

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 2 August 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VIETNAMESE DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.00 p.m.]: I was delighted to be in Cabramatta on 22 June 2011 representing one of the best health Ministers New South Wales has had, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, at an important Drug Action Week event: the launch of the new drug and alcohol information website developed by the Vietnamese Drug and Alcohol Professionals Association. This website was launched in the Vietnamese language to enable the Vietnamese community to access up-to-date information on drugs and alcohol in the privacy and comfort of their own homes. With such a large multicultural community in western Sydney, the importance of these services cannot be underestimated.

Today congratulate and thank the Vietnamese Drug and Alcohol Professionals Association for this vital service. This year the theme of Drug Action Week is "Looking after YOUR mind," an opportunity to emphasise and focus on the serious effects of drugs and alcohol on mental health. There is a strong link between mental health disorders and regular or dependent drug use. Often people only think and know about the short-term physical effects of drug and alcohol use but do not consider the effects on their mental health. Approximately 50 per cent to 70 per cent of young people who present with an alcohol or substance use issue also have a mental health problem, and those aged 18 to 24 have the highest prevalence of mental health disorders of any group.

Among adults who reported a mental or behavioural problem, 32 per cent were daily smokers, compared with 20 per cent who were not; 15 per cent of adults with reported mental or behavioural problems also consumed alcohol at risky levels, compared with 13 per cent of those who did not; around one in 10 people reported that they had a long-term mental or behavioural problem; and nearly one-fifth of adults reported using some medication for their mental wellbeing within a two-week period. Drug Action Week is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of drug and alcohol issues in the community and to showcase how communities are responding to these issues. Once again, I congratulate the Vietnamese Drug and Alcohol Professionals Association and the Vietnamese community in general for leading the way in providing support to members of their community.

FROM LAOS TO FAIRFIELD WITH FAITHS AND CULTURES LAUNCH

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.05 p.m.]: It was my great pleasure on Sunday 19 June 2011 to celebrate the launch of the booklet *From Laos to Fairfield with faiths and cultures*. I thank the Lao Community Advancement Cooperative for hosting this launch, which was held in my electorate of Cabramatta at Bonnyrigg Community Hall. As the Mayor of Fairfield I am very proud that Fairfield City Council has assisted with the production of the booklet by providing a grant of \$4,000 under our Community Cultural Grants Program. This is a very important booklet which aims to foster community harmony not only in Fairfield city, but also nationwide. This booklet is about religious groups in the Lao community residing within Fairfield, and particularly in Cabramatta. The grant was to fund the production of a booklet documenting the cultural significance and rituals of the different faiths within the Lao community in Fairfield local government area.

The first objective of the Lao Community Advancement Cooperative is to promote friendship and understanding between the Lao people settled in Australia and other ethnic groups. Its second aim is to provide care and assistance to all people from Laos. This includes cultural education, information, referrals, religion, self-help and welfare services to promote and safeguard the cultural and traditional aspects of the Lao heritage.

Intercultural dialogue is the first step to more tolerance and a greater appreciation of our differences. The Fairfield community is made up of people from the four corners of the globe. We are the standard bearers to the success of the multicultural history of this nation.

Booklets such as this are important and practical outcomes of council's community cultural development grants. With a brief history of Laos, the only land-locked country in South-East Asia, it then looks at the Lao settlement history in Australia. There are 12,000 Laos-born people living in Australia today, spread far and wide in Albury, Campbelltown, Wollongong, Tamworth, Camden, and Liverpool and more than 2,000 now make Fairfield city their home, adding to the rich tapestry of multi-ethnic communities. Our city—one of the world's most cosmopolitan regions with more than 130 cultural groups—is where 60 per cent of our residents speak a language other than English at home. It is this diversity that makes our city such a wonderful place.

Of course, with the Lao community there is rich religious diversity, and although most are Buddhist many are Catholic, Hmong, and Seventh Day Adventist. We are fortunate to live in such a diverse city, where cultures, traditions and religions are shared, celebrated and respected. Events such as this demonstrate our ability as a community to really embrace our diversity. The booklet's promotion of friendship and understanding between the Lao community and other ethnic communities in Australia is a goal shared by us at the Fairfield City Council.

It is also worth mentioning my admiration of the many great initiatives that the Lao Community Advancement Cooperative has carried out. One of these is the 18 public housing units that the Lao Community Advancement Cooperative is managing. Its efforts play a significant role in the betterment of our community and in keeping Lao traditions and culture alive and well in our city. It is important for all of us to get involved and show our support to allow these initiatives to continue to grow. I also thank all those individuals who have contributed to the booklet, including religious groups such as the Lao Buddhist group, the Lao Catholic Community of New South Wales, the Hmong Australia Society New South Wales and the Lao Seventh Day Adventist Church.

I extend my appreciation to the Lao Community Advancement Cooperative, in particular Mr Pierre Vanthavong, who was an important asset in developing and implementing the project with assistance from the Cabramatta Community Centre. His hard work has greatly contributed to shaping the future of our city. I also acknowledge and thank the other distinguished guests who attended on the day: Mr Oath Sysengrath, President of the Lao Community Advancement (NSW) Co-op Ltd; the Hon. Paul Lynch MP, member for Liverpool; Andrew Rohan MP, Fairfield city councillor and member for Smithfield; Ms Beth Goodwin, Principal of Cabramatta High School; Inspector Steve Thomas, Fairfield Local Area Command; Superintendent Joe Cassar, Cabramatta Local Area Command; and Acting Commander Steve Corry, Green Valley Local Area Command. I thank everyone for being there on the day and thereby showing their support for the booklet and everything it promotes.

TRUNDLE TROOPERS

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.10 p.m.]: Throughout history, mounted troops have been known as elite men of arms. The Australian Light Horse is no different, and wore decoration worthy of the distinction. Folklore has endowed the light horsemen with a mystique and an image that distinguishes them from their fellow diggers. During Parliament's winter recess on 2 and 3 July, I was asked to be part of the Reserve Forces Day held at Parkes, which also marked the ninety-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Romani. As part of the day's events, I presented 13 recognition medallions to wives and partners of former and current serving reservists and six medallions to former original light horsemen of the 6th Light Horse Regiment. I was privileged to present such prestigious awards and honoured to belong to an electorate that has such strong ties and traditions with the Light Horse.

But what equally touched my heart was an iconic bunch of lads whom I have come to know quite well and who are affectionately known and revered throughout my electorate as the Trundle Troopers. They are 10 locals from all walks of life who are aged between 30 and 75 years of age. Saddling up on horseback, they strive to keep alive the Australian Light Horse traditions. In doing so they let younger generations know of the contributions the Australian Light Horse has made and the significance of their contribution to the war effort. It would bring a smile to anyone's face to see these men—proud as punch, sitting high on horseback and dressed in uniforms from the 1914 to 1918 era or the 1930 to 1940 campaigns—who are doing all they can to preserve the history, traditions and customs of the Light Horse regiments and their predecessors.

The Trundle Troopers take on a ceremonial role of making several appearances at local shows, on Anzac Day and at official ceremonies. They take part in parades, escorts, displays, re-enactments, rides and sporting activities. They are also involved in collecting and preserving uniforms, weapons and equipment used by the men of the Light Horse as well as in researching, recording and passing on information on the Light Horse. The 6th Light Horse Regiment was commissioned in Sydney in September 1914 and comprised men who had enlisted in New South Wales. They became part of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade and sailed from Sydney on 21 December 1914. The regiment disembarked in Egypt on 1 February 1915 and spent late 1916 and early 1917 engaged in patrol work until the British advance into Palestine stalled before the Turkish bastion of Gaza. The 6th Light Horse was deployed one last time in assisting to put down the Egyptian revolt of early 1919 and sailed for home on 28 June that year. Trooper Ion Idriess wrote:

At a mile distant their thousand hooves were stuttering thunder, coming at a rate that frightened a man -

They were an awe inspiring sight, galloping through the red haze -

Knee to knee and horse to horse - the dying sun glinting on bayonet points ...

That poem brings home to me the rich traditions of the Light Horse and makes me immensely feel proud that, through the Trundle Troopers, members of my electorate honour, preserve and pass on to younger generations the history of the Australian Light Horse Regiment and celebrate its customs. I look forward to supporting this magnificent group of the Dubbo electorate for many years.

CAMDEN ELECTORATE RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.14 p.m.]: On 13 July I had the pleasure of attending the official soil turning of the Kentlyn Rural Fire Brigade Station and the handover of new tankers to various brigades in the Macarthur Zone. The ceremony marked the first fruits of an extensive strategic planning process undertaken by the Macarthur Zone of the Rural Fire Service. The strategic plan was born from a desire of key identified stakeholders consisting of Camden Council, the Campbelltown City Council and the Liverpool City Council to be able to identify where and how the Rural Fire Service in the Macarthur Zone will operate in the future. It was wonderful to attend that event in the company of my good friend Paul Lake, who is the Mayor of Campbelltown, and my parliamentary colleague, Paul Lynch, who is the member for Liverpool.

The population demographics and land uses in south-west Sydney are changing at an accelerated pace. Camden's population of 53,000 is set to increase to 300,000 during the next three decades, which will result in rapid integration of extensive rural-urban fire risks and increased population risk factors. The Rural Fire Service is optimistic and regards that as an opportunity for recruitment of Rural Fire Service members in expansion areas. With a growing population and expansion of residential development, areas of significant bushland and regenerated bushland will coexist with new urban development and require the presence of the Rural Fire Service to provide supplementary support service when bushfires occur in the Macarthur regions.

The aim of the strategic plan is to minimise the risk of adverse impacts of bushfires on life, property and the environment. The objectives are to undertake a strategic planning framework to identify risks and opportunities to continue recruitment and volunteer participation within the Macarthur region. Reducing the vulnerability of communities to bushfires can be done by improving the Macarthur Zone's preparedness and response capacity and by providing financial stakeholders of the Macarthur Zone with strategic outcomes and funding forecasts.

On 12 July, Jason Heffernan, who is the zone manager of the Macarthur Zone Rural Fire Service, gave a comprehensive briefing to Camden Council on the future of the Rural Fire Service in our area. The Macarthur Zone Strategic Plan presentation was professional, informative and well received by the council. The plan, having been written with the input of the volunteers of the Macarthur brigades, captured the essence of the Rural Fire Service as an organisation that the local community holds in high regard. Local government authorities should embrace the strategic plan and include it in their own planning frameworks.

Australia is unique in its reliance upon volunteers in times of disaster. When emergency management and response is required, volunteers can always be found at the forefront—especially in our rural communities. Volunteers are the backbone of our emergency management and response services during disasters. Volunteers donate their time, manpower and experience to ensuring our community is protected. They often risk their own safety to keep our community safe. I cannot speak highly enough of the volunteers who give so much to our community through their commitment to the Rural Fire Service.

I commend the recipients of the National Medal and Long Service Medal who were presented with their awards during the evening's events. The men and women recipients of the Long Service Medal for Ten Years were Michael Gow, who contributed 10 years service; Vicki Williamson, for 11 years service; Kenneth Graham, who contributed 14 years service; Matthew Irvine, for 18 years service; Neil Williams, for 22 years service; and Robert Etchells, who contributed 33 years service. Daria Hayes received the National Medal for 15 Years for 17 years service. Neil Williams also received the Long Service Medal 1st Clasp—Twenty Years for his 22 years of service, and Robert Etchells received the Long Service Medal 1st Clasp—Twenty Years, and 2nd Clasp—Thirty Years for 33 years of service. I have the utmost respect for these men and women, the volunteers I have just named, for having served over a significant period and for all of the volunteers who give their time selflessly.

On a personal note I am very happy that the Catherine Field Rural Fire Brigade in the Camden electorate received a new category 7 tanker under the ongoing capital improvement program of the Macarthur Zone Strategic Plan. The Macarthur Zone Rural Fire Service is a well organised and highly professional service that our community depends upon and is extremely proud of. This service is held in very high regard amongst our community. Without the Rural Fire Service, the Macarthur community would be left unprotected from a wide range of incidents and disasters, including floods and fire.

NORTHERN ILLAWARRA MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.19 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to talk about Northern Illawarra Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels is an important service that has operated in most communities for decades and hopefully will remain operating for many more. The Northern Illawarra Meals on Wheels team is based at Bulli Hospital and serves around 120 clients. It provides nutritious hot and cold meals to our elderly, frail and aged citizens—a simple but special task. Each month when Parliament is not sitting I volunteer a couple of hours to help deliver meals for the Northern Illawarra Meals on Wheels. It is fantastic to be out in the community serving the elderly, frail and aged citizens as well as those with a disability. As we contemplate a national disability insurance scheme I am heartened that Meals on Wheels has been at the cornerstone of providing support for those doing it tough or who need additional care and support. Meals on Wheels volunteers carry out a thankless task but they make an enormous difference.

It is amazing to see the glow on the faces of clients when someone pops in and spends 10 or 15 minutes listening to them chat about their day. The visit is extremely important because it is more than about just receiving a meal: it is an opportunity to say hello to someone and interact about weekly activities as well as receive important feedback about what is happening around the area. Most importantly, Meals on Wheels provides the opportunity to see firsthand the enormous benefit of volunteering in our local communities. The Northern Illawarra Meals on Wheels service has been operating from Bulli for many years; it is well known and well serviced. We all should be familiar with the Meals on Wheels service in our electorates because it provides enormous support for the often forgotten people of our communities.

Some elderly people have no families or loved ones and often are unable to cook healthy and nutritious meals. The Northern Illawarra Meals on Wheels provides not only good meals but also friendly faces and an important level of support for our community. Sometimes we in this place take for granted the support provided by volunteers and as local members it is incumbent on us to see firsthand the work of the many organisations whose volunteers provide support and assistance with huge hearts. I encourage the Government to continue to fund through the Department of Disabilities and Ageing its support for services such as Meals on Wheels—enough can never be provided. This important organisation does an enormous amount of work across New South Wales, and particularly in the northern Illawarra suburbs. I take my hat off to the volunteers and applaud them for what they do. They are testament to the character of our community. On behalf of all the residents of the Keira electorate, I thank the Northern Illawarra Meals on Wheels for providing enormous support and nutritious meals. The community is indebted permanently to it.

TAMWORTH CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [1.23 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the importance of the Tamworth Correctional Centre and in doing so refer to the scaremongering and intimidation tactics of the Labor Party last week within the Tamworth electorate. On Tuesday 26 July 2011 Labor MLC Walt Secord swanned into the Tamworth electorate to instil fear into the hearts and minds of hardworking families and employees at the Tamworth Correctional Centre by claiming that this important facility was to be closed. This stunt threatened the sense of security and the livelihoods of over 80 hardworking local families and clearly demonstrated the contempt of the Labor Party for the employees of the Tamworth Correctional Centre.

I acknowledge and recognise the role of the Tamworth Correctional Centre officers and contractors, who do a great job. They work in unique circumstances with some of the most vulnerable and demanding members of our community. These employees require expert knowledge and skills to carry out their role effectively as well as the ability to interact positively with individuals with a range of personal problems who sometimes may be quite difficult to manage and in some cases may be quite dangerous.

The job of a correctional centre officer already is emotionally demanding as they perform one of the most difficult roles within our public service. These hardworking and respected people should not become the political pawns of the failed Labor Party. The Tamworth Correctional Centre houses approximately 99 inmates: 64 maximum security and 35 minimum security. The centre services courts in Tamworth, Gunnedah, Armidale, Moree and surrounding areas and conducts up to 500 movements of inmates each month. The editorial of today's Tamworth *Northern Daily Leader* highlighted:

The nearest correction facilities beyond Tamworth are at Muswellbrook and Glen Innes. Moving defendants in the North West region who have been refused bail or those serving periodic detention, to facilities outside the region would be a logistical nightmare for the corrective services department.

There is serious rationale that says the centre must stay where it is and must stay open.

The Tamworth Correctional Centre plays a very important role in the local community by making a significant contribution to our regional economy. The centre enables inmates to receive educational and rehabilitative opportunities and enables the carriage of justice to occur locally. It ensures that inmates, their families, community elders and other support services within our local area can continue to interact providing stability and minimising further breakdown of family networks, which may occur due to geographic isolation. Keeping families close also assists in the rehabilitation of inmates. The ultimate outcome of rehabilitation is for offenders to not reoffend and the Tamworth Correctional Centre plays a big role in that process.

The local community is aware of a statewide review of correctional facilities, including Tamworth, to achieve savings. I have visited Tamworth jail and spoken to staff informing them that the unions and management are in discussions on how to achieve those savings. That may mean a few changes in the operation of the facility. That will be decided by the unions and management. The need for this review results from the Labor Party's poor management of our State, leaving us with a \$5.4 billion black hole. We need to make the hard decisions and make savings across the board if we are to make New South Wales number one again. The Government currently has no plans to close the Tamworth Correctional Centre. It is my job to make sure that those plans do not change. I will continue to lobby for our hard workers in the lead-up to what will be a very difficult September budget. Tamworth jail plays a very important role in our region and needs to stay open.

CUMBERLAND GANG SHOW

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [1.28 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the hard work, enthusiasm and dedication of the Cumberland Gang Show—the biggest gang show in Australia and, indeed, the world. I have heard much about the Cumberland Gang Show and was not disappointed when I had the opportunity to attend a performance last month. I had the privilege also to go backstage and meet the cast and crew. I was blown away throughout the performance by the passion of the performers. The Cumberland Gang Show has performed for 42 continuous seasons. It commenced in a scout hall at East Ryde in 1970, graduated to Marsden High School in 1972 and then in the 1988 bicentennial year moved to its current home at the Riverside Theatre, Parramatta. The show currently has a cast of 144 scouts and guides. More than 300 parents and helpers assist behind the scenes. Many people attend each year and the 200,000th patron was entertained during the 2005 season.

Three members of the gang have given more than 40 years' service to the show. Lindsay McEwen joined the cast in the very first show and currently works in the stage crew. Ian Marshall commenced in the cast and has been for many years audio team leader. Robert Lang commenced in the cast before moving on to being the producer. Each year on Red Scarf night long service is recognised with special scarves recognising 10, 20 or 30 years of service to the gang. The show has only ever had two producers: Dennis Butler produced the first eight seasons before the current producer, Dr Robert Lang, took over in 1978. Rob has produced 34 seasons. Members may know Dr Lang, whose day job is chief executive officer of Parramatta City Council. When I spoke to Dr Lang after the show he highlighted the show's importance. It is about giving opportunities to youth, leadership and team building. The show gives people the ability to achieve something and to build upon their successes.

Auditions are held in December. Then there are four months of rehearsals and the show opens in July. This year 5,000 people attended the show in two weeks. It is the biggest annual event for the Riverside Theatre,

Parramatta. Volunteers contribute 13,000 hours to enable the production. For example, Elizabeth Williams made costumes for countless hours, despite health issues of late. The show has 144 people in its cast, as well as an orchestra made up of people from all around Sydney, including professionals, and set designers, whose challenge was to build a 12-metre wide and seven-metre high set. Backstage work included lighting, audio, fly tower, queuing, hand props, make-up, wardrobes and special effects. Front-of-stage activities included program souvenirs, marketing, ushers, administration team, catering and security. Catering looks after 500 cast and crew at each performance.

Gang shows around Australia and New Zealand appreciate the original material written by members of the Cumberland gang. Three members have had their music recognised for accreditation by the National Performing Arts Conference: Dr Rob Lang, producer; Adam Wardell, who is now the leader of the creative team; and Dr Jeanie Wood, musical director. The Gang Show makes a difference to the lives of people. It is designed to present a challenge to every member and give them the wherewithal to overcome those challenges. The whole team is encouraged to reach for excellence and to inspire the audience, cast and crew. From the youngest cast member to the oldest hand, people take what they have learnt and apply it to the rest of their lives. Parents say that their children gain self-confidence from the personal achievement of meeting challenges, and this success gives them confidence in other things. I commend the Cumberland Game Show, the Scout Association and the Girl Guides Association for their contributions.

KOGARAH FREE SHUTTLE BUS

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [1.33 p.m.]: I want to inform the House of a free shuttle bus service from Kogarah Railway Station to St George Hospital that commenced service shortly before the last election. The bus operates a 10-minute run around the Kogarah town centre, St George Hospital and Railway Parade shopping strip between 9.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to move people, particularly the elderly, from the station to Kogarah, to help keep their cars off the street, to attend medical appointments and to assist mums with prams to get to and from the hospital or other parts of the locality. It is well documented that Kogarah has parking issues. Kogarah Municipal Council supports the service. The former Government introduced this service for a trial period. During the election and since I have been lobbied by my constituents to have this successful service expanded.

I wrote to the Minister for Transport and requested that the route be expanded to include the Calvary Hospital and St George Private Hospital. The proposal is supported by council as it believes it would ease parking pressures on Kogarah and around Calvary Hospital. Mayor Nick Varvaris and Councillor Nick Katris said the council should ask the State Government to add Calvary Hospital to the Kogarah bus loop. I thank council for its support. I have given the Minister time to settle into the huge transport portfolio but now I ask that she consider changing the route to improve the service it provides to residents and visitors in the Kogarah area. Constituents who have been very active in lobbying for the change to the bus route include Rita Reale, who said that the shuttle service needs to stop also at Kogarah RSL, St George Leagues Club, Rockdale Plaza and Carlton Railway Station.

However, the purpose of the shuttle service was to be a fast and frequent service that delivered people to their medical appointments and into the central business district. Ms Patricia Shave requests that the service stop at the St George Private Hospital. Ms Elizabeth Gango also wants the service to stop at the private hospital and Calvary Hospital. Alan Sparke says that provision of the bus service is very thoughtful and he requests that the stops I have mentioned be included on the route. Joan Banks and Judith Warren and many other constituents have written to me about this matter. I want to allay their concerns and advise that I have written to the Minister about this very reasonable request. Changing the route of the service will enable many more patrons to use the service. It was a good initiative to provide a free service. Kogarah has a big commuter car park, the M41 bus, the interchange at Allawah, Kogarah and the big new Hurstville bus interchange. The change will be welcomed by residents and visitors.

NORTHERN TABLELANDS ELECTORATE DIALYSIS SERVICES

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [1.38 p.m.]: It is well established that people who have to undergo hospital dialysis treatment three days a week fare best if they do not have to travel too far to access that service. As many members would be aware, dialysis takes from five to six hours and a return journey of three or more hours on top of that, as is often required in country regions, affects patients' health and wellbeing. A doctor told me this week that those who regularly travel such long distances are often worn out and have a very poor quality of life.

The ideal situation is to have dialysis services close to home. It enables family members or friends to visit and spend time with patients or transport them to the shorter distances required. These days many more people in their seventies and eighties need regular dialysis treatments, and the many hours on the road are stressful and add to health problems. With the ageing population these numbers are on the increase. Statistics I looked at recently show that there had been a more than 6.5 per cent a year increase in the use of dialysis services across the State.

When I first became the member for Northern Tablelands in 1999 there were no hospital dialysis services available in hospitals in the entire electorate. All patients had to travel to Tamworth for treatment and spend a large part of their week on the road. At that time the arguments against establishing renal dialysis units in Armidale and Inverell were that there were not enough patients to justify the expense, the capital cost would be too high, it would be difficult to recruit staff, the staffing costs would be too high, et cetera. I am pleased to say that, through the persistence of the communities, we worked together and broke through the negativity barrier, and satellite dialysis units were set up at Armidale Hospital in 2000 and in Inverell the following year. Since that time the Armidale unit has been expanded to six chairs and operates some evenings as well as day shifts to meet the demand. The four-chair Inverell unit operates three days a week and is now at full capacity.

