

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 5 August 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

SUMMARY OFFENCES AMENDMENT (INTOXICATED AND DISORDERLY CONDUCT) BILL 2011

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ROADSIDE VEHICLE SALES) BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Clover Moore.

Agreement in Principle

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

Large numbers of overseas visitors use Victoria Street, Potts Point and Brougham Street, Woolloomooloo as car yards to sell their vehicles at the end of their holiday. Up to 35 vehicles are offered for sale on Victoria Street, with the problem at its peak in the warmer months. Inner city parking is already limited and this use of public road for what is essentially a commercial purpose prevents residents, business operators and other visitors parking on these streets. Unlike in community land such as parks and enclosed lands, councils have no power to stop people from selling their vehicles on public roads. The Minister for Local Government made a number of suggestions to the City of Sydney to assist council to manage the problem; however, unfortunately, none of the suggestions address the problem of vehicle sales and they are not supported by residents.

The Minister has suggested time restricted, residential and metered parking, as well as towing vehicles that are defective or obstructing streets or traffic and impounding abandoned vehicles. Time-restricted parking and resident parking already exist on these streets but campervan owners stay with their vehicles and move them when their timed parking is up in order to avoid infringement. The City of Sydney consulted with the local community about metered parking and this was vehemently opposed by both residents and businesses because of its impact on visitors.

Council rangers spend on average 80 hours per week with two full-time rangers patrolling Victoria and Brougham streets checking every parked vehicle, and joint council and Kings Cross police patrols target defective vehicles. Council tows vans when they obstruct streets or traffic, or are defective, but this is generally not the case and few of these vehicles have been abandoned. Significant ranger and police resources are being directed to ineffective enforcement operations and local residents and businesses continue to be impacted.

The Local Government Amendment (Roadside Vehicle Sales) Bill 2011 would give councils power to prohibit the parking of vehicles on certain public roads for the purpose of offering the vehicles for sale. Currently section 632 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1993 prevents councils enforcing a notice that prohibits or regulates the parking or use of a vehicle on a public road. The bill specifies that this section does not prevent councils putting up notices to ban the offer of vehicles for sale on a road.

Under the bill councils would have the authority to prohibit the sale of vehicles on roads where sales are causing a problem and enforce the ban. It would enable the City of Sydney to stop backpackers in Victoria Street and Brougham Street from using the roads as car saleyards, freeing up limited road space for residents, businesses and their visitors. Similar powers existed under ordinance No. 66, introduced in 1991 under the then Local Government Act, which gave council the power to ban the offer of vehicles for sale on Victoria Street, Kings Cross. However, this was removed—inadvertently, I believe—when the Act was replaced in 1993.

The City of Los Angeles Council uses similar powers to prevent pop-up used car lots on particular roads. Backpackers provide a welcome contribution to our tourism industry, to the inner city and to the Kings Cross precinct and many services are provided for these young visitors. However, roads are public places. They should not be commandeered for private commercial activities like car sales and councils should have the power to stop this. This small change will make a big difference to the people of Victoria Street and Brougham Street. I commend the bill to the House.

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

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Debate resumed from 23 June 2011.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [10.06 a.m.]: I speak to the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands.. In order for State Emergency Service members to continue their invaluable work and skilled operations within the community it is essential that they possess the considerable resources and facilities necessary. In the 2007-08 budget the New South Wales Labor Government allocated \$35,000 in funding to assist the Shellharbour State Emergency Service unit with the cost of purchasing and fitting out a new emergency response vehicle. This investment was part of the New South Wales Government's thirteenth record emergency services budget, with increases in spending for the New South Wales Fire Brigade, Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and other volunteer rescue services.

The devastating effect of the June 2007 severe flooding and storm damage both in the metropolitan region and across New South Wales was a dramatic reminder of the excellent work carried out by our State Emergency Service workers and volunteers. These brave men and women work under some of the most difficult and extreme conditions, battling against the elements to ensure the safety and protection of all members of the community and their property. Therefore, it is imperative that we ensure they continue to have access to the appropriate equipment and supplies required to work in such demanding and hazardous environments.

In September 2008 the Shellharbour State Emergency Service unit was presented with more than \$33,000 in funding from the State Labor Government to help with the cost of a new emergency response vehicle and building works. As a result of the then Labor Government's investment in our State Emergency Service the Shellharbour unit received a new Fuso Canter four-wheel-drive crew cab, which has proven to be of great value in transporting both volunteers and essential equipment when the unit is responding to storms, floods and a range of other emergencies.

Safe and reliable vehicles are essential when volunteers are called out to help people in need. This new vehicle has enabled the Shellharbour unit to respond to requests for assistance from the public more efficiently and safely. The former Labor Government supported the volunteers with a subsidy of \$30,835 to assist with the cost of this new vehicle, along with an additional \$2,750 to help with the maintenance of the unit headquarters. This funding was an important investment in the safety of residents of Shellharbour and surrounding areas and, importantly, our volunteers.

I thank the Shellharbour volunteers for their commitment to helping and protecting their community. Our local community has a sense of security knowing they can rely on the members of the State Emergency Service to help them in times of trouble. Volunteers deserve our overwhelming gratitude and thanks. I acknowledge the outstanding community service of some former State Emergency Service award nominees from my electorate. Richard Hart has held numerous positions within the Shellharbour State Emergency Service unit, including communications officer media-community, education officer, deputy controller and unit local controller from 2005 to July 2009.

Richard Hart stepped down from the controller position after completing a very productive tenure, to allow other members to step up to the task. Although no longer the local unit controller, he has remained an active member, applying for and being appointed as the planning-intelligence officer in the operations team. With his many years of experience in emergency management operations, he is now able to support the unit in the development of standard operational procedures and guidance in the planning and development of flood rescue and storm responses.

Bradley Irwin is another State Emergency Service nominee for the Shellharbour electorate. Brad's many years of service have seen him participate in both rescue and operational tasks. Brad's leadership and

training, especially in operation centres, has enabled him to undertake many roles in supporting the Shellharbour City State Emergency Service and respond to out-of-area requests for assistance. Brad is always the first to volunteer his time to assist our regions and is held in high regard for his efforts. Brad's willingness to work many additional hours at the unit in his operational role supporting the unit controller has meant that information and communication updates are dealt with daily. His loyalty and dedication means that the unit functions efficiently and, in turn, that is reflected in quick responses to requests for assistance.

David Armstrong is a Rural Fire Service Member of the Year nominee. David is a member of Albion Park Rural Fire Brigade. Each year he attends multiple incidents with his brigade and has worked tirelessly for the brigade in many facets of its operations, including maintenance, administration and training. I could continue acknowledging many more admirable nominees, but as the local member I take great pride in our local State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service members, as well as ambulance officers. I pay tribute to each and every one of them and thank them for supporting our communities. Many times comments are made about their incredible compassion to people in times of need, and I genuinely admire them for that support. This has been said many times, but my comments are genuine. Where would our society be without our volunteers and emergency services personnel who put their lives on the line during emergencies?

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [10.12 a.m.]: I support the amended motion about State Emergency Service volunteers in New South Wales. Members familiar with my electorate would be aware that since 2009 Coffs Harbour has suffered the effects of approximately nine floods. The State Emergency Service has been at the forefront on each occasion—Toby Cuthel at Bellingen and the Urunga group or Bob White and the Coffs Harbour group out in the middle of the night. My office has been flooded twice and when I have gone to assess the damage at 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning those volunteers in the orange uniforms are there already. They are out protecting people and property from natural disaster while their families are home in bed.

When a mini tornado recently crossed the North Coast in the Clarence electorate at Red Rock and Corindi, taking the roof off the bowling club and severely damaging farms and properties, the first persons on the scene were the State Emergency Service volunteers. That storm travelled down the coast flooding Bellingen yet again, luckily, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen and Urunga were not flooded. The storm then travelled to Kempsey and further south to the Manning and Hunter regions. In each region the volunteers in the orange uniforms of the State Emergency Service were first on the scene taking phone calls and directing assistance to those needing help. In the Oxley electorate especially, people were evacuated from their homes, leaving behind their belongings and in many cases their pets, and taken to emergency service centres run by other volunteers, such as the Red Cross. A job was undertaken by all the volunteers.

