failure to deliver infrastructure. I became concerned about the lack of confidence that business had in this State, following more than a decade of Labor. I listened a lot; I heard the message. I looked for world's best practice, rather than world's worst practice, as was occurring in New South Wales. I looked to overseas jurisdictions, including Partnerships BC in British Columbia, Infrastructure Ontario in Ontario, Canada, and Partnerships UK in the United Kingdom. I heard the message that an infrastructure body was required to ensure the delivery of infrastructure to the State.

The purpose of the bill is to establish that new body, Infrastructure NSW, and to coordinate infrastructure planning and delivery across the whole of government and across this great State. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to build a strong framework that will support the sustainable growth of the State's economy. The bill has been carefully designed with three goals in mind: promoting accountability and transparency, ensuring government decisions are informed by expert analysis and advice and, most importantly, restoring public confidence that infrastructure projects announced in New South Wales will be delivered. The bill ensures that economic, social and environmental factors are fully considered when Infrastructure NSW develops the State infrastructure strategy. The ongoing performance of the State's infrastructure network will be able to be assessed and benchmarked against specific and measurable objectives that will be built into the State infrastructure strategy.

This will enable communities to measure our effectiveness and hold this Government to account on our commitments. A government honouring its commitments is something that has been lacking for too long in this State. An expert board will oversee Infrastructure NSW, which will be made up of members who are well respected amongst their peers and have a long association with the planning and delivery of significant infrastructure projects. The board will comprise a public sector chief executive officer and private sector personnel and will have the express power to publish independent advice to Government. I stress "independent". The board will set the strategic policies and direction of Infrastructure NSW. It will not be under anyone's control, including Nick Greiner as suggested by the member for Keira. Ministerial decisions will be informed by expert analysis and advice provided by the board as a whole.

Infrastructure NSW will be very lucky to have the services of Mr Nick Greiner. He has a breadth of experience in business far beyond most people in this State and he understands how to get things done. He has been involved in major project deliveries and assisted the former Labor Government in ensuring that this State was able to move forward despite the blockages often created by the former Government. The day-to-day operations of Infrastructure NSW will be the responsibility of its chief executive officer, who will be assisted by staff employed under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act. This Government makes no apologies for taking responsibility for infrastructure provision and clearing a long backlog of infrastructure across New South Wales. This Government is focused on restoring public confidence in New South Wales.

Ministerial responsibility for Infrastructure NSW will provide the necessary accountability that government will be held to in the delivery of infrastructure projects by this Government. What does the bill introduce? I can spell it out in four simple descriptions: first, responsibility; second, accountability; third, transparency; and, fourth, solid governance—all in the one place and at the same time. This must be a revolutionary concept for those on the Opposition benches. Critically, the community will be consulted on individual infrastructure projects and will have the opportunity to provide meaningful input that will form part of any decision made. The days of tokenistic consultation are over. This Government values the contributions made through simply talking to and engaging with the community. 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.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.29 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that in the absence of the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services will answer questions on her behalf.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.18 p.m.]

MEMBER FOR LONDONDERRY

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's statement before the last election that "the public have had a gutful of politicians who promise to set high standards and then refuse to do so". In light of the Premier's refusal to take any action against the member for Londonderry, will the Premier admit that that description now applies to him?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have just attended a Lifeline lunch. We are raising money for a great service across all electorates—an issue of bipartisanship. At the lunch, in response to a question from the moderator about standards in Parliament, I said that as long as there are humans in Parliament there will be errors made. But I did not back away from the fact that even though we are human we should seek perfection. I made the point that we should strive to raise standards and to set our heights high.

On this side of politics we will always do that, because over the past 16 years we saw scandal after scandal after scandal and we saw Minister after Minister go down to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, but we saw no resignations. Except during the brief tenure of No. 41 when the member for Toongabbie removed a police Minister doing unmentionable things in his unmentionables with the unmentionable member for Wollongong, there was very little attempt to impose standards upon those people opposite who sat on the front bench. Yesterday the member for Londonderry came to report to me—

Ms Linda Burney: That he was drunk.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I say to the member for Canterbury that that is something she sat in this House with for two years and never ever accepted about the then member for Kiama, who did those unmentionable things with the member for Wollongong in his room after budget day two years ago.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: It is the same point of order I raised yesterday. Even though the personal reflection is a short one, and it has now been repeated twice, in respect of one of our members, it still breaches the standing orders. If the Premier wants to cast aspersions and throw mud, we might raise the matter of the member for Coffs Harbour and his effort when he came into the House one night—

The SPEAKER: Order! I note the point of order. Introductory remarks are acceptable. The Premier will return to the leave of the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I find it incredible that members opposite would raise this after all their scandals over the past 16 years. As I said yesterday, the member for Londonderry reported to me that he had been breath-tested by police, at the request of police he had gone to the police station and as a result he had been charged with a low-range drink-driving offence.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As I said yesterday, I was extremely frustrated, particularly because of my determination to raise and seek to maintain high standards on this side of the House.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What I find hypocritical is that members opposite, despite all their scandals, are prepared to focus attention on members on this side of the House. The Leader of the Opposition himself promoted the member for Kogarah, who has had run-ins with the police and would not obey police instructions. The member for Londonderry was prepared to and did cooperate with police on every occasion.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Leader of the Opposition has been prepared to appoint as his spokesman for road safety—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —the member for Lakemba, who notoriously was involved in an incident on Coronation Drive. And we still do not know how fast he was travelling when he collided in that very expensive Italian car.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Every member on this side of the House knows that I expect them to impose the highest possible standards on themselves. I will be frustrated and disappointed—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I would not put that sort of person on the front bench.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: My question is directed to the Premier. What action is being taken to deliver open and transparent government in New South Wales?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for his question and look forward to joining him in Tumut tomorrow to open another piece of strong economic infrastructure for New South Wales that will create jobs and revenue and ensure that we can provide the services that people want.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member's question goes to open, transparent and accountable government. There is no doubt that after 60 years of Labor's shady—

Mr John Robertson: Sixty years?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It felt like 60 years. Members opposite will soon understand that a year is a very long time in opposition. We have only another 1,200 days to go until the next election. After 16 years of Labor's shady, sleazy, secret deals the people of this State would welcome a return to honest and accountable government, and this Government is determined to deliver it. We want to restore confidence in public administration because all of us—including the Treasurer and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure—know that business will not want to invest in New South Wales unless it is confident about the way in which decisions are made. It must be confident that decisions are merit-based and transparent.

That is why I am pleased to announce that this Government is talking action to strengthen the powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, to restore integrity to government advertising and to introduce new protections for whistleblowers. If we are to achieve our goal of restoring ethical standards in

public administration we must start at the top, that is, at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. This Government will honour its election commitments to strengthen the Independent Commission Against Corruption and to allow it to do its job properly and openly. The changes the Government intends to make will ensure that the inspector has broader powers to communicate—

Ms Linda Burney: You should set higher standards.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Canterbury never set a high standard in her life. She was a member of a government that lowered standards to a degree that—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This Government's changes will ensure that the inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption has broader powers to communicate his findings and to report on his activities to this Parliament. They will also remove any doubt that the Independent Commission Against Corruption is able to provide information about its use of covert surveillance to the inspector so that he can do his job properly in oversighting commission investigations.

The Government will also move to strengthen whistleblower protection powers in line with the 100 Day Action Plan. Among those changes will be the requirement that each public authority have a designated officer to receive information from whistleblowers. That is a simple but important change. Public authorities will be required to report back to those making disclosures within 45 days because that was not happening under the Labor Government despite the concerns expressed by public servants. Public authorities will also be required to report the number of disclosures made by whistleblowers each quarter. That is the best way to detect hotspots and to focus attention to clean up public administration.

In making these changes the Government has taken on board recommendations made by the Ombudsman that strengthen our original plans to give whistleblowers more protection. In other words, this Government will do for whistleblowers in our first 100 days in office more than members opposite did in 16 years. One need only consider the shameful way that members opposite treated Gillian Sneddon, who blew the whistle on Milton Orkopoulos, to see the difference between how they treat whistleblowers and how this Government will treat them.

The Government's determination to restore integrity does not stop there. We all recall the disgraceful way in which State and Federal Labor used taxpayer dollars to promote their political ambitions. This Government will change that. Legislation will be introduced to prohibit party-political material being included in government advertising and to ensure that the Auditor-General can scrutinise advertising campaigns. Importantly, the Auditor-General will have the power to recommend that accounts for political advertising be sent to the political party concerned if those rules are breached. If those rules had been in place over the past 16 years the Labor Party would be broke. [*Time expired.*]

ALCOHOL ABUSE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I direct my question to the Minister for Healthy Lifestyles. Will the Minister outline the effect that excessive alcohol consumption has on individuals and the community?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I might ask the shadow Minister for Health to help you out considering that it is a historic day. The great Australian Labor Party has 18 members sitting in Parliament today—probably 17 because we have a shadow spokesman for the national party on the Opposition—and there are 18 members representing my party, the great national party. Who walked away from the people of New South Wales?

Ms Linda Burney: What about healthy lifestyles.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I am getting to healthy lifestyles. Who walked away from the people of New South Wales? You people walked away from the people of New South Wales. And one of the reasons was that you lost your connection. You lost your DNA. I heard the Opposition leader talking about DNA. DNA has a lot to do with healthy lifestyles. Why was the so-called champion of the working families not asked to speak at the rally held here the other day? Because you were disconnected. You have been disconnected from the people of New South Wales.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My question was to the Minister for Healthy Lifestyles on the effect of excess alcohol, not on him prancing around.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member taking a point of order?

Mr John Robertson: It was a serious question.

The SPEAKER: Order! If it was a serious question members should listen to the answer.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: That it is a serious question. Which is the first government to put in place a Ministry for Healthy Lifestyles, targeting preventative health? Which is the first government? It was led by the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, because we see preventative health issues as serious issues. The portfolio targets obesity, alcohol consumption and issues around tobacco uptake. Do we take alcohol consumption seriously? Yes, we do.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: What happened under Labor between 2000 and 2007?

Mr Paul Toole: Nothing.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Nothing, exactly. Emergency presentations—

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: —related to alcohol consumption in our hospitals increased by 57 per cent. Under the Labor regime, alcohol consumption, alcohol-related violence that had to be treated by our front-line workers, half of which Labor sacked because it would not put them into wage freeze positions—

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: We had more presentations in those seven years under Labor's leadership than previous governments ever had. So what are we doing about alcohol consumption?