Today I am calling for planning to begin for a renal dialysis unit at Glen Innes Hospital. It should be part of the Network Services Plan now being drawn up by Hunter New England Health. Recently I met with a group of dialysis patients and their families in Glen Innes. Their situation is very similar to those that existed in the Inverell and Armidale districts prior to the establishment of their local dialysis units. Those who have to travel for treatment often have to get up as early as 5.00 a.m. We all know that winter mornings in New England, to use a politically correct term, are invigorating. By the time they return home that day, at 5 o'clock to 6 o'clock that night, it has been a very long day. One patient unfortunate enough to miss out on two kidney transplants told me she had to spend weeks receiving dialysis at the John Hunter and Tamworth hospitals because she could not access the treatment in Glen Innes.

It has been put to me that a sensible first step to alleviate the situation for Glen Innes patients would be to extend the Inverell dialysis unit from four to six stations. That would mean a return journey of only one hour and twenty minutes a day instead of the two and a half hours it takes to travel to and from Armidale. The one-off capital cost of extending the Inverell unit has been estimated at \$200,000. There would be no need for additional staff because the Inverell unit is already established and underway, but it would involve some additional running expenses. This service extension is doable. In my view it would be a positive interim measure and would be welcomed by doctors, patients and their families.

At the same time planning should begin to establish a dialysis unit at the Glen Innes Hospital to meet the needs of patients in the Glen Innes-Severn area and also of those in Tenterfield farther north who currently travel to Lismore, Stanthorpe or Toowoomba for treatment. Those who have the best interests of dialysis patients at heart are desperate to have these services available at their local hospitals. Those established so far have been outstandingly successful and meet the standards of best practice for patients who need these treatments three days a week. I urge the Government to act swiftly to alleviate the situation and make it possible for Glen Innes-Severn patients to access treatment through an expansion of the Inverell Hospital dialysis unit in the short term and for the planning for a full dialysis unit for Glen Innes Hospital to proceed as quickly as possible.

DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoynes) [1.43 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House an important issue in my electorate. The main points of the issue have been summarised quite comprehensively by the principals of St Marks Primary School and Drummoynes Public School. St Marks Primary School and Drummoynes Public School are asking that the necessary authorisation be put in place to permanently close South Street between Broughton Street and Rawson Avenue in Drummoynes to all vehicles. The Canada Bay Council approved a temporary closure of the street during building works at both schools over the past 12 months—works that took place as a result of the Building the Education Revolution Program. That was an ideal opportunity to evaluate the impact of the closure. The schools are now seeking permanent closure of this section of South Street in order to turn it into a shared open green space and games area, with pedestrian access only.

The schools believe a move to permanently close this section of South Street to vehicular traffic offers considerable long-term benefits for the school and the local community. There are many advantages of the closure. One is that it will provide open recreational space that is desperately needed for 950 students. Also, it

would bring about a major improvement in safety for students and the community. There is strong support for this closure within the wider school community. I deal first with the open recreation space desperately needed for 950 students. South Street runs between two very busy schools which together have an enrolment of 950 students. Enrolments at both schools have markedly increased over the past three years, and our data suggest that this pattern is set to continue for a considerable time. Both school sites have very limited playground space and urgently need additional space in which children can play, to enhance the welfare of the students. The permanent closure of this section of South Street will provide much-needed open space for the use of students from both schools.

Regarding major safety improvements for students and the community, both sites are bounded by busy roads. With the extension of the Iron Cove Bridge, extra traffic in the side streets around the two schools has greatly increased. School communities, councils and governments have a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of this most vulnerable age group of five to 12-year-old children. The temporary closure of South Street has significantly increased the safety of the students from both schools as they enter and exit the premises. South Street used to be dangerous, especially at the beginning and end of school hours. It was a congested road. Staff on playground duty consistently reported dangerous and speeding drivers using this narrow street, at great risk to children.

I encourage Canada Bay Council to implement a communications program to consult further with local residents about this proposal. I believe there is strong support for it within the wider school community. The proposal to permanently close South Street is strongly supported by the Drummoyne school council, the Drummoyne Public School parents and citizens association, Drummoyne and St Marks teaching staff, the St Marks parents and friends association and Monsignor Vince Redden. I am raising this issue of importance as the State member. The Federal member for Reid has been notified, as has the New South Wales Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli. I urge Canada Bay Council to support this important safety issue and wellbeing initiative for 950 primary school students. I hope council will consider this issue as a matter of urgency. I fully support the initiative and congratulate the principal of St Marks Primary School, Mrs Margaret Sargisson, and the principal of Drummoyne Public School, Ms Gail Charlier, on the outstanding job they do for the community.

CESSNOCK ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [1.47 p.m.]: What a privilege to be back in Parliament. I started my inaugural speech in this House using a phrase something akin to "brimming with pride and enthusiasm". I start this next session of the sittings of this Parliament with the same sentiments—brimming with pride and enthusiasm. The recent break gave me the opportunity to get out and about and meet and spend time with my constituents, doing with them the things that they regard as so important to their lives. How fantastic and humbling it was. Three events in particular, which I will relate to the House in a moment, gave me cause to be humble about what is happening in my community and how brilliant our communities are.

In my time away from this place I had three unique opportunities. The first involved the Rotary Club of Cessnock Wine Country holding of its changeover dinner and annual thankyou night. This Rotary club is constituted by just seven people, but without fail they turn up to meetings—except in extraordinary circumstances—lest they should wear the criticism of their colleagues. They manage to raise more than \$7,000 per person annually. They have been doing this for more than a decade.

The recipient of their funds is the Children's Medical Research Institute. The institute's association with Cessnock began 30 years ago. For 20 years a lady by the name of Olive Drayton—who is part of the family associated with Drayton's Family Wines—solely manned the ship and raised funds for the institute before handing the job over to the Rotary Club of Cessnock Wine Country because age was catching up with her. The Rotary Club continues her great legacy. I am humbled by and pleased to acknowledge the longstanding efforts of the members of this association.

The second dinner I attended—and I do not want to be labelled with the moniker Sir Lunchalot—was the Cessnock Lions Club Changeover Dinner. On this occasion I was fortunate to meet more hardworking people who are dedicated to their community. They have a long history and go about their work with pride under the banner of fellowship. Their work includes fundraising efforts for local, national and global conditions of childhood cancer—a topic dear to my heart—and issues of childhood sight, hearing and mobility. They support an amazing array of worthwhile and important causes. They conduct their business with humour, primarily through a member whose title is the Lion Tamer. Those who have not attended a Lions Club function

should go to listen to the Lion Tamer at work. The Lion Tamer's role is to make all sorts of assertions—ridiculous, large and small, true and false—about other Lions members and accuse them of all sorts of things in a humorous way. The Lion Tamer then finds the accused guilty of the charges and orders them to pay money into the fine jar.

On this occasion I wish to contribute and make the job of the Lion Tamer a little bit easier by naming two members. First, I refer to media starlet Peter Torenbeek. Peter has been in the media for many and varied reasons and on each occasion he has been ordered to pay a fine. Peter recently appeared on the front cover of the *White Pages* and *Yellow Pages* for the Cessnock community, for which he also had to pay a fine. On that occasion it was in relation to another of his contributions to the community in his role as President of the local Men's Shed. My naming him in the House today undoubtedly will result in his having to pay another fine. Jason Harrington, the outgoing president of Cessnock Lions, also will have to pay a fine. Jason and I have been friends for 20 years. He is a hardworking man, a former local chemist and a former soccer, sorry, football player. He now works with his wife and children to improve the condition and treatment of children with autism.

The third function I attended was the Cessnock Women's View Club forty-sixth annual dinner, which also commemorated the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. The guest speaker was a newsreader with NBN News for the Hunter, North Coast and Central Coast who has a child with autism spectrum disorder. She spoke at length about her time in the media not only as a journalist but also as a mother of a child with autism. The incidence of autism seems to be increasing and more must be done to address it. I am pleased to acknowledge these magnificent people in my community.

BETTER BUILDINGS PARTNERSHIP

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [1.52 p.m.]: The electorate of Sydney includes the central business district of the global city of Australia. Today I wish to talk about an important partnership that recently has been created, the Better Buildings Partnership, between the Council of the City of Sydney and the 13 major property owners who collectively own nearly 60 per cent of the city's commercial office space. They have agreed to work together to address global warming. The partnership includes AMP Capital Investors, Brookfield Office Properties Australia, Charter Hall, Colonial First State Property Global Asset Management, DEXUS, GPT Group, Investa Property Group, Lend Lease, Mirvac, Stockland, Frasers Property, the University of Sydney, the University of Technology, Sydney, and the City of Sydney.

The recently signed historic memorandum of understanding will make Sydney one of the world's leading green cities. It is the first time major property owners in Australia will work together on a precinct level with city government to take action on climate change. Australia has one of the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions per capita in the world, mainly due to our reliance on dirty coal-fired electricity, which loses about 66 per cent of its energy directly to the atmosphere through heat, with further energy wasted in transmission from distant power stations. Seventy five per cent of Australia's emissions are generated in our cities, particularly from energy consumption in commercial buildings, and 66 per cent of Australia's total energy demand in central business districts comes from stationary energy use. It is, therefore, in the commercial buildings of our cities where we need to make the deepest cuts if we are to combat global warming.

Businesses recognise we need to act on climate change and they want to work with governments to take practical action that will not only reduce their emissions but also make them more commercially competitive. Energy efficiency measures are the necessary first step to reducing greenhouse gas emissions but the real game-changing move will be the establishment of green infrastructure such as trigeneration and recycled water networks. The Better Buildings Partnership will help develop commercially viable energy infrastructure to create low-carbon zones across the city. Once the existing regulatory impediments have been removed it will be possible to make trigeneration available to the entire property market.

Producing energy locally instead of bringing it in from the Hunter Valley will reduce pressure on the State's ailing electricity infrastructure and future electricity price rises across the State. Improving the energy efficiency of buildings and providing locally generated energy through green infrastructure hubs is also smart business. It will help Sydney businesses reduce their overheads, create opportunities for new businesses and make our city a better place to live and work. A global survey in January of the world's 700 largest property funds and private landlords named Australia's leading property companies as global environmental leaders. It said:

It is clear that property companies from all over the world can learn from Australian best practices in environmental management.

The City of Sydney has committed to reducing our emissions by 70 per cent by 2030. Our partnership with the 13 Sydney major property owners to develop energy, water and waste systems to reduce our carbon footprint

will help us reach that target. Recently the city hosted Professor Ross Garnaut, adviser to the Federal Government on climate change, to present his report during our City Conversations series. He congratulated the City of Sydney on our work and said:

I have seen few, if any, programs to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions of the ambition of those embodied in the work program of the City of Sydney.

Garnaut's report warns that, even with current international commitments to reduce carbon emissions, global average temperatures could rise by three or four degrees Celsius, with six degrees a possibility. This is the scenario we are facing and I am proud that the Sydney city council and businesses are leading the way in reducing emissions and costs. For many years the city has worked closely in support of Sydney businesses—from small start-ups through to the big end of town—with grants, programs and business awards. The memorandum of understanding takes this relationship to a whole new level. By working together we will make Sydney one of the world's leading green cities. To all the members who have signed up I express my gratitude for their vision and commitment. Together we will make Sydney one of the world's top sustainable cities.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser) left the chair at 1.57 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

NORWAY KILLINGS

The SPEAKER: On behalf of members of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly I convey our condolences to our friends in Norway. On 24 July 2011 the world was rocked by the calculated and shocking attacks that resulted in the death of 100 people in a deeply peace-loving nation, Norway—our friend and ally. The targeted bombing of government offices in Oslo, including the office of the Prime Minister, followed by the killing spree that resulted in the murder of 86 young people at a summer youth camp on the island of Utoya is beyond comprehension. Countless other lives—the families, friends and loved ones of the dead, and the many injured—have been and will continue to be directly and indirectly impacted by these events. Their lives have been changed irrevocably forever. We will all struggle to understand these senseless actions—Norway's deadliest attack since World War II. We stand united with their Majesties King Harald and Queen Sonja, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg and the people of Norway in condemning these actions in the strongest possible terms, and we convey to them the deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences of this House and the people of New South Wales.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills was reported:

Destination NSW Bill 2011
Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Part 3A Repeal) Bill 2011
Infrastructure NSW Bill 2011
Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2011
Parliamentary, Local Council and Public Sector Executives Remuneration Legislation Amendment Bill 2011
Regional Relocation (Home Buyers Grant) Bill 2011
Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2011

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from the Administrator:

T. F. BATHURST
Administrator

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 31 July 2011

The Honourable Thomas Frederick Bathurst, Chief Justice of New South Wales, Administrator of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, having assumed the administration of the government of the Commonwealth of Australia, he has this day assumed the administration of the government of the State.

DEATH OF MARGARET OLLEY, AC, AO

Ministerial Statement

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [2.20 p.m.]: I wish to express our condolences to the niece and other family members of Margaret Olley, who died last week.

As we all know, Margaret Olley was a national living treasure. That was the title endowed upon her in 1997 by the National Trust as part of its series to acknowledge those Australians who had made a significant contribution to this State and to the nation. Margaret Olley was a woman whose life was characterised through the arts. She was celebrated first in the Archibald exhibition of 1948—a controversial win that year by the Dobell portrait claimed by some to be a caricature. But in the great tradition of the Archibald Prize, many people flocked to see the painting of this woman in the hat that had caused such controversy.

Earlier this year I was pleased to be present when one of Margaret Olley's protégés, Ben Quilty, won the Archibald Prize with yet another portrait of Margaret Olley—a portrait that to my untrained eye was characterised more by the pieces of the canvas that were not touched with paint but which was a remarkable resemblance of this woman who had contributed so much to the life of this country, to the arts and, I acknowledge particularly, to regional art galleries across this State and elsewhere. I met Margaret Olley only once and as I left she said, "You must come and have a cup of tea with me". With all the stories I have now heard about her house in Paddington—the clutter, the disorganisation and the marvellous artworks she produced there—I will always regret that I did not take that opportunity to have a cup of tea with one of our great artists.

I remember vividly that the moment she was introduced to me she grabbed my hand. She used her walking frame like Antony Sher used his crutches in *Richard III*. She managed to wheel it around as she held my hand and told me how important it was for governments to support the arts and how important it was in particular to support opportunities for artists who live, or who want to live, in regional areas. What else would one expect of a woman born in Kyogle and who, despite a brief tenure in another State, came back to this State and never forgot her roots? What else would one expect of someone who comes through in all the stories written and told about her with three characteristics: first artistic ability; secondly enormous generosity; and thirdly political incorrectness?

Margaret Olley insisted on being called Ms Olley. Edmund Capon, the Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, tells me that most of her friends simply called her "Oil". Ms Olley was a monarchist. She was someone who shared a range of views, someone who battled her own demons but someone who exhibited great discipline. In other circumstances Ms Olley might—given the way she wisely invested her money in property—be called a property developer. But she was someone who never lost sight of the fact that this nation has been built not just on what we can manufacture and what we can grow, but also on that artistic field of endeavour for which we have been known around the world and for which Margaret Olley helped us become known.

One of the stories that I liked most about Margaret Olley was told last week by Ben Quilty, this year's Archibald Prize winner whose portrait of Margaret Olley is something to behold. He made the point that Margaret took him under her wing, she started buying his artworks at a time when no-one else would and she ensured that he was able to exist and subsist as an artist. When he went to thank her she said, "And when you are successful this must be what you also do." She was a woman and an artist who understood benefaction. She was a woman and an artist who understood that part of the duties and obligations of those who are successful is to encourage others to follow in the same footsteps. Life could not have been easy for Margaret Olley. She was a woman at a time when it was not easy to be a woman—if it is easy to be woman today. She was a woman who forged her way in an area of the arts that had been dominated by men, but she was a woman who left her mark on this State and this nation.

On behalf of the people of New South Wales I was delighted to offer her family—her niece—the opportunity to have a State memorial service. That service will be held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales later this month. It was her spiritual home. Not only is it adorned with her artworks, not only did she write cheque after cheque to assist it in acquiring artworks from around the world, but it was from there that she sought, whether in the Tweed or in other parts of the State, to ensure that families and children, and all those interested in the arts across this great State could access wonderful acquisitions. When I spoke with the Governor last week, she made it clear to me that Margaret Olley's support of the arts was not confined to painting. She told me a story about Margaret Olley buying a grand piano to support music. This was a remarkable woman. She is no longer a national living treasure, but she remains a national treasure.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [2.27 p.m.]: I commemorate the passing of Margaret Olley, one of Australia's greatest-ever artists, who passed away on 26 July 2011 aged 88. As the Premier said, Margaret Olley was a true legend of the arts and her passing is a great loss for the arts community in New South Wales, Australia and around the world. As the Premier said, she was born in Kyogle and started from very humble beginnings, but when her talent was noticed by an art teacher at her boarding

school her career began to take off. With a career spanning more than 60 years, Margaret Olley had more than six solo exhibitions in Australia, as well as shows at the Nevill Keating Pictures and Browse & Darby galleries in London. Well known for her oil paintings of home interiors, and still-life paintings of carefully arranged objects such as bowls, plates, jugs, flowers and fruit, Margaret Olley's works have become true Australian classics and are loved the world over.

But to recognise Margaret Olley as only an artist would fail to appreciate her generous philanthropy and the work she did for the wider arts community, which raised the profile of Australian art and artists. Margaret Olley was also a patron and mentor for many younger artists. Over the years she donated more than 130 works of art to public collections in Australia. In an interesting achievement for a still-life artist, Margaret Olley was twice the subject, as the Premier has alluded to, of winning entries in the Archibald Prize—one in 1948 and again this year in a painting by Ben Quilty. In 2006 she was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia in recognition of a lifetime spent supporting the arts and those less fortunate in our community.

It was not just art lovers who mourned Margaret Olley's passing. The entire Australian community has now lost a true living legend of the arts. However, Margaret Olley's legacy will leave a collection of works so rich and diverse that the people of New South Wales and Australia will be able to see her exuberance and talent live on. I join with the Premier in paying tribute to Margaret Olley, one of Australia's greatest artists and a true champion of the arts in Australia

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.32 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. In light of his decision to reconsider ethics classes, impose a moratorium on marine parks and exempt police from his industrial relations legislation, will he admit that he has broken his promise not to do deals with minor parties?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The short answer is no, but I have four minutes and 57 seconds left, and I would hate to waste it. I remember saying to the editorial board, I think, of the *Sydney Morning Herald* during the election campaign that from time to time they ought to listen to what I say before they report their commentary. I do not complain about media reporting, that is fair game, but I wish that just occasionally they would start with the facts and then move to commentary as opposed to starting with commentary. The fact is I will respect all members of this House and all members of the other House because they have been elected by the people of New South Wales. Whether we like it or not, members of both Houses of Parliament have a right to vote. It is incumbent upon members to use that right appropriately. I have said repeatedly that I will not sell out the principles, policies or programs of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition in exchange for the support of those minor parties to get legislation through.

That is precisely what Labor did over 16 years and it dropped this Government in a hole. Whether it was Alan Corbett, who represented a micro party called A Better Future for our Children, whether it was Malcolm Jones, who represented the Outdoor Recreation Party, whether it was the first iteration of the Shooters Party or whether it was The Greens repeatedly, the party opposite time and again sold out the public interest for political interest. It sold out the public interest to try to gain votes. It worked for a decade and a half but on 26 March it ended and the election of members across this Chamber was a reflection of the community's concern about that. The Coalition put public interest first. The Coalition went to the election campaign with a clear commitment that ethics classes would not be wound back.

What I did last Thursday is what I will do, I presume, with members of The Greens, who I read today are going to introduce a bill to label chickens or label eggs or label other members of Parliament—I am not

quite sure what it is about—which is to consider the proposal. It will not come as a surprise to anybody on my side of the House that every piece of legislation that is introduced into the Parliament, whether by Labor, which is yet to happen, by Liberals or Nationals, Independents, Greens or other parties, is considered by Cabinet and by the joint party room. That is process. How you get from the position where I had a conversation with Fred Nile—it is clear from that conversation that he is going to introduce his bill, and I gave the bleeding obvious commitment that it will be considered by Cabinet and the joint party room, and I have restated the fact that we took a policy to the election that ethics classes would stay intact—to the headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* is beyond me, except that it was explained.

It is great to see Fairfax assisting those displaced headline writers from the *News of the World*. With all due respect to the reporter who wrote the story, he said in the middle of his article that the only commitment was that we would consider the legislation, as we consider every other piece of legislation. There is a process. I do not expect that we will support The Greens legislation. I say to the member for Balmain that maybe there will be the exception, but it is hard to argue. Whether The Greens like it or not and whether Labor likes it or not, every member of Parliament has the capacity to introduce legislation. I well remember that those opposite, along with The Greens, did the State's dirtiest deal in relation to donation laws before the last election that gave the unions a free pass.

Mr Nile will introduce his bill, it will be considered by the Cabinet and it will be considered by the party room, but our election commitment stands. Those opposite should not judge us by the lack of standards they applied to themselves in office. They should not judge us by the way they operated in government because that got the State into the mess it is in. We are determined to clean it up. I say again to my friends in the media: they should start listening to what I say, not base their stories on their grand obsessions about what we may do given certain circumstances.

NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM AGREEMENT

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is directed to the Premier. What improvements to the National Health Reform Agreement have been secured by the New South Wales Government?

[*Interruption*]

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Well may the member for Canterbury laugh because it is clear as a result of this historic agreement today that New South Wales has got a far better deal than that sought by the member for Heffron before the last election campaign. It is pretty fair to say that the people of New South Wales have breathed a sigh of relief today that it was a Coalition Government and not Labor that delivered this national agreement for New South Wales. We all remember the hysteria of the member for Heffron during the campaign claiming that if we did not sign up to her agreement, her signing of the memorandum of understanding with the Prime Minister, we would lose funds. She was very clear; she predicted all sorts of dire consequences if the Liberal and National parties did not sign up immediately during the election campaign to the deal she had negotiated. I said at the time that we would do what all the Labor Premiers were doing, including the Labor Premier of Queensland: go away and look at the agreement to see whether it delivered benefits to the people of New South Wales, city and country.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: And it did.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am glad for that interjection because, despite that interjection, the member for Heffron signed up to an agreement that would have delivered little if any additional growth funding until 2019-20. In other words, under the deal crafted by those opposite we would have had to wait eight years to see any increased funds flowing to New South Wales. We were never going to rely on the negotiating skills of those opposite, who over 16 years signed up to every dodgy deal that was going. In the dying days of the last Parliament those opposite sold off the State's electricity assets for a song. We always knew we could deliver a better deal for the people of New South Wales and we have done just that.

The agreement announced by the Prime Minister today represents not only a good deal for New South Wales but also a vast improvement on what those opposite signed up to. As we know, as a result of the GST arrangement entered into by Bob Carr, for years New South Wales has been robbed of Federal funding. We are the largest State with the largest population. Today, \$9.5 billion of the additional \$16.4 billion in health funding will be brought forward and distributed to the States on a per capita basis. In other words, the funding will be available earlier and it will be split on a population basis—and that means New South Wales will finally get its fair share of health funds.