The fantastic job undertaken during the recent floods and events on the North Coast since 2009 by the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, the New South Wales Fire Brigades and all volunteer emergency organisations, ably assisted by the police, of course, is second to none. If the State had to pay an hourly rate for those people to perform that rescue work, the taxes would be beyond anyone's ability to pay. Unfortunately, these natural events regularly occur in the middle of the night or when everyone else has finished their normal work. But the volunteers, who also have finished their normal daily duties, are the ones who respond to pager calls to attend dangerous situations. In the 2009-10 Coffs Harbour floods I went into the office and on my return along Bucca Road I met the police at the point where the road had been closed. My daughter and I slept in the car on the corner of Bucca Road and Central Bucca Road until about 6 o'clock in the morning because the road on which I live was covered by eight feet of water.

During the last flood my wife rang me here because Parliament was sitting following that Monday night of the June long weekend. She told me that approximately 12 inches of rain had fallen in 10 hours and the water levels in the creeks across the road were higher than in the 1996 event, which made national headlines. Toby Cuthel and Bob White told me that their volunteers were out repairing roofs and shifting trees that had fallen on cars, roads, fences and anything else. They worked selflessly with community safety in mind. I commend our volunteers for the fantastic job they always do. Many years ago I was a member of a flood boat crew in Moree. I came to Coffs Harbour to offer my services to the State Emergency Service and met old Fred Pastin, who has passed away but who did a great job for many years. I said, "Fred, I'm licensed to drive a flood boat." He said, "We don't have floods in this area, mate." If Fred were alive I wonder what he would think about his comments to me 35 years ago. I support the amended motion and support the volunteers of the State Emergency Service and other services in New South Wales.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [10.17 a.m.], by leave: I support the motion and the amendment. I too acknowledge the wonderful work of the State Emergency Service volunteers. Indeed, in doing

so I highlight particularly the major flooding emergency in Wagga Wagga in October and December. Our community relied on those wonderful volunteers who worked throughout the night, with the support of their families, to build sandbag levees to ensure that the city did not flood, families were safely evacuated and all precautions were taken. All members in this place support the work of the State Emergency Service volunteers and their association. A submission has been put to the Government, and the amendment acknowledges that. The Government will require time to consider the content of the submission and its response to that submission.

All of us support the wonderful work of the State Emergency Services and all volunteers in this State. As other members have said, if government were to pay for those services we would quickly go broke. I commend the member for bringing this important motion before the House. There are many examples, whether involving bushfires on the North Coast or recent floods in Wagga Wagga, of heroic efforts by individuals and teams. Whether managing floods at Tumut or further down the river, or fighting the bushfires that the State has endured, these people give selflessly. Sadly, from time to time injuries and deaths occur. Those are the sacrifices made by the volunteers as well as the families—the mums, the dads, wives and partners who support the work of the volunteers, doing all they can to ensure that the volunteers are able to get out there and assist others.

This is a very worthy cause and a wonderful organisation that operates on our behalf. I do not believe words can ever fully describe the services provided by these individuals or adequately thank them. I know that on many occasions members have tried in this place to express our thanks to the volunteers but, as I said, I do not think we could do that in a manner that fully reflects the deep appreciation we have for the accomplishments of these organisations. I thank the House for its indulgence to allow me to speak on this important motion. For the record, I note again that a submission has been put to the Government, which the Government will consider in the fullness of time.

The amendment to the motion acknowledges and supports the outstanding dedication of New South Wales State Emergency Services volunteers who assist our community through their emergency and rescue service work, congratulates State Emergency Services volunteers who assisted in the rescue and clean-up efforts following the June mid-North Coast and Hunter floods, and supports the State Emergency Services retention of its volunteer status. I am sure all members will support that amendment and would wholeheartedly and unanimously support the efforts of the State Emergency Services volunteers and families. I thank them for the wonderful work that they do.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.22 a.m.], in reply: As some time has elapsed between sitting weeks, I take this opportunity to thank all members who have contributed to the debate on this motion, including the members for Wyong, Wollongong, Londonderry, Shellharbour, Coffs Harbour and Wagga Wagga. It is great to see so much support for the State Emergency Services, particularly as the motion not only acknowledges, as all members have done, the great work done by State Emergency Services but also ensures that State Emergency Services retains its volunteer status. Community members want to recognise and support the work done by the volunteers of the State Emergency Services. I remind the House that there are more than 10,000 volunteers in 228 locations across the State. The member for Coffs Harbour put it well: they respond to crises and are 100 per cent reliable; we count on them, and acknowledge and appreciate that they often put their own circumstances aside.

The State Emergency Services has evolved over some 55 years to become the organisation that is now so widely supported and respected. The Volunteers Association presented to me and government a submission that the volunteer culture remain. The service was built on volunteerism, with a minimum paid employees support base. The association would like to see that process supported by government; they do not want a departure from that volunteer culture and status. That was the main purpose of bringing this matter to the attention of the House. The motion and the amendment to it encompass the support for the State Emergency Services. The Volunteers Association has continued to put forward well-thought-out recommendations in its submission, and in my view those recommendations would help bolster volunteers across New South Wales.

We need to continually improve the conditions for volunteers. Some have told me that it is becoming more difficult to volunteer in the various organisations because of some aspects of training and accountabilities. I am all for skilling people to do that job, but let us not have a legally-driven process that involves such lengthy delays in mitigating liability that that could be a deterrent to contributing as a volunteer, which is so rich in our culture in New South Wales. I am hearing that particular concern, not just in relation to emergency services but in volunteering generally, which are so fundamentally important to delivering services across the State on behalf of the people of New South Wales, particularly in regional and rural communities, where distance, remoteness and isolation are also factors. I thank all members for contributing to this debate, and I commend the motion and the amendment to the House.

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

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [10.27 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the COAG Reform Council Report on the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy, released on 19 April 2011, found that New South Wales had exceeded 11 of its 12 improvement targets and recommended New South Wales receive significant reward payments;
- (2) congratulates the teachers, students and parents in the 147 National Partnership schools in New South Wales on their outstanding improvement in literacy and numeracy performance; and
- (3) calls on the Government to continue the successful programs and initiatives that have supported this substantial improvement.

Today I speak in praise of the hard work that is occurring in schools in New South Wales. In April, the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council published a report that looked at the achievements of States and Territories in achieving improvement targets in literacy and numeracy. The National Partnership Program is a significant investment in New South Wales education. Through the three national partnership agreements, the Commonwealth has committed more than \$870 million in additional funding to New South Wales schools.

More than 740 government, Catholic and independent schools are benefiting from this funding. The National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy aims to deliver sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes, particularly for those students who are falling behind. The Council of Australian Governments Reform Council report found that New South Wales had exceeded 11 of its 12 improvement targets and achieved 89 per cent of its twelfth target. The report recommends approximately \$46 in reward payments to New South Wales under the national partnership agreement.

This is an excellent result for these schools. The participating schools deserve our congratulations. In New South Wales 147 schools are participating in the National Partnerships Program. They comprise 114 government schools, 26 Catholic schools and seven independent schools. The Department of Education and Training, as it was then known, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools collaborated to implement the National Partnerships. This included program development to cover all school sectors. It is particularly impressive to see such partnership and collaboration across school sectors to ensure that students who are struggling receive the support and assistance they need. In all, it involved 43,800 students, of whom 4,000 are Indigenous, and 46 per cent of the schools are located in regional, rural or remote areas.

The schools selected for the National Partnerships were those whose students were performing substantially below expectations. Clear targets were set to improve the reading and numeracy performance of students, to strengthen teacher capacity and to develop whole school improvement frameworks. The participating schools determine their particular priority areas by looking at their test data and use the funding available to establish intervention programs to improve teaching and learning in that priority area. The outstanding performance of the schools is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the principals and teachers, the students and, of course, the parents. Good educational outcomes depend on parental involvement and engagement.

As a result of this initiative there has been an increase in the percentage of students at and above the minimum standard in three mandated National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy measures for years 3 and 5. We all know the importance of developing strong literacy and numeracy skills in the early years of a student's schooling. Literacy and numeracy are the building blocks upon which all other learning depends. If students fall behind in these areas in primary school it can be very difficult for them to catch up in later years. It also can mean disengagement from learning because they cannot keep up with their peers and they do not enjoy going to school. As we know, accompanying problems can occur with disengagement from learning. That is why this collaboration with the Federal Government is so important.