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: What did we announce pre-election and what are we in the process of doing?

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: The Minister the Health announced the establishment of the Preventative Health Office and the Preventative Health Fund, and that commitment is a first for any government, and it is a Liberal-Nationals government that has put \$120 million—

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: —into a preventative health fighting fund. That is the first time ever. We will pool—

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: What did you do with the money? You had most of your people on a wages freeze.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will listen to the answer in silence.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Labor had most of its people on a wages freeze when it came to preventative health. That is how it propped up its budget. It propped up its budget by not filling positions. Just as

we heard from the transport Minister yesterday, you do not have to have bus drivers when you take out the bus runs. It is the same with preventative health: you do not end up targeting some of the issues we need to target when you do not have any preventative health workers. Is that smart? Is that good management? That is propping up the budget. The member for Canterbury might be interested in this. The Office of Preventative Health will be located in south-west Sydney.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: What happened in south-west Sydney? Did the people from south-west Sydney walk away from Labor? They did. The best thing we have done for preventative health in this State was to get rid of you people. Labor was toxic to the people of New South Wales. Will we do better? Yes we will.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What progress has the Government made regarding tendering, planning and delivery of the North West Rail Line?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Hawkesbury for his interest in this very important rail project. Unlike members on the other side, who promised the North West Rail Line for a decade and never delivered, the O'Farrell Government is on the way to delivering this essential rail line. I am pleased to advise the House that since 13 May this year not one but 10 major tenders have been issued for everything from engineering, design and architecture to legal services. Two of these tenders closed this week and I am pleased to inform the House that they attracted widespread interest. A total of 12 high-calibre consortia with international and Australian experience have lodged expressions of interest—another vote of confidence in the O'Farrell Government's determination and ability to deliver the North West Rail Line. The North West Rail Line will be the longest rail tunnelling project ever undertaken in New South Wales and is a project of international standard that has attracted international interest.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: How are you going to pay for it?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will get to that. I am pleased to inform the House that next week—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will be getting to that and much, much more in this answer. Just listen. Next week we will be calling for further tenders on project scope—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —definition services and planning approval services. By early July we expect the final substantial tender for professional and technical services to open. We on this side of the House are letting tenders and engaging experts for the North West Rail Line. Those on that side of the House made a lot of promises and delivered nothing. That is not to say they did not engage experts. The only trouble with Labor was that it did not manage to build anything and the many experts they engaged were experts in spin. I thought it was appropriate to give an example today. In 2008 those on the other side were deciding how to announce they had failed on the Tcard project.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Who did they call to help them make the announcement about the failed Tcard project? Any guesses? It may not surprise members to learn that the firm Labor engaged to help spin it out of trouble was none other than Hawker Britton. We all know the close links between Labor and Hawker Britton. A new Labor member in the other place worked for Hawker Britton as a communications director. In 2008 those on that side of the House engaged Hawker Britton to help them with "short-term assistance with communication and media services regarding Tcard contract termination."

Mr Andrew Fraser: What did it cost for that?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am getting to that too. What did that firm do?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It spun out a press release. It drafted a few questions and answers.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It wrote up lines for question time. That was the official brief.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: So for a press release, a question-and-answer House folder note, how much do you think they paid for those services—\$500?

Government members: No.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: A thousand dollars?

Government members: No.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Labor gave taxpayers a bill from Hawker Britton for \$25,000.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I hope this is not a spurious point of order. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: Given that yesterday every member of the Opposition was on three calls to order—

The SPEAKER: And deservedly so. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order is that I might invite you to put at least one person on the government benches on a call to order given that in this answer there have been several instances of mass interjection.

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

Mr Michael Daley: A little bit of even-handedness might be good once in a while.

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

Mr Michael Daley: A little bit of even-handedness.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. That is not a point of order. It is not a breach of standing orders, as the member well knows.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: For \$25,000—and I have the official work request here—the Labor Party got a media release, a question-and-answer statement and notes for Parliament, \$25,000. What have Labor members learnt from that experience? They have learnt nothing. The head of communications for Hawker Britton is now a member of Parliament in the other place. Labor has learnt nothing from what the people decided on 26 March. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: This has been an outstanding response to a question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member seeking additional information or is he asking a supplementary question?

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: Could you extend the courtesy of giving the Minister a bit more time?

The SPEAKER: Order! According to the standing orders, the Minister is allowed two minutes to provide additional information.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Thank you very much for that time. Whilst Labor members were doing nothing but engaging spin doctors in public transport, we were getting things done. We have done so

much since 13 May in relation to the tender for the north-west project. It is worth going through the list of tenders announced since that time. Have we already released a tender in relation to engineering design and architecture? Yes, tick. What about in cost planning—tick. What about in commercial and finance?

Government members: Tick.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What about master planning and urban design?

Government members: Tick.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What about scheduling and program support?

Government members: Tick.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Integrated transport and land use?

Government members: Tick.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What about legal services?

Government members: Tick.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: What about the all-important geotechnical services?

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Madam Speaker—

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

Mr Michael Daley: I invite you to have regard to *Rulings from the Chair* with respect to rulings by several of your predecessors that mass interjections are particularly disorderly.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is inciting members to respond. They are not interjections.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In addition to geotechnical services, we also extended a tender in relation to land survey—very important and necessary work—and noise and vibration. While Labor was wasting taxpayers' money on spin doctors we are getting on with the job of delivering important projects. Labor is about spin; we are about substance and delivering for the people of New South Wales who gave us that confidence on 26 March. [*Time expired.*]

PAYROLL TAX

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. I refer to the Treasurer's comment on ABC radio this morning that his payroll tax rebates would be available to "every business across the State". Given that 90 per cent of small businesses in New South Wales do not even pay payroll tax, how does he justify that statement?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is worth noting what a fantastic job you are doing in this House, Madam Speaker. You are one of the best Speakers we have ever had. I cannot believe some of the comments that come from the other side.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is such a pleasure to get a question from the member for Maroubra. I have been missing his questions. I must point out that every business across the State that pays payroll tax has an option to apply for this rebate, and it is not that difficult. Some businesses pay payroll tax and others do not. But why are we providing this rebate for every business that pays payroll tax? We are doing it because this State needs jobs.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In the past 10 years New South Wales has lagged behind on every critical economic indicator.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The way to get the State moving is to put confidence back into the economy. We understand that businesses employ, take risks and invest. The O'Farrell Government is going to support them. It is worth noting that this morning I received an email, probably from a constituent in the electorate of Maroubra, following the payroll tax announcement, which states:

Fantastic job Mike this is the kind of thing we have been waiting for the last 12 years. I run a small business that has just started to pay payroll tax. Can I put on additional staff now and qualify for the rebate or must I wait till 1 July?

Businesses across this State are lining up because they want to employ. They know that the Government supports them. It is interesting that we have details from the member for Maroubra on numbers, questions and that sort of thing. I decided to go into some numbers, which are specifically for the member for Maroubra. We have heard a number of things in this Chamber in inaugural speeches. We heard from the member for Strathfield that God talks through our wives, we heard from the member for Tamworth about unusual bodily functions, and we heard about lots of swings. I went back and looked at some numbers—the election results for the member for Maroubra. In 2003 Bob Carr received a two-party preferred vote of 73.5, which is very high. In 2005 the result for the new member, Michael Daley, was not quite as good as the result for Bob Carr.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The question was very specific; it was about payroll tax. It has nothing to do with swings in any seat across New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have listened to the question and answer closely. In the first minute of his answer the Treasurer answered the question about payroll tax and clarified a comment he made on radio this morning. If members were listening they would have heard what I heard. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Bob Carr got 73.5 and in 2005 Michael Daley got 70.1. In 2007 the figure went down to 66.1 on a two-party preferred vote. It seems the more people get to know him the less they like him.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will return to the leave of the question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In 2011 one would have thought the figure would increase, but it went down to 51.5. What does that mean? I thought the member for Bathurst had the swing of all swings, but we have a new king of swing and it is the member for Maroubra. In cricket, reverse swing is very good, but the member for Maroubra has more reverse swing than Wasim Akram and in the political field that is not a good thing. In respect to jobs, we are getting on with it. We will support businesses across the State.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will support businesses to provide jobs and get New South Wales back to number one again.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. What progress has the Government made in meeting its commitments to medical research?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Vacluse, who has made a tremendous contribution to medical research over the years through her membership of one of our proud institutions.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This is a special day for medical research, which is no longer the poor cousin of the New South Wales Government. It has been ignored by Labor for too long, which is why we promised to bring Medical Research back into the Health portfolio. We promised to enhance medical research, to give it the serious attention that it had been denied by New South Wales Labor over many years while

Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia have zoomed ahead. Unlike Labor, when we make promises we keep them. We promised to establish an Office of Medical Research reporting to the Minister for Health.

The establishment of the Office of Medical Research was a commitment within our 100 day plan. Have we done that? Have we kept our promise? Yes, we have—tick. I am proud to say that the Office of Medical Research started work today, 17 June, well within our 100 day plan. We are delivering on our health promises, unlike Labor members, who promised big. Members opposite shout across the Chamber a lot, but they never deliver anything. Let us look at some of the promises Labor made. I know that Government members are getting ready for this; I can see them nodding. Labor promised Tamworth hospital but did it deliver? No. It promised a new hospital in Dubbo. Did it deliver?

Government members: No.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It promised a new hospital in Parkes. Did it deliver?

Government members: No.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It promised a new hospital in Forbes. Did it deliver?

Government members: No.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Did it deliver a new hospital in Wagga Wagga?

Government members: No.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Did it deliver a new hospital on the northern beaches?

Government members: No.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I could go through many more Labor promises on which it failed to deliver. We also promised to boost funding for the Medical Research Support Program.

The SPEAKER: Order! All members will come to order and cease their conversations across the Chamber.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I would have expected the Labor Party to be interested in the Medical Research Support Program, a critical program that underpins the submissions that researchers put to the National Health and Medical Research Council for the resources that enable them to do their work. Without sufficient funding, New South Wales has missed out on crucial clinical research grants that have gone to the more generous States. Back in 2007 the directors of 12 of the leading New South Wales research institutes wrote to the then Labor Premier pleading for increased funding. It was an open letter signed by the directors of the 12 research institutes. These researchers are well-known household names and leading members of the business community. What did they get? Precious little.