That represents an additional \$3 billion over six years. That is money that is earmarked for our hospitals that the previous Labor Government was simply unable to secure. Under the revised package we will also have greater flexibility to move funds between hospitals and services aimed at reducing hospital admissions. It should be the aim of any agreement to promote programs that stop hospital admissions. We appointed a Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and that is what the Minister has been doing—pushing us to live healthier. That is one of the reasons I am running in the City to Surf this year. I do not run really; I sort of shuffle along like Cliff Young. We want to run programs that assist patients with chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity and heart and kidney disease, so that patients do not end up in hospital.

We will be able to set up programs that allow people to be treated at home rather than in hospital. We all know that the State's health care system was allowed to fall into disarray under Labor, which closed 1,500 beds and slashed the number of beds available in emergency departments during its last six years in office. One certainty under the agreement negotiated by Labor in February this year was that New South Wales would have again missed out on its fair share of funding. We would have lost out to the smaller States yet again. We would have been penalised for having the largest population. The Coalition has reversed that trend. We have secured more funds, we have secured them more quickly, and most importantly we will ensure that the additional funds are used to deliver the best possible health care that the people of this State, in the city and the country, deserve.

GUN CLASSES IN SCHOOLS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. How does the Premier reconcile his statement of 13 April this year that he would not introduce gun classes into schools with the recent comments of a spokesperson for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services that the Premier is "open to finding ways to support those schools that wish to offer shooting as part of their sports curriculum"?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Canterbury has caught me out. A policy, a document, a plan has been prepared instructed on the basis of allowing shooting in schools across the State. I am distressed that we have been caught out on this because it was requested in May of last year by those opposite. I thank the member for Canterbury for the question. To conclude my answer I advise that the only party that has tried, time and again, to do deals with minor parties in the other place is the Labor Party, and that included, against the best wishes of the Department of Education and Training, an instruction to the department to put together a policy to be put before Cabinet about the introduction of shooting lessons in public schools. That will not happen under my Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. The member has asked a question and she should listen to the Premier's answer.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We have just resumed after a five-week break. The members opposite were feeling tired after the first session of Parliament. Clearly that is the case because the Leader of the Opposition went missing in action again—the member who made a specific pledge in his first press conference has gone missing again, not sighted during the entire five weeks. And after a five-week break on what topics are the first two questions asked by members of the Opposition? Were they about the struggle people have daily on our transport system or the problems people are still experiencing in our hospitals? And they are still experiencing those problems because we have been in office for only four months. Is it about the other great issues: the cost of living and the legacy left by those opposite? No. Their questions were about two rumours, two untruths—one about ethics and the other about shooting. That epitomises the lack of ability in those opposite.

But what is obvious is that during the five-week break No. 41 has got back in the saddle. The member for Toongabbie has almost supplanted the Leader of the Opposition in the upper House as the most active shadow Minister. We did not see the member for Maroubra until I heard some echoes from him on Sunday calling for my resignation over a story that was allegedly untrue. And we did not see the Leader of the Opposition. But the member for Toongabbie, admittedly on an equally untrue story, was far more active and inventive. My spies in restaurants around this city inform me that the member for Toongabbie is engaging in the Scully strategy—there is lobster and fine wine available for anyone who is prepared to sup with the member for Toongabbie. They are not happy luncheons; the member is not happy. He has not been happy since he was knifed by the factional warriors of the Labor Party.

I have to say, however, that his successor, my predecessor, seems to have had a great time in France. It is obvious to all that she has done things with her hair that the Leader of the Opposition would never do with

his. It was said about me a decade ago when I shaved my beard and lost weight that I was interested in leadership. Well, I think the Leader of the Opposition should be nervous about that new person who sits behind him because the hairdo suggests that there will be more ado in the Labor Party caucus before this Parliament is out.

NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM AGREEMENT

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. What type of hospital and health programs will benefit from the Government's successful negotiations with the Commonwealth as part of the National Health Reform Agreement?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The successful member for Tamworth knows that only a Liberal-Nationals government can secure a fair share of funding for New South Wales for hospital upgrades. He knows the benefits of a State government that can successfully negotiate with the Federal Government. When the O'Farrell Government committed substantial funding for new and upgraded hospitals we sat down with the Federal Minister for Health to negotiate a fair share of funding. And what did we achieve? We achieved upgrades of Tamworth, Bega and Dubbo hospitals, which Labor promised but did not deliver.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will direct her comments through the Chair.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: And at the recent meeting of the Council of Australian Governments we negotiated another successful outcome with the Commonwealth Government. As the Premier indicated, we have unlocked early access to \$9.5 billion of the \$16.4 billion on offer. That was not going to happen under the deal agreed to by the former New South Wales Labor Government. We have a guaranteed equal per capita share of funding. This was not on the table when funding was negotiated by the former Government either. We have a guaranteed \$3 billion extra for New South Wales and we have flexibility to spend as the Premier has indicated. What will this \$3 billion provide for our State? It will enable us to engage general practitioner liaison officers to ensure that patients see their general practitioners after discharge from hospital. It will enable much broader enrolment opportunities in chronic disease management programs than are available at present. This \$3 billion will give us a greater capacity to provide support—

[Interruption]

They do not want to listen to good news—news we have been able to provide for patients and carers across New South Wales.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: We are able to provide extra diabetes nurse educators. We are able to announce programs such as that which I saw recently at John Hunter Hospital—one of the 18 hospitals I visited across New South Wales in our first 18 weeks in office. Unlike those of the shadow Minister for Health, each of my visits lasted half a day, not half an hour. At John Hunter Hospital one emergency department nurse—

Mr John Robertson: What about Fairfield Hospital?

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The Leader of the Opposition wants to know about Fairfield Hospital, where I spent half a day talking to the fantastic staff—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —particularly about programs such as that to enable aged care patients to receive better hospital and community-based care and much better transition care to obviate unnecessary hospitalisation. The Leader of the Opposition jokes about not taking members of the media with me. I was applauded by the doctors, nurses and others at that hospital because I am not about media circuses—unlike the Leader of the Opposition. I am about listening to the staff and others about what is happening.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I return to the initiative at John Hunter Hospital. One very committed emergency department nurse has saved 500 bed days in three months by liaising with and supporting four local nursing homes to ensure that patients who would otherwise be put in an ambulance and taken into the emergency department are able to have their care managed in a nursing home. It was a much better outcome for everyone: the patients and the emergency department staff. Similar programs operate at Westmead Hospital, where one of my favourite doctors, Professor Jeremy Chapman, provides outstanding inpatient and outpatient care for renal patients. As I stated earlier, care for older patients by linking hospital outpatient care and community-based care is happening at Fairfield, Campbelltown and Canterbury hospitals. Under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government we can invest more to reduce unnecessary hospitalisations with the \$3 billion than would otherwise have been provided that we were able to negotiate with the Commonwealth.

HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

Mr RYAN PARK: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. Given that Fred Nile successfully went over the head of the Minister for Education to negotiate a reconsideration of ethics classes, what assurances can the Minister give that hunting in national parks will not be reconsidered in return for the support of the Shooters and Fishers Party for her Government's legislative agenda?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: How predictable. The policy of the New South Wales Government is clear: hunting in national parks is not permitted. I say that very slowly for the slow learner on the Opposition backbench. Parks receive over 35 million visits per year and we provide among other things facilities for visitors to our State, and I advise the member opposite that shooting is not compatible with visitations to our national parks. The member has wasted yet another question. For the benefit of those opposite I repeat that the policy of the New South Wales Government is clear: Hunting in national parks is not and will not be permitted.

REGIONAL ROADWORKS

Mr TROY GRANT: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What steps have been taken to improve roads across regional New South Wales?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Dubbo for his question. He is a true local champion already achieving wins for his electorate. Only recently the Minister for Western New South Wales and the Minister for Roads and Ports, with the member for Dubbo, announced that on 31 July the majority of the Newell Highway would be returned to a 110 kilometre per hour speed limit, fulfilling another of the Coalition's commitments. This is great news for Newell Highway users, who were frustrated by Labor's knee-jerk decision in December 2009 to cut the speed limit on this important inland route. True to form, under the guise of road safety, Labor viewed regional roads as just another revenue stream.

Mr John Williams: And never travelled on it.

Mr ANDREW STONER: No, never travelled on it; its members never got outside the Sydney Basin. Against community wishes, the speed limit on more than 800 kilometres of this 1,060 kilometre Newell Highway was reduced to just 100 kilometres per hour. This resulted in higher levels of fatigue for many drivers and a great degree of frustration for drivers who were stuck behind heavy and slow vehicles, such as caravans, because they were unable to legally overtake on many parts of the road. However, the good news is that, unlike Labor, we have listened to the local communities and implemented a strategy that will see the 110 kilometre per hour speed limit reinstated along the majority of the Newell Highway. A communication campaign started last week to inform the community about these changes, including radio and newspaper advertising and mail-outs to local stakeholders, members of the heavy vehicle industry, emergency services, and bus and coach operators. That is not all. In other moves warmly welcomed by the community we have announced exemptions for cotton pickers to help harvest this year's bumper cotton crop. We have increased the legal width for the transport of wool bale loads.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I know this is of great interest to you, Madam Speaker, but it is not to the members opposite. They do not get what the transportation of rural commodities is all about. They probably need a bit of instruction about wool bales. From next week baled hay loads will be able to be transported at a width of 2.7 metres. This achieves in just four short months what the so-called Country Labor could not do in 16 long years. The Labor Party may have been conceived in the shearers' strikes of the 1890s, but today its

members of Parliament would not know a wool bale if they fell over one. From farmers transporting cattle to sale yards and truckies driving from Brisbane to Melbourne, to families travelling along highways to take children to school, we understand that regional people know regional roads best. That is why we have begun the process of encouraging the community to have its say about speed zones across the State on our Safer Roads website. The information provided by drivers across New South Wales will help us prioritise 100 corridors to be reviewed as part of a speed zone audit by March 2012. A number of road stretches already have been reviewed. Drivers across regional New South Wales want to do the right thing, and they tell us that fewer changes in the speed limit will remove much confusion.

But wait, there is more. Before the election we announced that the Liberal-Nationals Government would task the Auditor-General to investigate whether fixed and mobile speed cameras were in place to improve road safety or simply to raise revenue. We have again delivered on another commitment with the Auditor-General releasing his report on 27 July. From the New England Highway at Murrurundi to the Pacific Highway at Kundabung, the Hume Highway at Coolac and the Princes Highway at Broughton the Auditor-General found—surprise, surprise—that a number of fixed speed cameras in regional New South Wales had not reduced crash rates.

Unlike the mob opposite, we want to make sure that cameras are in place for road safety and not as cash cows. This Government immediately agreed to remove ineffective cameras. I draw attention to the sad response of the shadow roads Minister. Before the Auditor-General's report was handed down he said that if any cameras were found to be ineffective they should be ripped out. After the release of the report he said that any crashes after the cameras were ripped out were on Barry O'Farrell's head. [*Time expired.*]

CORRECTIVE SERVICES STAFF CUTS AND POLICE

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Can the Attorney General guarantee that police will not be removed from their current front-line duties in order to transport prisoners following cuts to corrective services staff.

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for his question, though I have not heard from him before expressing concerns about prison officers or police. Of course, this Government inherited an enormous black hole from the previous Government, and it is currently looking at ways of overcoming that problem. The main thing is that police keep doing police work and corrective services people keep doing corrective services work. In some places in the country police already—and this was a long-established practice under the previous Labor Government—do some transporting and holding of prisoners, although Corrective Services officers do most of it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is already on two calls to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: Other than that, there are at the moment no plans to change the practice, except to return police as much as possible to police duties.

HENDRA VIRUS

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. Could the Minister tell the House what the Government is doing to tackle the outbreak of Hendra virus?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I commend the member for his interest in this issue and thank him for this very timely question. The Government is working hard to get the best research and science to combat the current Hendra virus outbreak, which so far has resulted in the death of five horses on the New South Wales North Coast—two at a property near Wollongbar and the other three at Lismore, Macksville and Mullumbimby. We have been working around the clock and are taking swift and decisive action to address the problem, which I know has been of concern to a number of members. All four properties were quarantined. In some cases the quarantine has been lifted. We are continuing to closely monitor another 12 horses that are currently considered to be at-risk. A State Control Centre is operating at the headquarters of the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries in Orange, and a Local Control Centre has been established in Wollongbar, in the electorate of the member for Lismore.

Strict biosecurity and human health measures are in place, and New South Wales authorities are working with affected properties and the wider community. Representatives of both the New South Wales

Department of Primary Industries and the Livestock Health and Pest Authority are undertaking extensive property checks; and scientists at our biosecurity laboratory, the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, have completed more than 300 Hendra tests so far in recent weeks on more than 100 properties in all locations round New South Wales, not just on the North Coast. Infected properties are immediately quarantined and movement restrictions are enforced for horses and companion animals. Those companion animals might be other horses, but certainly include cats and dogs. Any horses that have had close contact with an infected horse are closely monitored and tested three times—an immediate test and follow-up tests at 16 and 32 days hence. The quarantine is lifted only when it is safe to do so and when authorities are confident that the property concerned poses no risk.

Members would have heard last week of a new development in the detection of Hendra antibodies in a dog in Queensland that had displayed no clinical signs of the virus. This was the first time outside a laboratory that the Hendra antibody had been seen in an animal other than a horse or a bat, or in a human who had been confirmed positive with the Hendra virus. Of course, we apply the same strict biosecurity and quarantine measures for companion animals such as dogs and cats. A number of cats and dogs at infected properties have so far been tested for Hendra. Fortunately, so far, all have tested negative.

The latest development has highlighted just how little is known about the distribution and spread of this insidious virus. To fast-track vital research, the New South Wales and Queensland governments recently joined forces and established a joint taskforce, on which there are also representatives of the Commonwealth and Victorian governments, to ensure that all the science and research is properly shared between the States. Recently I was delighted when the Premier committed an additional \$3 million for that taskforce, as did the Premier of Queensland, and I was even more delighted when the Commonwealth matched that \$6 million in funding. That means \$12 million will be going into new research. We know very little about this disease and the broader impacts it has on all domesticated animals.

A team of disease experts—including specialists from the New South Wales Government's biosecurity centre, the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute—will lead the research. They will investigate the reasons behind this year's spike in infection and how we can reduce transmission and infection in the future. The Hendra taskforce that I mentioned is overseeing the research effort. It will bring together the State's most senior veterinarians, chief health officers and scientists. The taskforce is really the brains trust of New South Wales and Queensland, together with representatives of the Commonwealth. It will play a critical role in how we respond to the outbreak and how we coordinate our biosecurity measures in the future.

Once again I call on the horse community to maintain vigilance against this deadly virus. The message is clear and simple: If you have a horse keep it away from fruiting and flowering trees that might attract fruit bats; and if you suspect your horse has Hendra keep people and other animals away from it, notify your local veterinarian immediately and take every step to get on top of this issue as soon as possible.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES STAFF CUTS

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney guarantee that no regional Corrective Services jobs will be lost as part of the planned cuts to Corrective Services?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for his question. Negotiations are currently occurring between the Commissioner for Corrective Services and the Government in relation to budget savings within Corrective Services. I do not want to jeopardise those negotiations, and I am sure the member would not want to do that either. It should be stressed that no decision has been made regarding any closures or any cutbacks at the moment.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: These negotiations are occurring right around New South Wales. The Leader of the Opposition is stopping other members from hearing my answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time. I advise him that I will not hesitate to remove him from the Chamber if he continues to interject.

Mr GREG SMITH: I do not want to interfere with freedom of speech, especially if the Leader of the Opposition wants to get thrown out. Those negotiations are occurring because of the previous Government's

complete failure to properly manage the finances of this State, leaving us with a \$5.2 billion black hole. Shame on them for letting the finances of this State deteriorate so badly. It is relevant to note that there are 500 new beds available at Nowra, and another 250 new beds at Cessnock will become available in 2012.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: This means that we have more modern cells that should be utilised and those that have passed their use-by dates need to be closed. I can assure the House that the safety and security of the community, of Corrective Services staff and of the inmates in the care of Corrective Services remains the first priority of both the commissioner and this Government, and this will not be compromised.

MAJOR EVENTS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. Does the Government have any plans to bring back Brian Eno to New South Wales?

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I thank the member for the question. I appreciate his interest in the future of New South Wales. Despite Mr Eno's enormous popularity, we have missed out on him this year. And we have had to settle for a golfer by the name of Tiger Woods. Of course, as everyone knows, the former Premier and member for Toongabbie was the mastermind of the great coup that saw Mr Eno brought to Sydney for a three-week visit. Brian Eno is undoubtedly a musical talent and in no way am I trying to denigrate him; however, I suggest there is quite a difference between the pulling power of Mr Eno and that of the most in-form sportsman in the world at that time. Who can forget the former Premier's famous declaration:

I'd much rather Brian Eno's work on display for the people of New South Wales for three weeks than Tiger Woods for three days.

At the time the then Premier insisted that Mr Eno, the maestro of ambient music, was a better investment than Tiger Woods, a sporting superstar. With that sort of investment advice, it is no wonder this State is in an economic hole. It is good grounding for his forthcoming tilt at Captain No Show.

Mr Nathan Rees: Just stop there.

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I am waiting for the right interjection. Keep them coming. We only have to look at the publicity Tiger Woods has generated and the hundreds of thousands of people who now will follow and watch the Australian Open to know which is the better investment. I confirm that Tiger Woods will play in the Australian Open at The Lakes golf course in November. He joins a stellar field and it has been estimated that this investment not only will return at least \$10 million to New South Wales taxpayers but also will put our State back in the big league when it comes to attracting major sporting events. The Government has begun the process of bringing New South Wales back into the business of major sporting and other events and reclaiming our place as the premier State, and Sydney as Australia's only truly international city and home of sporting events such as the Rugby World Cup, the Touch Football World Cup, the Australian Open and Surfing Lifestyle Festival, soccer's Asian Cup, the Red Bull X Fighters World Tour, the netball world championships, the Australian badminton titles, and more to come shortly.

When it comes to first-run stage productions, a major tourism driver ignored by the previous Labor regime, New South Wales is now a dominant player. The list of first-run productions announced by the Liberals and Nationals Government includes *Dr Zhivago* and *Legally Blonde*. It will be a premier run of *Legally Blonde*. The list also includes the *The Addams Family*, *Annie*, *Strictly Ballroom*, *Richard II* with Kevin Spacey, *La Traviata* on Sydney Harbour, and more to be announced very soon. We have also just announced that Sydney will be the home of the Helpmann Awards for excellence in live stage productions for at least the next three years. As can be seen, the Coalition Government has been very active and successful in attracting major events, sporting and otherwise, to New South Wales. That success will continue for a long time to come.

NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Did the Deputy Premier fail to apply for flood relief grants from the Federal Government to assist primary producers on the North Coast affected by recent flooding because he was too busy using taxpayers' money on a dubious trip to New York?

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I ask the Deputy Premier to respond to that question, I will ask the member to rephrase her question, which contains imputations of improper motives.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Did the Deputy Premier fail to apply for flood relief grants from the Federal Government to assist primary producers on the North Coast affected by recent flooding?

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, having spent some time in Government, should realise that a process must be followed to assess the different categories of flood assistance in the event of natural disasters, such as the flooding experienced on the mid North Coast in June. From the get-go I have ensured that farmers, residents and small businesses receive the full measure of support from the State Government. On the day the flood peaked I toured the area around Kempsey and Taree to observe the extent of the flooding. The Opposition should be aware of the process, which involves waiting until the floods subside. This particular flood took a long time to subside because the ground was saturated prior to the flood and heavy rain fell following the flood. Enormous amounts of data have to be collected, in particular, by the Department of Primary Industries. The Rural Assistance Authority and the Treasurer's office are also involved. When the data is compiled a case is put by the Premier to the Federal Government for category C assistance.

I am happy to state in this place and before my constituents that from day one until such time as category C assistance was approved I pushed hard for assistance to the area. Very early in the process the Minister for Emergency Services declared disaster support for the 21 affected local government areas, from the Clarence Valley to the Hunter. This disaster support enabled a wide range of assistance measures, including low interest rate loans for primary producers, low interest rate loans for small business owners, replacement feed and transport subsidies. Subsequently, when the full data was collected an additional assessment was made and category C support was declared by the Premier.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My question related to Federal Government assistance.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have been listening carefully to the Deputy Premier, and he is clearly answering the question. Perhaps the member for Canterbury has not been listening.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I explained at the outset that before we go to the Federal Government for support assistance we have to go through the process.

Ms Linda Burney: So you haven't done it.

Mr ANDREW STONER: We have.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Premier has written to the Prime Minister, and farmers will receive the support. Eight local government areas will receive category C level support, which enables them to apply for grants of up to \$15,000 to assist in repairing damage to their properties. These local government areas include the Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Nambucca, Kempsey, Port Macquarie-Hastings, Greater Taree and Gloucester.

Question time concluded at 3.16 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2010-2011

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, Variations of the Receipts and Payments Estimates and Appropriations for 2010-11 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Primary Industries, dated 23 June 2011.

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, Variations of the Receipts and Payments Estimates and Appropriations for 2010-11, arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments and National Partnership Payments below the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Health, dated 24 June 2011.

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 24 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, Variations of the Payments Estimates and Appropriations for 2010-11 flowing from the transfer of functions between agencies, dated 30 June 2011.

PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER**Report**

The Speaker tabled the report of the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser for the year ended 30 June 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF WOLLONGONG**Orders of Court of Disputed Returns**

The SPEAKER: I report, pursuant to the Parliamentary Electorate and Elections Act 1912, that the Clerk has received from the Prothonotary of the Supreme Court copies of two orders of the Court of Disputed Returns relating to the petition against the election of Noreen Hay as the member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Wollongong:

- (1) Order dismissing the petition, dated 27 June 2011.
- (2) Order awarding costs, dated 8 July 2011.

Orders tabled and ordered to be printed.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**Government Response to Report**

The Deputy Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to report No. 8/54, entitled "Children, Young People and the Built Environment, Follow-up Inquiry", received 30 June 2011.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Deputy Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Improving Road Safety: Speed Cameras, Roads and Traffic Authority", dated July 2011 and received 27 July 2011.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES**Chairs and Deputy Chairs**

The SPEAKER: I inform the House, pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2), that on 23 June 2011 the following members were elected as chairs and deputy chairs respectively of the following committees:

Legislation Review Committee

Chair: Mr Stephen Bruce Bromhead
Deputy Chair: Dr Geoffrey Lee

Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption

Chair: Mr Mark Raymond Speakman
Deputy Chair: Mr Andrew Robert Gee

Committee on Children and Young People

Chair: Mr Andrew Stuart Cornwell
Deputy Chair: Ms Melanie Rhonda Gibbons

Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety

Chair: Mr Giovanni Domenic Barilaro
Deputy Chair: Mr Jai Travers Rowell

Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office

Chair: Mr David Andrew Elliott
Deputy Chair: The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, MLC

PETITIONS

The Deputy 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**.