The National Partnerships Program focuses on lifting the performance of schools and students that have been performing substantially below expectations. The initiatives that make up this partnership build on the

substantial investments that we made when in government in this area through programs such as Reading Recovery and the Best Start initiatives. When in government we invested substantial funding in literacy programs. We increased funding for specialist literacy and numeracy programs from \$54 million to \$262 million by the end of our time in government. That is a massive 394 per cent increase in this important area. We recognised the importance of early intervention by establishing the Best Start Program.

This program, which has been implemented in primary schools across the State, assesses kindergarten children in their first weeks at school. It identifies what children know and what they can do in literacy when they start school. Can they recognise letters or read simple sentences? Do they recognise words? Teachers then have detailed information about every student in their class and are able to address their individual needs. It is a fact of life that students start kindergarten with different levels of knowledge and skills. It is important that teachers have a benchmark to be able to tailor the educational programs and curricula for students in a way that best meets their needs. That is why this program is so important. It also includes training for kindergarten, year 1 and year 2 teachers in the most effective teaching methods.

It includes additional Reading Recovery teachers and support for literacy leaders—expert teachers who are given release time to help their colleagues improve their teaching practices. We also implemented the Class Size Reduction Program, which was a massive investment in additional teachers and smaller classes in those early years when students are learning the fundamentals. It meant that teachers had more time to spend individually with students. This program was extremely well received by both parents and teachers. It resulted in many parents choosing public schools because of the benefits of having smaller class sizes in the early years.

This investment proved successful, with our students getting some of the best results in literacy and numeracy in the country. In the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy test New South Wales students excelled in spelling, achieving the highest scores in years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and we had by far the highest percentage of students in the top band for each of those years. Despite these excellent results for many of our students, there are achieving gaps. The Government must continue to support and expand programs such as the Priority Schools Funding Program, which aims to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. More than 580 schools from some of the most disadvantaged areas in the State are supported already through this program. It is an essential program for the Government to continue to support and expand. It means that students in some of our most disadvantaged schools receive extra support and assistance.

Programs such as the Country Areas Program and the Aboriginal education programs are also important in closing the achievement gap. The National Partnerships Program has provided welcome additional support. The Council of Australian Governments Reform Council report demonstrates that New South Wales students are achieving real improvements. The programs and approaches that the 147 New South Wales schools put in place to achieve these substantial improvements were carefully examined and developed to meet the unique needs of individual schools. No two schools are identical, and the schools were equipped with resources and support to drive improvements in literacy and numeracy in their schools. I again pay tribute to the principals, teachers, staff, parents and volunteers in these schools.

I call upon the Government to continue the good work that we began under the National Partnerships Program. I support the continuation of these initiatives and programs. They make a huge difference in the lives of students across New South Wales. They ensure that students who are falling behind have the additional support and assistance they need to be able to lift their literacy and numeracy performance. Most importantly, the report of the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council—the result of a rigorous process—shows that this investment is making a real difference. It shows that it is achieving outcomes and that New South Wales schools are performing extremely well compared with schools in other States and Territories. I call upon the House to support this motion.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.36 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Marrickville. Today we have evidence that some of our most disadvantaged students are getting the boost they need to succeed through the participation of their schools in the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy. As the previous speaker noted, the 147 partnership schools across the State are providing their students with high-quality, intensive and targeted literacy and numeracy programs that are aimed at lifting their skills in these fundamental areas of learning. The National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy mission statement reads:

The National Partnership is envisioned as a tool to galvanise the collective resources and energy of the Australian Government and the state, territory and non-government education systems, to put in place the infrastructure and practices that will deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind ...

The National Partnership will accelerate progress towards their ambitious literacy and numeracy target set by COAG to halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.

The National Partnership will operate for four years from 2009 and will facilitate and reward literacy and numeracy models or approaches that clearly demonstrate evidence for accelerating improvement in student results. Effective practices will be disseminated to support system wide improvements in attainment.

I commend those purposes. In addition, the objectives of the agreement include:

Increased collaboration with state, territory and non-government education systems in achieving national literacy and numeracy reform, with priority focus on those primary aged students most in need of support ...

Identification and implementation of evidence-based interventions which achieve accelerated and sustained improvements ...

Working collaboratively with state, territory and non-government education systems to inspire a renewed focus and Australia-wide awareness of the importance of increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of all students, with a particular focus on lifting performance in numeracy.

As the previous speaker noted, it is clear from the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council's assessment of our performance that our partnership schools are succeeding. These schools achieved 11 of the 12 performance targets set for 2010, with the twelfth target being 90 per cent achieved, which is commendable. That means that New South Wales has received \$46 million of reward funding from the Commonwealth—an outstanding result for which we congratulate our students, teachers and schools and their large communities. The Council of Australian Governments Reform Council reported that in three mandated national assessment measures for years 3 and 5 there was an increase in the percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard, with the results exceeding the targets needed to gain the 2011 reward payments. All three local measure targets were also exceeded. The local measures are important because they assess performance in all priority areas of the partnership, including teaching and leadership capacity building.

The Council of Australian Governments Reform Council has worked with States and Territories commendably to ensure that rigorous standards of reporting and accountability are practised. The stamp of approval from the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council is welcome recognition for New South Wales. In addition to the 147 partnership schools, another 22 schools are participating in a one-year modified National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy program. All up, we have nearly 50,000 students benefiting directly from targeted programs to lift their literacy and numeracy skills—skills that will set them on the path to future achievement as they progress through school. Our schools' results are doubly impressive, given the short time frame and considerable effort required to implement the national partnership reforms.

The National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy is about igniting change through whole-school planning supported by strong leadership and direction. It takes energy, commitment and courage to embrace new ways of doing things, and that is exactly what our schools in New South Wales have done. First and foremost, teachers have contributed to this through working collaboratively, mentoring and supporting each other, opening up their classrooms to outside specialists and engaging in professional development. That has included intensive and systematic professional learning in student data analysis and explicit strategies in teaching literacy and numeracy.

The SMART2 online tool, developed in New South Wales, supports classroom teachers and school leaders in analysing National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] data to drive continuous improvement by implementing proven literacy and numeracy practices. The teachers of our State have demonstrated overwhelmingly with their drive and hard work through the partnership that they continue to be the biggest in-school influence in successful educational outcomes for our students. The New South Wales Government thanks the parents and carers for working with their children's teachers to achieve these successful outcomes. It is vital that we learn through the efforts and outcomes of the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy. To this end, rigorous evaluation of the various literacy and numeracy programs is being undertaken to determine what has worked, why it has been so successful, what we need to do to ensure the success is continued and, most importantly, how this can be extended beyond partnership schools to all our New South Wales schools.

The impressive achievements of our partnership schools were obvious at the literacy and numeracy conference held in Sydney in May. Government and non-government partnership schools from across the State came together for two days of sharing, celebrating—as they should—and learning further about effective partnership activities. From the workshops and presentations it was obvious how far these schools have come in

achieving real whole-school transformation in literacy and numeracy teaching practices and also how they were going about planning to sustain the gains that had been made into the future, which is most important. The Government's Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan will assist schools in this endeavour.

The plan was released by the now Premier and now Minister for Education in January 2010. It included providing an additional 900 teachers for the Reading Recovery Program and expanding the program to include both literacy and numeracy; reallocating more than 300 K-2 Support Teachers Learning Assistance to provide more intensive support to students in years 3 to 10; moving responsibility for preschools from the Department of Community Services to the Department of Education; using kindergartens' screening assessments and other data to identify K-2 students at risk of not meeting the standards; and establishing a ministerial working group, comprising educational experts, to report annually on the performance of our Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan.

On 21 June the Minister for Education announced the establishment of a Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan Ministerial Advisory Group, which will provide him with advice and direction in creating an action plan to improve our standards. Dr Ken Boston was announced as chair of the group. Dr Ken Boston served as Director General of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training for six years and as Managing Director of TAFE New South Wales, so he is an accomplished and respected individual. Some other appointees to the group have respect and experience in the education sector and all appointees will have a three-year term. Our Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan will ensure that the spotlight stays on literacy and numeracy as the foundations of future education success, which is critical to both our social and economic outcomes in New South Wales.