What did we promise? Before the last election we promised that we would increase funding for the Medical Research Support Program. Those institutes, our universities, numerous independent researchers, including those working within hospitals—those important doctors translating clinical research into the treatments that assist patients—continued their pleas for a better deal from the New South Wales Government. In particular they wanted an increase in funding, but they also wanted certainty. They did not want the practice that had been followed by Labor for so many years, of coming up with minimal base funding but then topping it up at the last minute—not nearly enough, but providing some funding for a one-year period. So there was no certainty. And what happened? There was a brain drain. Our fabulous researchers were going overseas and interstate because there was no certainty here.

What are we doing? We have committed to boosting funding for the Medical Research Support Program over the next four years. The Office of Medical Research will have a budget of \$27.3 million to start with, boosted by \$5 million per annum, bringing the total funding to \$32.3m each year over the next four years. That is a huge tick for medical research on the part of the O'Farrell Government. We also promised to develop a 10-year Health and Medical Research Strategic Plan. We have engaged respected research advocate Mr Peter

Wills to lead the development of that plan. We also promised funding for the Westmead Millennium Research Institute and the Children's Medical Research Institute at Westmead. We have promised funding for medical research. We are delivering on our 100 Day Action Plan and we are delivering on our election promises.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Mr RYAN PARK: My question is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. In light of the recent decision by the Victorian Liberal Government to scrap the acknowledgement of country at official functions, can the Minister guarantee that this practice will continue in New South Wales?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I thank the member for Keira for his question. I have a good story he might want to listen to. I went to a function recently. It was a good function; a lot of people were there. A lot of people from corporate Australia were there, and the Premier was there.

Ms Linda Burney: I know this story.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Does the member for Canterbury want to hear this story? I will tell her the story. At the function a person stood up and said, "I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land." They then made a joke and said, "The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority." People then started laughing. I thought: What a shame people are treating this so lightly. The Premier, to his eternal credit, then got up and, despite the fact that everyone was joking about what had been said, showed absolute leadership. He said, "I want to correct something that was said publicly before. I am going to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, and I want to pay my respect to the Elders both past and present"—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will listen to the answer in silence, and take it seriously.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: The member for Keira asked the question, so he should listen to my answer. I thought: This is what true leaders do. They do things that are extraordinary. They do things that the rest of us would not do. This is why this man is the Premier of this State. This is why this man will be known as one of the greatest Premiers this State has ever had.

[Interruption]

Members opposite are jealous that they do not have that sort of leadership.

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

[Interruption]

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I take that comment back.

[Interruption]

With great respect, members opposite believe in leadership. The difference between this side of the House and the other side of the House is that members opposite believe in quantity, whereas we believe in quality.

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

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health. What is the Government doing to ensure that New South Wales is leading the way in suicide prevention, so that fewer families are left to suffer the devastation of such a tragic event?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I commend the member for Hornsby for his question and congratulate him on his election to this place. More importantly, I congratulate him on his commitment to mental health

issues and to resolving issues around suicide, given the recent tragic incident that involved the office of the member for Hornsby. As the first Minister for Mental Health I can say that this Government has demonstrated a commitment to mental health issues and suicide prevention. We are putting mental health front and centre. Health, including mental health, deals with improving people's lives, and reducing morbidity and mortality.

In mental health, suicide is an extremely important issue. It is a complex issue that requires a sophisticated response—a response that must incorporate the government and non-government sector. We believe in the restorative model of mental health. People can live a functional life with mental illness provided they have the appropriate medication, care, support, surroundings and—as was evidenced at the workplace I visited yesterday—the appropriate workplace. One in five of the people in this Chamber today would be on some form of medication, for a mood disorder, depression, or other health or mental health-related condition. Mental health is an issue that touches all of our lives at some stage.

It is important that we all believe in a restorative model for mental health. While New South Wales has the lowest rate of suicide in Australia, at 7.8 per cent per 100,000 population—the latest figures being for 2008—this is no cause for complacency. Early intervention is the key, rather than waiting until people are in crisis and presenting to an acute facility—or, in many cases, not presenting at all. The Premier has reconfirmed the Coalition's commitment to essential services such as Lifeline. We are committing \$8 million in funding over the next four years. Today the Premier announced a \$500,000 upfront payment to ensure that Lifeline gets the resources it needs.

When Reverend Alan Walker started Lifeline in the northern Sydney area it was largely based on goodwill and volunteerism—they still underpin Lifeline today. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is the first New South Wales Government to provide recurrent funding for the ongoing issue of suicide prevention. The Government has partnered up with Lifeline, a major 24-hour, 7-day-a-week service. Following the lunch provided today I congratulate John Brogden and all the people who support Lifeline, at both the volunteer level and the corporate level. Lifeline receives 170,000 calls a year. I am advised that every year across the State approximately 20,000 people seek to take their life. Across Australia well over 2,000 suicide deaths are reported each year and in New South Wales that figure is roughly 700. That is 700 too many.

I commend the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the health Minister, and indeed all my Cabinet colleagues, for their commitment to mental health. In addition to the funding being provided to Lifeline, the Department of Health has prioritised actions under the Suicide Prevention Strategy. This is in the context of an overall mental health budget of \$1.25 billion, which is about improving the lives of those who are affected by illness, reducing the impact that illness has on their lives and preventing that illness from taking their lives. Unlike previous governments, this Government will ensure that every dollar we commit to mental health is spent on mental health. When the O'Farrell Government won office it tried to find out where that \$1.2 billion was. As Minister for Mental Health I wanted to find out where the community mental health teams were and where the vacancies were and, interestingly, about 30 to 40 per cent of community mental health positions were not filled.

If we are going to prevent suicide and support people with mental illness we need those support people. The member for Blacktown might be interested in this because in Blacktown six out of the 14 community mental health positions are vacant. In Parramatta eight out of 22 community mental health positions are vacant. In Camperdown nine community mental health positions are vacant and in Broken Hill—where I was last week—eight community mental health positions are vacant. The Government is about filling jobs and restoring front-line workers, unlike the former Labor Government. The Government will target the restoration of mental health in this State by having staff in place, which the former Government failed to do. [*Time expired.*]

LAKE MACQUARIE POLICE RESOURCES

Mr GREG PIPER: I address my question to the Attorney General, representing the Minister for Police. With the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command having around half the average police per capita of New South Wales local area commands, as well as a geographically challenging area covering at least in part five State electorates, how will the Government address this shortfall in personnel?

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

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question and his ongoing interest in ensuring sufficient police services in his beautiful electorate. The O'Farrell Government is determined to give police the powers, resources and backing they need to keep our community safe. Under Labor 65 police stations

were closed in the past five years, and police numbers rose and fell in line with elections. In fact, I remember attending the auction of the Brooklyn Police Station. It was passed in. The reserve price was not met. It was sold cheaply to get a bit of money and to do away with police services in that area. Other police stations have been closed in areas where they should have remained open

[*Interruption*]

I am unsure about Mount Druitt. The member for Mount Druitt probably carries out that function himself, bearing in mind his experience and his ability to whistle Dixie. The Government will recruit an additional 550 police—

Mr Richard Amery: Hurry up. The mother ship is leaving soon.

The SPEAKER: Order! As amusing as the member for Mount Druitt is, he will come to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: He is like the police from the *Pirates of Penzance*. He should get back on the ship. The Government will recruit an additional 550 police, taking the authorised strength of the Police Force to a record 16,356 officers by June 2014. I am advised the current authorised strength of Lake Macquarie Local Area Command is 196 officers. The Government has asked former Assistant Commissioner Peter Parsons, APM, to undertake a comprehensive audit of police numbers across the State to examine where police are, where they need to be, and how best to use them to protect and serve our communities. I am sure that if there is a deficiency, as pointed out in the question of the member for Lake Macquarie, it will be rectified. This audit will put the Government in a position to identify how it can deliver additional police officers and ensure even more police are patrolling our streets and protecting our communities.

Long-term sick leave and its effects on local area commands are also being examined. The Government takes this very seriously. The Government is committed to ensuring that injured officers are given the opportunity, if they can, to return to work in the Police Force. The Government wants to ensure that it does not unnecessarily lose their experience and expertise. Unlike the previous Government, this Government does not want to assign injured officers to the scrapheap. The Government wants to give those officers a chance to fulfil their vocation. Even if they are not entirely fit, there are many jobs they can do and they want to do. The Government will give them that chance.

CARBON TAX

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy. What effect will the Federal Government's carbon tax have on resources and energy?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I thank the member for Charlestown for his question. I congratulate him, as he deserves to be congratulated, on being the first Liberal member for Charlestown. He is the first real member for Charlestown. He is the first member to get there not because of family connections. He is there because of the vote of the community, with a 24.4 per cent swing.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The Premier has made it clear that New South Wales opposes the carbon tax. The last time the Leader of the Opposition spoke on the carbon tax was 3 April, when he said he needed more information. April, May and June—since then the great silence has descended. We have not a word from the Leader of the Opposition about the carbon tax. He needs more information. He is about to receive more information. It is calculated that for the average household the price of household items will go up by between \$400 and \$600 per year with a carbon tax. The next point is that the Hunter region, so well represented by the member for Charlestown, the member for Newcastle, the member for Port Macquarie, the member for Maitland and, of course, the member for Terrigal—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: What about the Upper Hunter?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Who could forget the member for the Upper Hunter. In that region only one Labor member still stands. A carbon tax will result in that region losing 4.3 per cent of gross domestic product, which will translate into 13,000 jobs. What does the Leader of the Opposition have to say? The great silence descends. I will now read to the House a letter I received—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer will cease talking across the Chamber.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: —in relation to a major employer in the Hunter, in the electorate of the outstanding member for Newcastle, which relates to the Kurri Kurri aluminium smelter.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Treasurer will cease talking across the Chamber. The Minister has the call. The member for Canterbury will come to order if she does not want to be called to order for the third time.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I received a letter from a certain organisation about the Kurri Kurri aluminium smelter, which reads:

Minister,

The many pleas, phone calls, public rallies, including promises from the Labor Ministers, have amounted to nought.

When those opposite were in government the pleas from this organisation amounted to nought. The letter goes on:

The change of government has hopefully brought with it a return to the good old days of respect for principles and honouring of agreements.

Who wrote that letter? It is signed by Richard Downie, secretary of the Australian Workers Union—one of the big right wing unions. The Leader of the Opposition was head of Unions NSW. He represented the big right wing unions. They put him there. They kept him there. What do they say about him? The change of government under Barry O'Farrell will bring a return to the good old days of respect for principles. That is what the Australian Workers Union said. I am happy to show the letter to members opposite.