Wind Turbine Developments

Petition requesting a moratorium on all wind turbine developments until health, acoustics, visual and property value studies have been conducted, received from **Ms Katrina Hodgkinson**.

Pet Shops

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

Wild Dog Numbers

Petition requesting assistance to employ wild dog trappers to reduce wild dog numbers over all land tenures, received from **Mr George Souris**.

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**.

Drink Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting a container deposit levy be introduced to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

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

Riverstone Electorate High School Construction

Petition requesting the construction of a high school in the Kellyville Ridge-Stanhope Gardens-The Ponds area, received from **Mr Kevin Conolly**.

Stanford Road Closure

Petition requesting the suspension of the closure of Stanford Road until safe alternative access and egress from Stanford Merthyr has been provided, received from **Mr Clayton Barr**.

The Deputy Clerk announced that the following Ministers had lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Greg Smith—Young Offenders—lodged 24 May 2011 (Mr Kevin Humphries).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Receptor Targeted Radionuclide Therapy—lodged 26 May 2011 (Mr Andrew Stoner).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Royal North Shore Hospital Site—lodged 27 May 2011 (Mr Jonathan O'Dea).

The Hon. Michael Gallacher—Manning and Great Lakes Area Command Policing—lodged 30 May 2011 (Mr Stephen Bromhead).

The Hon. Greg Pearce—Public Sector Wages and Conditions—lodged 1 June 2011 (Mr John Robertson).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Wagga Wagga Base Hospital—lodged 2 June 2011 (Mr Daryl Maguire).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Yamba Health Centre—lodged 14 June 2011 (Mr Steve Cansdell).

The Hon. Donald Page—Blue Mountains City Council Ratings Restructure—lodged 14 June 2011 (Mrs Roza Sage).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Byron Shire Central Hospital Ewingsdale—lodged 15 June 2011 (Mr Donald Page).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Palliative Care Community Services—lodged 16 June 2011 (Mr Barry O'Farrell).

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Bus Service 268—lodged 23 June 2011 (Mr Clayton Barr).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

National Health Reform Agreement

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [3.22 p.m.]: My motion calls on the House to congratulate the Government on securing a better deal for New South Wales in the national healthcare agreement. One has only to look at the record of those opposite to see that the people of New South Wales were clearly short-changed when it came to the delivery of health services. Those on the other side were very good at spin but not so good at delivering outcomes that would make a real difference to the lives of people in this State. We were not in government long before we realised that the former Labor Government was also not very good at negotiating. In fact, the previous heads of agreement deal did not provide any assurances to the people of New South Wales that things were going to get a whole lot better under the former Government's leadership.

The voters of New South Wales drew that same conclusion, and on 26 March they made it very clear that they expected better from their Government and, rightly, that they expected their fair share. The people of New South Wales understood that only the Liberal Party and The Nationals could secure a fair share for health and for our hospitals. This motion should be accorded priority because the people of New South Wales need to understand that, unlike Labor, on this side of the House we are able to negotiate a better deal on their behalf. We have demonstrated that by gaining an additional \$3 billion over six years—cash that the previous New South Wales Government was simply unable to secure.

This is a historic deal. It gives States and Territories an extra \$9.5 billion over six years, brought forward and distributed to States and Territories on an equal per capita share. This new deal means that New South Wales will get an estimated \$184 million in 2014-15, \$391 million in 2015-16, another \$477 million in 2016-17, \$631 million in 2017-18, \$631 million in 2018-19 and another \$691 million in 2019-20. Under Labor's agreement we would have received very little, if any, additional growth until 2019-20 and had limited ability to invest in hospital avoidance programs. On Labor's watch the biggest State with the biggest population could not get its fair share. In fact, under Labor's agreement of February this year we were deprived of much-needed funds for our hospitals. In regional areas the contrast could not be starker between the Liberals and The Nationals and those on the other side of the House in relation to what can be delivered.

In just four months in government the Liberals and The Nationals have made real changes to health in regional areas such as Tamworth, Dubbo, Bega, Albury and Port Macquarie, delivering on hospital expansions and improvements that those on the other side could not provide. Under Labor, people in regional areas missed out time and again. Labor failed to deliver key health infrastructure projects to the very people it was elected to represent. Those of us who live in regional New South Wales were clearly off Labor's radar, and on 26 March we sent Labor the message loud and clear. After just four months of a Liberal-Nationals Government the regions are already far better off than they were under 16 years of Labor. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government, which clearly recognises that New South Wales comprises more than Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong, has already

secured funding because we have a much more productive relationship with the Commonwealth. Look at what we have achieved already: in Tamworth \$200 million for a new hospital; Bega, \$170 million; Albury, \$65 million; Dubbo, \$72 million; and Port Macquarie, \$96 million.

People in regional Australia are only asking for their fair share, which clearly Labor could not deliver. The Liberals and The Nationals can give New South Wales its fair share of funding by delivering an equal per capita share of a funding split from the Council of Australian Governments, with 39 per cent from the Health and Hospitals Fund. One has only to consider Labor's track record to see that our State now has a real future and the opportunity to deliver better health services across the entire State, no matter what the postcode. [*Time expired.*]

Government Legislative Program

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.27 p.m.]: On this the first day of a new session this matter deserves priority because the O'Farrell Government has abandoned ordinary mums and dads to begin a tango with the minor parties. This breaks a key election promise the Premier made not to do deals to get his legislation through the upper House. History shows that Liberal governments do not get elected in this State—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will leave the Chamber quietly.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: —unless they present themselves, as this Premier did, as moderate and middle of the road. Instead, we have a weak Premier who as soon as the election was over pulled open the curtains to reveal something quite different. Exhibit A: out come the Premier's WorkChoices-style laws that force public sector workers to trade off conditions and freeze wage rises at 2.5 per cent while inflation runs at 3.6 per cent. This is the ideological lurch that New South Wales never saw coming—laws so extreme they make Peter Reith look like a moderate.

Then, just as New South Wales mums and dads thought it was safe to come out, they awake to a Sunday newspaper headline that the Government will consider introducing weapons training in schools. For a whole week while the Premier was away in China his frontbenchers tried to hold the line on school ethics, only for the Premier to return home and announce that he was prepared to negotiate. This motion deserves priority because the Premier piously promised the people of New South Wales that he would be different, that he would not horse-trade with minority interests to get his legislation through the upper House. On 27 March the Premier said:

As I've made clear during the campaign, I'm not going to sell out our mandate, sell out those people who have supported us, simply to trade votes with minority interests in the state's upper house.

Let us review how this weak Premier has broken his promise and compromised himself. We have already seen the Premier announce a moratorium on protecting endangered marine habitats, a decade of hunting in 142 State forests and a whopping 3,832 restricted game hunting licences in less than 110 days—a far greater rate than the previous Government. This is very worrying—weapons in schools, bullets buzzing through our State forests while families try to picnic. This is not the moderate Premier who—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The Premier indicated during question time that every assertion currently being made by the Leader of the Opposition—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr Brad Hazzard:—is absolute rot. I ask that you direct the Leader of the Opposition to return to the very narrow leave of his motion, which does not cover the issues that he is seeking to raise.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard the point of order and I have ruled on it. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: And that is before we get to the Christian Democratic Party generously offering to rewrite the curriculum for schools. Remember the company that had the advertising slogan 'What'll they think of next'? Clearly, this Government's slogan is, 'Whatever the minor party thinks of next'. This matter deserves priority because when a minor party leader smiles and declares himself satisfied, one has to wonder what pay-off the Premier has promised down the track. The people of New South Wales have given this Premier a big majority, yet he flails and wobbles about in the upper House like a giant jellyfish. This undignified spectacle could have been avoided if the Premier had not gone for broke with his industrial relations laws. But having unleashed WorkChoices—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. The Leader of the Opposition is seeking to impute improper motives to the Premier. Even Morris Iemma said that you cannot trust this Leader of the Opposition. I ask that you direct him back to the leave of the motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is generally within the framework of the motion.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: This undignified spectacle could have been avoided if the Premier had not gone for broke on his industrial relations laws. But having unleashed the WorkChoices gorilla from the closet, the Premier should let those laws stand or fall in the upper House on their merits. This is a test of leadership for the Premier. He raised expectations that he would be different—

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The Premier raised expectations that he would be different, and the people of New South Wales took him at his word. He has abused their trust by doing backroom deals with the minor parties such as we have seen this week.

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

NATIONAL HEALTH REFORM AGREEMENT

Motion Accorded Priority

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [3.35 p.m.]: I move:

That this House congratulates the Government on securing a better deal for New South Wales in the National Health Agreement.

It is the New South Wales Government, the Liberal Party and The Nationals, that have led the way in negotiations on the national health agreement and achieved nothing less than an historic deal. That is exactly why I am proud to be a member of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. Under Labor, New South Wales in round one of Commonwealth health funding secured just 17 per cent of \$443 million in the Health and Hospital Fund. In round two New South Wales got just \$116 million, or 21 per cent. Yet under the Liberal Party and The Nationals in round three of funding we got not 25 per cent, not 30 per cent, not 35 per cent; we got an unprecedented 39 per cent.

Clearly the voters of New South Wales got it right on 26 March. They knew they would get a better deal under the Liberals and The Nationals. Certainly in regional areas they knew that if they elected local members, such as Kevin Anderson in Tamworth and Troy Grant in Dubbo, they would get—as they have done—a fair share of Commonwealth funding. Because we are much better at negotiating and much better at delivering than those opposite, as part of our better hospitals and health care plan we are delivering more than \$3 billion in health capital works across this State. This includes \$215 million for Wagga Wagga, \$100 million for Tamworth, some \$50 million for Dubbo, \$42.5 million for Parkes, \$25 million for Forbes, \$20 million for Maitland, \$10 million for Bega and \$10 million in northern New South Wales. As part of our pre-election commitment we will also boost the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme for regional and remote patients by 58 per cent, or \$28 million over four years. This is just another example that the Liberals and The Nationals are there for everyone in New South Wales, whatever their postcode.

In government we passed legislation on 12 May to create local health districts and announced new local health district boards, including 32 new board members. The Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner—who knows the importance of regional New South Wales—chose Dubbo Base Hospital in western New South Wales for her very first hospital visit as Minister. Let me remind the House what Labor achieved under its deal with the Commonwealth Government. Under Labor, there was limited flexibility to invest the Federal health agreement funds in hospital avoidance programs. That meant that the then Government could not support additional investment in general practitioner liaison officers or in chronic disease management programs such as diabetes nurse educators. NSW Health financial modelling showed that under Labor's February agreement we would have received very little, if any, additional funds until 2020—no new money until 2020.

Labor's track record on negotiations with the Federal Government is very poor. In February 2011, as I have outlined, there was to be no money until 2020 and limited ability to invest in hospital avoidance

programs. As a local nurse, I know that is where we should be investing our money. In round one of health and hospitals funding, Labor achieved 17 per cent; in round two under Labor, we received 21 per cent. But in round three under a Liberal-Nationals Government, we received not 25 per cent, not 30 per cent and not even 35 per cent but an unprecedented 39 per cent. Clearly, only the Liberals and Nationals can secure a fair share for New South Wales by having an equal per capita funding split and getting 39 per cent of the Health and Hospitals Fund. That is how we will deliver hospital expansions in Tamworth, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Port Macquarie and Bega.

I note that during question time there was an interjection from the Opposition about acute beds available for admissions from emergency departments. Let us talk about that and the way the Opposition deceived the people of New South Wales about additional acute beds. Labor claimed that 22,421 beds were available for patient admissions. But if we look at how those beds are made up we will see how those opposite continue to deceive the people of New South Wales—as they did when they were in government. Let us consider the make-up of those beds. They are not acute beds. Some 4,295 of the 22,000-plus beds were subacute, or what we call non-acute, beds. In other words, those beds were for rehabilitation and for transitional care.

Another 3,967 so-called beds were recliner chairs, maternity beds, cots or bassinets, hardly what one would call acute beds. Another 2,565 claimed acute beds were in smaller facilities that did not have an emergency department. This is another example of Labor's failure to deliver more acute beds in 16 years in office; it actually cut bed numbers. Despite the population growth of 1.1 million in New South Wales during those 16 years and continued growth in demand, continued pressure on our hospitals across the State and pressure on our hardworking nurses, of whom I was one, and hardworking doctors, those opposite cut the numbers of acute hospital beds, which were desperately needed. Instead of increasing bed numbers Labor tried to deceive the people of New South Wales by counting bassinets, cots, maternity beds and recliners in maternity departments. The truth is that Labor cut the number of beds in New South Wales.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [3.40 p.m.]: During the speech read out by the member for Port Macquarie I deliberately did not take any points of order because I wanted to hear the member say one word—Nicola Roxon.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: Point of order: Given my great concern for numeracy and literacy, I point out for the benefit of the member for Macquarie Fields that "Nicola Roxon" is two words.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The truth about the New South Wales health system was stated by Commissioner Garling. We run one of the world's better health systems. To have access to universal, free, high quality health care is an extraordinary achievement and one that was opposed by those opposite. The Commonwealth Fund, which is an international fund for health, recognises we have nearly the best system in the world. That is why 75 per cent of people who are asked in New South Wales have confidence in the health system despite 16 years of denigration by those opposite and a 180-degree change in the direction of ministerial press releases from universal denigration to universal support. The reality is the Minister, in opposition and in government, has failed to recognise the truth of our system: it delivers high quality care, free to the patient, 90 per cent of the time, which is the percentage of patients who rate their care as good, very good or excellent.

This is a good agreement and it is a good day for patient care. As Andrew Pesce, the head of the Australian Medical Association said, every health worker gets out of bed every morning to improve patient care. This is a good deal for patient care, which is why the least members opposite could do is commend Nicola Roxon for her essential decency, drive and determination, and her negotiating skills with all the States. She has shown a willingness to work with the States and that is in harsh contrast to the behaviour of former health Minister Abbott. In fact, I will do a deal with those opposite. They can negotiate with Tony Abbott and we will negotiate with Nicola Roxon and we will see which team ends up happier. The reality is that this agreement is the tail end of a long process of health reform started by the Federal Labor Government.

The Minister will claim all the credit for this deal without giving any acknowledgment to previous work by the Labor Government or the current Minister. To be a credible Minister one must tell things as they are rather than indulge in meaningless spin. The Minister needed to sign this agreement because of the 1,390 beds she has promised—880 are in fact beds provided by the Council of Australian Governments. It is only 880 beds over four years. We negotiated 400 beds in the 2010-11 financial year alone. The 50-50 split of

funding is to be commended because it returns us to the situation before the government of John Howard and health Minister Tony Abbott. It was a 50-50 split but under Howard and Abbott it changed to 40 per cent Federal funding and 60 per cent State funding, a loss of \$1 billion a year to the New South Wales health system, and during that time there was not one word from members opposite about the fact that our hospitals were being starved of funds.

The big question for every patient in New South Wales is whether the New South Wales Government will deliver on its side of the commitment. We know from Treasurer Baird that this is going to be a horror budget. Many of the questions I have been asking about hospitals such as Bega and northern beaches have drawn a reply from the Minister stating, "Wait till after the budget." Will the Minister support the recent changes such as the 29 medical assessment units we opened or the Hospitals in the Home? There is no commitment to transparency from this Minister. For example, the surgical waiting lists have not been updated since March 2011.

The boards that were mentioned by the member for Port Macquarie are in fact the boards that we instituted, with a few people added mainly because of their financial skills, a change that I foreshadowed would be necessary in my speech on the bill. As for beds, when the Minister was asked how many beds there are in the New South Wales hospital system she did not know. She is unable to say how many beds there were in the New South Wales health system as at 1 April 2011. The member for Port Macquarie mentioned that 4,295 of the beds in the State health system were subacute beds. Of the 1,390 beds promised by the Opposition 450 were subacute. When their side provides the beds it is a great thing but when our side does that members opposite say it is inappropriate.

The agreement will mean that the Commonwealth and the States will share funding for hospitals in an equal partnership, and that is to be commended. I take issue with members opposite who say the health system has fallen into disarray when they do not know how many beds there are. I will read out some of our achievements. Liverpool Hospital received \$395 million in 2008; Orange Hospital received \$250 million for a new facility; Bathurst Hospital received \$110 million in 2008; John Hunter Hospital got \$200 million in 2001; Newcastle Mater received \$194 million in the early 2000s; Campbelltown Hospital received \$112 million in 2006, and I could go on.

Sutherland, Royal Prince Alfred, Auburn, Broken Hill, Gosford and Queanbeyan hospitals all received funding. I visited the wonderful work at Nepean hospital, which is nearly finished at a cost of \$144 million, \$94 million of which is Federal funding and \$50 million of which is State funding committed by our Government. In New South Wales we have the longest life expectancy in the world. We have 2.8 beds per thousand population compared to the Australian average of 2.6 beds. We have increased the number of nurses by nearly 5,000 in the past five years and the total staff by 8,000. We run a very good health system and this is a good deal.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [3.47 p.m.]: I support the motion and congratulate the Government on securing a better deal for New South Wales. Once again our State's new Government has led the way in negotiating a historic deal for the people of New South Wales. The new Federal health agreement has secured a fair share for New South Wales. This agreement provides a guaranteed cash flow of \$9.5 billion over a six-year period on an equal per capita share basis. This means that funding for New South Wales will now increase thanks to a much better cash flow system. The \$9.5 billion is in addition to the funds the States will receive through indexation under the National Health Care Specific Purpose Payment.

Disappointingly this deal was not included in the February 2011 agreement. In fact, the agreement of the former New South Wales Government contained no guaranteed annual payment for growth and no guaranteed per capita share of growth for funding for any State or Territory. Under the new agreement New South Wales will now receive a guaranteed per capita cash flow amounting to a total of \$3 billion over six years, which is estimated to be \$184 million in 2014-15, growing to \$691 million in 2019-20. We can definitely say that our New South Wales Government took the lead in negotiating this cash flow guarantee.

In addition, further top-up payments above the amount by the Commonwealth will be available from the aggregate \$16.4 billion growth funding commitment should growth in State hospital services result in funding requirements above the State share of the \$9.5 billion. The new agreement allows for much greater flexibility in moving the guaranteed funds between hospital funding and funding of services to ameliorate hospital growth. Greater funding means our local hospitals like Sutherland and Liverpool—both of which the health Minister has visited—will have the opportunity to improve and grow their existing facilities for the future.

This guaranteed \$3 billion would enable hospital avoidance programs to be enhanced, such as the engagement of general practitioner liaison officers, to ensure patients see their general practitioners after discharge from hospital; enrolment in chronic disease management programs, which provide ongoing support for people with chronic diseases about the need for checkups, medication reminder calls, home visits or referrals to specialist treatment if warranted; diabetes nurse educators, to deliver better dietary education for diabetics; and care for older patients linking hospital care to outpatient and community-based care. These guaranteed funds may also be used for any services such as hospital admission avoidance programs.

Dr Cho, a doctor a few doors down from my Menai electorate office in Hammondville, also runs an after-hours clinic next to Liverpool hospital. He, along with other local general practitioners, worked around the clock to reduce non-emergency patient numbers who would normally be queuing at the emergency department. Instead of waiting in emergency for non-threatening medical issues, patients can be seen at this after-hours clinic by general practitioners and can then return home. The emergency ward medical staff are then able to concentrate on high-priority patient care. This program is an example of just one of the ways this funding could be used to support hospital admission avoidance programs.

Even though the February 2011 agreement provided for scope to use funds in this way, there was no guarantee of the availability of this growth funding for New South Wales hospital avoidance programs until 2019-20. I acknowledge and congratulate our health Minister, Jillian Skinner, and our Premier for addressing the situation. We all know that it is far more cost-effective to help people avoid the need to spend time in hospital. It is also less stressful and disruptive on them and their families. Hospital avoidance programs are worthwhile and mean that people needing a hospital visit will be able to get the attention they require.

Let us be clear. Under Labor's Council of Australian Governments deal in February we would have received little, if any, additional funds until 2020—basically no money until 2020—and there would have been limited ability to invest in hospital avoidance programs. New South Wales deserves a health system that can afford to grow, develop and innovate for many years to come, and I know that is the intention of this Government.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [3.52 p.m.]: I congratulate the Prime Minister and her Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, on negotiating this historic national health reform agreement with the States and Territories and, of course, I congratulate in particular the Federal Labor Government on delivering this agreement that will benefit the people of New South Wales. In the *Australian* online today Julia Gillard said:

There is no practical difference between the final deal and that proposed by Kevin Rudd before the 2007 election.

Mr Stuart Ayres: She also said no carbon tax.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Are we saying we do not negotiate on the Federal health agreement with Julia Gillard and Nicola Roxon? The current New South Wales Government is misleading the people of New South Wales. It has been in government for four months and it is taking credit for a health deal that has been negotiated over more than two years and it has the audacity to not acknowledge it is the Federal Labor Government that negotiated this deal with the New South Wales Government. It keeps using every terminology except the correct terminology, which is that it is the Federal Labor Government.

Let us look at what happened under the Federal Coalition Government. When that Federal Government was in office the former New South Wales Opposition refused to join us in the demand for the \$3 billion of GST money that the State was ripped off on by the Howard Federal Government, and the then Opposition remained silent. Over 12 years the Federal Coalition Government reduced health funds to New South Wales down and down, and it talks about how it negotiated. Zip is what it said about us trying to get back the \$3 billion GST money from the Federal Howard Government.

Julia Gillard has also stated that what was promised was at least \$16.4 billion of new funding and what has been delivered through this agreement is precisely that. If the truth be told, the O'Farrell Government has agreed to lower the standards. Rather than securing that 95 per cent of emergency patients who receive treatment within four hours, the O'Farrell Government has agreed to lower that to 90 per cent. It is a great agreement for the delivery of health services in New South Wales and it is substantially the same when it comes

to new money and new beds for our health system. It is ridiculous for this Government to congratulate itself and refer to the Commonwealth—it does not even refer to the Commonwealth Government in case it lets it slip that it is the Commonwealth Labor Government.

This is the first major reform of the health system in Australia since the groundbreaking Medibank scheme by the Whitlam Government in 1974. Each major health care reform in this nation has been under a Labor government—the prescription benefit scheme in 1949 under Ben Chifley, Medibank with Whitlam and now this reform under the stewardship of a Labor government. Contrast that with the Federal colleagues of this Government who opposed the introduction of the prescription benefits scheme, dismantled Medibank after it won in 1975—and thankfully that was rectified when Federal Labor won in 1983 with Medicare—and then the Howard Government tried to destroy Medicare.

These welcome reforms announced earlier today by the Prime Minister will secure the sustainability of Australia's health system into the future. As a result of these reforms the Gillard Government has committed to providing a strong financial basis for our whole system into the future. This guaranteed funding from the Commonwealth will ensure Australians can continue to access the health care they need when and where they need it. The Commonwealth will work with the State and Territory governments to reduce waste and ensure sustainability in our hospital funding into the future. Under the national health reform the Commonwealth Government will fund half of every dollar required to meet increases in the efficient cost of public hospital services, including growth in demand.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [3.57 p.m.], in reply: First I thank the member for Macquarie Fields and shadow Minister for Health for acknowledging the value and worth of this important deal for the people of New South Wales. I also acknowledge the member for Wollongong and the member for Menai for their contributions to the debate, again acknowledging that it is a great deal for the people across New South Wales. I also want to use this opportunity—before I remind the people of New South Wales about this great deal—to refer to the issue of waiting lists. This is another area where the previous Government failed the people of New South Wales. Waiting lists have increased since 1995 from 44, 707 to 68,630 in March 2011.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The member is misleading to House. No surgical waiting lists have been published in this State since March 2011 and I ask the member to talk about waiting lists since March 2011.