We know that we cannot underestimate the importance of these foundations and that students skilled in literacy and numeracy are not only more likely to stay in school and to earn higher wages post school but also more likely to have higher levels of confidence, a better ability to deal with daily tasks and have better outcomes in terms of lifelong learning and health. The Government wants to ensure that those students most at risk, including our Indigenous students and those living in remote and very rural areas, who can experience other causes of disadvantage, also receive the support they need to achieve these lifelong and very important outcomes. Through the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan we will capitalise on what we have learned from the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy, and the New South Wales Government will continue to drive the change that is well and truly in motion. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.46 a.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I join the shadow Minister for Education—who has had to leave the Chamber to attend a committee meeting—and other members on this side of the House in congratulating the hardworking teachers, principals and support staff in the 147 national partnership schools on achieving wonderful results in the areas of literacy and numeracy, as recognised in the recent Council of Australian Governments Reform Council report. There is no more important role for lawmakers and policymakers in this State to play than in the area of education. We all come to this place with various passions and, as a former high school teacher, education is an area that I am particularly passionate about.

I spent several years working at Lake Illawarra High School in the southern part of the Illawarra in the electorate of Shellharbour. As the school was recognised to be in a disadvantaged area, it was in the Priority Schools Program and received additional funding to improve the student literacy. Sometimes some of us in this place and others assume that everyone has a level of literacy and numeracy that is similar to our own, but not everyone does. Not everyone's parents read to them at night. Not everyone has the luxury of a well-rounded, well-thought-out and well-crafted first few years of life. Not everyone has access to educational resources. That is why programs such as the National Partnerships Program combined with programs such as Reading Recovery and the other key literacy and numeracy programs in our schools are absolutely vital.

When it comes to education, this side of the House has a proud record. In 2010 New South Wales students scored at or above the Australian average in every basic skills area at every level tested. That is something to be proud of. New South Wales students topped the nation in spelling at every level. We had the highest percentage of students achieving in the top band for numeracy in years 5, 7 and 9. One of the programs that we introduced—which I am particularly proud of and have seen firsthand benefitting our schools—is the Reading Recovery Program. I recently visited Woonona Primary School in my electorate. I spoke to the principal, parents and teachers, and they raved about the program. I hope that the Reading Recovery Program is well funded in the coming budget.

It deserves to be well resourced and introduced in additional schools across our communities, because it is a program that works. It provides for early intervention for students who may be falling behind and gives them the additional resources and support they need to improve their literacy levels. As a child, I attended several low socioeconomic schools, so I know how important programs such as these are. In the working class areas where I grew up, and where I continue to reside, not everyone starts school with the same standard of literacy. That is why I congratulate Bellambi Public School in my electorate, which is part of the National Partnerships Program and does incredible work to improve its students' literacy. It is a school with challenges.

Approximately 19 per cent of its students are Aboriginal. It is a school that has significant social disadvantage. The socioeconomic level of its students is not particularly high. But it is a school determined to improve students' literacy and it is a school that I and my community are extremely proud of. I acknowledge the work of the principal, the staff and the community at this National Partnerships school. Bellambi Public School is a wonderful place that is doing great things. I look forward to the upcoming budget to see how we can improve our literacy programs to achieve even better results for our students in the future.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.51 a.m.]: I offer my support to the motion brought to the House by the member for Marrickville on the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy. In every educational facility across New South Wales there are students who are missing out on a great education and some who are falling through the gaps. From a young age some students will experience challenges and hardships that will negatively impact their ability to learn. These difficulties will affect their literacy and numeracy, their ultimate learning outcomes and their overall performance in the classroom. As the member for Marrickville and the member for Vacluse have said, sometimes these learning difficulties are compounded by various socioeconomic and geographical factors that are beyond a student's control.

I am pleased to bring a regional perspective to this issue, having spent the majority of my working life in isolated and remote communities throughout New South Wales. The Government recognises that certain factors, such as living in remote communities, can impact negatively on a student's performance. We believe every student deserves to reach their full potential, no matter who they are, what their background is or where they live. We will be increasing the State's investment in improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes of all New South Wales students so that every student in this State will experience an equally fulfilling education. This is regardless of whether English is their first language, or whether they live in the city or in regional New South Wales. To do that we will use strong, evidence-based data to identify the students who are falling behind. We will continue to support the successful initiatives and the targeted programs that are currently in place and have achieved outstanding results for students.

We will sustain these improved outcomes through the use of the School Measurement Assessment and Reporting Toolkit, known as SMART. We will better use the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy performance data for individual students, classes or whole schools and provide all students with the best support we can. Our national tests show that in year 3 reading one in seven students in remote areas and almost every second student in very remote areas is below the national minimum standard. This is compared with at least one in 20 students in the city. National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results for 2009 in reading and numeracy show that on average 46.9 per cent of students in remote areas and 40 per cent of students in very remote areas fall below the national reading and numeracy standards. There have been some gains, as recognised in the Council of Australian Governments report. However, we believe there is still much more to be done.

Nearly 50 per cent of the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy schools are located in regional, rural and remote areas. This represents around 18,000 school students, including 2,653 Aboriginal students in these areas and around 219 in remote areas who will continue to receive our support. There is evidence that targeted approaches can make a difference and I have seen that evidence firsthand. I do not come from an educational background, but I have learnt in recent years from my association with the Indigenous Police Recruitment Our Way project that everybody learns differently. This can be an inhibitor to achieving desired literacy and numeracy outcomes. Different learning styles need to be identified early, and this is another reason why the targeted approach is important.

We strongly believe in supporting significant improvements in growth results. The percentage of Aboriginal students below the minimum standard is heading in the right direction by decreasing from 25.1 per cent to 20.3 per cent. This has exceeded the State's target under the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy by 3.5 percentage points. As the member for Keira said, we are leading the country but there is more to do. We also firmly believe in improving the learning outcomes of students of low

socioeconomic status, students with English as a second language and refugee students through this targeted intervention. I am enormously pleased to be part of this Government that will continue to commit to this approach while recognising that much more needs to be done.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [10.56 a.m.]: I would like to make a contribution to debate on the motion moved by the member for Marrickville. She is a former Minister for Education and Training and is obviously committed to achieving good educational outcomes for the youth of New South Wales. The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results certainly demonstrate that we are moving in the right direction in New South Wales. Although we are enjoying some excellent results, I hope that the averages will increase to the point where we can focus even more closely on those students who fall through the net.

As a representative of schools in western New South Wales, I know the problem we have with literacy and numeracy goes beyond the children. It is intergenerational. This is evident from the youth who have not attained basic literacy and numeracy skills. We need to recognise the importance of education in closing the gap for Aboriginal children. Until we educate Aboriginal children and give them the chance to engage in employment and enjoy other opportunities that we take for granted, we have still got a long way to go.

The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results show that some schools are performing very well but it is obvious, as previous speakers have highlighted, that we still have some way to go. The fact is there is a continuing problem in providing education to some students in New South Wales, which is a frustrating problem for those communities. It is quite easy for anyone in the community to identify education as a major problem. If we can get these young people to attend school we can help them get a standard of education that will provide them with future opportunities and we can start engaging in a process that genuinely closes the gap. But right now we are a long way short of the mark and we have really achieved nothing. From my observations we have unfortunately gone backwards in many ways.

I know that these children's attendance at school is cyclical, but their non-attendance is consistent. We must ensure that education is available to every young person in New South Wales, and that Aboriginal children are able to engage in education and get the benefits it offers. I can only say that the sooner we can get to the standards we need to achieve across the State the sooner we can address the shortfall that exists in education—it certainly exists in my electorate and it is a problem. I can see the future of Aboriginal communities will continue to be pretty grim until we can educate their youth to a standard of numeracy and literacy that will give them the confidence to get on with their lives, become leaders in their community and demonstrate a way out of the problem, and in so doing close the gap.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): As the member for Marrickville has indicated that she is unable to reply to the debate on her motion, I shall now put the question.

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

Motion agreed to.

HUNTER CHILDREN'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) commends the Hunter Children's Research Foundation, which provides funds for much-needed research equipment and employment of research staff; and
- (2) congratulates the foundation and its volunteers on raising money through donations that remain in the Hunter for the benefit of local people.

When I was undertaking some research on the Hunter Children's Research Foundation I was not surprised, as I am sure you would not be, Mr Assistant-Speaker, to find some very interesting speeches made by my wonderful predecessor Mr John Mills about the establishment of the John Hunter Children's Research Foundation and grants that were made a long time ago. He made two speeches on that topic. I am not surprised by that because not only was my predecessor an excellent member of Parliament he was also a chemist and very interested in research. I will refer to some of the comments he made about the establishment of the research foundation.