They do not want me to table it. There is no request from the member for Maroubra to table this letter. The Australian Workers Union has spoken. I draw the attention of the House to what was said in the *Australian* today. It said it was expected that by next Monday a public inquiry would be announced into Currawong. Without making any remarks to prejudge an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry—I will not prejudge it in any way at all—I expect one person will not be able to invoke the great silence once the Independent Commission Against Corruption starts its inquiry into the Currawong fiasco. We look forward to that inquiry with interest. [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.10 p.m.]: For the benefit of members I advise that the order of business for this afternoon will be as follows: Ministerial statements will proceed, followed by the tabling of papers, the presentation of petitions and the giving of notices of motions. There will then follow one agreement in principle speech and private members' statements. The House will adjourn without the question being put at the conclusion of private member's statements.

DEATH OF LES SHORE

Ministerial Statement

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [3.10 p.m.]: As the Minister for Local Government I pay tribute to one of the State's longest serving councillors, Les Shore, who passed away last night aged 80. Former councillor Les Shore was elected to Baulkham Hills Shire Council in 1969 and retired at the last local government elections, held in 2008. His term on council was almost 40 years and he played his part in shaping the growth, vitality and prosperity for which The Hills shire is widely known. Les Shore is one of our longest serving councillors in the history of The Hills shire. He represented council at many conferences and external forums during his years of service.

Les Shore's local government career is distinguished by representing council as shire president of the Baulkham Hills shire from 1983 to 1986. He was a member of the Hawkesbury River County Council, serving five terms as chairman and four terms as deputy chairman from 1987 to 2007. He was a Local Government Alternative Delegate on the Hawkesbury Nepean Forum, which replaced the trust. He also was the council's delegate to the Hawkesbury Nepean Local Government and Catchment Management Reference Group, including as deputy chairman. He was a member of the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee to the Minister for Agriculture from 1993 to 1999 and a member of the board of Integral Energy, formerly Prospect County Council, up until July 1995.

Les was council's delegate to Prospect County Council from 1997 to 1980 and from 1987 to 1995 and council's representative on the Cattai State Recreational Trust. He was executive member of the Central Region Bushfire Organisation and chairman of the Shire Rural Fire Service Management Committee. Les Shore also had a distinguished teaching career. Les was appointed classroom teacher after graduating from Wagga Wagga Teachers College to Wentworth Central School. He taught at Murwillumbah Public School, Mullumbimby High School in my electorate and Parramatta East Public School. He was principal at Theiss Village Public School in the Snowy Mountains, Werrington Park School for Special Purposes and Harrington Street Public School, Cabramatta.

Les was appointed school principal of Castle Hill Public School in 1976 and held that position until his retirement in 1992. Castle Hill was the largest public school in New South Wales during that time, with up to 1,400 students. Les was also a very keen cricketer and a member of Glenorie Cricket Club since 1947. The oval at Glenorie is named after him. The member for Hawkesbury, Ray Williams, who served alongside Les Shore during his last term at Baulkham Hills Shire Council, said about Les:

Les's passing is a sad loss for our community. His dedication to service and great affection for our shire were nothing short of outstanding and he will long be remembered as a great leader of our community.

On behalf of all members of the House I offer condolences to Les's family and acknowledge his wonderful contribution to his community over such an extended period.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [3.14 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I join with the Minister for Local Government, the Government and all other members of Parliament in paying tribute to Les Shore. I pass on our condolences to the family of Les Shore, who was a well-known and well-respected Hills identity. He was born on 17 February 1931 and lived in The Hills district virtually all his life. He was the oldest of six children. Both his father's family and his mother's family were pioneers in the shire. It is fair to say that he was a true local. In an interview Mr Shore gave to the *Hills Shire Times* in 2006 he joked about his family's association with the district. He said:

It is amazing the number of cousins and relations that encouraged me to take on public life—enough of them to get elected, I am told.

Clearly, Mr Shore and his family loved the district and were active in community life. As the Minister said, Mr Shore was involved in cricket from the end of the Second World War till recent times. He moved through the Glenorie Cricket Club from assistant secretary at age 14 to secretary and on to life member. He had an active interest in and passion for cricket. He also had a passion for involving young people in the sport. It is fitting that his lifelong work has been acknowledged by the naming of a cricket oval after him. Last year he oversaw the building of a new cricket pavilion at Les Shore Oval and was present at its opening.

Mr Shore's work in the district continued as a school principal. During his lengthy time as principal at Castle Hill Public School he oversaw a dramatic increase in the school's population, new building facilities and the advent of computers. At the same time that he was a busy principal he extended his services to the community as a councillor for 39 years 4 months. He is one of the longest-serving councillors on Baulkham Hills Shire Council over its life of 100 years. He was committed to his community and to helping young people through many sporting and youth movements.

Mr Shore was instrumental in ensuring that land was purchased for community activities, such as scouts, he was part of the council that started the first library in the area, and he was focused on providing amenities for young people. Mr Shore was a great community leader. He had his community at heart and his work in the shire is testament to his life. His brother Stan said yesterday that Les was someone that people looked up to, he had a great personality, great stature and great intellect and he was helpful to people. Despite the political divide that existed between us, Les Shore made a great contribution to his community.

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

PETITIONS

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

Oxford Street Traffic Arrangements

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

Pet Shops

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

Community Housing Mental Health Services

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

DESTINATION NSW BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr George Souris.

Agreement in Principle

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [3.21 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Destination NSW Bill 2011. Tourism and events are a twenty-first century business with the potential to generate billions of dollars for New South Wales and to support tens of thousands of jobs throughout the State, many of them in regional New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government has made a commitment to ensure the tourism and events sector in our State can fully realise its potential and more effectively fulfil its vital role in helping to rebuild the New South Wales economy. The New South Wales Government has announced the creation of Destination NSW, a new statutory authority that will be strongly resourced, better equipped and more focused on working with the State's tourism and major events sector to sell Sydney and New South Wales to the world.

Sydney and regional New South Wales have some unique and spectacular assets including the world's most beautiful harbour; incredibly varied scenery from outback to rainforest to snowfields; some of the world's best beaches and coastline; and destinations that uniquely represent the Australian way of life and the culture and history of Aboriginal people. These assets have been dealt with in an ad hoc or piecemeal fashion for too long. There has also been a distinct lack of cohesion between our success in acquiring events, our strategies to enhance them, and our marketing and promotion activities in attracting visitors to New South Wales.

Insufficient notice has been paid to industry and the sector has been underresourced. This Government is determined to change that. That is why, as well as establishing Destination NSW, we have established the Visitor Economy Taskforce. The taskforce will be charged with developing a strategy to double tourism expenditure in New South Wales by 2020, measured by overnight visitor expenditure. The Visitor Economy Taskforce will comprise the new Chief Executive Officer of Destination NSW, once appointed, and three high-level industry representatives. It will be supported by a broad-based advisory committee that will include government and industry representatives and it will be expected to deliver a long-term strategy and work plan to the Minister for approval within 12 months.

The taskforce will have a broad ambit including making recommendations on attracting additional airlines and routes and new ship capacity; proposing innovative approaches to visitation growth and product development; establishing destination development strategies; delivering Crown land tourism development schemes; delivering industry development programs; considering appropriate structures to oversee implementation and execution of the strategy; and delivering destination branding and event calendars.

The bill establishes a new statutory authority to be known as Destination NSW. We have chosen a statutory authority structure because it is the most suitable structure for an organisation that has strong commercial interests, requires partnerships with private industry and manages valuable government collateral, such as the Sydney and New South Wales brands. Specifically, the new entity will encompass the current functions of Tourism New South Wales; it will include the event acquisition, enhancement and marketing functions currently undertaken by Events NSW; it will take on the role previously assigned to the Greater Sydney Partnership for marketing Brand Sydney; and it will deliver the approved strategies developed by the Visitor Economy Taskforce in conjunction with existing bodies such as Business Events Sydney and regional tourism organisations.

The Destination NSW Bill 2011 requires the abolition of the former corporation Tourism New South Wales, constituted under the Tourism New South Wales Act, 1984. Tourism New South Wales will become a division of Destination NSW. By separate process, we will also wind up Events NSW, which will become a second division in Destination NSW. Members of the former Tourism and Events boards will be eligible to be appointed as members of the board of Destination NSW, at the discretion of the Minister. The existing budgets of Tourism New South Wales and Events NSW, along with an additional funding boost of \$40 million over four years and \$5 million in 2011-12 for Regional Tourism Organisations, will provide resources of \$400 million over the next four years. This will support the tourism and events sector in New South Wales through strategic investments, generating strong economic growth and supporting and creating jobs. It will help realise the sector's full potential in helping the Government and the people of New South Wales rebuild the State's economy.

The functions of Destination NSW are set out in the bill and include brand, partnership and event marketing, including event leveraging and regional relationships; events acquisition, retention, enhancement and leveraging international operations; destination development; stakeholder management and communications; management of Brand Sydney; and a range of other initiatives that support Sydney's global positioning. The bill will establish the board of Destination NSW as a board of management. The board will be accountable for the operations of Destination NSW and the strategies, plans and actions that the organisation will implement to achieve its goals. The board will have an independent chair and it will include the chief executive officer of Destination NSW, the Director General of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, and industry representatives with the relevant skills and experience in tourism and events.

As Destination NSW will be responsible for events, product, destination, regional investment and economic development programs, it is essential that it operates in the context of broader government priorities. In addition, the organisation will control substantial collateral, such as Brand Sydney and Brand NSW, and public funds of over \$400 million. It is therefore necessary for the Government to have the power to direct the board on strategic issues, including the implementation of the strategies developed by the Visitor Economy Taskforce. The bill also provides that I can appoint the board of management and remove members from the board. The chief executive of Destination NSW will manage and control the agency's affairs, as directed by, and in accordance with, the general policies and strategic direction agreed by the board.