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

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: At Coffs Harbour in March 1995 there were 828 on the waiting list. In March 2011 at the end of 16 years of Labor that number had skyrocketed to 2,097. In the Shoalhaven in March 1995 the number was 793 increasing to 1,534 in 2011. The member for Orange would note that there were 507 on the waiting list for his area in March 1995, which increased to 1,490 in March 2011. Finally, Lismore in March 1995 had 463 on the waiting list and that went up to 1,371 in March 2011. That is what New South Wales Labor calls achievements.

Under the Federal health agreement we have achieved fantastic results. We have unlocked early access to \$9.5 billion of the \$16.4 billion, guaranteed equal per capita share, guaranteed \$3 billion for New South Wales and guaranteed flexibility to spend on hospital avoidance programs. Hospital avoidance programs are extremely important and we need to ensure that we continue to direct funds into those areas. We have achieved also general practitioner liaison officers to ensure that patients see their general practitioners after discharge from hospital, enrolment in chronic disease management programs providing medication reminder calls and home visits for patients suffering from heart disease, and diabetes nurse educators delivering better dietary education for diabetics.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government can use the funds from the Federal health agreement to invest more in reducing unnecessary hospitalisations. The previous Labor Government could not secure these cash flows or this flexibility to invest in hospital avoidance programs using funds from the Federal health agreement. I thank the shadow Minister for Health and the member for Wollongong for their contributions. Tribute must be paid to the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, and the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, for a fantastic achievement for people across New South Wales.

Motion agreed to.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CONDUCT DIVISION**Appointment of Community Representatives**

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.02 p.m.], by leave:
I move:

That, pursuant to clause 4 of Schedule 2A of the Judicial Officers Act 1986:

- (1) this House nominates Ken Moroney, AO, APM, and Rosemary Sinclair, AO, as community representatives for appointment to a panel of the Conduct Division of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales; and
- (2) a message be sent requesting the Legislative Council's concurrence in the nominations.

Members would be aware that the Judicial Commission conducts a preliminary examination of a complaint received about a judicial officer. If the commission does not dismiss a complaint or refer it to the head of jurisdiction, the complaint must be referred to a Conduct Division for further investigation. A separate Conduct Division is established for each complaint referred by the Judicial Commission. A Conduct Division consists of either one serving and one former judicial officer, or two serving judicial officers and a community representative. The two community representatives rotate sittings, subject to availability.

Mr Moroney has served on the Conduct Division since the introduction of community representatives in 2008. However, the nomination of community representatives expires when those persons resign, become legally qualified, are replaced by Parliament or following a State election. The Government is pleased to nominate Mr Moroney and Mrs Sinclair to serve as the community representatives. In doing so, I note that both Mr Moroney and Mrs Sinclair have indicated their willingness to serve in this role. The Judicial Officers Act requires community representative nominees to be people of high standing in the community and also provides that they may not be legally qualified or members of the Judicial Commission.

Mr Moroney is the former New South Wales Commissioner of Police, whose service to this State has been significant. He has been recognised by numerous honours and awards. Operationally, Mr Moroney has been recognised for his service during the Strathfield massacre, the Thredbo landslide, the 2000 Olympic Games and the 2001 Christmas bushfires. He is a recipient of both the national medal and the Australian Police Medal. In 2006 he was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia in recognition of his distinguished service to policing. He served as the twentieth New South Wales Commissioner of Police from May 2002 to August 2007.

Mrs Sinclair has published on various topics and been instrumental in initiating various projects relating to the prevention of child abuse. Mrs Sinclair was the co-founder and first President of the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and has held a number of other positions with that organisation over the years. She was also the inaugural coordinator and initiator of the National Child Protection Week—the first national campaign focusing on the need for the effective care and protection of children. In 1995 she chaired and co-founded Good Beginnings, which provides free early childhood and practical parenting programs for children and families across Australia.

Mrs Sinclair has been the patron of and held various positions on boards and councils. In 2002 she was the Australian delegate to the United Nations Special Session on Children in New York and also was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia. She received the Centenary Medal in 2003. The appointment of community members to the Conduct Division is important to ensure public confidence in and the transparency of the complaint-handling process. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

GRAFFITI LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011**Agreement in Principle**

Debate resumed from 1 June 2011.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.07 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This bill proposes amendments to a range of legislation, including the

Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987, Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, Graffiti Control Act 2008, Young Offenders Act 1997, the Fines Act 1996, the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act 1998, and the Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Regulation 2008. The Opposition has concerns with several aspects of the legislation proposed by the Government and would seek to move amendments to improve it. At the conclusion of that process the Opposition shall support the bill.

The first category of changes relates to community service orders and is the least substantive of the three categories of changes proposed in the legislation. The bill proposes that when a court makes a community service order in relation to a person guilty of offences under the Graffiti Control Act that a condition of the order must be to clean up graffiti. The only apparent exception is if the court considers that it is not reasonably practicable for work of that kind to be performed by the person. If a court does not impose that type of condition, it must record its reasons for that decision. The President of the Law Society, Stuart Westgarth, has written to me pointing out that the society's Criminal Law Committee and the Juvenile Justice Committee have grave concerns over this legislation. In relation to the community service order provision, the President states:

The committees are concerned that the court may increase the sentence up to a CSO (a direct alternative to imprisonment) in order to impose the compulsory clean up graffiti condition when the appropriate penalty for an offence of this nature is commonly not a custodial sentence or CSO.

That concern might be termed as one of net widening. The president further states:

The committees notes that the rectification of the damage to property and participation by victims in deciding what needs to be done to repair the damage could otherwise be, and often has been in the past, addressed in the outcome plan from a youth justice conference.

That is, the Law Society is suggesting there is nothing that much new in this particular legislation in that respect. The Law Society continues:

If the use of CSOs for graffiti offenders increases, this may have implications for the bail and remand population. The committee is concerned that there will be more curfews and non-association conditions imposed on young people who might currently be dealt with by way of warnings, formal cautions, or referrals to a youth justice conference. Breaches of CSOs can result in time in custody in a detention centre.

The amendments will cause difficulties in regional areas, where formal graffiti clean-up programs often do not exist. This could result in yet another instance in which young people in regional areas suffer, because instead of imposing a CSO magistrates may consider imposing a custodial sentence rather than dealing with them by way of caution or referral to a youth justice conference.

At the conclusion of this debate I would be pleased to have a response from the Attorney General as to the impact of such community service orders in regional areas where formal clean-up programs do not exist; that is, I would appreciate a response to that concern expressed by the Law Society. I would also seek clarification that this is one of the types of eventualities that would make a clean-up condition impractical in relation to the legislation; and, more generally, that impracticality does not relate only to an offender's physical capacity. The truth is that the courts already have power to insist that a clean-up condition is in a community service order.

The previous Government amended the young offenders regulation to require graffiti offenders appearing in youth justice conferences to pay compensation, or participate in education or training programs, or to clean up graffiti, or perform other available community work. Granted that this requirement said to be introduced by the legislation can already be imposed, and granted previous changes to the law, this is not a substantial amendment to the law and the Opposition will not oppose it. The second category of changes in this legislation relates to driver licence orders. This means that a court can make orders about the drivers licence of a person committing an offence under section 4 or section 5 of the Graffiti Control Act, being the offence of damaging or defacing property by means of a graffiti implement and the offence of possession of a graffiti instrument.

The orders range from extending the length of time someone must be on a learner or provisional licence and limiting the number of demerit points a person can accrue, to suspending a licence for up to six months. This involves the slightly novel proposition that a person's driving licence can be affected by behaviour that is entirely remote from the licence. In short, there is no connection at all between sentence and offence. This failure to have a connection is a clear weakness in this scheme. Indeed in November 2008 the then and current member for Pittwater criticised other legislation that imposed licence sanctions for behaviour that he said was unrelated to driving behaviour. The member for Pittwater said:

Surely the nature of the penalty should be linked to the nature of the offence.

He should direct that criticism to this bill. However, criticism of the approach in this legislation is certainly not restricted to Liberal members of Parliament, significant though that may be. In relation to this part of the proposal, Howard Brown for the Victims of Crime Assistance League said:

People are joking if they think graffiti offenders will be deterred by the prospect of losing their licence; if anything, it will encourage them to commit a second illegal action of driving without a licence because the punishment has no correlation with the initial offence.

Ken Marslew from Enough is Enough said:

I can't see how suspending a licence is going to change a graffiti vandal's attitude. It won't stop them from doing graffiti.

The Government's approach is also opposed by the Law Society of New South Wales, which has said this to me:

The committees are opposed to the imposition of driver licence sanctions for offences that are completely unrelated to driving.

This approach has failed when it comes to fine enforcement in respect of young people. Licence sanctions may work for relatively stable, employed, middle-class adults. However, the young people who commit graffiti offences are likely to be among the most marginalised in our community, and licence sanctions only exacerbate their hardship.

The committees query the logic of making the already very difficult task of obtaining a drivers licence for disadvantaged young people even more difficult. Extending the period that young people may be required to hold learners or provisional licences is onerous. It could cost job opportunities and place undue pressure on the family who have to 'supervise' a learner whilst driving (especially for those young people most likely to be committing graffiti offences who often have little parental control and/or huge social and economic obstacles to overcome). Suspending a young person's licence for a graffiti offence will inevitably increase the number of driving offences committed by these young people, who may well drive whilst suspended.

The Opposition opposes this portion of the Government proposal. Imposing sanctions on licences will have no likely deterrent effect. First it assumes that graffiti offenders are caught. The overwhelming majority are not, so this will have no impact on the incidence of graffiti. Anecdotally the vast majority of offenders do not have licences in any event. Suggesting that this will reduce the incidence of graffiti is to trumpet spin over substance. And in this instance, by sanctioning licences that had nothing to do with the offence, it is also frankly silly.

The third group of changes relates to youth conferences. Under this legislation all young people charged with a graffiti offence will have to appear before court and not be referred to a youth justice conference before appearing before a magistrate. I must say this does not seem to have been properly thought out by the Government. At the moment a police officer, if he or she wishes, can refer a graffiti offender to court, if he or she thinks that that is appropriate. This legislation removes that discretion. This part of the legislation is not about punishing graffiti offenders—it is about not trusting police.

The Government will no doubt claim that a magistrate can still refer the offender to a youth justice conference after a court appearance if the magistrate so determines. That is true—but all that that achieves is a comprehensive waste of court time and resources. The proposal also underestimates how effective youth justice conferences are. They have a lower recidivism rate than for young offenders appearing in court. More than 42 per cent of young people dealt with under the Young Offenders Act do not go on to reoffend. The youth conferencing model has substantial community support. Howard Brown, for the Victims of Crime Assistance League, told the Law and Justice Committee in 2008 of his support for pre-court diversion:

This is one of the great things about juvenile conferencing. If we can get these unfortunates early enough and divert them, they do not become serious offenders.

Ken Marslew from Enough is Enough also said this to the committee:

With conferencing there is a high level of justice for both victims and offenders. They appear to get more out of the process.

The Law Society is also opposed to the Government's proposal in this regard. It makes these points:

The proposed amendments to the Young Offenders Act 1997 to remove the power for police to deal with young offenders who have committed graffiti offences by way of caution, warning or youth justice conference is of great concern.

The removal of pre-court diversion is contrary to the principle that criminal proceedings should not be instituted against a child if there is an alternative and appropriate means of dealing with the matter. The proposed amendments are a further move away from the carefully crafted system of diversion that was originally devised when the Young Offenders Act 1997 was introduced.

Requiring a young person charged with a graffiti offence to appear before court will unnecessarily increase the financial and social costs of responding to alleged young offenders.

It is unjust and inconsistent that other young people will be able to receive pre-court diversion for more serious offences.

The Opposition has considered these concerns about the Government's proposal. We adopt a constructive approach. In the Consideration in Detail stage I will move an amendment to this bill. The amendment will provide that the new regime prohibiting pre-trial diversion to graffiti offenders will apply only to repeat offenders. I think that is a sensible compromise that maintains the Government's intent but does not increase the likelihood of increased reoffending, which is otherwise the likely consequence of the Government's proposal. We are frankly and sensibly trying to save the Government from itself.

Finally, it is worth noting that this debate does not occur in a vacuum. In recent years there has been a significant lightening of laws and penalties relating to graffiti offenders. Those initiatives, by the previous Government, include banning the possession of spray cans for young people unless they have a legitimate reason, doubling imprisonment penalties for graffiti vandalism and possession of graffiti implements, introducing clean-up orders for graffiti offenders, and encouraging graffiti-prevention design strategies. I look forward to the Consideration in Detail stage, in which I will move an amendment.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.18 p.m.]: There have been earlier attempts to use legislation to deal with the problem of graffiti, but one does not have to be particularly observant of the trains and of the walls of our cities to know that Parliament has missed its mark, so to speak. Graffiti is prevalent. Yet we are not operating in a legislative vacuum here. There are existing powers, and this is not a new problem. The Graffiti Control Act 2008, which came into force late in 2009, consolidated elements of legislation going back to at least 2001, when spray cans became a focus of attention.

Refinements were made over the years but it became apparent that this Act was not doing the job. More needed to be done. Graffiti remains omnipresent in our communities despite these laws from 2009. The Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 establishes a clearer process for dealing with offenders and provides more targeted penalties aimed at prevention and rehabilitation. Offenders, if caught, will have their day in court. They will have to front up before a magistrate. If found guilty, offenders will have to fulfil a community service order to clean up graffiti—theirs or someone else's. The bill inserts new section 11 (3) into the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987:

Except as provided by subsection (4), a community service order in respect of a person who has pleaded guilty to, or been found guilty or convicted of, a graffiti offence must impose a graffiti clean up condition.

New section 11 (6) states:

graffiti clean up condition means a condition requiring the offender to perform the following kind of community service work:

- (a) the removal of graffiti from buildings, vehicles, vessels and places,
- (b) the restoration of the appearance of buildings, vehicles, vessels and places consequent on the removal of graffiti from them.

Similar amendments will be inserted in section 90 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. Courts will have the power to tie a sanction to an offender's driver licence. This is an attempt to move away from a focus on incarceration and monetary fines as effective deterrents. Importantly, discretion exists as to how the legislation will be applied by magistrates. For example, a court need not impose a graffiti clean-up condition as part of a community service order where it would not be reasonably practical to implement the requirement. Discretion may be exercised in the application of the period of suspension of a driver licence, demerit point thresholds and extra time spent on provisional or learner stages of licensing. Further, a sanction for a young offender might involve, for example, reference to a youth justice conference where the offender will have the chance to consider and discuss his or her behaviour and its impact on others.

As the member for Liverpool questioned the capacity of regional areas to deal with graffiti, I will outline the situation in Albury and refer to actions taken by Albury City Council. The council deals directly with the problem of graffiti on public property. The cost to Albury attributed to graffiti for the full year 2009-10 was \$100,735 and as at 31 May 2011 the year-to-date figure is \$97,086. In rounded terms, graffiti is costing Albury ratepayers about \$100,000 annually. This is on top of the cost to individual businesses and private property owners for the removal of graffiti from their property. Albury City Council has been an active participant in public debate about graffiti. The council made a submission to the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Public Works in response to a request for information on the social and economic impact of graffiti, anti-graffiti policies, and practices and approaches with respect to public infrastructure. In 2010 Albury City Council prepared its own Graffiti Management Policy. This document states:

This policy has been developed in response to the increasing acts of graffiti vandalism within Albury. Illegal graffiti is of ongoing concern to the general community and within the Albury local government area. Graffiti incurs substantial social and economic costs to the community ... Albury City has an active removal process which involves Albury City staff and the use of local contractors where necessary.

The policy was created to provide a framework to deal with graffiti, while ensuring adequate opportunities for the display of street art. The policy has three steps: one, to remove graffiti as quickly as possible—this is to act as a deterrent to graffiti vandals; two, to involve the local community and young people as partners in reducing graffiti; and, three, to remove graffiti using environmentally sustainable methods to minimise harm to the environment. Four key elements have been shown to have an effect on minimisation of the impact of graffiti: one, prevention; two, continual removal; three, prosecution; and, four, education. Less often spoken of, apart from the financial cost of graffiti removal, is the emotional and aesthetic impact.

Graffiti, if left unaddressed, has the power to raise the level of fear of crime within a community. People can begin to feel that the authorities have lost control of the streets. Graffiti also adversely affects the amenity of an area, adding a visual mess that disturbs the enjoyment of public spaces and facilities in the community. Each step of dealing with graffiti brings expense to the local community. Typically, Albury council officers will document the graffiti with photographic and written evidence. The incident will be added to the graffiti register and the graffiti will be removed. If the graffiti is offensive it will be removed within 24 hours of reporting. Relevant property owners will be notified that removal has taken place and then post-graffiti removal photographs are taken and recorded.

A clean-up might be performed by council officers, contractors or offenders. Typically, in this last category will be a team of four to five juvenile offenders, working with a supervisor, who have received court-mandated community service orders. Sometimes Albury council will pay compensation to private property owners for damage caused by council officers in carrying out graffiti removal work. Albury council also offers a reward of up to \$2,000 to members of the public for information and evidence that leads to successful prosecution of an offender. Albury council's Graffiti Management Plan was endorsed by council on 26 July 2010 and implemented following public consultation.

More still is being done in Albury. As I mentioned, one of the three steps of this policy is to involve the local community and young people as partners in reducing graffiti. The council has taken part in events to publicise and acknowledge Graffiti Action Day in May 2010 and May 2011. Members of the council's Crime Prevention Committee, the Youth Council, Albury city councillors and staff, police, business people and community members have gathered to clean graffiti from public property. Volunteers are also invited to join in at each clean-up site. This is a whole-of-community model to confront the issues raised by graffiti. We are seeing some benefits from this approach. In December 2010 the Albury Community Safety Precinct Committee, of which I am a member, was informed that reporting of graffiti offences had declined.

Albury council is currently working on a program with a more activist, preventative approach, combined with positive outcomes for young people. This program will turn traffic light signal boxes into a canvas for public art by young people. Appropriate boxes will be offered as places for painting to take place. The evidence from some shires is that this has multiple beneficial outcomes. The experience is, first, that graffiti vandals are less likely to tag a signal box if it has been painted by other young people; and, second, young people get to see public art created by other young people and displayed in their own community. These lawful paintings can be intriguing and stimulating to the wider community. They turn unattractive signal boxes into art that can improve the amenity of the area. These initiatives are welcome and necessary in the Albury region, which has a high rate of malicious damage compared with State averages.

In 2010, 1,250 incidents of malicious damage to property were recorded within the Albury local government area. This is down from a high of 1,351 incidents in 2008. While the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research records the bare statistics, it does not separate out the numbers on graffiti as a subset of malicious property damage. Fortunately, in Albury our police keep separate records. In the Albury local area command the police statistics note 332 recorded graffiti incidents for the 24 months to May 2011. Police believe the actual figure is much higher, as many incidents, particularly graffiti on public property such as toilet blocks, go unreported. The data is recorded on a monthly basis according to individual policing sectors.

Each policing sector, with the exception of Hume Weir that is serviced by Albury, has one or more police stations that service that particular area. In addition, local police keep files on the different tags used by offenders, whether they are operating alone or as part of a group, and information is built up on graffiti activity. One of the dangers of this kind of debate, where there may be talk about getting tough on offenders, is the risk of blame falling on young people in general. I reject that view. While graffiti appears to be an offence committed largely by the young, in no way should the blame be shared widely. Graffiti in Albury appears to be mostly the work of a modest number of small groups at any one time. At some point a group will grow out of it or, in a sense, retire and may be replaced by another group on the local scene.

In Albury it is not a case of youth gone wild or the sweeping, unfounded allegation that parents are failing to supervise their children as they did in "the good old days". Small numbers of offenders are involved

and it is truly unfortunate that some sections of the community take the opportunity to point the finger at all young people. With this bill the Government is finetuning the targeting of enforcement to those who are creating the costly problem. We are treating the problem seriously and implementing sanctions that will drive the message home more clearly to those engaged in these activities. For those reasons I support the bill.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.28 p.m.]: I support the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 with the proposed amendments foreshadowed by the shadow Attorney General. This is an important bill. However, graffiti requires more than a piece of legislation. We know, and research shows, that imposing tough laws and tough punishments on graffiti vandals is not a deterrent. The way we plan significant precincts and public housing estates is just as important as introducing legislation. I was particularly impressed with how the previous Government made sure that government departments focused on finding ways to reduce the incidence of graffiti.

We know that graffiti is a problem in all of our communities, but we must look beyond the legislative models and take a holistic approach to resources across government agencies. For instance, I would like this bill to provide additional resources for local governments, which are often at the forefront of ensuring that graffiti is removed from our buildings. It is local governments and their staff who are often called upon to clean up graffiti, regardless of where it is. I call on the Government to make sure that this legislation, something that we support broadly, is accompanied by significant resources for local governments to enable them to clean up the areas of our communities that need it the most.

Bellambi, a large public housing estate in the electorate of Keira, is home to several thousand residents. Unfortunately, over the past couple of years it has had ongoing problems with graffiti, just like many other housing estates across New South Wales. The Department of Housing must take a more aggressive approach to ensure that graffiti is removed. I have visited and spoken to many residents in that area, and their fear is that crime in the area is worse than it actually is—graffiti does that, it often makes people fear that an area is more unsafe than it really is, and that is how the residents of Bellambi feel at the moment.

We must work together across the agencies to ensure that all agencies at all government levels, but clearly local government, are focussed on this issue, and that we are not simply passing laws in this place. Laws are important, but they must be accompanied by adequate resources to ensure that agencies are not caught up in red tape and that they are able to remove the graffiti as soon as possible. Graffiti is often placed on local government buildings, but it is also placed on school buildings, Department of Education buildings, Department of Health buildings, Housing NSW buildings and other government agency buildings within our local communities. It is a scourge.

I am concerned that some aspects of the bill will lead to more graffiti problems for our local communities. I am concerned about the cancelling of licences because the punishment does not match the crime. I am concerned that for a person of 13, 14 or 15 years of age that punishment will not be a deterrent at all. I understand what the Government is trying to do, and I accept that it is not an easy issue to tackle. But I urge caution in relation to the removing or banning of licences when many of the young offenders are not old enough to hold a driver licence. I want to see more of a focus on youth justice conferencing, which the experts and research have shown over and over works; it acts as a deterrent for young people to continue to commit crimes.

I am very keen to work with government agencies within the electorate of Keira to make sure that we use this legislation to the best of our ability to remove graffiti from our community. At the end of this month I will host in our Bellambi Community Neighbourhood Centre a graffiti and crime workshop and community forum in which people will have the opportunity to talk to me, their local superintendent of police, their local government representatives and Housing NSW about how we can work together as a community to try to reduce the incidence of graffiti. As local members of Parliament we need to take the lead. We need to be out there making sure that our communities know that services are in place to remove graffiti rapidly. Former Premier Rees, who is in the House, introduced a range of legislation and a range of different deterrents to achieve that. I am encouraged that the Government is building on that, but I urge the Government to act with caution on some of the changes, particularly those involving driver licences.