He said the John Hunter Children's Research Foundation arose from "a set of happy circumstances", which was a really nice introductory comment in his speech. John Mills mentioned Lorraine Gardner and Phil Gardner, who is still the general manager of Wests Leagues Club, who were the strength behind the project, along with the director of the John Hunter Children's Hospital at the time, Dr Cliff Hoskings. They were able to raise funds easily because medical research was very important at the time and of increasing interest to the public. In his speech in September 2002 John Mills also referred to a range of grants that were awarded at the time from an amount of \$100,000 that had been raised by the foundation and what the recipients of those grants did with the awards.

In 2002 he attended a grants ceremony and in his speech to this House he mentioned the different grants that were awarded. The first of the four grants he referred to was \$28,000 awarded to Dr R. L. Smith to analyse maturational changes associated with childhood and juvenile absence epilepsy. A grant of \$24,000 was made for diabetes research, \$24,000 for other research and \$24,000 for research into the effects of cigarette smoke on immune inflammatory responses in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children with middle ear infections. My predecessor recorded lots of interesting research that was going on in 2002. He also explained how the John Hunter Children's Research Foundation evolved and changed its name. He talked about the fact that in 2002 the children's health services in the Hunter were rebadged as Kaleidoscope. How time flies; that is a name my colleagues in the Hunter know as referring to part of the children's hospital. It was then rebadged as the Children's Research Foundation and it has evolved very well since then.

I refer now to my predecessor's private member's statement in February 2006. It is important to look at what he said because it shows the evolution of the Children's Research Foundation. John Mills was particularly interested in the foundation because he was a chemist. He worked for Broken Hill Proprietary Limited and was very interested in research. He referred to the tenth anniversary in 2006 of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation and having been invited to a function. He mentioned some names that my colleagues the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Lake Macquarie might be familiar with. They were members of the board in 2006 who may well be members of the board right now. He said Sandra, Natasha, Maree, Lorraine, Judy, Janelle and Dineane were doing outstanding work at the time supporting children's research.

John Mills talked about the money raised for the children's foundation being kept in the Hunter. I read many comments about how important it is that that money remains in our area. The money was raised to establish new research and continue existing research projects in areas such as asthma, cystic fibrosis, cancer, diabetes and sleep disorders. John Mills mentioned that \$780,000 had been raised in 2006. I will refer to that later and draw a comparison with the amount that is raised now. Interestingly, the first event that the hardworking fundraisers undertook was a bus trip around the Hunter in 1996, which raised \$800. I know that is a very humble beginning but when you consider that 10 years later the group had raised \$780,000 it shows how hard these people worked. Many groups and people in the Hunter were involved in fundraising. The Lioness Club of Maitland held an early season ball and a bridal fair, which I am sure many of my colleagues would have been interested in attending. Other fundraising events were also held.

I turn now to what is happening at present. When I asked for an account of how much money had been raised to date I found the Hunter Children's Research Foundation has now raised \$1,040,000. The foundation reached the \$1 million milestone in October last year. I also refer to the ways in which this group raises money. One of the fundraising organisations is called ReaCH 200. People in the local area and businesses are invited to donate \$200 or more. The good thing about it is that their contributions are acknowledged by ReaCH 200; donors receive a certificate of appreciation and invitations to lots of events. I advertise that organisation because it raised money for a worthwhile cause. ReaCH 200 is something I have enjoyed being involved with. ReaCH 200 and other fundraising activities have raised \$159,000 for asthma research; \$50,000 for cancer research; \$79,000 for autism; \$150,000 for mothers and babies research, and the list goes on. A couple of people I know whom my colleagues might mention and who are founding members of this group are Janelle Shakespeare and Lorraine Gardner, who said:

The HCRF is now in its 16th year and we are thrilled with the amount of support our charity has received over the years from the local community.

All money raised in the Hunter stays in the Hunter with local researchers, many of whom are being recognised internationally for their work, benefiting from our funding.

We are passionate about children's research because it can dramatically impact on a child's life ...

I talked to one of the researchers who had been given a grant and she was keen to make a comment about the good works. Her name is Clare Collins, a professor in nutrition and dietetics at the University of Newcastle. She said:

I wish to acknowledge the wonderful support provided to my research by grants awarded from Hunter Children's Research Foundation, through the Hunter Medical Research Institute. The Hunter region does not have the same pool of benefactors that a capital city does, yet his group of tireless volunteers have raised over one million for research and equipment through their voluntary efforts.

These funds make a difference to the lives of children and their families through application of our research outcomes. As an Accredited Practising Dietician, a researcher and a recipient of these small grants, I have been able to test the feasibility of innovative approaches to helping children and parents improve their nutritional health. My team have also been able to develop important tools to more accurately assess dietary intake and work out the best way to assist families in eating better.

She went on to thank the foundation.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [11.12 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for her important motion about a foundation that is a shining light in our region, particularly for the city of Newcastle. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation was established in 1996 by three friends from the Hunter region, Lorraine Gardner, Janelle Shakespeare and Maree Anderson. The aim of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation is to raise much-needed funds for research into children's terminal and debilitating illnesses. The foundation works in association with the Hunter Medical Research Institute and is associated with Kaleidoscope, a children's health network, and is supported by the Hunter Children's Research Executive.

In October 2010 the Hunter Children's Research Foundation celebrated the milestone of reaching \$1 million in donations, a fantastic effort. The significance of this achievement is fantastic. All the money is raised in the Hunter and stays in the Hunter, as the member for Wallsend mentioned. This enables local researchers to establish new and continue existing research projects in areas such as asthma, cancer, prematurity, cystic fibrosis, diabetes and sleep disorders—illnesses that can affect any family at any time. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation supports all clinical disciplines, whether it be doctors, nurses or allied health, to deliver research outcomes that improve the health and wellbeing of the children and young people in the Hunter region.

Today the Hunter Children's Research Foundation committee consists of six representatives: Janelle Shakespeare, as I mentioned earlier, Lorraine Gardner, Natasha Beyersdorf, Sheridan Ferrier, Judy Hogan and Helen Ancuck. These generous women, along with former members, have worked to raise funds for essential research equipment, research support staff and research grants for new and ongoing research. In 2010 a grant from the Hunter Children's Research Foundation provided funding for the establishment of the New South Wales Infant Lung Function Centre based at John Hunter Children's Hospital—a fantastic deliverable. This is the first facility of its kind in New South Wales and measures lung function in children under the age of three. It is something that we in the Hunter can be very proud of and something that the Hunter Children's Research Foundation should be proud of too.

The purpose of the research project is to detect lung function abnormalities in infants, as 50 per cent of children have a wheezing illness in the first three years of life. Due to the success of the initial research the foundation funded, the project has received a further \$615,048 from the National Health and Medical Research Council for 2011 and 2013, a great testament to the work those people do. Data collected on wheezing infants to date from the project was recently presented at a meeting of the American Thoracic Society and, again, was very well received at that international forum. In the most recent round of grant funding the foundation provides funds for research into how high protein and/or high fat meals affect postprandial glycaemic control in children and adolescents using intensive insulin therapy.

A child or adult with type 1 diabetes is committed to lifelong insulin injections, daily blood glucose monitoring and dietary control. Dietary education needs to be clear and evidence based to minimise the burden diabetes places on families, whilst optimising blood glucose levels after meals. This important study will examine the effect of high protein and high fat meals on glycaemic control in children and adolescents using intensive insulin therapy, something that is very much needed in the medical fraternity. Gaps are evident in the impact of protein and fat on glycaemic control in children and the appropriate clinical advice to give for high protein and high fat meals. This new research will have international importance for appropriate dietary education strategies to be used for people with type 1 diabetes on intensive insulin therapy to optimise glycaemic control and minimise adverse outcomes, not only for children but also for adults.