The bill provides for stronger, more focused strategic direction and more effective leadership through a fully coordinated agency covering tourism, visitation and events. It will offer this State a real opportunity to achieve the kind of global and domestic appeal it deserves. As indicated in the legislation, Destination NSW will be expected to demonstrate its effectiveness. It will be required to prepare and deliver corporate and business plans that I will approve. The plans will outline the objectives of key activities and strategies including policies and budgets for achieving the targets and criteria against which the performance of Destination NSW will be assessed. New South Wales now has a real chance to help the tourism and events sector in our State realise its potential and make a full contribution to the task of rebuilding the New South Wales economy. I commend the bill to the House.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HUNTER VALLEY TRAINING COMPANY

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [3.30 p.m.] This weekend I will have the privilege of attending the thirtieth anniversary celebrations of one of New South Wales's most important training organisations, the Hunter Valley Training Company. The company is the Hunter region's premier training organisation and the largest group training organisation in Australia. The company was established by Kay Sharp, AM on June 22 1981 to provide skills to young unemployed apprentices as national skills shortages loomed. Today the company continues to assist young people to become skilled while providing a local workforce to secure the economic future of the region.

In its 30-year history the Hunter Valley Training Company has provided training to more than 18,000 apprentices and trainees, which, when considering the national skills shortage that has been highly detrimental to the growth of many regional communities over many years, has been of immeasurable benefit to many communities throughout the Hunter, particularly those in my electorate of Maitland. The skills shortage is a very real problem. As our nation gradually ages and our baby boomers reach retirement age we face an incomparable loss of skill and experience. Compounding this is a decline in the rates of apprentices in training. Without immediate attention the shortage of appropriately skilled labour is expected to significantly impact individuals, organisations and the performance of the State's economy.

However, according to the chief executive of the Hunter Valley Training Company, Robert Fuller, this is far from a doom-and-gloom scenario for the Hunter region. It presents golden opportunities as regions with sound training infrastructure such as the Hunter stand to do better because people will get the right training to make them competent and work-ready when they are most needed. Because of the company my electorate of Maitland is in an enviable position to weather future skills shortages. Over the past 30 years the men and women who have been trained at the company have been at the forefront of the drive to advance the nation's infrastructure agenda. They have also set the bar for other training organisations across Australia, which is evident in the company apprenticeship completion rate of 85 per cent compared with the national average of 50 per cent.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the chairman of the Hunter Valley Training Company, the Hon. Milton Morris, AO and the Executive Director and founder Kay Sharp, AM. Members of this House may remember Mr Morris as the long-time member for Maitland and esteemed Minister for Transport. Since his retirement, Mr Morris has continued to serve the people of Maitland in a number of roles, including as the patron of East Maitland RSL and Patron of the Mai-Wel Association. There has most likely never been a more passionate advocate for the city of Maitland, and his legacy will be felt for many, many years yet.

Mr Morris and Mrs Sharp have both shown a lifelong commitment to the Hunter region, and their involvement with the Hunter Valley Training Company has been instrumental in its ongoing success in encouraging and training thousands of new tradespeople. Many Hunter residents—including quite a few in my electorate—owe their successful careers to the vision and passion shown by both Mr Sharp and Mr Morris. One such person is Michael Wilson, who featured in today's *Maitland Mercury* as having just received his dream job at Alstom Power after recently completing a two-year school-based traineeship with the company.

Before I conclude, I will provide the House with a further example of the work being carried out by the Hunter Valley Training Company. Recently, eight unemployed young people from the Hunter graduated from a unique training program that was created in a partnership between the company, Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets and BHP Billiton. These young people were given the opportunity to gain new skills and a potential future career with a nine week pre-vocational training program in metal work that saw them complete the construction of 50 horse jumps for the newly formed Watagan Pony Club at Lake Macquarie. As Father Riley said when he visited the young people upon the completion of their training, the project gives the young men a priceless opportunity to learn skills and give back to the community. I congratulate the organisation on its thirtieth anniversary and wish it every success in the future.

STOP-MOTION ANIMATION FILM EVENT

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [3.35 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to a wonderful event I had the pleasure of attending on Monday 2 May 2011 at Hoyts Cinema Wetherill Park. I was invited to

celebrate the official red carpet film screening of five stop-motion animation films. These fantastic animation films were the creation of 25 young people all aged between 12 and 18 years who worked very hard for several months to complete their task. For those members who are not sure what stop-motion animation is, I advise that it is a technique that makes a static object appear to move of its own volition. This is achieved by creating very small movements with an object and photographing every change. The result is a sequence of continuous animated movements. An example of stop-motion animation would be *Thomas the Tank Engine* or *Bob the Builder* films.

There were five such films created as part of the stop-motion community program, the talented young creators of which were able to see their work on Hoyts big screen, along with an audience of family, friends and special guests. Two special guests—Simon Maddison and Nick Donkin—decided on an overall winner. Simon has more than 12 years experience in features, television shows and commercials, and Nick Donkin has created some well-known animations for clients such as Coca-Cola and Schmackos.

The young people were divided into teams with each team having the opportunity to work alongside film industry animation technicians David Roberts and George Barillaro of Jumbana Group. The Jumbana Group is a leading Australian Indigenous Strategy and Design Company, which devised this program especially for the Stockland Group. Fairfield City Council, Fairfield police, Parks Community Network and Mission Australia supported this wonderful project. Several high schools, including Fairfield, Prairiewood and Patrician Brothers, were involved in the creation of the stop-motion animations.

It is marvellous that organisations like Stockland acknowledge the importance of investing in our local youth by creating such beneficial community programs. Creating these opportunities for our young people shows that they are really making our community a better place. Our young people are the future of our society, and as mayor of Fairfield City Council I know how hard council works to provide young people with avenues to express their creativity and passion. When I addressed the audience before the showing of the animations, I encouraged these young people to always strive to succeed; to take advantage of every opportunity that came their way so they can learn and grow.

I spoke to them about the importance of keeping a positive mind and remaining focused. I told them that they should never give up because doors like these will always open in life. They simply need to jump in and take a hold of opportunities. It is important always to have dreams, aspirations and goals. I tell people to grab every opportunity that comes their way. We have to have the guts to have a go. When we were young we never imagined that we would be members of this House. However, when the opportunity came our way, we took it. If we can make it, anyone can. I thanked Stockland Wetherill Park and Hoyts for holding this event, which was eventually won by a team of students from Patrician Brothers Fairfield with an entry entitled *Overdue*.

WOONONA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.40 p.m.]: I congratulate the Woonona Public School, which is at the northern end of the electorate of Keira, on its achievements. It has an enormous amount going for it. Recently I had the pleasure of meeting with members of the school's parents and citizens association to discuss their concerns. The school community is constantly looking for innovative ways to educate its young people, to involve the local community and to ensure that graduating students are the best in New South Wales.

One of the things the school is undertaking that I was impressed with is the Reading Recovery Program. It has received funding for the program to ensure that students in the kindergarten and year 1 age groups are notified when they are struggling with their reading. It does not mean they have reading disabilities but they are people who in previous times may have fallen through the gaps. Reading Recovery is a program the school is using to make sure that by the end of year 6 its students are extremely literate, have a full understanding of a variety of different texts, have a full understanding of a variety of different genre, and are well educated, well rounded and ready for high school.

Another program I learnt about with the parents and citizens association is called an L3 program. It is a literacy program that incorporates language, learning and literacy—hence the name L3. It is a research-based program designed to target text reading and writing as part of the program. It is a particularly important element of the literacy work because it focuses on young people. They receive explicit instructions in reading and writing, and the strategies needed to read and write effectively, in small groups. That is important because it allows a more cost-effective and less intensive form of Reading Recovery and is one that has been very successful at Woonona Public School.

Members will understand, given my background in teaching, that I am particularly passionate about programs aimed at encouraging school leadership. The student representative council at the school is a very active one. It has put many issues to the students and to the school and it has been an instrumental part of the work the school does. The school parents and citizens association is an extremely active one. On the very cold winter's night I turned up 20-odd members were present. In the past few years the association has donated around \$20,000 to its school. That is an enormous effort for a school that is not too large. That is very impressive.

Next year the school celebrates its 130th anniversary. It has three heritage-listed buildings, and the school's numbers have grown in the last few years—from 325 in 2004 to 401 this year. That is a massive increase and shows that Mr Terry Fisher, his executive Mr Bland, Mrs Barnes and Mr Nield are really driving the motto of learning and working together at Woonona. Like all my schools, it is a school I am very proud of. It is very active within the local community. Over the next four years I look forward to working closely with the school. I hope the Minister for Education continues to fund important programs such as Reading Recovery and that schools such as Woonona Public School are openly engaged with that Reading Recovery Program, because it is vital to the success of the school and something I will continue to lobby for to make sure the funds are there to ensure our young people get the best opportunities when it comes to literacy in our schools.

TUMUT FESTIVAL OF THE FALLING LEAF

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [3.45 p.m.]: In autumn the town of Tumut in my electorate of Wagga Wagga comes alive as locals and visitors celebrate the changing of the seasons with the Tumut Festival of the Falling Leaf. During April there are activities, events and exhibitions, culminating in the final festival weekend. Tumut in autumn offers one of the most spectacular displays of colours to be found anywhere in the State. The town is the northern gateway to Kosciuszko National Park and close to the intersection of the Snowy Mountains Highway and Snowy Valley Way, two of Australia's great high-country touring routes. The townships of Tumut, Adelong and Batlow nestle in the northern foothills of the Snowy Mountains.

In 1954 the local headmaster, Alf Wood, introduced the idea of a festival to celebrate the arrival of autumn and the falling leaves, which characterised the town's many parks and gardens. Thus the Tumut Festival of the Falling Leaf was born. The initial aim of the festival was to foster an appreciation of nature's colours to both the local community and visitors through a series of events over a period of 10 days. Over the years the Festival of the Falling Leaf has seen many changes but has continued to flourish and grow into a wonderful annual event, attracting thousands of visitors from far and wide.

This year was its fifty-seventh anniversary—a remarkable effort by the community. The festival is recognised as one of the major events in the Tumut region. The scenic location, autumn colours and crisp, clear air of the Tumut region provide a beautiful atmosphere for visitors on the last weekend of April each year. The festival offers something for everyone—a rodeo, a fun run, a mountain bike endurance ride, the Adelong Antique Fair, a poetry competition and a bush dance, to name just a few attractions. The final weekend starts with a street parade with the community encouraged to participate, in or out of costume, with or without floats.

A highlight is the Snowy Hydro Gala Day with over 100 stalls in beautiful Bila Park offering original artworks, furniture, handmade toys, home wares, skincare and jewellery. A great line-up of local and regional talent performs on stage. Food lovers can enjoy a range of local products, including a bag of freshly picked Batlow apples. I attended and made a presentation at the opening of the festival and participated in the line-up of dignitaries and others to congratulate all the people who work so very hard to continue to bring this wonderful festival to the region. In the festival tradition, at 6.00 p.m. a spectacular display of fireworks lights up the skies above Tumut.