In recent weeks I have sent constituents in my electorate details of the Wollongong City Council graffiti hotline, which is a fairly new initiative in the Illawarra. It is a one-stop shop and a simple number for people to call the moment they see graffiti so that graffiti can be removed from the area as quickly as possible. Those of us who have looked at this problem know that the best way to stop graffiti from appearing is to remove

it as soon as possible. All of us want to see that done as quickly as possible. I urge the Government to ensure that this legislation is accompanied with significant funding for our local government agencies to ensure that they have adequate funding to use this legislation to remove graffiti permanently from our communities.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [4.35 p.m.]: I speak to the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. First, I congratulate my colleague the Attorney General on his energy and leadership on this issue. He is a man committed to genuine reform of our criminal justice system. This bill honours a commitment in the Government's 100 Day Action Plan to implement reforms to ensure graffiti offences are dealt with more effectively. I am pleased to say that the people of Ryde made a significant contribution to the development of our graffiti policy, which will now be legislated as part of our 100 Day Action Plan.

On 23 and 24 July 2009, in response to significant community concern about graffiti vandalism, I held a graffiti forum in Ryde. We invited local residents, community leaders, police, business owners, graffiti removal volunteers and legal experts to participate in a discussion on how we could tackle the increasing incidence of graffiti in New South Wales. Special guest speakers included the then shadow Minister for Police, the Hon. Mike Gallacher, former Children's Court Magistrate Barbara Holborow, OAM, and spray can expert John Nardone. Approximately 70 people participated in the Ryde graffiti forums and all contributed valuable ideas that form part of a policy paper that I developed and took to the then Opposition party room. A number of the key initiatives arising from the Ryde graffiti forums were included in our graffiti policy. Two years after those forums it is very pleasing to see these important reforms now being made law.

Today I acknowledge some of the key people who have fought for these reforms at a local level. First, I sincerely thank Charles Kilby from Ryde Rotary for his tireless work on graffiti removal in Ryde and his advocacy for legal reforms. I also acknowledge Roger Norman from Turramurra Rotary who has worked in partnership with Charles on the Rotary Graffiti Removal Program over the past few years. I also thank Charles' fellow Ryde Rotarians Geoff Brennan and Adrian Hallett for their invaluable work on the Rotary Graffiti Removal Program. I also acknowledge other Ryde Rotary graffiti removal team members including Bill Payne, Val Payne, Burkhart Foertsch, Duncan Taylor, Martin Aston, Allen Horrell, David Horrell, John Higgins, Paul Burnett, Ron Taffa, Les Whitcroft, Stefan Sojka, Tony Abboud, Siddharth Maheshwari and Malcolm Cox.

The Ryde graffiti removal team was supported by the Ryde Chamber of Commerce and the Ryde Business Forum and sponsored by the Ryde City Council, Dulux Paints, Taffa's Mitre 10 Hardware and Kennard's Self Storage at Rydalmere. The equipment for the Ryde graffiti removal team is supplied by the Ryde City Council. I also acknowledge Guy Kingdon from Turramurra Rotary and my esteemed colleague and friend Bryan Doyle, the member for Campbelltown and former chief inspector of the Campbelltown police, for their valuable input. I would also like to acknowledge the Hon. Chris Hartcher, to my left, who is a vocal advocate for reform and who has added his acute intellect and zeal on this issue.

The bill delivers on the O'Farrell Government's election promise by, first, requiring juvenile graffiti vandals to appear before the court for a graffiti offence. The rationale is that it shows offenders that the community takes graffiti offences seriously. Graffiti offences result in more than \$100 million worth of damage to property each year—and that is a conservative estimate. We are asking that offenders be brought before the court so that its Judicial officers can look offenders in the eye and tell them that this is a serious offence that will be treated seriously by the community. That is the first reform we have undertaken.

The second reform is that we are giving courts the power to suspend a driver's licence of any class, extend the time that graffiti offenders spend on L plates or P plates, or impose a limit on the number of demerit points that they are able to accrue over a specified period. The rationale behind this is it gives courts additional powers in circumstances where they are dealing with offenders who are, quite frankly, completely irresponsible and reckless with public property. If a graffiti offender is so immature and so reckless that they are prepared to damage public property of significant value, how on earth are they going to be responsible enough to drive a motor vehicle? This is the rationale behind the reforms. I think giving a magistrate an additional tool with which to modify and curb the behaviour of graffiti offenders can only be a good thing.

At this point I stress, as I have stated over the past two years, that the last thing we want to do is put young people behind bars. So we have to put barriers in place to make sure that they do not go to jail. One such barrier is to say to an offender, "Listen, if I see you before this court again I am going to suspend or remove your driver licence." One of the most important things a male of 16, 17, or 18 can get at that age is a driver licence. So if a magistrate says to them, "If you do this again then I am going to take that privilege away from

you", it may sink in and prevent them from undertaking acts of vandalism again. Thirdly, I refer to community service orders. The reforms involve making graffiti clean-up a condition of community service orders imposed on graffiti offenders. Again, the rationale behind this is quite simple. As a society, we must teach young offenders that their actions have consequences.

When I was conducting the graffiti forums— and subsequent to that—when I would often talk to community members about this issue. I would ask, "If you had a child at home who threw his toys all over the lounge, would you say to that child, 'Don't worry, go back outside and play and I will clean up the toys'"? Of course you would not do that, because that is not responsible parenting. You would tell the child, in a caring way, "Pick up the toys and don't do it again". You would explain to the child what he did wrong. It is similar with graffiti. If a person vandalises public property with graffiti, as a society we should say, "Your job now, first and foremost, is to clean up your mess because actions have consequences."

As a consequence, the person would have to clean up not only his mess but that of others in his gang. So the next time he is speaking to his gang members he could say, "Don't do that, I just spent last weekend cleaning it up." The bill is designed also to teach responsibility by giving courts the powers necessary to show young offenders that crime does not pay. I am very proud of this bill because it is an example of grassroots democracy in action. Many of the reforms in the bill came from the grassroots level, so the bill is owned by the community. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.45 p.m.]: I add my comments to debate on the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. As previous speakers have indicated, the costs and statistics regarding graffiti are staggering. In particular, the fact that a single government agency such as RailCorp is required to spend \$55 million on graffiti prevention and removal is simply incredible. However, the State Government is not alone in suffering the financial consequences of graffiti management. Graffiti is as much a problem, if not a greater problem, for local government than it is for State government. It is no secret that local councils are under-resourced and underfinanced. As a result, they are often ill equipped in the ongoing battle to prevent and clean up graffiti.

A council such as Bankstown has close to 2,000 incidents of graffiti reported annually. Offensive graffiti is removed within 24 hours and other graffiti is removed within five to 10 days. As I advised the House previously, Bankstown council spends close to half a million dollars of ratepayers' money annually on graffiti removal. This is a significant amount of money for a local council and could be better spent elsewhere. Of course, those costs are in addition to those incurred by private citizens and business operators.

The State Government, however, is in an enviable position. It has been handed a robust economy with a triple-A credit rating, thanks to Labor. This Government is in a position to take real action to clean up graffiti and prevent it from happening. Unfortunately, that is not what this bill is really about. It is all form and no substance. The Government plans to cancel the driver licences of convicted graffiti vandals, many of whom are too young even to have a licence. What possible effect could this have? If graffiti is, as we are often told, a common first offence that can lead to further criminal behaviour, why would the Government create a situation where it sets up graffiti offenders for further offences? I put it to the House that this is actually a terrible idea, one that could cause much more harm than benefit.

The Government needs to demonstrate that the bill will somehow prevent graffiti offences. I am having difficulty following its line of reasoning. Taking away offenders' licences might stop some from driving, but it is unlikely to stop, or even reduce, graffiti crime. The Attorney General said that he wants to see fewer people in jail. But this proposal is going to have the opposite effect. Furthermore, as is evident from RailCorp's expenditure in this area, many offenders travel on public transport to and from the scene of their offences. As previous speakers have indicated, the Opposition is not alone in questioning this proposal. Third party groups such as the Victims of Crime Assistance League are similarly concerned.

The bill also proposes to require all graffiti offenders to appear before the courts instead of relying on police judgement and discretion. Not satisfied with ripping off the public service with its atrocious industrial relations policy and not satisfied with taking away public servants' rights to an independent industrial arbiter, the Government is adding insult to injury by once again telling the brave men and women of our police force that it does not trust them. This is the Attorney General who in April last year promised:

I have support for the view that the law-and-order auction should not be continued in the next election.

Essentially the Attorney General was telling the electorate that he was going to take the politics out of law and order; he was going to ensure that his policies were good policies. But now in government it is a different story. Requiring all offenders to appear in court might make for a good sound bite but it does not make for good policy. Police now have the option to formally caution an offender or to refer an offender to a youth justice conference, particularly if it is a first offence. The Attorney General needs to learn to trust the Police Force, as does the Liberal Party. Police deserve it and they also deserve fair pay and conditions—but it seems that for the Liberal-Nationals Coalition that ship has sailed. Furthermore, a recent Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research evaluation of cautioning and conferencing found:

Juveniles who receive a caution or a youth justice conference are less likely to re-offend than those who are referred to the Children's Court.

For more serious or repeat offenders there are already tough imprisonment penalties, court orders and fines in place. Under the Government's policy even juveniles appropriate for diversion would be hauled before the court, making them more likely to reoffend.

There are elements of the bill that we support but like so much of this Government's legislative agenda this is soft touch. I would be happy for any of the relevant Ministers to visit Bankstown and to provide them with an opportunity for an open dialogue on this issue. If the Government wants to take real action on graffiti, I invite it to do so. This legislation, however, will do very little to reduce graffiti. I think we all agree that there is no single solution to the problem of graffiti, but there is a wealth of potential ideas the Government should consider. I urge the Government to consider working more closely with local government and government agencies and to provide funding to those councils and agencies to work directly on this issue. In reality, levels of graffiti are unlikely to fall and the costs associated with its removal will continue to rise.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [4.52 p.m.]: I thank the member for Menai for her indulgence on this occasion. There are some underlying principles in the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 that need to be reaffirmed. The first is that young offenders—it is overwhelmingly an offence committed by young offenders—need to be called to account for their actions but in a way to which they and the community are responsive. The practice of the former Government of simply increasing penalties, which led to one offender getting a three-month jail sentence and caused public outrage, was clearly counterproductive. The community does not support jail terms for young people who commit graffiti however much the community may dislike graffiti.

It was clear that we had to move away from a custodial sanction to a sanction that would be effective. With young offenders, many of whom are impecunious—especially those who commit this sort of crime—the one thing on which the community would agree they have an interest in protecting and are determined to protect is the right to a drivers licence or their holding of such a licence. That is the first point. The second point is that if a young offender is simply dealt with by way of a sanction in the form of a caution imposed by a police officer it is meaningless. It is well known to be meaningless because it tells the young offender, "You've been a naughty boy. Don't do it again." They know they have been naughty boys. They are overwhelmingly boys and are unfortunately the sorts of individuals who are naughty boys at school.

The sanction needs to be effective and one in which the community can have confidence. Our community makes the judicial imposition of penalties through the court system. The second underlying principle is that every person caught committing this offence should be brought to account before a court. They are the two fundamental principles behind the legislation. The third principle underlying the bill is community involvement. The community's dislike of graffiti, as well as its willingness to be involved in cleaning it up, was brought strongly to my attention when I was out working the bus stops and railway stations with the member for Menai. Most people believe graffiti is easily soluble and all that is needed is a bucket, a mop and the appropriate soap or chemical solvents.

In the electorate of Menai the member for Menai and I met a number of people on a cold Saturday. It was good to be with the member for Menai but the conditions at the time were not so enjoyable. When we asked people what was the biggest issue in the electorate a number of them mentioned graffiti. They said again and again that they would be happy to help remove it, although they did not want to be rostered for duty every day of the week. Many organisations such as Rotary and community groups do a great job. They are happy to receive training and support and go out and clean up their area. I was impressed by that attitude, as I was when I was out with the member for Wyong and the same issue came up again and again—as I am sure it did in every electorate across the State.

I do not think it is revealing any great secret to say that the genesis for this proposal came not from me or, with the greatest respect, from the Attorney General, who has done great work in progressing the legislation and bringing it before the House, but from the member for Ryde, the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He was elected in that watershed by-election in 2009 that showed the Coalition parties that if we kept things together, retained the faith of the community and stood united we were destined for an enormous victory—which of course came to pass on 26 March. It was his extraordinary achievement in that by-election in October 2009 that resulted in his coming into Parliament with this plan. He put the plan together and road-tested it with community groups in the July meetings in his electorate, as he said earlier, and put it to the shadow Cabinet for adoption.

The Minister did a great deal of work on it and fleshed it out. It was adopted by the shadow Cabinet and then by the joint parties, as is our rule, and became our policy at the 2011 election. I commend and place on public record the work of the member for Ryde. I acknowledge that, as the member for Dubbo said, we had a clear mandate. It was a policy that we took to the people. The policy was publicised and was referred to in articles in the *Daily Telegraph*. It got a reasonable amount of publicity because there is a degree of community concern about this issue. The policy was presented to the people of New South Wales as part of our election manifesto for the 2011 election and was massively endorsed in the biggest single victory that has occurred in New South Wales electoral history since its Constitution was granted in 1902.

That is the legislation now before Parliament. Nobody expects this legislation will solve the problem of graffiti overnight. What it does is seek to engage the community in solving the problem and bring home to young people, who are the principal offenders, the consequences of their actions in a way the community will accept. If further action is required then obviously the Government, in conjunction with the community, will take further action. This is a valuable step forward. The old system tried to restrict the sale of spray cans, which is a good idea but easily bypassed. It then tried to impose penalties on offenders who were caught, but they are very hard to catch. On the rare occasions they were caught the penalties were so severe that nobody was going to enforce them and the system simply did not operate.

We need to involve the community, and that is what this legislation does. Fifteen May 2011 was Graffiti Action Day throughout the community, and many people, including many members from both sides of this House, took part in working with local communities and in particular with local councils. One of the ongoing problems councils have faced in addressing this issue is cost transfer. Time and again over the past 16 years the State Government developed proposals and enacted legislation and said to local councils, "It's a great idea. You go out and implement it at your cost." We are determined to try to remove that burden from local government in a way that does not impose extra costs on local government, which is the policy of the Coalition parties.

I acknowledge the reasonably thoughtful contribution by the member for Keira. I regret the attempt by the member for Bankstown to politicise the issue and somehow to make the proposal an adverse comment on the New South Wales police, when it has nothing to do with them. If any parties are committed to the New South Wales police it is the Liberal Party and The Nationals. I put that on record because in the member for Campbelltown, the member for Dubbo and the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council we have three people who have given distinguished service to the New South Wales Police Force.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: And the member for Myall Lakes.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: There is also the member for Myall Lakes. My apologies, I thought he was a learned professional, a lawyer, like me. I am happy to acknowledge that in a former life he was a member of the New South Wales Police Force. We are the strongest champions, defenders and supporters of the New South Wales Police Force ever in the political framework of this country, and we make no apology for that. We stand by the police and with the police, and we are proud to be associated with the New South Wales police, who are—despite what may be said about them on the other side of politics—a wonderful group of men and women. We are going to progress the issue of graffiti control in our community. We are doing it in the right way, through the legislative framework, and establishing a base from which communities can go forward with confidence, knowing they have the Government and councils behind them, knowing they have an adequate framework through which offenders can be brought to account and knowing that areas that suffer from graffiti will have the opportunity to drive out this scourge.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.01 p.m.]: Some people say that graffiti can be a victimless crime. Nothing could be further from the truth. First, it is definitely a crime—not only a crime, but blatant vandalism.

Graffiti is messy, it can be vulgar and offensive, and very often contains derogatory remarks and discriminatory insults. The victims of graffiti are proud citizens from vibrant communities who wish to walk down their streets with pride, but instead are greeted by what are colloquially known as "tags", "etches" and "scribes". In some areas whole walls of railway tunnels are overridden with graffiti vandalism. Elsewhere we find small businesses having to clean graffiti from the walls of their properties—the places where they earn their bread and butter, and where they earn money to feed their families.

Graffiti is a scourge on the communities that members who sit in this Chamber proudly represent. Defacing other people's property is simply not on. Graffiti increases the perception of crime in a local area and can make community members feel intimidated. People are feeling unsafe, and enough is enough. The former Government took strong action against graffiti vandalism to protect local communities and their members. We gave police the power to confiscate spray paint cans from persons under the age of 18 if they were found to be carrying those cans in a public place with no reasonable explanation as to why they were in their possession. Such persons would have to satisfy the police officer that their possession of the can did not constitute an offence under the relevant provisions.

Persons under the age of 18 in possession of spray paint cans could also be charged with an offence carrying a maximum penalty of \$1,100 or six months imprisonment. As graffiti is not simply some ill-advised juvenile stunt, harsh penalties are needed to deter the actions of vandals. Evidence-based research carried out by the Department of Justice and Attorney General has shown that while some graffiti vandals commit these acts for the adrenaline rush, around a third of those interviewed stated that they were affiliated with a graffiti crew. Thus we can surmise that not all graffiti is a random act or a rush of blood, but can be a premeditated, organised activity that has direct consequences for the community to face. The Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 continues the good work of the former Government in making it as difficult as possible for graffiti vandals to ply their trade.

The bill will amend the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 and the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 so that when a court is making a community service order under those Acts in relation to persons guilty of offences under the Graffiti Control Act 2008 a condition is imposed requiring the offenders to remove or obliterate graffiti and restore the appearance of buildings, vehicles, vessels or places consequent on the removal or obliteration of graffiti unless it is not reasonably practicable for such work to be performed by those persons. If these vandals want to leave their tags on buildings within our local communities they can clean them off too.

Further, the bill will amend the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to enable a court to make certain orders with respect to the drivers licence of a person who has committed an offence under section 4, Damaging or defacing property by means of graffiti implement, or section 5, Possession of graffiti implement, of that Act instead of, or in addition to, imposing a fine, sentence of imprisonment or community service order on the offender. Graffiti vandalism is often committed by those in their youth. These new sanctions allowing for the suspension of an offender's drivers licence should serve as an effective deterrent. Do the crime and your driving privileges will be revoked.

The bill also amends the Young Offenders Act 1997 to remove the power for investigating officials and specialist youth officers to deal with young offenders who have committed graffiti offences by way of caution, warning or youth justice conference instead of court proceedings. I foreshadow that the member for Liverpool intends to move an amendment to the bill that will make this provision more sensible. Communities have had enough, and effective measures must be taken to deter young offenders from vandalising our streets and monuments. Our community members have the right to feel safe on our streets, be it morning or night, and no-one deserves to feel intimidated.

As I said before, graffiti often targets those of a different race. Racial epithets have no place in our society. I proudly represent the electorate of Cabramatta, a true melting pot of cultures, with community members from Vietnam, China, Bosnia, Serbia, Italy, Macedonia, Laos, Cambodia and many more. In my electorate all community members function and interact harmoniously and have a deep mutual respect for each other. For there to be racist graffiti tags on the walls not only is not on but gives a blatantly false image of the local area. Cabramatta is one of the most diverse places in the world—a success story of racial and religious harmony. That is something we are proud of and will fight to protect. The perception of crime can be powerful. The former Government gave New South Wales its largest police force on record, which does an excellent job keeping our streets safe from criminals and vandals alike.

In August 2010 Fairfield City Council resolved that a graffiti prevention policy be prepared, underpinned by a coordinated approach to the prevention and removal of graffiti. This included the use of the

Australian Graffiti Register, which enables the council to share information with the New South Wales Police Force. Recently the council also created an email hotline for the reporting of graffiti in order to support an initiative of the New South Wales Government and the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Fairfield City Council currently receives a monthly graffiti prevention report that highlights the work being undertaken with other government agencies, the community and bodies such as Juvenile Justice to address graffiti vandalism.

Alternative measures to address graffiti hot spots by planting trees and shrubs have also been trialled successfully and will continue to be used as a tool to prevent this form of vandalism. In 2010 the council also resolved that a service be provided to local residents to remove graffiti from their private property. There is a small fee attached to this service of \$26 to \$40, reflecting that the community is often better engaged when councils do not completely absorb the cost of this social problem on their behalf. This is a successful service about which the council has received very positive resident feedback. Fairfield City Council continues to pursue a range of activities to reduce graffiti vandalism in the local government area.

To date, there has been some success measured in an approach that was implemented in late 2010. However, the benefits of a project managed response to graffiti crime is that continued monitoring and tracking will determine a best practice model to reduce graffiti in the Fairfield local government area. The Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 will assist law enforcement to effectively deal with and deter graffiti vandals from leaving their tags all over our streets and city. The Opposition does not oppose this bill.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.09 p.m.]: I support the Government's Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This bill not only seeks to fulfil an important election promise to the people of New South Wales, but also grants additional power in order to stem the tide of graffiti, which is an habitual blight on our communities. This bill is a positive step forward to reducing and targeting graffiti vandals, which is both an unsightly and costly problem to New South Wales. Graffiti is evident throughout Australia regardless of the social, economic or cultural status of the community. Graffiti is variously described as crime, defacement, property vandalism or street art. Residents often are legitimately angry when vandals deface their homes, public places and open space. Unsightly graffiti adds to an atmosphere of neglect and urban decay, and distorts perceptions about the actual level of crime and safety.

Illegal graffiti is of ongoing concern to the general community and to the people in my electorate and New South Wales as a whole. Graffiti incurs substantial social and economic costs to the community. Graffiti battles are ongoing in the Menai electorate. Both local councils—Sutherland shire and Liverpool city—have established hardworking committees and groups to tackle this problem. In the Sutherland shire, in conjunction with the council, Menai Community Services has set up a volunteer group that has rewritten the book on attempting local solutions to the endless local problem of graffiti. It is difficult to believe but in the 2009 financial year the council suffered more than 1,600 incidents of graffiti, covering more than 22,000 square metres of the beautiful Sutherland shire and costing ratepayers more than \$250,000 to remove.

Menai Volunteer Graffiti Removal Group is the first of its kind in the Sutherland shire. The Premier and I met and thanked this group for its time and effort. The group gives several hours a fortnight to remove graffiti from Parc Menai and the town centre. In February last year Project Get-A-GRIP [Graffiti Removal Intervention Project] was launched by the Sutherland Police and Community Youth Club. This program offered graffiti offenders eligible for a police caution the option of attending a two-hour session about the legalities of graffiti as a crime, and its cost and impact on the community. Parents of graffiti offenders also could elect to enter their child into the program as a further measure against repeat offences. Volunteer groups and the police and community youth club put in this effort because graffiti degrades our urban environment and introduces an intolerable level of disorder that unsettles the community, often leading to a feeling of being unsafe and a concern about the potential rise in local crime.

The changing nature of graffiti from isolated slogans and larger murals to etching, tagging and stickers that can be rapidly applied and difficult to remove contributes to the fast paced and concentrated build-up of graffiti in certain locations around our electorates. This fast and concentrated build-up of tagging and antisocial gang-like behaviour drove one of my constituents in the Liverpool area, Allan Dabbagh, to take matters into his own hands a few years ago and establish LAGG—locals against graffiti gangs. As his local member I commend him for his tireless service to the Menai electorate, particularly to the Wattle Grove and Holsworthy suburbs, and acknowledge his initiative in fighting graffiti. The Premier met with Mr Dabbagh when he was in opposition and also was impressed with his initiative.