The Hunter Children's Research Foundation has worked extremely hard to reach more than \$1 million in donations. It started with small events, such as a bus trip to the Hunter Valley in 1996—its first event—which raised \$800. Over the past 15 years, as the member for Wallsend alluded to, the foundation has established longstanding events and initiatives that have contributed to its success in fundraising. For example, the ReaCH 200 program involves Hunter businesses making an annual minimum donation of \$200. Over the past nine years the program has raised more than \$110,000. Another example is Swim for Kids, which involves local businesses and organisations participating in a relay swimming carnival that is held in the Hunter Valley. Teams of four pay a \$200 entry fee, with all money raised contributing to Hunter researchers—again, another fantastic initiative by the research foundation.

Additionally, the Hunter Children's Research Foundation receives proceeds from various events, including bridal fairs, the Rotary Club of Newcastle's Golf Day—which I participated in—and the Australian Hoteliers Association's awards dinner. I was lucky enough to be a shared beneficiary of Hunter Life Education's cash housie, again a very good innovative if you can get your tentacles into the Hunter business community. In 2010, the Hunter Children's Research Foundation distributed \$40,500, which supported two project grants into children's research. The committee and volunteers of Hunter Children's Research Foundation should be commended for their contribution to children's research over the past 15 years. They have been fantastic. I strongly support the motion of the member for Wallsend.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.19 a.m.]: It is a pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. So many deserving charities and generous people support those in need in our society, but the cause of children in need particularly touches our hearts, and rightly so. While we may be parochial in commending the great work undertaken in our regions—this motion is about the Hunter Children's Research Foundation—it is appropriate and somewhat serendipitous that this motion is being debated on Jeans for Genes Day. I appreciate that the Children's Medical Research Foundation is a different charity, but the principles are the same. I hesitate to point out that the member for Wallsend is wearing her jeans today, but I note that many members are wearing the Jeans for Genes Day badge. Although we are parochial, we support all of our communities across New South Wales and Australia.

The work of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation is targeted locally, obviously, but it benefits the entire community spectrum. Other members will speak to the motion in more detail in addition to that provided by the member for Newcastle. I acknowledge particularly the member for Macquarie Fields, Dr Andrew McDonald, who will speak in some detail from a great knowledge base of children's health issues. I speak broadly about the 15 years during which the Hunter Children's Research Foundation has worked to raise money to fund research into terminal and debilitating illnesses suffered by children. In 1996 the founders of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation undertook a heartfelt initiative to use volunteers to improve the level of mainstream funding for research benefiting the most deserving of target groups—our children.

Since that time, a little more than \$1 million has been raised in the Hunter and spent locally to benefit new and ongoing research projects. Problems such as asthma, cancer, cystic fibrosis, diabetes and sleep disorders are now researched to a degree that could not occur within the constraints of the New South Wales Health budget. Funding is provided to purchase essential research equipment, to employ research support staff, and to support new and ongoing research through grant funding. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation works in association with the Hunter Medical Research Institute, which in turn has a productive partnership with the University of Newcastle and the Hunter New England Local Area Health Network.

My wife, Lyn, and I have been extremely fortunate in that we have never had such serious health concerns with our children, or our grandchildren. However, we do know people who have struggled with the health of their children, including close friends. Whilst we witness the pain and disruption to their lives, we can barely imagine the emotional and financial impact on those families. I genuinely thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion and place on the public record my appreciation to all involved with the Hunter Children's Research Foundation, particularly those who volunteer actively, some of whom the member for Wallsend and the member for Newcastle named. Many of them are my friends and, of course, I am proud to call them friends.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [11.23 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and note the member for Lake Macquarie's acknowledgement of Jeans for Genes Day. Although I am not wearing my jeans now, I assure him that I will wear them later when I attend the football. It is fantastic that donations to the Hunter Children's Research Foundation recently reached \$1 million. As has been mentioned, the foundation was established in 1996 by three friends—Lorraine Gardner, Janelle Shakespeare and Maree

Anderson—and now has a board of six members with Natasha Beyersdorf, Sheridan Ferrier, Judy Hogan and Helen Ancuck joining them. The foundation raises much-needed funds to find cures for children's diseases. Through the support of the Hunter community and businesses the foundation provides much-needed grants and research funding. Over the years grants have been provided to more than 40 projects for children's medical research, some of which I shall mention.

Recently the foundation contributed to research into an innovative approach to increasing physical activity for the whole family; molecular markers of reversible airway obstruction in early life and correlation with clinical wheezing; preterm infant carbon monoxide; meningococcal disease; children with type 1 diabetes on intensive insulin therapy; improving carbohydrate knowledge and targeted nutrition education strategies, and improved diabetes management; the effects of passive smoking on children with asthma; developing pituitary autoantibody assays; characterising the sex-specific differences of neonatal cardiovascular adaptation; developing a validating tool to assess children's food intake to develop healthy eating programs; and a web-based fathers' network and health information service for first-time fathers. These are just some of the projects and grants the foundation has contributed to over the years.

As has been mentioned today, in 2006 the previous member for Wallsend said that although the money is raised in the Hunter and stays in the Hunter, the research contributes not only to the Hunter but also across the Central Coast, New South Wales generally and, indeed, the world. The foundation provides funds for research into high protein and/or high-fat meals affecting postprandial glycaemic control in children and adolescents using intensive insulin therapy. Diabetes affects many people in this country and is detected mostly after age 20. We cannot provide enough research and funding, but governments cannot provide it all. It is important for community organisations to do as much as they can to fund research into these conditions, particularly for our children, who are our most vulnerable but also our future. Although the foundation is in the Hunter, I take pleasure on behalf of all my Central Coast colleagues in supporting the motion. I commend the motion to the House.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.27 a.m.]: Today is a great day to mark the Hunter Children's Research Foundation, which, since its formation in 1996, has raised \$1 million for research. This is an extraordinary achievement. The foundation works closely with the Hunter Medical Research Institute and Kaleidoscope, which is part of the Hunter Children's Health Network. Great children's hospitals such as John Hunter have great research support. This is why the Hunter Children's Research Foundation is vital to the ongoing daily work of John Hunter Children's Hospital. As a college examiner for future paediatricians, I have had much to do with the John Hunter Children's Hospital over the years. It is truly a magnificent children's hospital with brilliant, highly skilled and caring staff.

The Hunter Children's Research Foundation activities are coordinated by the independent committee, and I pay tribute to the members of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation executive, who were named by the member for Newcastle. Research institutes in New South Wales receive Commonwealth or State Government funding usually as regular or block funding, but this covers only about 30 per cent of the total research costs.

The medical research support program was pioneered by the Carr Labor Government under an understanding with the Federal Government. The reality is that, for most researchers, survival of their research involves a mixture of applications for competitive grants and philanthropy, which is why in the Hunter the work of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation is so vital. Research is the way forward in health care, but there are significant funding shortfalls. In 2006 for example, Australian universities and medical research institutes received \$2.2 billion in research income, yet spent \$5.4 billion on research, a gap of \$3.2 billion. That is why funding such as that from the citizens of the Hunter is so vital to the future of medical care. The fact that funds raised by the Hunter Children's Research Foundation stay in the Hunter is incredible. However, as members opposite have said, much of their research is of worldwide interest.

In 1977 one of my tutors—a cardiac surgeon at the time—told me, "Half of what I am going to teach you is rubbish; I just don't know which half." The worst thing is, he was right, and that is why research is so vital. In medicine, there are four types of research. The first is so-called "wet lab" research in the laboratory, the second is clinical trials treatment such as randomised control trials, the third is population based research, and the fourth is health services research, that is, how health services are actually delivered to a community. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation is able to support all of those four types of research. But, more importantly, research has a halo effect; that is, having a research institute attracts clinicians who want to do research as part of their practice, and many of those clinicians are highly skilled. Having a research institute also helps clinicians who are already in the institution; it gives them the opportunity to be involved in research.

The Hunter Children's Research Foundation looks at many illnesses that can affect anybody at any time, such as asthma. The absolutely vital work of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation in terms of lung function in children less than five years old is a case in point. It is very difficult to measure lung function in children of less than five years; however, wheezing in children less than five years may have life-long ramifications. There are still considerable debates on whether to treat and the long-term future of this. That is why research like this carried out only in the last few years will still be able to be quoted in 50 years time, and it will change the way we practise medicine for those children for many years to come. Cancer in children has gone from being a death sentence to a disease that is often curable, and that is why the research done by the Hunter Children's Research Foundation in 2007 on acute lymphoblastic leukaemia is so vitally contributing to knowledge.