From Thursday to Sunday on the gala weekend there is an extensive annual exhibition of artwork from national, regional and local artists across a variety of mediums. I opened the art show, where spectacular works were displayed. I have to admit I won the raffle prize, a beautiful painting of Tumut, which hangs proudly on my wall. A spectacular exhibit of scale models ranging from motor vehicles, motor bikes, tracks, trains, vessels, military dioramas and figures is always popular. At any time of year, there is plenty to do. Whether it is camping, walking or riding in stunning mountain scenery and crisp fresh air, the Tumut region has a wealth of activities to suit any budget and lifestyle.

Indeed, tomorrow the Premier and I will be going to that wonderful environment of Tumut, that great community. We will be travelling to Tumut to participate in the opening of stage two of the Visy operation. That

industry, through the Visy Foundation, supports the Tumut community and supports events such as the ones I have talked about. Visy stage two involves a total investment of some \$1 billion in what is, I understand, the biggest paper mill in the southern hemisphere. It is another reason to celebrate, along with the other things I have mentioned today. It is a community that is making progress, a community that has an industry that we will celebrate tomorrow.

The fact that the Premier is attending is a great indication of the support this Liberal-Nationals Government is giving to regional communities and how much value we place on them. As well as the Festival of the Falling Leaf, there will be great celebration in Tumut tomorrow with the wonderful investment that has been made, and that is due recognition of a community that continues to work hard for the region. I congratulate all involved and Visy on its wonderfully diverse community participation.

CALLAGHAN COLLEGE WALLSEND CAMPUS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [3.50 p.m.]: The youth of today are constantly decried in some circles of society: they have bad hair cuts, bad dress sense and bad attitudes. We constantly hear about the me generation of today, the generation that wants it all and wants it now. Of course, this is just one view of what is going on today. Young people who are given the right environment in the right circumstances with the right influences will aspire to help in our local community. We have many fantastic examples of terrific students in our area.

Wallsend has a fabulous public school that we are privileged to have educating the students in our electorate. The school runs a number of truly inspiring volunteer programs in which students uphold the United Nations definition of volunteering. One such undertaking by students at Callaghan College Wallsend Campus involves the Smith Family Student2Student program. This program puts volunteer students in touch with other students who may need a little extra help and encouragement to develop reading skills. The volunteers make weekly phone calls to their buddies, helping them to read a series of books, building their confidence and fostering an interest in reading. Their commitment and generosity are laudable, and I have been assured that all concerned are finding this program very rewarding.

Ann Iredale, the college librarian who coordinates this program, said of the students involved that they give a generous gift of time considering many are also involved in a wide range of after-school sport and activities as well as family and study commitments. This marvellous initiative is just the tip of the iceberg. The students at Callaghan College give so much to the community that I will not be able to mention it all here. I, like the students, will do my best. Candice Bergin-Brown and Samantha Wong, music teachers, have also been busy working hard to help students to coordinate activities that are of benefit to the greater community. Candice stated:

The Senior Concert Band (approx 40 students) travels to Cardiff Senior Citizens Club three times a year to play a concert and put on lunch for the seniors. We go for Mothers Day, Fathers Day and Christmas. Not only do our kids play, they also bring a plate either a salad or a dessert and Candy (our other music teacher) and I cook them a hot lunch of sausages and chicken. Our kids spend all their time sitting with the seniors speaking with them and listening to their stories.

Candice stated that students at the school do the following activities in the community on a volunteer basis:

- Peer reading in the library
- Peer reading at a local primary schools ...
- Earth Hour
- Peer leaders and transition helpers
- Cafe CC (an in school cafe run by our lifeskills students)—

Their coffee almost rivals that of Cafe Quorum; indeed, it would be a tie—

- Breakfast Club ...
- Legacy
- Knit One Save One (students come to library and knit ... squares ... for mothers of new born babies ...
- Sports coaching ...
- Air force cadets
- Lifesaving
- St John's Ambulance
- The Marching Koalas Marching Band ...
- Building and Construction ...
- Beginner Band tutoring
- Home Economics ...
- Recycling Program

40 hour famine
Legacy
Red Cross
Environment team ...
Fundraising for local sports clubs ...
Bandlink ...
Sportslink
Artlink

That was all Candice could think of, but what a list. She ended by stating:

I think Parliament needs to be made aware of how proud we are of all our students here at Callaghan College Wallsend Campus. Our students are generous, helpful, empathetic and selfless. They gladly and willingly give up their time to help others. They are role models in our community and need to be praised and acknowledged for all the wonderful things they do.

Callaghan College Wallsend Campus does, indeed, show that our local students are generous volunteers, who will grow up to be generous and kind adults.

NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [3.55 p.m.]: Today I speak about the floods on the North Coast of New South Wales, specifically Coffs Harbour. First, I congratulate emergency services volunteers, who have done a phenomenal job over the past week, basically from as far north as the Manning area. I thank the volunteers at Woolgoolga, Bob White and his volunteers at the Coffs Harbour State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, the fire brigade, and Toby Cuthel and his volunteers from the Bellingen State Emergency Service. Toby is not in my electorate but the floods in the Bellingen area affect the bottom end of my electorate. I thank also those volunteers at Urunga. They have all done a phenomenal job in terrifying conditions. On the northern end of my electorate and into the southern end of the Clarence electorate the roof of the Red Rock Bowling Club was lost.

Damage worth hundreds of thousands of dollars was done to banana and blueberry crops in the northern part of the electorate. Fences were destroyed in the Orara Valley and the Bellinger area and cattle were lost. I accept that assistance given from the Federal and State governments is fantastic but the timely deliverance of it is a matter for concern. Local government areas must first assess the damage and if it is assessed at more than \$240,000 council must then apply to the Government for disaster relief. That process should be examined. In May 2009 the then shadow Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Duncan Gay, and I called for the process to be streamlined so that the criteria enabling farmers and businesses to claim flood or disaster assistance could be reassessed. In September of that year the Rural Assistance Authority was still calling for applications for assistance for floods that had occurred in May of that year—four months later.

Some farmers had suffered three flood events and in one case a friend of mine had lost the same fence three times and was out of cash. Grants in the sum of \$15,000 were being given back then for farmers and shop keepers in the Bellinger Valley-Urunga-Coffs Harbour area—in fact, my office was flooded twice. The problem was that many people did not have the cash or money in the bank. The Government of the day decided to pay accounts on invoice, which was fantastic. Applications for assistance were still being processed four months after the event. Whether the amounts involve small business loans or \$15,000 grants—as the Deputy-Speaker would well know—many farmers do not have that sort of cash in their pockets. If money is not available when they need it many people go broke. Oyster growers in the lower end of the Bellinger-Kalang system packed up and walked out because they could not gain assistance.

With respect to the low-interest loans, it seemed that if people could prove they did not need assistance they got it. People who needed assistance to keep their heads above the water to continue their business and employ people were excluded, but not until six or seven months after the disaster event. Today I call on the Minister for Primary Industries, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and perhaps the Treasurer to examine the way in which disaster assistance is provided. I ask them to liaise with our Federal colleagues and to streamline the process. Farmers no longer make hundreds of thousands of dollars, send their children to private schools and buy a Mercedes-Benz.

It is a subsistence economy. In fact, many of the farmers on the North Coast, who did not receive assistance last time—they should be considered—gain 50 per cent of their income from off-farm employment. Under the current guidelines they are excluded. The electorate of the Deputy-Speaker has suffered many flood events in the past years and this year. Those people deserve our consideration and assistance. The criteria and

guidelines must be streamlined so that these people, even if they have off-farm jobs, can get on with their great work. This will enable them to provide the people of Sydney and other areas of Australia with our food and necessities of life into the future.

MOUNT DRUITT INTERCHANGE

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.00 p.m.]: I raise matters of demarcation between Blacktown City Council and various transport authorities run by the State Government, including State Rail. It relates to the Mount Druitt interchange, which was constructed some eight or nine years ago. I think it was officially opened by the then Minister for Transport, Michael Costa, but funding in the amount of \$12 million for the facility was secured by the previous Minister, Carl Scully.

As I said, some \$12 million was spent on the project. The interchange comprises a large bus terminal which buses enter, do a large U-turn, then pick up passengers and take them to the various suburbs of Mount Druitt and other suburbs of western Sydney. The interchange also comprises a taxi rank, kiss-and-ride stop-off points, and disabled parking spots. As part of the interchange Mount Druitt also received what used to be called easy access facilities, such as escalators and lifts.

The issue I raise—which I have described as demarcation, but it is probably not the appropriate term; certainly it was a disagreement at the bureaucratic level, I would suggest, between Blacktown City Council and the various transport authorities—is: Who is responsible for the upkeep, maintenance and repair to damage done at this interchange facility? Recently a constituent of mine, Mr Glyn Corbishley of Lethbridge Park, a regular bus user, reported to me that the plate glass panels at the bus stop had been vandalised. The interchange is also the subject of a lot of graffiti and the like. Since Mr Corbishley reported that damage to me some days ago he has reported that more damage has been done.

I have raised this issue with a ward 5 councillor at Blacktown City Council, Councillor Charlie Lowles, a former mayor. Councillor Lowles reported to me that the council has not been able to resolve with the State authorities just who is responsible for what—for example, whether council is responsible for the sweeping, cleaning and washing of the interchange and the State authorities are responsible for damage and major repairs. Correspondence has gone backwards and forwards between the council and the State authorities. I understand that the last return of service came from the council and that it is now with the State authorities. As at just half an hour ago council was not able to report to me whether it had made any progress in relation to the issue of responsibility.

In the meantime it is the commuters of my electorate who suffer. Whilst the council tried to resolve the matter—and I think it is on firm ground—this project was funded by the State Government and a lot of the infrastructure there is State Government infrastructure. However, I understand that at the time there was either a formal or informal agreement between the two bodies as to who would take over certain responsibilities. I am concerned about the vandalism, graffiti, and the like at the facility. It is one of those interchanges that require regular upkeep and repair. I am not an expert in the use of these materials, but I would think that something like perspex or hardened glass would certainly prevent the commuters from suffering the effects of the constant damage, broken glass and graffiti.

The damage to the interchange is not excessive and not a lot of money would be involved in repairing it. Several plate glass panels need to be repaired. At times storm damage needs to be repaired, graffiti needs to be removed, and of course regular cleaning of the interchange needs to be carried out. I ask the Minister for Transport to take my comments on board and to expedite the State authorities coming to some agreement with Blacktown City Council to ascertain whether one of the bodies will run the interchange totally or whether there should be a memorandum of understanding between the two organisations. The commuters of Mount Druitt would certainly appreciate a result on this issue.