Undoubtedly, trying to keep on top of graffiti removal is a vicious cycle and until now was difficult to deter. There have long been calls for tougher consequences for graffiti vandals as current sentencing options do

not adequately address the problem. Even when a vandal is caught, the penalties are not much of a deterrence and the current system can be navigated in a number of ways to receive a lenient punishment. We need real consequences, not just threats. The Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill is about making graffiti vandals accountable for their actions and face the true cost of their activities. By enforcing offenders to undertake graffiti removal work shows them just how much work is involved in cleaning up their vandalism.

I have cleaned up graffiti as part of Graffiti Action Day. I cleaned the brick wall at the Bangor Pink Elephant car wash. It was difficult and tiring. I hope that by enforcing vandals to clean up graffiti they will realise that removing it can take hours and an awful lot of elbow grease. I hope they realise also that graffiti is destructive and demoralising to the community, especially to the home owner. For many graffiti vandals a simple tag might take a few minutes to scrawl on a train carriage but to remove the same mark can take much longer. The Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 will ensure that once sentenced an offender is required, rather than simply recommended, to undertake clean-up work.

Many offenders fail to see the seriousness of their crimes and do not fear reprimand if they are caught. This is why the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill also introduces a driver's licence penalty to add tougher consequences for graffiti vandals. Losing one's driver's licence has a far greater impact on lifestyle, status and livelihood. A licence suspension can result in the loss of income, or even the loss of employment. By introducing tougher penalties, such as extending the minimum period for learner or provisional licence holders or suspending a licence for up to six months, potential graffiti vandals are likely to be more hesitant to get caught and therefore may be less likely to vandalise public property.

I have spoken to several young people who have just obtained their licences or who soon will. They are so proud of their achievement that I truly doubt they will risk doing something as juvenile or destructive as graffiti. Alternatively, the court has the option to allocate demerit points to the offender. If they accrue four or more points, their licence will be suspended. Behavioural studies have shown that graffiti is most likely to occur in a concentrated fashion in public spaces where the graffiti writer feels they are assured of an audience and flow-on attention. Juvenile graffiti offenders are about to receive ample audience and attention under this bill. This bill will require a juvenile offender to have an audience with a judge in a courtroom in order to characterise and emphasise the seriousness of the offence.

Further, this bill will give ample attention to their status as New South Wales drivers. To ensure that each offender realises the true weight of the situation, the graffiti bill will ensure that young offenders can no longer be diverted from the courts. There will be no easy way out of a graffiti offence. There will be real consequences with real implications for the individual involved. This bill is about taking tougher steps to help curb this problem in our communities. For a long time now, most graffiti occurs without someone catching the offender. Subsequently, the clean-up process is then entirely undertaken by the business, the private owner or the council whose property has been damaged. This is also the cause of much community angst about this issue. People want to see the culprits made accountable for their actions and also receive real penalties for it.

Graffiti is not an isolated issue. It occurs everywhere. My experience in local government, having served seven years as a councillor on Sutherland Shire Council, has given me a comprehensive grasp of the anxiety, concern and exhaustion our community feels when confronted by the endless tide of graffiti we see in otherwise beautiful residential and shared community spaces. At the last Graffiti Action Day I joined Sutherland Shire Youth Council to plant about 500 trees and shrubs to screen regularly targeted sites. My electorate is fairly young and also has many Colorbond fences along Bangor, Menai and Illawong properties that have often been vandalised. We also have beautiful sandstone entrances at Wattle Grove and the isolated Holsworthy railway station that are targeted regularly. A person's perception of their urban environment is fundamentally shaped by the meanings they attach to different places.

While I was doorknocking during the election campaign and at progress association meetings graffiti continually came up as one of the top issues people were concerned about. The neglected-looking physical attributes of our surroundings often are used to determine if a place is safe or unsafe, family friendly, child friendly or a blanket no-go zone. We need to be able to convince offenders that their carefree scrawling on public and private property is not just unacceptable but costly to the community and will carry significant penalties if they are caught. The Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 really works to achieve this result. I support the bill's increased measures to deter future graffiti vandals. The community has had enough of graffiti and graffiti offenders. This legislation will prove that their actions have consequences.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.18 p.m.]: I add my support to the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 and particularly to strengthen the position made clear already by my Opposition

colleagues in calling for amendments to the bill. For those relatively bipartisan parts, the bill well reflects the strong views of our respective communities on this kind of reckless, inexcusable and destructive behaviour. Graffiti vandalism is a blight on the landscape of our cities and suburbs. Unfortunately, its perpetrators show complete disregard not only for private property but also for the very infrastructure and property that people use daily, such as our trains.

For those who may think that the damage is merely aesthetic and without impact on the taxpayer, I offer a sober reminder that this is not the case. RailCorp alone estimates that the cost of addressing graffiti vandalism is around \$55 million per annum. The Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast spoke earlier about a lack of support for councils. Councils, particularly Auburn City Council, has been the benefactor over a number of years of support from the Attorney General's Department, particularly in the earlier 2000s, when there was great support for the tackling of this type of behaviour.

Labor governments have been well justified in taking a consistent and progressively tougher stance on graffiti vandalism. This House has witnessed the passage of Labor's Graffiti Control Act, which contained amongst other measures the doubling of imprisonment penalties, sanctioning of the courts to order vandals to clean up their own graffiti and the introduction of offences related to the sale or supply of spray cans to minors. In recognition of the complexities inherent in prevention, Labor policy went a step further by introducing the designing out graffiti approach, which employed special coatings and lighting and restricted access to construction sites, as well as establishing the Anti-Graffiti Action Team comprised of leading experts from government and the retail paint industry to implement new initiatives. This brief overview of a few key Labor achievements is important in laying the groundwork for an assessment of the bill at hand.

The issue of graffiti vandalism strikes a raw nerve in the community at large, and as politicians we have a responsibility to address the issue in an appropriately serious manner without succumbing to the urge to score cheap political points. So let us examine the main points of the bill in light of what already exists in law and what would most likely prove to be effective in curbing graffiti vandalism and tackling its root cause. The first tenet of the bill involves amending the community service order legislation to include a clean-up provision. However, it is clear that this power already resides in the hands of the courts. The only point of difference appears to lie in the fact that the legislation makes it compulsory rather than discretionary. Notwithstanding, it must be stressed that even under this bill the court can conclude that it is not reasonably practicable to impose such a condition. All in all it seems this aspect of the bill represents only a comparatively minor change to existing laws.

I note again that the power to order offenders to clean up their graffiti is embedded in laws that go back as far as 1987. I refer members to section 33 of the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act. There is an entire Act of Parliament dedicated to this end, and that is the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987. I refer particularly to section 5 of that Act. With respect to introducing driver's licence orders, I note that such a punishment is not widely accepted as an effective deterrent. In my past capacity as Minister for Juvenile Justice I developed a close working relationship with people such as Ken Marslew of Enough is Enough. The shadow Attorney General, my parliamentary colleague Mr Paul Lynch, referred to comments made by Ken Marslew, who noted his organisation's position on the matter. I think it worthwhile reaffirming that position. Ken Marslew said:

I can't see how suspending a license is going to change a graffiti vandal's attitude. It won't stop them from doing graffiti.

At present there exists in this State an alternative that involves the use of our youth justice conferencing system, should the police determine that such an avenue is appropriate. Again, as the former Minister for Juvenile Justice, this is a matter of great interest to me. I note that the member for Bankstown raised pertinent issues, which the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast seemed to dismiss inappropriately. The member for Bankstown said that police currently have power to make a determination about the use of that discretionary power to caution an offender or refer an offender to a youth justice conference. The bill being considered seeks to remove that discretion from the police. I wonder why that is. Is it because Government members are of a mind that police have inappropriately used that discretion? If they are of that mind, then they are wrong. The evidence would suggest otherwise. Or is it that Government members do not trust the police?

The evidence is that youth conferencing has proven to be effective in relation to graffiti matters, and that generally referral to youth justice conferencing has led to a lowering of re-offending rates and been more

effective than court attendance. So clearly there is a place for its continued use in graffiti cases. To undermine the ability of the police to exercise this option, which is backed by the weight of evidence and the support of key figures such as Ken Marslew of Enough is Enough and Howard Brown of the Victims of Crime Assistance League and the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is to violate good sense for the sake of political expedience. Again I urge the Government to join the Opposition in establishing the most effective approach to what is a serious and widespread problem. Let us build on what has been established thus far and work to address the aspects of the bill that are in clear need of amendment.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Along with the Minister for Local Government and member for Ballina, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Public Works in the term of the previous Government. That committee tabled a report entitled "Report on Graffiti and Public Infrastructure" in November last year. It is interesting to note that of the 10 members of this House who served on that committee only 3 are left—myself, the Minister and the member for Cabramatta. Perhaps I should remind newer members of this place what happened to the other seven members who served on that committee.

Some might remember that Karyn Paluzzano left about a year ago under somewhat of a cloud and that Stuart Ayres did a wonderful job which resulted in that by-election win. The only member of that committee who saw the writing on the wall and did not run this year was Grant McBride. We were confident that the Coalition would win Dubbo from Dawn Fardell and Gosford from Marie Andrews, but what happened to members such as Ninos Khoshaba, David Borger and Alan Ashton? Gone, gone, gone. I must admit I was pleasantly surprised when the Coalition won Smithfield, Granville and East Hills. Members of the Opposition must have been horrified at the loss of Labor talent, if that is not a tautology, especially when you look at what is left.

I would like to talk about the Public Works Committee. It was to inquire and report on: the social and economic impact of graffiti on public infrastructure; anti-graffiti policies and practices to protect public infrastructure; anti-graffiti practices, such as mural painting programs employed by New South Wales State and local government agencies; graffiti resistant finishes and other building materials suitable for public infrastructure; anti-graffiti approaches taken in other jurisdictions to protect public infrastructure; and other relevant issues.

It was always understood that, although the terms of the inquiry had to focus on public infrastructure, recommendations from the committee could equally apply to private property. Submissions were called for on 23 March 2010 and closed on 10 May 2010. Some 49 submissions were received and hearings were held on 11 August and 11 October. I found the inquiry both interesting and beneficial. The number of reported graffiti attacks rose from around 9,000 in 2005 to 14,000 in 2008, but it is thought that those figures are but a small percentage and clean-up bills annually are in the millions of dollars.

There seem to be some in the community who feel that graffiti is not really a crime. I cite a recent case in Lake Macquarie in which some idiot named Tony Caban decided to spray paint around a dozen fences to promote a book he has written. The House will not be surprised that he is yet to find a publisher. According to the *Newcastle Herald*, the magistrate said she accepted that Mr Caban was not a criminal or teenager who went around vandalising people's property and she dismissed all 12 counts of damaging property. This idiot, Tony Caban, is quoted as saying:

I did not set out to destroy property, I set out to deliver a message. I went about it the wrong way in a moment of desperation. I apologise profusely for the few private residents I hurt by spraying their Colorbond fences and I hope my cleaning of them now helps right the wrong.

He was too dumb to realise that graffiti not only affects the property owner, it affects everyone in the community who sees his untidy scrawl. He must be a hell of an author. No debate on graffiti can be complete without the House continuing to praise the work of Ted Bickford. Ted is a volunteer who removes all forms of graffiti within the Great Lakes local government area. Ted also promotes community pride to young people through a schools program. Ted's efforts were recognised in 2008 when he was awarded the Order of Australia. Ted removes graffiti as soon as it appears. This approach is also taken by Bankstown City Council. I refer to the Standing Committee on Public Works report on graffiti. It states:

Bankstown City Council have tried a different approach to graffiti management after hiring a youth worker as a consultant. Following his advice Blacktown have been pleased with the results and after being the second worst area for graffiti in the State in 2000, they were out of the top 25 by 2008.

Council had previously operated a rapid removal policy and also experimented with legal murals but did not see the benefit as they often found graffiti on nearby property.

Council staff learnt about the "culture" of graffiti, including its origins in hip-hop culture and this was important and useful knowledge in their efforts to eradicate graffiti in the area.

According to the consultant, graffiti breeds graffiti, and Council therefore concentrated on removing all large scale graffiti in their area, even that which some people considered to have artistic merit.

This was done repeatedly if necessary but the smaller "tags" which were found in the same areas were initially ignored. After removing the large pieces several times, Council found that they no longer returned and at that point they then cleaned off the tags which also did not return.

The Committee learnt that graffiti offenders would often come to admire a larger piece of work (legal or otherwise) and on their journey to and from the piece they would leave their tags. Therefore by concentrating on removing the larger pieces and identifying and targeting graffiti "crews" Council reduced the number of areas for taggers to congregate and operate. The aim was to destroy the "culture" of graffiti. This was seen to be a better use of time and resources than removing all tags immediately as they were found.

The Council learnt from local youth and the consultant that any publicity for the work of graffiti offenders was seen as a good thing. It was common for them to create scrapbooks including articles cut from newspapers.

In order to stop this Bankstown made serious efforts to prevent graffiti offences being reported or shown in the local press, or on television, and similarly dissuaded politicians from using graffiti in photo opportunities.

They also did not promote their strategies and successes as they thought this may come across as a challenge to graffiti crews. As part of this, graffiti removal vehicles in Bankstown are unmarked.

The Council has a colour palette for council property but also encourages private businesses to choose colours from this palette. Therefore if there is an incident the graffiti can be easily painted over rather than the whole wall.

I congratulate Bankstown City Council on its innovative approach. The final committee report was introduced to this place in November last year, at the end of sittings, with ten recommendations. I will not list them, as they are already on the record. I recommend the report to anyone interested in this subject. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.33 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Greens on the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The bill has three main components. First, it amends the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 and the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 to require a court making a community service order under those Acts in relation to persons guilty of offences under the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to impose a condition requiring the persons to remove or obliterate graffiti and restore the appearance of buildings, vehicles, vessels or places consequent on the removal or obliteration of graffiti, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so.

Second, it amends the Graffiti Control Act 2008 to enable a court to make orders relating to the driver's licence of a person who has committed an offence under section 4, Damaging or defacing property by means of graffiti implement, or section 5, Possession of graffiti implement, of that Act instead of or in addition to imposing a fine, sentence of imprisonment or community service order on the offender. Third, it amends the Young Offenders Act 1997 to remove the power for investigating officials and specialist youth officers to deal with young offenders who have committed graffiti offences by way of caution, warning or youth justice conference instead of court proceedings.

The Greens agree that graffiti can be a significant problem. In my local community, which has a huge amount of heritage buildings, graffiti is used to deface the many heritage buildings and leads to significant costs and unsightly views and alienates people's connection with place. It was estimated in 2009 that local governments across Australia spent \$260 million on removing graffiti. As we have heard from speakers to the bill today, graffiti leads to increased perceptions within the community of crime and social decline. However, the Greens do not support the approach outlined in this bill. In our view, and it is supported by evidence, criminalising young people who engage in graffiti activities is both ineffective and counterproductive. In presenting the bill the Attorney-General has produced no evidence to show that this new punitive approach is likely to be effective in reducing graffiti incidents.

The former Government introduced punitive measures on the basis that they would reduce graffiti. Evidence demonstrates that the approach that makes the most significant impact on graffiti is not a punitive or criminalising one. Successful alternatives have been raised in this House by some members, particularly those with experience in local government. In my electorate of Balmain, Leichhardt Council's Graffiti Management

Policy has been effective in reducing incidents of graffiti, not through the type of punitive approach promoted by this bill but through applying strategies in planning and design, community involvement, education and protection and removal.

By applying a design protocol known as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, Leichhardt Council—and many other councils—has been able to significantly reduce graffiti vandalism. Examples of this approach include using landscaping as an anti-graffiti device. Previous speakers have referred to graffiti on colorbond walls. Planting is a cost-effective and simple strategy in reducing the incidents of graffiti vandalism. Those strategies have been used effectively in my local community. Further approaches include creating public spaces that are well lit, well utilised and safe, increasing natural surveillance by designing adequate sight lines into public space, installing motion detection lighting in under-utilised spaces and attracting the community to public spaces that receive low usage through activity generators such as community art, cafes and play equipment.

Leichhardt Council is a great example of implementing measures that focus on community education, the removal of graffiti within 48 hours, the setting up of a graffiti removal team and the provision of free graffiti removal kits to private owners. The council also established the LikeArt initiative designed to facilitate alternative and legal art opportunities for young people who may otherwise engage in graffiti. Evidence shows that in our community the LikeArt Beat Graffiti Strategy has been successful in reducing tagging on walls and, in particular, signal boxes, which is a major problem. In many communities signal boxes are constantly covered in graffiti. Leichhardt Council works closely with the Roads and Traffic Authority to create a program where young people and others receive a grant to paint signal boxes in a range of lively and colourful scenes. This has been well received by the community.

Rather than having to clean graffiti tags from signal boxes every two weeks, the council now cleans them once every year or two years. These low-cost, effective strategies do not criminalise people. They improve the visual amenity and quality of community life and make a positive contribution. In War Memorial Park in Leichhardt the council previously had to remove graffiti tagging incidents once or twice a week. With the provision of a mural on site, changes in planting and the installation of one light, council records demonstrate that graffiti removal has diminished from once or twice a week to less than twice a year. That is a positive example of how graffiti can be removed without clogging up the courts, taking up the time of magistrates, populating prisons with young offenders and introducing young people to the criminal justice system.

I have spoken about my experience locally and the significant impact on the incidence of graffiti vandalism in the community, but it is important also to look at what other stakeholders in this debate have contributed. The Law Society's Criminal Law Committee and Juvenile Justice Committee have reviewed the bill and have expressed their concerns about the removal of the power of the police to deal with young offenders who have committed graffiti offences by way of caution, warnings or youth justice conferences. That is contrary to the long-held principle that criminal proceedings should not be instituted against a child if there are appropriate alternative means to deal with the offence. It is clear to us that this will significantly increase caseloads and costs for the court system and overall costs for the State. In my view it is unjust and inconsistent that other young people can receive pre-court diversions for more serious offences but young people who commit graffiti vandalism offences cannot.

The increased use of community service orders may also lead to increased incarceration rates because a breach of a community service order can result in time in custody in a detention centre. The Law Society is also concerned about the use of driver licence sanctions for offences that are unrelated to driving. The Law Society points out that this approach to fine enforcements against young people has failed, and that it is likely to lead to a significant increase in driving offences by young people who drive while suspended. One would think that the Government would have reviewed the evidence in relation to using the suspension of driver licences as a fine enforcement. There is no evidence to demonstrate that it is an effective mechanism to enforce compliance amongst young people. With a lack of effective evidence to show that this punitive and criminalising approach towards young people reduces the incidence of graffiti vandalism, it is important that the Government notes the contributions of some of its members involved in local government who say that there are clearly cost-effective ways to reduce the incidence of graffiti vandalism through the range of strategies that I have outlined.

I welcome the contribution of local government leading the way in dealing with social issues. I also acknowledge the role played by the Attorney General's department when the Attorney General in the former Government recognised the evidence on these matters and made funds available to local government to implement strategies such as design, plantings and lighting in places such as Blacktown and Leichhardt in order

to make significant and long-lasting inroads in the permanent reduction of graffiti vandalism. The Greens share the concerns of the Law Society about this bill. We are concerned that pushing more young offenders into the criminal justice system rather than into diversionary programs is expensive and counterproductive. The costs to the community are likely to be much higher and more long-term than the cost of graffiti removal or the implementation of the graffiti-minimisation strategies that I have discussed.

Minimising graffiti vandalism is a worthy objective that we all support. It is an issue that I have been greatly concerned about in my time on Leichardt council since 1999 and in my role as mayor. It is important for the State Government to recognise and support the efforts of local government in galvanising community activism to minimise graffiti vandalism and to make sure that any additional costs borne by the community are dealt with by that community in an effective way. It is our view that the measures outlined in this bill will be unlikely to succeed, and will cause significant additional cost to the community and damage to young offenders. On that basis we do not support the bill.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [5.43 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I bring 27 years of policing experience to this debate and the pride of having led the anti-graffiti push at Campbelltown—that opal of the south-west—when we faced up to community concerns in relation to graffiti and we did something about it. At a recent community forum at the Campbelltown Catholic Club, attended by 64 people, one of the biggest concerns raised was graffiti. The community is concerned about graffiti, trail bikes, motorised pushbikes, cars doing burnouts, offensive noise and general perceptions of safety, but always it is the scourge of graffiti that really gets up the noses of Australians. This bill is all about intent and integrity, and that is what this Government is about.

At Campbelltown our strategy, which is reflected very deeply in this bill, is the three Es—education, eradication and enforcement. It is about education that graffiti is a crime and that it is not an artistic pursuit if one goes around damaging public property and the property of other people. At Campbelltown we engaged our local media. I spoke with the *Macarthur Advertiser*, the *Macarthur Chronicle* and C91.3FM—great media outlets in Campbelltown. I said that we needed to change the way we speak about graffiti. We needed to stop calling it graffiti art and start calling it graffiti crime carried out by graffiti criminals or graffiti vandals. It gave the community heart. That is what leadership is about: signalling one's intent and going after the objective. We told the community that we were serious about graffiti and fighting graffiti crime, and it galvanised community support. People had given up; they were so tired under the previous Government that they thought that nothing could happen. But we showed them that something can happen and that people care about their community.

Eradication is about getting rid of graffiti. Graffiti must be removed rapidly, and that is where Campbelltown council is a leader. I invite some of the other people who suffer the scourge of graffiti to get in contact with the General Manager of Campbelltown City Council, Paul Tosi. The council works very well in partnership with police, the Department of Housing and State Rail in a Campbelltown crime prevention partnership, which organises and coordinates the fight against graffiti and its rapid removal. Involving the community is very important. Dennis Murphy of Leumeah is a Father of the Year nominee in the *Macarthur Chronicle* and I worked with him, the community, the council and the police in reducing the impact of graffiti on the community. Similarly, I worked with Les Turner, who is another great community activist, in his Graffiti is a Crime group. He worked tirelessly in support of council and police against graffiti.

Enforcement is also vital. Under my leadership at Campbelltown the police targeted graffiti and went after the offenders as if they were drug cartels. Graffiti gangs operate in a very similar fashion to drug cartels. If you substitute drugs for graffiti spray cans you get a fair idea how graffiti gangs work. We assigned Detective Senior Constable Mick Kelly to lead a team that doggedly policed graffiti through high visibility policing and targeting offenders. A small number of offenders can commit a large number of graffiti offences. We targeted those criminals and we went after them, even when they went into online discussion groups, and we seized their electronic equipment because they like to document and record what they do for their own personal satisfaction.

So successful was Detective Senior Constable Mick Kelly that he was awarded the police officer of the year award at Campbelltown by a very grateful community who appreciated the fact that police were doing their bit in going after criminals. That policing also included the illegal display and sale of spray paint cans and also targeted shops that operated outside of development approval. This bill supports good policing in good communities in fighting graffiti. The requirement that offenders front up before court is very important. As most lawyers and offenders know, courts are places where people do not want to go. The rule of law in courts is the basic principle that underpins our society; it is vital that courts are included in the process of graffiti removal.