Cystic fibrosis affects one in 1,600 children, yet one in 20 of us carry the gene; there are probably four members in this House who carry the gene for cystic fibrosis. We are in the middle of an epidemic of paediatric diabetes, which is why the work of Professor Collins, which has been sponsored on more than one occasion by the Hunter Children's Research Foundation, is so absolutely vital. Population health studies in the Hunter will change the way that we practise for many years, and that is why the FamilyFIT approach of 2010, about the use of physical activity at a family level, is so important for the future of these children. Finally, even in today's press there is an article on meningococcus. In 2008 Professor Blackwell did research into meningococcus. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation is a magnificent institute. I urge everybody to be involved. They can help by attending functions, donating equipment, or being involved in a committee. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [11.32 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. I commend the member for raising this matter. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation is a vital part of health research and health delivery in the Hunter region. Our region is incredibly blessed to have great synergy between a world-class hospital in the John Hunter Hospital, world-class research through the Hunter Medical Research Institute, and a world-class university. Those three facilities work very collaboratively for the benefit of not only our region but New South Wales and the broader community. We have in our area world-class researchers who are able to work across all three organisations. It is unfortunate that it is a bit unusual to have across the State three organisations working collaboratively because often we get fiefdom building. I highly commend all of the people involved because this does benefit our region enormously.

Recently I had the privilege to visit Kaleidoscope at the John Hunter Hospital. Kaleidoscope provides an absolutely fantastic service for not just Newcastle but the entire draw area of the hospital, which goes all the way to the Queensland border. The neonatal intensive care unit there is manned by brilliant staff, and they get brilliant clinical outcomes. They are, as we have been aware of for many years, in a cramped environment. We will work together to try to improve conditions at that unit. Kaleidoscope provides a wide range of services, such as oncology, occupational therapy or whatever, looking at the full breadth of health services for our young people. Organisations like the Hunter Children's Research Foundation really contribute to delivery of those services.

I would like to commend the people involved on the Hunter Children's Research Foundation committee: Janelle Shakespeare, Lorraine Gardner, Sheridan Ferrier, Judy Hogan and Helen Ancuk. I would like to commend the organisation for the projects that they have funded over time. I note, as has been mentioned previously, the contribution they have made to research into juvenile diabetes. As the member for Macquarie Fields mentioned, we have an epidemic of juvenile diabetes. Having this money coming in for that research is much needed and appreciated. Mine has been a brief contribution, but I would like to commend all those people involved. I thank all the fantastic staff of the John Hunter Hospital, the Hunter Medical Research Institute and the researchers at the university who interface with those other organisations as well. Congratulations to all of them, and congratulations to the member for Wallsend for moving the motion.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.36 a.m.], in reply: I say a big thank you to my colleagues who have contributed to the debate today: the member for Newcastle, the member for Lake Macquarie, the member for The Entrance, the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Charlestown. When this motion was coming to light it was really pleasing for me to be involved with it and to invite my colleagues from the Hunter and the Central Coast to be involved, because I knew it was such a positive and well-supported topic that it would attract a lot of nice comment, and deservedly so.

The member for Newcastle made some really good comments. He spoke of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation being a shining light in the Hunter. I agree. He spoke also about the aims of the group. It is

interesting that all the board members are women. I would never say that is just because women work so hard; it is just interesting that the members at foundation were, and still remain, all women. That is just one for the girls. The member for Newcastle also talked about the importance of the infant lung centre and the funds raised last year for that centre. That is fantastic. He commended all the hard work of the researchers and the fundraisers. I agree.

The member for Lake Macquarie made a really nice statement. He said the cause of children touches all our hearts and I agree with him on that. He mentioned the close links with today and the coincidence that this debate is taking place on Jeans for Genes day. He referred also to the parochial nature of the people of Newcastle and the Hunter. I must of course concede that. He spoke also about the local targets of the Hunter Children's Research Foundation and of the global benefits derived from that research. The member for The Entrance also congratulated the Hunter Children's Research Foundation on its hard work, and mentioned how wonderful it was that we achieved the \$1 million milestone. He referred also to the support of the Hunter community for children's research, adding that while we are very parochial about using our money locally the benefits are worldwide. I agree.

The member for Macquarie Fields, the shadow Minister, who is a paediatrician, talked about the importance of the links between the Hunter Medical Research Institute, Kaleidoscope and the Hunter Children's Research Foundation, and of his involvement with the John Hunter Hospital children's services. He spoke also of the importance of grants and the survival of research being dependent on funding. So the fact that the Hunter can raise \$1 million has really helped our researchers. He referred to the halo effect of research, that is, good researchers attracting more interest and involvement by clinicians in research. That is fantastic.

The member for Charlestown, who I am pleased contributed to debate on the motion, talked about the vital part of health delivery that the research foundation has provided to the Hunter and commended all those involved with the Hunter Children's Research Foundation. I agree with his comments on the importance and benefits of the Kaleidoscope children's health network and the John Hunter Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. I welcome the positive contributions of my colleagues who represent electorates in the Hunter and on the Central Coast and the member for Macquarie Fields. The Hunter Children's Research Foundation is dear to all our hearts. We will continue to support fundraising for this institution and look forward to the foundation undertaking more research to help our kids.

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

Motion agreed to.

HEART DISEASE

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.40 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes heart disease is the number one killer of Australian women;
- (2) notes that 1 to 7 May 2011 is Heart Week, which aims to raise community awareness of cardiovascular disease; and
- (3) calls on all members of this House to raise awareness about this important health issue.

Heart disease is the number one killer of Australian women. On average it kills 216 Australian women every week, or 31 per day. The risk of getting heart disease increases significantly for women after they reach menopause. In fact, women are four times more likely to die of heart disease than of breast cancer. The good news is that heart disease is largely preventable. Although there is no single cause of heart disease, risk factors increase one's chance of developing it. Some risk factors we can do nothing about, such as increasing age or a family history of heart disease. But many risk factors are modifiable. These include smoking, both active and passive, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, being physically inactive, being overweight, depression, social isolation and lack of support.

The main cause of heart disease is atherosclerosis, the build up of plaque, which is made up of fat or cholesterol that blocks the body's arteries. The major risk factors for death are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking and obesity. This cardiovascular mortality is not evenly spread in the general population. People in socio-demographic areas such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people of

lower socioeconomic status have higher rates of premature and preventable heart disease than the general population. In 2006 the New South Wales life expectancy was 84.8 years for women and 79.3 years for men, one of the highest in the world. The mortality for heart disease has reduced substantially in the past decade.

The *Medical Journal of Australia* dated 1 August 2011 notes that in 2007 there had been a substantial improvement in outcomes for acute coronary syndromes with decreased mortality, decreased heart failure and an increase in use of newer technology such as angioplasty for acute coronary syndromes, especially in urban areas. The 47 per cent cardiac mortality decrease in Australia from 1997 to 2007 of 140 to 80 deaths per 100,000 population, which occurred at the same time that some politicians decried a failing health system, places Australia second in the world to the Netherlands in the category of improved preventative health in heart disease. By contrast, the United States of America reduced its cardiac mortality by only 20 per cent. It looked to countries such as Australia to reduce cardiac mortality and morbidity.

The most effective way to reduce deaths and disability from heart disease is a sustained, whole-of-society approach over an extended period. That is why the Heart Foundation can and should take much of the credit for this reduction in cardiac morbidity and mortality. I am impressed with the Heart Foundation's Go Red for Women campaign, which aims to unite women to fight against heart disease by helping to raise awareness of the risks and to promote healthier choices. Go Red for Women builds on an American campaign that started in 2004 when it became known that 500,000 American women were dying every year from heart disease.

This year's campaign encourages women to take action. It advocates a Healthy Heart Challenge, which some of our female members of Parliament have joined. Participants commit to making a change that will improve their heart health. It is a 10-week program designed to help Australian women make lifestyle changes necessary to improve their heart health and reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. I urge all members to support this campaign. By reducing risk factors 14 years can be added to a person's lifespan, male and female.

Research by the Heart Foundation shows that while many women are well aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, often there are significant barriers to reducing their cardiovascular risk factors. Participants in the campaign can select any one of six key goals, such as, one, being active every day and, two, improving everyday nutrition. These two goals are important because weight gain is a very significant risk factor for heart disease and 61 per cent of the population of New South Wales is now either overweight or obese. The third goal is to increase the knowledge of heart health. Many women with heart disease do not realise that the symptoms of heart attack in a woman may be different from the symptoms in a man and are easy to underplay or are missed by clinicians in emergency departments.