CENTRAL COAST YOUNG CHAMPION AWARDS

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [4.05 p.m.]: I highlight a fantastic event I attended a few weeks ago in my electorate. A project of Gosford North Rotary Club, in conjunction with the Combined Rotary Clubs of the Central Coast—the Central Coast Young Champion Awards—is an event to recognise the achievements of young people from our local community on the Central Coast. Their goal is to provide an avenue of support to Central Coast young adults who have not experienced support and encouragement to achieve. The Save our Kids Smiles fund, created by Rotary, was the beneficiary of the event.

The Central Coast Young Champion Awards invited nominations from people aged between 16 and 25 across five categories including community, vocational, academic, sports and performing arts. Seventy-seven written nominations were received and an extensive interview process was undertaken by Rotary. The awards profiled leading young persons who are role models and who inspire us through their achievements, and who challenge us to make our own contribution to creating a better community. The inaugural awards were presented at a gala ceremony held on Saturday 21 May 2011 at Mingara Recreation Club. The evening was an opportunity not only to recognise our Central Coast Young Champions but also to showcase some of the most talented young performers from the Central Coast.

I am pleased to report the category winners for the night. Aimee Hanslow was a winner in the Community category. Aimee, who is 21, is a certificate 3 qualified hairdresser, but it is her charity work with the Pink Ribbon Appeal for cancer for which she has gained notoriety. Aimee's masquerade ball at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Terrigal raised \$9,000 for the fight against cancer. Laura Baker was also a winner in the community category. Laura, who is 25, has devoted much of her young life back to the community. She has mentored students at Kincumber High School, collected for the Red Cross, served at Donnison Street, Gosford, given up her paid employment to volunteer in Cambodia, and is now a World Vision ambassador for its "Don't Trade Lives" national campaign.

Simon Walters won the vocational category. Simon, who is 25, works as a podiatrist. Simon has helped establish four rural and remote clinics for the Indigenous population, established screening programs for people with diabetes and kindergarten children, and carries out voluntary work with children who have cerebral palsy. Jack Lovicu was a winner in the academic category. Jack, who is 17, is currently in his Higher School Certificate year. Jack, who is a State champion debater, received the Principal's Award for outstanding service to the school, the Australian Defence Force Long Tan Leadership and Teamwork Award, and achieved gold, silver and bronze in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, as well as a Rotary Service Award in 2010-11.

Patryck Allen was also a winner in the academic category. Patryck, who is 25, graduated with first class honours from his Bachelor of Science course with a double major in advanced physics and advanced chemistry from the University of Sydney. He has been awarded the Asian Crystallographic Association's Rising Star Award. His studies will officially culminate in his graduation as a Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry from the Sydney University School of Chemistry next year.

Lauren Hall was winner in the sports category. In the area of surf lifesaving, Lauren, who is 20, has won in excess of 60 New South Wales State championship medals and five Australian surf lifesaving medals. Lauren was selected to represent New South Wales on four separate occasions and received the Olympic Committee's Pierre De Coubertin Award in 2008. She has also been awarded an Order of Australia commendation. Lauren has recently recovered from a spinal injury sustained while competing at a surf lifesaving competition.

Madeleine Powell, who is 19, was also a finalist in the sports category. Jordan Fleming, who is 19, won an award in the performing arts category, and Karina Russell, who is 17, was a winner in the performing arts category. The overall winner on the night, a finalist in the vocational category, was Carreen Dew. I would like to read her biography. Carreen is 24 and is qualified as a Bachelor of Law and Media, achieving this result in 2009. She followed this up with a College of Law post-graduate degree in February this year. But it is her life that led to her degree that is truly amazing. She was the second-eldest of four children and lived with her mother, Sonia, her brother, Brendan, and her half-brothers, twins Liam and Alec. Her stepfather, David, was a quadriplegic and lived in permanent respite in Sydney. Alec was born with Mobius syndrome and as a result has very high medical needs. He has a tracheotomy and a gastrostomy, and is extremely medically frail. He has no speech, and he uses signs to communicate. He has no facial expression, and does not smile, frown or cry. He relies on a wheelchair for mobility.

At the age of 12 Carreen became a young carer. She spent much of her teenage life looking after Alec and missed a lot of her schooling life. When she was not at school, and when Alec was in hospital, Carreen assisted Alec's twin brother, Liam, with his reading and homework. She took over completely all household management, and looked after both her brothers. She cooked, cleaned and dropped her brothers to school and picked them up. She did all the washing and ironing, and took the boys to visit Alec in hospital. In general, she kept the household together both physically and emotionally.

In 2005 Carreen achieved her Higher School Certificate against all odds with a university admission index of 97. She focused on becoming a lawyer, but because of her family situation she could only do this by correspondence. She achieved this in 2009. One of her major motivations was to be in a strong position to fight

for carers' rights and receive better conditions. In 2010 Carreen was invited to speak to Parliament to highlight the difficulties facing carers. Describing it as the best day of her life, she talked about her life and the struggle she has endured. Many members of Parliament were openly crying as she told her story. Carreen is a truly remarkable young woman in the face of ongoing and long-term adversity. It is a testament to her courage and determination that she is as well adjusted as she is, and this has helped her to be where she is today. I congratulate Carreen on her award.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I am sure every member of this House will join the member for The Entrance in congratulating Carreen.

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.10 p.m.]: Despite recent problems, the New South Wales Solar Bonus Scheme remains important to many Lake Macquarie residents. My electorate office heard from many residents who are deeply concerned about the recently announced prospect of losing the guaranteed income on which they had budgeted for their purchase of photovoltaic systems. In some cases people had borrowed money or diverted funds from superannuation to enhance their financial situation by entering the scheme. When the Premier announced that the Solar Bonus Scheme would continue my office also received many communications expressing people's relief. Among these correspondents was Mr Allan McMillan of Bonnells Bay, who thanked me for my defence of the Solar Bonus Scheme and reminded me that the Government should consider the benefits of photovoltaic systems, not just the cost of the feed-in tariff.

The total capacity of the State's photovoltaic systems is about 350 megawatts, about twice the capacity of the coal-fired Redbank power station in the Hunter Valley. Given this comparison, the State's combined photovoltaics could be considered as a small power station, but with some significant differences and benefits. Setting aside recent problems with the cost of the gross feed-in tariff, photovoltaic installations provide no burden for the Government, with no ongoing maintenance costs and no overhead operating costs, and with the liability for depreciation and risk of damage borne by the owners of the 160,000 installations across the State. If the solar industry is encouraged in its development, we can expect that these installations will be replaced at the end of their anticipated 20-year life at no cost to the Government.

Photovoltaics contribute only about 2 per cent of the State's total 18,000 megawatt generating capacity. With the premium feed-in tariff for photovoltaics applying to such a small proportion of this total, it is clear that photovoltaics cannot constitute a significant component of electricity price cost pressure. The premium—the extra payment under the feed-in tariff—is the difference between the 60¢ per kilowatt hour and a typical general tariff of approximately 20¢ per kilowatt hour. This difference of about 40¢ per kilowatt hour is the amount that it would be fair to consider as an extra cost. This premium payment equals about double the general tariff, so it would also be fair to double the price rise impact of photovoltaics and say that 4 per cent of price rises flow from this 2 per cent of the State's generating capacity.

Therefore, only 4 per cent of next month's Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal-approved 17.3 per cent price rise can rightly be attributed to the premium component of the feed-in tariff. Multiplying these figures shows that less than one half of 1 per cent of the current price can be fairly attributed to the Solar Bonus Scheme. This is a figure that the public would not be aware of; indeed, from reading the reporting on the issue the public would likely think that the Solar Bonus Scheme has had a much greater effect. They certainly did not hear anything different from the Government, from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, or from media. Instead the scheme was demonised and people who had invested in photovoltaic systems were at times portrayed as greedy beneficiaries. This sorry situation was only redeemed by the Government's reversal of the proposed retrospective dismantling of the Solar Bonus Scheme in the face of parliamentary defeat.

On 14 June Lake Macquarie City Council unanimously resolved to write to the Premier supporting the continuation of the Solar Bonus Scheme. In recognition of the scheme's maturation and the encouragement already provided to the industry, a tariff of either 20¢ per kilowatt hour or the applicable time-of-day tariff was proposed. This provides less to new starters than the scheme's original terms, but it is preferable to switching off the solar electricity industry in its infancy. In reaching its decision, council considered the scheme's social outcomes in helping to create an energy-resilient community and the implications for the 27 accredited solar installers in Lake Macquarie registered with the Clean Energy Council. Council's view takes account of the ramifications of dismantling the Solar Bonus Scheme, including a significant decline in the installation of small-scale solar panels, with implications for climate mitigation, energy resilience and energy efficiency;

undermining trust in local governments that promoted the Solar Bonus Scheme to residents; and creating a high degree of uncertainty for the future of the solar photovoltaic industry, affecting thousands of jobs in New South Wales.

Photovoltaics are becoming more affordable as the industry grows and the Government should foster this change. Prices still inhibit many people, but if the solar industry is given just a little more encouragement its reducing costs will cross paths with the increasing costs of coal-fired power and become an increasingly viable and popular option. A State the size of New South Wales is in a very good position to lead in this area, and indeed has a responsibility to do so, and to ensure the continuation of investment in photovoltaics and other alternative energy technologies. I encourage the Minister and the Government to ensure that the photovoltaic industry in New South Wales remains viable.

MONARO ELECTORATE ROAD SAFETY

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [4.15 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the excellent response from emergency service workers in my electorate of Monaro to a recent incident on one of our alpine roads. At 6.00 p.m. on Saturday 11 June a bus loaded with 44 passengers returning from the Thredbo ski resort rolled down an embankment in Jindabyne landing on its roof and narrowly missing a caravan park. This incident occurred at the intersection of the Alpine Way and Kosciuszko Road. Numerous police from the Monaro Local Area Command arrived within minutes followed by New South Wales Fire Brigades and ambulance personnel.