The penalty of losing one's driver licence is also very significant. One of the few rites of passage that we have in our community is the privilege to hold a drivers licence. It is not a right and it can be taken off people for misbehaviour. The elements of this bill actually support good community partnerships that involve police, community and councils, and give the court the necessary tools to support community efforts in scrubbing out graffiti from our community. A key intent in this legislation is to reinforce the fact that graffiti is a crime. It is a crime against the community; it is not a victimless crime. This Government is determined to support the community and actually scrub graffiti out of our community.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [5.51 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Many members of this place have local government experience, so they will have a good understanding of the impact of graffiti on their communities and the community's desire to reduce or eradicate graffiti. It is unlikely that any Act of Parliament will result in graffiti being eradicated entirely, but from time to time have to deal with the consequences of graffiti, both in terms of cleaning it up and in terms of the court processes for dealing with offenders.

A number of previous speakers have identified the continuing and important role of local government in dealing with graffiti. I know from my experience as the Mayor of the City of Canterbury that a number of programs have been implemented in an effort to try to reduce the incidence of graffiti. The member for Balmain spoke briefly about Leichhardt council's traffic signal box program. Canterbury was one of the very first councils in New South Wales to introduce that program, which was funded through the Attorney General's Department. We received funding to engage the community to creatively and constructively paint approximately 90 traffic signal boxes in the City of Canterbury. In the five or six years since the program was started, only one or two traffic signal boxes around the city have had to be touched up or repainted as a result of graffiti. The program is an effective way to reduce graffiti and improve the appearance of a city without anyone having to go to court.

Canterbury council has also provided graffiti removal kits to both the chamber of commerce and residents to help them to remove graffiti from private property. Importantly, crime prevention through environmental design is a process whereby council and the local police work together to develop a procedure to identify ways of reducing the likelihood of crime occurring, including vandalism. We all want to reduce graffiti, and I understand the Government's desire to be seen to get tough on graffiti. I understand what it is trying to achieve with this bill. I am largely comfortable with the community service orders component of the bill and I generally support them. Community service orders have been used throughout the city of Canterbury to remove graffiti. I can see the benefit of them, and I am sure that community members will accept them and generally agree with their objectives.

However, perhaps other elements in the bill have taken this attempt to be seen to be tough a little bit further than necessary. In particular I have concerns about the drivers licence orders. It is not as if the previous Government did nothing about graffiti. The previous Government was responsible for the Graffiti Control Act, which doubled the penalties of imprisonment for graffiti vandalism from six months to 12 months, doubled penalties of imprisonment for the possession of graffiti implements from three months to six months, banned the possession of spray paint cans by youths without legitimate reason, empowered the courts to order graffiti vandals to clean up their own graffiti, made it an offence for a person to sell a spray paint can to a minor and made it an offence to supply a spray paint can to a minor. It is not as though provisions are not in the statutes to deal with these issues. The Act contains some very tough provisions.

The requirement to extend the provisions to include the cancelling of a drivers licence concerns me greatly, not because I do not think it will be an effective deterrent—it may or it may not, I am not convinced—but because of the danger of applying it to young people who have been convicted of graffiti vandalism. To have their drivers licence revoked or to have their licence conditions so substantially altered it is likely that they will be in breach of other laws, namely traffic laws, adds a component to this punitive measure that will have serious and long-reaching consequences.

A young person who is caught driving without a licence is committing a far more serious offence than being caught writing their initials on a letterbox. We have to think very carefully about criminalising young people and giving them a long-term record, reducing their ability to get to work, reducing their ability to provide for their family, and reducing their ability to get to study facilities or university. The impact of removing a drivers licence will criminalise the young people who have been caught up in the system—it goes a step too far. I am not alone in my view on this: quite a few people have said that this is not necessary. Independent experts and even members of the Government have said that this measure will not work. Howard Brown of the Victims of Crime Assistance League said:

People are joking if they think graffiti offenders will be deterred by the prospect of losing their licence.

Ken Marslew from the crime advocacy group Enough is Enough said:

I can't see how suspending a licence is going to change a graffiti vandal's attitude. It won't stop them from doing graffiti.

Of course we are familiar with the comments of the member for Pittwater, Rob Stokes, on a similar proposal to linking the loss of a licence with an unrelated offence. He said:

It's difficult to see the link... Surely the nature of the penalty should be linked with the nature of the offence.

That is a very salient observation. A few points have been made on compulsory court attendance. I am not suggesting for a moment that court attendance is not an appropriate way of dealing with serious repeat offenders when it comes to graffiti. But the idea that we should require first-time offenders to appear in court for a graffiti offence, when the police have discretion in other areas of youth crime to refer them to the youth justice system, seems to make a graffiti offence a much more serious offence than other youth crimes and that does not seem appropriate. I am concerned that removing the discretion of the police to involve themselves in recommendations about youth conferencing shows a lack of respect for their judgment on these matters. I have confidence in their dealing with these issues and making a good call.

A much more effective way of dealing with first-time graffiti offenders than requiring them to appear in the criminal justice system is to deal with them through youth justice conferencing. I understand the intentions of the Government and its desire to want to thump the table and to be seen to be very tough on the most serious of crimes, like writing your initials on a letterbox. But certain aspects of this bill have taken that table-thumping a step too far. I understand that the Opposition reserves the right to amend elements of the bill in another place.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [5.58 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I speak to the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Numerous speakers on this side of the House have referred to this bill as the Government delivering on another election promise. More importantly, too often our local communities are held at ransom. Too often we see graffiti appearing all over our buildings and our private property. I believe in the bill. I also make the point that I spoke in favour of the graffiti control legislation in 2008, expressing my concern and the concerns of my constituents about the rising incidence of graffiti.

In my great electorate of Tweed I go out with Neighbourhood Watch and the Pottsville Community Association and physically remove graffiti. It is not an easy thing to remove; it takes a lot of elbow grease. I compliment the Tweed Shire Council, which supplies training and free chemicals to community groups to remove graffiti. On a recent Saturday members of the Kingscliff and District Chamber of Commerce spent a long time removing graffiti, which they feel not only cheapens the image of local business but also detracts from the local community. As many speakers have said, once some graffiti appears it often leads to offenders creating more. The Gold Coast has a four-man squad that continually goes up and down the coast looking for and removing graffiti. We in the Tweed cannot afford that and we rely on volunteers.

Many community groups are putting up their hands to remove graffiti. One of the questions they ask time and again is, "When is the Government going to act? When is the Government going to tighten up the Graffiti Control Act to make it a criminal offence?" That is why I support this legislation. It is a great move by the Government to introduce this bill and make creating graffiti a criminal offence. The bill will also make juveniles more responsible. I like the provision relating to drivers licences, which will extend the period the offender is subject to either a learner or provisional licence. It is all about reward and punishment. There are many great kids in our towns but unfortunately some kids, and some adults, involve themselves in producing graffiti. One community group has a photographic record—a library—of all the graffiti tags, which Len Greer regularly sends to the police. This bill is all about giving the community the respect it deserves. That is crucial for us as members of Parliament.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Graffiti is a terrible scourge and the more we can do to support the community and clean it up, the better. The difficulty is in identifying the culprits. I have been out on the night shift with our local police and they say it is very easy for offenders to quickly throw away spray paint cans; there is not much that can be done unless someone has actually seen the offence being committed. A number of businesses in the Tweed have suffered from graffiti and have installed night vision cameras to catch offenders. This bill will have great support in my local community. Everyone in my community thinks it is about time the

Government got tough on graffiti artists who damage public and private property. That is why I fully support the bill. Once again this side of the House has delivered on an election commitment. I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Jonathan O'Dea and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

EDUCATION WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.18 p.m.]: The matter of public importance I speak about tonight is Education Week 2011, which runs from 1 to 5 August. This year's theme is "NSW Public Schools—creating the future". I am a proud product and graduate of the public school system. I went to Castle Hill Infants School, Castle Hill Primary School and Castle Hill High School. All my schooling during those 13 years occurred in the public system. I then went to Hawkesbury Agricultural College to get my first degree and later to Macquarie University Graduate School of Management for my MBA and finally received my doctorate at the same institution. I cannot thank the State school system enough for my education. I will indulge members by telling them what Education Week is about. The Minister's press release states:

It's an opportunity for schools to exhibit how they support a whole range of students, showcasing their academic strengths and outstanding results; the excellent work with students who have special needs; quality arts, sports, gifted and talented programs and extra-curricular activities; as well as the focus on teaching strong values.

Education Week is being held this week to showcase the very best in our New South Wales public schools. Regions and schools are holding events and activities in their local communities and schools across the State are opening their doors. Minister Piccoli attended the Sydney Central Railway simuLaunch at which 34 students from Bungwahl Public School entertained the crowds with an impressive Jump Rope for Heart skipping demonstration. Then more than 300 students dazzled the crowds with an energetic four-minute dance compilation. Similar performances occurred at the same time in other locations across the State, with a total of nearly 5,000 dancing simultaneously. A video of the performance can be seen on the department's website, which I recommend to all members.

The launch also featured a performance from Inverell High School student Melanie Dwyer, a graduate of the prestigious Talent Development Project who is mentored by the fabulous Mary Lopez. Melanie sang her composition *The Power's in our Hands*, which is a reflection of the Education Week 2011 theme, "Creating the future". Melanie was accompanied by a rousing support choir at Central Station, together with soloists and choirs from across the State, including Heather Riley from East Hills Girls Technology High School at the Busby simuLaunch. Minister Piccoli said that it was the best performance he had seen in his 12½ years in Parliament. It was indeed an energetic, creative way to start Education Week, and a great crowd pleaser right across the State.

Other events to take place during the week include the New South Wales State Student Representative Council Conference, from 2 to 5 August, involving up to 130 secondary student leaders, including 10 Aboriginal student leaders. The Great Schools "Show-off" showcase will take place on Wednesday 3 August. More than 250 schools have entered this competition to create promotional films, videos, animations and digital and photographic pieces for use on their school websites. Director-General for a Day gives students the chance to learn about working in senior management positions in the department. The F1 in Schools project allows students to use industry-level simulation software to design, manufacture and race miniature balsawood Formula One cars. Jump Rope for Heart will see more than 600 schools participating in activities to raise funds to assist the fight against heart disease.

In my electorate of Parramatta the Rydalmere Public School organised an open day, book fair and mini fair, and Parramatta North Public school held a 275-student dance presentation that included students from K-6.

Rowland Hassall School is putting on a band performance and holding a whole school assembly. Parramatta Public School, a very multicultural school, is hosting an international family day with foods, costumes and a parade celebrating the diverse national backgrounds of students. Westmead Public School, which is another very multicultural school in my electorate, is holding an Around the World in a Day event at which students will learn about different countries and be encouraged to see themselves as part of a global community.

I have had the opportunity to visit many schools in my local area, and each time I am amazed by their dedication to educating the future leaders of New South Wales. A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of visiting Dundas Public School on open day and witnessed a school assembly. That school community certainly realises that education is more than buildings, teachers and students—the school becomes a community hub. Under the leadership of Principal Ms Jan Thurgar, the teachers encourage citizenship amongst the students. There is the opportunity to recognise the good work of students through Wattle Awards as the school's highest achievement in its behaviour system.

A student must earn 10 green awards for working well, citizenship, good manners and so on to earn one gold ribbon. Five gold ribbons earn one gold certificate and five gold certificates earn the Wattle Award—a banner and wattle badge. Parents of past students also attend the school to look after the gardens and make the school environment more pleasant. This school has the support of the local community and the parents support each other in peer relationships.

Public education is more than simply State schools. The Parramatta electorate has active independent schools that I shall talk more about later. Public education is certainly being showcased this week. We thank all our fantastic teachers, support staff and students who are so energetically welcoming local communities across New South Wales during Education Week. I encourage everybody to check the Education Week 2011 website for information on events that are taking place in schools in their local area.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [6.25 p.m.]: Discussion of this matter of public importance about Education Week is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of schools across New South Wales, the hard work and dedication of our teachers, the great outcomes of our students, and the support and huge contribution of parents, volunteers and the community. The people of New South Wales place a high value on education. A strong public education system is essential to a fair, just and democratic society. Our schools, TAFEs and universities prepare the workforce of the future, but they do more than that.

Our schools foster a love of learning in students, a desire to understand better the world in which they live as well as develop an appetite to improve that world through the application of their skills, knowledge and creativity. During Education Week schools across New South Wales open their doors to parents and the broader community. It is a great opportunity to strengthen the relationship and partnership between schools and their communities because that is essential to successful and effective schools.

The theme of Education Week 2011 is "NSW Public Schools—creating the future", and during the week a range of special events will occur in schools locally and statewide. For example, as we have heard already, nearly 5,000 students took part in the simultaneous launch of Education Week. In the Great Schools "Show-Off" students will demonstrate their digital and media skills, and the Director-General for a Day and Principal for a Day event provides opportunities for secondary students to learn about the challenges of working in senior positions in the public education system.

New South Wales public schools are achieving great results, and I am very proud of the investment in public education made by the Labor Government and the new initiatives we put in place. In the 2010-11 budget we allocated a record \$14.4 billion for education and training in New South Wales. This included more than \$5.1 billion for public schools and TAFE institutes in rural and regional New South Wales. I remind the House that in the last Coalition budget funding per school student was \$5,273 a year and in our last budget it was \$12,607 per student. I wait with interest to see what will be provided when the O'Farrell Government hands down its first budget in September.

Of course adequate funding is essential, but how that funding is used makes the real difference. Labor has a very clear understanding that, first and foremost, teacher quality makes the most difference in educational outcomes. It is one of the things we celebrate during Education Week. Teachers who are passionate about education and their students, who have a deep knowledge about their subjects, and who feel valued and supported by both the community and the Government are critical to good student outcomes. That is why when we were in government New South Wales was the first State or Territory to require new teachers to be accredited through an Institute of Teachers. We developed a framework of teacher professional development and recognition for teachers at increasing levels of accomplishment to encourage teachers to enhance their

skills. We provided funds directly to public schools to support professional development and created 50 new positions for highly accomplished teachers through the New South Wales National Partnership on Teacher Quality.

We also made sure that our teachers were the highest paid in Australia—recognition of the important work they do. That is why I am concerned about the impact of the O'Farrell Government's retrograde industrial relations legislation, which could see a substantial decline in the real wages of teachers. In government we also recognised the importance of investing in the early years so that students get the best possible foundation on which to build lifelong learning. We delivered smaller class sizes for kindergarten to year 2, reducing statewide class averages from more than 24 per kindergarten class to under 20. We introduced Best Start, an initiative that assesses kindergarten children as they start school to determine what they know, which children need extra support and what areas the teacher should focus on teaching. We expanded the Reading Recovery program to assist students who were falling behind in reading and writing.

We provided continuous training for early years teachers in the latest research-based techniques to help young students learn to read and write effectively. We had a clear focus on rigorous education standards because we understood that students performed best when there were high expectations of them. We maintained a rigorous, content-focused common curriculum that prescribes the skills that teachers should teach and students should learn. The New South Wales Higher School Certificate provides students with a world-class end-of-school credential that contains clear pathways to further education, training and work. We also increased the school leaving age to 17, with all students required to stay at school until the end of year 10, after which they must continue in education, training or paid work until they turn 17.

This investment by the New South Wales Labor Government was accompanied by impressive results. It is these results that we celebrate again during Education Week. Our students achieve among the best literacy and numeracy results in the country. Through national literacy and numeracy testing, New South Wales students have consistently outperformed those in other States. During Education Week we celebrate also the diversity and creativity of our public schools across New South Wales. As a former education Minister, I had the chance to see firsthand some of the fabulous achievements of New South Wales school students from every corner of the State.

Whether it is the School Spectacular, the State Dance Festival, the ensembles or local school performances, the talent of students is amazing. Initiatives such as the Talent Development Project, about which we have already heard, and the performing arts high schools provide opportunities to nurture and promote this talent. The Arts Unit within the Department of Education and Communities also plays an important role in supporting arts education and providing professional development for arts teachers. In visual arts, both Operation Art and Art Express provide a vehicle for the wider community to view the artworks of New South Wales students.

I feel very fortunate to have in my electorate both Newtown High School of the Performing Arts and Dulwich High School of Visual Arts and Design. Of course, our public schools also cater for students with sporting prowess through representative sporting opportunities and the Talented Athletes Program. The New South Wales public school system provides an education that enables students to develop into well-rounded adults with the necessary skills and knowledge to have a successful career, the values to make a positive contribution to society, and the opportunities to try new things so they are stretched as individuals. In Education Week I congratulate all students, teachers, staff, parents and volunteers involved in our schools and TAFEs across New South Wales.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.31 p.m.]: At the outset, I note how good it is to hear another member of the Opposition waxing lyrical about how good life was under New South Wales Labor for the past 16 years. They love waxing lyrical about the glory days and the salad days when really we all know that they are simply in denial. They exist in some parallel universe, and I can only imagine that this is just another attempt to rewrite the history books. But the New South Wales voters made their decision loud and clear.

I join the member for Parramatta in speaking about this very important matter. The theme of this year's Education Week is "New South Wales Public Schools—creating the future". This is a time to reflect on the achievements of our public schools, which have been shaping the future of our State through education. It is also a time to celebrate what is happening in our schools today and to acknowledge the fine work of our teachers, their students and parents.

I have had an opportunity to visit a number of schools in the Orange electorate in the past week or so, in the lead-up to Education Week, and have been very impressed by what I have seen in them. Last week I was fortunate enough to visit two of our small schools. The first was Mullion Creek Public School, a school of 50 or so students. Mullion Creek Public is a small school, but it clearly has a very big heart, and is very ably led by Principal Gay Stone. The former member for Orange and I were recently at that school to plant some native trees. We also had the chance to meet and talk with some of the parents of students at the school. I was impressed by the energy of the teachers and the parents, who are working so hard to improve the school and make education even better for students.

I also went to another small school in my electorate, Euchareena Public School. Euchareena Public School has but 18 students. It is in a bush setting; a more picturesque setting for a school you would not find. It is in many ways the quintessential bush school. Euchareena Public School opened in the late 1800s; the original building still stands and is in use. At the school we planted more trees and dedicated a classroom to one of the school's greatest supporters and treasures, Mrs Kaye Duncan. The school is a testament to the drive and energy of the students, the parents and the staff. I would like to make special mention of the school's dynamic principal, Megan Cross. I thank them for their hospitality and also thank the Mullion Creek Public School community for their hospitality. The Orange electorate has a number of small schools. It is often said that children are disadvantaged in such schools because the schools are indeed small in size. But, after witnessing the dedication of staff and students at those schools, it is my belief that the children attending those schools are in many ways the lucky ones.

I mention my visits to these schools because when we reflect on education in New South Wales we should not forget the good work of our regional public schools, and in particular our small schools. My father was a public school teacher and taught at the school at Cullen Gully, on the outskirts of Wagga Wagga. Last week I had the pleasure of visiting Anson Street School in Orange. Anson Street School is for students with a disability. The work of this school and its dedicated staff, led by Principal Garry Brotherton, is truly inspiring. I was there for the opening of the Art on Anson exhibition, put together by the students. To say I was impressed is an understatement.

Schools across New South Wales, and in particular regional New South Wales, are opening their doors for shows, open days and exhibitions. As other members have mentioned, events in Education Week 2011 include the Great Schools "Show-off" and the Director-General for a Day program, which gives students the amazing opportunity to step into the shoes of the director general for a whole day. In this Education Week of 2011 we acknowledge and thank our dedicated public school teachers for their hard work and dedication to their profession. Also, we thank and acknowledge the parents, parents and citizens associations and friends of our public schools who raise money and work so hard to support education in New South Wales. Lastly, I would like to thank and acknowledge the students who have participated in Education Week with such enthusiasm. I say to you all: We thank you for your contribution to public education in New South Wales.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.36 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Marrickville and the member for Orange for supporting the great work of our public schools, especially in this week of celebration of our schools. The member for Orange is clearly a hardworking member. His going out and about to even the smaller schools in his electorate is wonderful testament to his ability and dedication to the job. I especially thank the parents and friends of those schools; they make the vital contribution in support of their schools. As I said previously, complementing our State schools is the independent school system, which is also to be recognised for making its contribution to the community.

In Parramatta, we have the headquarters of the dioceses of Parramatta, and leader for the schools Greg Whitby is an innovative and committed leader in education. The Parramatta dioceses should be recognised for their longest continuous commitment to education in Australia, through Marist Westmead, with 190 years of continuous education service to the community. The dioceses' role in education needs to be recognised because it is the second-largest employer in western Sydney, with some 5,000 staff and more than 80 schools. The dioceses take a diverse and contemporary approach to education, such as the innovative use of learning spaces by having multiple years of students in the one large learning space and enabling students to learn from each other in peer group settings.

The dioceses are committed to providing the latest technology through hardware and software, iPads, laptops, and access to social networking tools, such as Facebook. The dioceses' role should be recognised for building the capacity of their teachers. The teachers are the ones who face the students, empowering and developing them. Their focus is on educating the child as a whole, with a heavy emphasis on the child's

responsibility to become a productive member of society. Recognition of their programs can be seen through their Captivate program, which is a creative and performing arts program that has achieved local, State and national recognition through music and dance.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit one of those schools, St Patrick's Marist College in Dundas. Leadership is provided by the principal, Brother Robert Sutton. I was impressed from the moment I got there; I was met at the gate by the captains and vice-captains, who escorted me to their Semester One Academic Awards Assembly of some 900 students—the best-behaved students I have ever seen; not one of them spoke out of turn. I then had the privilege of presenting the years 9 and 11 awards. In last year's Australian Tertiary Admission Rank results they were in the top 100 schools across the State, and are number two in the Catholic school system.

Education Week helps to ensure that communities know of the fabulous work being done in their local schools. It ensures that people consider their local school when making educational choices and increased enrolments. The focus on raising the profile of New South Wales schools has had a positive effect on enrolments. New South Wales school enrolments have been on the rise in recent years, and have increased again in 2011. The department's February data reveal that in 2011 4,870 additional students enrolled in New South Wales public schools. The Australian Bureau of Statistics most recent Schools Australia 2010 report has also confirmed that New South Wales is the only State in Australia where the public education system has maintained its market share. New South Wales public schools are seeing a year-on-year increase in enrolments, with more and more parents in New South Wales choosing public schools for their children.

Enrolments from the department's February census show the following. We are now seeing a year-on-year increase in enrolments in New South Wales public schools, and enrolments increased in eight of the 10 school education regions from 2010-11; 890 primary schools experienced an increase in total enrolments; significantly, 897 experienced an increase in kindergarten enrolments from 2010-11; 265 high schools experienced an increase in year 10 to year 12 enrolments from 2010-11; and in metropolitan Sydney there have been significant increases in enrolments in public schools over the past three years.

In the Sydney region enrolments are up by more than 2,800 students on 2008 enrolments. In northern Sydney region enrolments have increased by more than 5,100, in western Sydney region by more than 3,700 and in south-western Sydney region by more than 1,000 over the past three years. This all supports the fact that New South Wales public schools are to be congratulated for the wonderful work that is happening at local and State levels. Teachers, students, support staff and community members should be congratulated, and we should all be very proud of what is happening in our public school system.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.41 p.m.
until Wednesday 3 August 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