The excellent coordinated emergency response resulted in the accident site being cleared by about 3.30 a.m. on Sunday. The response was carried out with minimal disruption to the residents and users of the area and police were able to maintain a constant traffic flow whilst dealing with the incident. In total, 21 passengers suffered injuries in the crash and were taken to Cooma Hospital. Four casualties with more serious injuries were transferred to Canberra Hospital. I am pleased to report that there were no fatalities and all patients are making a steady recovery. Three of the four most seriously injured, who were transferred to Canberra Hospital, have now been discharged.

At the time of the incident my wife and I were returning to Jerrabomberra from the ski fields and were driving along Jindabyne Road. We can bear witness to the rapid and professional emergency services response, which passed us en route to the scene of the accident. The aptitude and capability of the emergency services response to the accident is a source of great pride to me. Prospective tourists can rest assured that the emergency service personnel in the mountains are world class. I put on record my appreciation for the efforts of the emergency service personnel and staff at Cooma and Canberra hospitals. These are the unsung heroes of my electorate who serve the community every day and are always there when we need them most.

This accident occurred on the opening weekend of the ski season, and is a timely reminder of the dangers that exist when driving in an alpine environment. We all want to ensure a fatality-free 2011 ski season with no fatal road accidents. We achieved this last year and we can achieve it again this year. A week ago the New South Wales Government's SnowSafe campaign began, which focuses on speeding and impaired drivers, and highlights the importance of taking regular rest breaks during the drive to or from the alpine region. This is an excellent initiative that greatly increases the likelihood of a fatality-free 2011 ski season.

Road safety is a result of contributing efforts from all sectors of the community including both private and government organisations. It is important to remember that everyone has a responsibility to ensure that our roads remain safe. I implore all motorists heading to my electorate to enjoy our unique tourism product to slow down and pay attention. It gets icy up in the mountains—there are lots of twists and turns in the road and quite often there are changes to the road conditions. People may have been to the snow many times and think they know the roads well, but they cannot tell where a stretch of black ice may be hiding or whether another vehicle is just around a sharp bend. The New South Wales ski fields are Australia's premier winter destination and they are enjoyed by thousands of people every year. If we can all heed the road safety message this season then nobody's holiday will be ruined by senseless tragedy.

I note that we enjoyed a great start to the season on the weekend with one of the best starts to the ski season in the past five years—we had some great snow. I acknowledge the great work of the resort owners at Perisher and Thredbo in making sure visitors are well looked after and are kept safe while visiting the ski fields. I reiterate that the alpine environment is a beautiful destination for winter or summer holidays and a venue for many challenging and exciting activities, including skiing and bushwalking. The alps, however, can be

hazardous if visitors are careless or irresponsible, and I urge people to take extreme care. Again, I commend the tireless work of those volunteers and emergency service personnel who bring peace of mind to the thousands of visitors to the region and those who call the Monaro home.

HABERFIELD MCDONALD'S RESTAURANT

HABERFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.20 p.m.]: I speak about two developments in the suburb of Haberfield in my electorate. Recently the Land and Environment Court upheld an appeal by the multinational conglomerate to allow a 24-hour fast food facility to be built in Haberfield. In upholding the appeal the court ignored the unanimous objections of Ashfield Council and those of many thousands of local residents. There will now be three 24-hour McDonald's facilities within a five-kilometre stretch of Parramatta Road. I am not sure how many people need to eat what passes for food at McDonald's, but three such facilities so close together is excessive. I call on McDonald's today to reconsider and withdraw this very poor application.

These 24-hour facilities cause significant problems with late night noise, security, and significant littering in surrounding streets. Ashfield Council's failure to update its local environmental plan in more than 20 years did not help in its attempt to fight the McDonald's case. The council should address that issue as a matter of urgency. The approval is for a 12-month trial of 24-hour trading, and I will work with the local community to ensure that McDonald's complies with all the controls placed on the approval and that any breaches are dealt with and taken into proper consideration at the end of the 12-month period. It is my strong view that this facility with a 24-hour operation is totally inappropriate to be placed directly next door to residential properties, and this will be demonstrated in the coming months.

I congratulate all the local residents who have been campaigning on this important issue. I particularly congratulate the No McDonald's at Haberfield group on their diligence and hard work. Even though I have come into this matter after the initial approval of the Land and Environment Court I will continue to work actively on the issue. Last week I attended a meeting of the parents and citizens group at Haberfield Public School to discuss the attempt by the previous Government to transfer land from that school to the neighbouring heritage-listed Yasmar estate in order to facilitate opportunities for more intense development of the site and to allow the development of a bilingual school run by the Co.As.It. Italian community organisation.

I respect and fully support the excellent work done by Co.As.It. As a Leichhardt councillor and former mayor, I have worked very closely with Co.As.It. in supporting it in a range of different ways to operate its bilingual school at its current premises in Norton Street at Leichhardt. However, it is clear that the Yasmar option was not optimal for Co.As.It. and was also overwhelmingly opposed by the Haberfield Public School community. The Co.As.It. development application for the site was rejected by both the Ashfield Council and the Land and Environment Court. The development of a school on that site was determined to be problematic in relation to both access and size.

Many parents, teachers and students attended the meeting at Haberfield Public School, which is an excellent State public school with nearly 600 students from a diversity of backgrounds, including many from the local Italian community. With nearly 600 students open space is at a premium. Playground space has been reduced as additional classrooms have been built to accommodate the growing school population. The parents, teachers and students at the meeting made it very clear that they do not want any of their valuable land taken away. Two articulate young students addressed the meeting to talk about what the land proposed to be taken away meant to them. I will report some of those comments to the House. One student said:

Our back paddock is used a lot. It is the only place big enough to play football. It is already too small to be a full field but every day there are 4 or 5 groups playing soccer or rugby. Losing any of this beautiful grassy space will mean less space for healthy exercise for all the students.

Another young student described the back paddock as:

... a place where we can run and test our abilities, away from the classroom and technology, a place for kids to be kids.

The land proposed to be transferred by the former Government is a one-metre wide corridor running along the back fence of the school. As one of the students said:

I know that it is only 1 metre wide but you cannot imagine having a swimming pool losing a lane, an athletic field losing one of its tracks, a soccer field losing a goal post or a softball field losing a base.

I congratulate these young students on expressing their views so eloquently at that meeting. They are a credit to their parents and their teachers. I do not believe that the land transfer is the best outcome for Haberfield Public School or for Co.As.It., or that transfer of precious open space with no conservation management plan and no genuine consultation from a bustling inner-west public school can be justified. I have undertaken to work closely with Co.As.It. Recently I met with members of the Co.As.It. board.

I will continue to engage with them to work with local councils to try to find a better alternative to enable Haberfield Public School to keep its valuable land and to enable Co.As.It. to continue to operate and grow its school whilst meeting the community demand for bilingual education. I have also contacted the mayor of Leichhardt council to see what can be done to facilitate options for Co.As.It. in its current facility. I look forward to working closely with Co.As.It. to find an appropriate venue for its students, which will enable it to grow and prosper but will not diminish the educational, sporting and recreational opportunities for the students of Haberfield Public School.

NSW JEWISH BOARD OF DEPUTIES

YESHIVA COLLEGE

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.25 p.m.]: Yesterday I had the great pleasure of speaking to the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies in my capacity as the local member for the electorate of Vaucluse and to speak about some work the O'Farrell Government will undertake in pathways for skills and higher education, which are covered in my role as Parliamentary Secretary. I congratulate the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies on its very valuable work in reaching out not only to the Jewish community but also to many New South Wales communities. A lot of its programs build understanding and tolerance across New South Wales. A good example of this is its social harmony project, with interfaced and intercultural dialogues conducted with more than 2,000 students annually across New South Wales.

I spoke to the board about my new role of 11 weeks as the member for the electorate of Vaucluse. As I noted in my inaugural speech, Vaucluse is a diverse and enterprising community. Of its residents 50 per cent are born overseas versus 30 per cent nationally. Twice the national average of professionals resides in my electorate and we are very proud to have the largest Jewish community in New South Wales. The position of Jewish people in Australia is somewhat different to what it is in other places in the world. That is because the Australian community has worked to build the country together. Of the first Jewish communal members who came to New South Wales, eight Jewish petty criminals were amongst the convict cargo on the First Fleet. Apart from religious practice, they were indistinguishable from the general population in colonial society. Indeed, that is how it is today within our community and in the electorate of Vaucluse.

My predecessor, Peter Debnam, had very strong bonds with the Jewish community, as does my Federal counterpart, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, MP, member for Wentworth. The Jewish community has always been part of the fabric of my life. My mother broke the Catholic mould in the late 1950s. As a young Catholic woman she attended Sydney Teachers College where her closest friends and colleagues were mainly Jewish women; their children became some of my closest childhood friends. I had the pleasure of visiting Israel when I was 23 years of age. I stayed in Petach Tikva with an Israeli family. I remember keenly looking out from their apartment across to the West Bank and seeing how very close that security threat was to their immediate lives.

I believe Israel has the right to live in peace and security, and to get on with the task of long-term economic development. That peace and security should be extended to its neighbours. The recent turmoil in the Middle East has left Israel as the only true democracy in the region in a very difficult environment. However, Australia shall always stand alongside other democratic nations like Israel, extending friendship and honouring that friendship based on shared beliefs in individual liberty, equal rights and the rule of law. The boycott by The Greens in New South Wales has concerned us all. We do not understand why Israel has been singled out in such a way and the New South Wales Liberals condemn it.

When the O'Farrell Government won office it took some very firm steps to ensure that Marrickville Council knew it might lose its governing mandate if it pursued such a boycott. We must keep a watching brief on that. On 7 June 2011 I also had the pleasure of attending the Yeshiva College at Bondi, which is the Chabad headquarters in New South Wales. Representing the Premier, and as the member for Vaucluse, I celebrated the festival of Shavuot. It was a dinner for about 60 to 80 people. I was given a thoughtful topic to speak about: the enduring importance of the 10 Commandments and the values they represent in our society today, and to the New South Wales Government. Some thought went into my speech. I had the opportunity to learn about Shavuot and its deeper traditions and meaning.

I learnt that Shavuot is one of three major celebrations with both historical and agricultural significance—the other two being Sukkot and Passover. Shavuot commemorates the time when the first fruits were harvested and brought to the temple. Historically it celebrates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. This gave me a great opportunity to meet the younger members of the Chabad community. As I have said, the Vaucluse community is diverse and the Jewish community plays a significant part in it. The Jewish community punches above its weight in its cultural, professional and spiritual contribution. I look forward to working with the community. I commend my private members' statement to the House.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 4.30 p.m. until
Monday 20 June 2011 at 1.00 p.m.**