The fourth goal is to quit smoking. Smoking is responsible for 10 of the 14 years of life lost due to preventable heart disease. One of the greatest challenges for reducing smoking rates is the greater uptake of smoking by young and marginalised women. That is why the tobacco plain packaging legislation, now supported by both sides of Federal and State politics, is so important. British American Tobacco has been published in today's paper as fighting tooth and nail to prevent the introduction of plain packaging because it will cause a significant reduction in smoking rates. The fifth goal is to lower blood pressure. Heart disease and stroke are preventable if blood pressure is lowered.

The treatment of heart disease relies heavily on the use of medications, which often are under-prescribed, particularly in the high-risk population. The College of General Practitioners recommends that blood pressure be measured in adults every two years. The sixth goal is to lower high cholesterol levels. The use of diet and medication is very important in this regard. The Healthy Heart Challenge started on 1 June 2011 as part of the Go Red for Women month. The six goals of the campaign will significantly improve a woman's lifespan and general health, not only in heart disease but also in reducing the risks of stroke, dementia and diabetes. I commend the Heart Foundation for this brilliant initiative.

I now turn to treatment. Sometimes it is difficult to separate age and social factors in the female sex when undertaking research into treatment for heart disease. Evidence in the United States, and I suspect in Australia, shows that women with heart disease are not referred as often as men to the appropriate centres for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. That is due to a variety of factors, one of which is it is often more difficult to diagnose heart disease in women than it is in men. New South Wales has an excellent network of cardiac referral services for the treatment of acute infarction and post-cardiac rehabilitation. However, some marginalised communities do not access these services.

Hormone replacement therapy is not recommended for cardiac protection in women with coronary heart disease since the Heart and Estrogen Replacement Study showed no evidence of benefit from hormone replacement therapy in preventing heart disease. Heart disease is the most common cause of death in women, killing 31 women today in Australia. Many of the risk factors are preventable. Much can be done by members of Parliament in this place and in the general community to reduce the risk factors. Simply by reducing the risk factors adds 14 years to the lifespan of every man, woman and child in New South Wales, with very little health expenditure. It is the way of the future. I commend the Heart Foundation and its Go Red for Women campaign to the House.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [11.49 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to talk to the motion of the member for Macquarie Fields on Heart Week. It is a very, very important topic. As the member for Macquarie Fields advised the House, Heart Week is an initiative of the Heart Foundation of Australia and it went from 1 to 7 May. This year's campaign focused on raising awareness of heart disease as the number one killer of Australian women. We focus often on other diseases that women suffer but very few women know that heart disease is the major killer of Australian women. The Heart Foundation encourages healthcare professionals to raise awareness about these important health issues.

Coronary heart disease, also known as ischemic heart disease, is the most common form of heart disease. There are two major clinical results of the disease—heart attack, or acute myocardial infarction; and angina. Heart disease is a significant contributor to the number of deaths in New South Wales. Just over 7,800 deaths in 2007, or about 21 deaths every day, were as a result of heart disease. Coronary heart disease was the principal reason for just under 51,000 hospitalisations in 2008-09. Coronary heart disease kills more Australians than any other single disease. In 2006 it contributed to 22,983 deaths—17 per cent of all deaths in Australia. Falls in death rates from coronary heart disease since the 1970s are due to fewer heart attacks occurring and better survival from them. If a person suffers a heart attack at a younger age heart disease can be reversible, but I stress that it is only at a younger age.

Between 1996 and 2006 age-standardised coronary heart disease deaths fell by 45 per cent in males and 44 per cent in females. Older people develop coronary heart disease much more commonly—7.5 per cent of Australians aged 55 to 64 have coronary heart disease, increasing to 20.3 per cent for those aged 75 years or over. This will be a significant factor as the baby boomer generation ages and we have a much greater number of aged people in our population. Men develop coronary heart disease more commonly than women, which is why people are not aware that it is the number one cause of death in women.

The New South Wales Government and NSW Health are committed to working with primary health and community-based organisations to deliver programs that will prevent heart disease and effectively manage those with chronic heart disease. NSW Health has invested funding of \$21.5 million in 2010-11, which will increase to \$32 million in 2011-12, for the Connecting Care Program. The Connecting Care Program targets people with chronic diseases, such as heart disease, that result in the most frequent presentations to hospitals, that drive the highest healthcare costs and that respond best to improved care coordination and health coaching. Current enrolments in the program are more than 6,000, which will increase to 43,000 people by June 2013.

The Connecting Care Program actively promotes patient self-management and proactive measures to manage chronic diseases in the community. The program involves collaborating with general practice and allied health practitioners in developing and implementing tools and training towards improving patients' self-management of and education in chronic conditions, including heart disease. This Government will increase funding for chronic disease management by \$57 million to improve sufferers' quality of life and drive down unnecessary hospital admissions. The additional \$57 million will help support an extra 16,000 people who suffer from some form of chronic disease over the next term of government, enabling a minimum of 59,000 people to benefit from the program by 2015.

By arming sufferers with better information, education, education management and access to community support, the New South Wales Government will better manage chronic disease to minimise the impact it has on our hospital system. The New South Wales Department of Health works closely with the New South Wales branch of the National Heart Foundation to develop and deliver preventive health programs and initiatives that support improved cardiovascular health. The Heart Foundation has developed Managing My Heart Health—A Resource for People with or at High Risk of Coronary Heart Disease.

Managing My Heart Health is an interactive self-management resource for people with or at high risk of coronary heart disease. It mirrors the content of the Reducing Risk in Heart Disease 2008 guidelines and

provides lifestyle, medical and psychosocial strategies to reduce the risk of further heart problems. Key features of this valuable resource include comprehensive evidence-based risk factor information in concisely formatted self-management tools including an action plan, a medicines list card and a record card to help patients monitor their progress and facilitate discussion with health professionals.

The Prevention in Practice project, funded by NSW Health and managed by the Heart Foundation, developed an integrated approach to implementing lifestyle risk factor intervention within general practices in New South Wales. This has resulted in improved best-practice care for people with coronary heart disease and has reduced the incidence of subsequent cardiovascular events. In New South Wales services for the management of heart disease are provided by cardiac rehabilitation services in combination with medical and surgical intervention and pharmacotherapy. The services have improved outcomes for people with heart disease, their families and the community in general. This, in turn, has a positive effect on the health system through a reduction in the use of health services.

Rehabilitation is offered throughout NSW Health facilities for people with cardiac disease such as heart disease. The aim of rehabilitation is to assist people achieve optimal physical and psychological function, to self-manage their disease and to be active partners with the multidisciplinary care team in decisions regarding their health care. Outcomes of heart disease rehabilitation include reduced admissions to hospital and subsequent length of stay and reduced morbidity and mortality. Each local health district is responsible for the planning and delivery of cardiovascular services, incorporating the clinical specialties of cardiology, interventional cardiology, nephrology, renal transplantation, cardiothoracic surgery and vascular surgery.

The Agency for Clinical Innovation's Cardiac Network is a collaboration of more than 120 members including consumers, administrators, academics and clinicians from all cardiac disciplines across New South Wales. It works on planning and development initiatives that promote equitable access to high-quality cardiac services for the population of New South Wales and equitable patient outcomes for patients needing cardiac services in New South Wales and it provides advice to the Department of Health regarding the appropriate provision of specific cardiac services. On a more personal level, I entered the Go Red for Women campaign a few weeks ago. It has been a challenge but it has increased my awareness of eating healthily, which is the target I aimed for. Having known many of the risk factors for heart disease I thought that was something I should try to implement.

The six goals that have already been mentioned for the participants to choose from were to be active every day, which I pretty much am anyway; to improve everyday nutrition, which is what I have been working on; to increase knowledge of heart disease, which I have a fair idea about having previous medical-affiliated knowledge; to quit smoking—I have never done that; and to lower blood pressure and cholesterol. All those factors are intertwined so improvements in one area will help in other areas. For example, lowering cholesterol is a result of eating better and being more active. To use a cliché: prevention is better than cure.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.59 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by Dr Andrew McDonald, the shadow Minister for Health, and shadow Minister for Medical Research. This topic is of personal relevance as my father has struggled with heart disease for more than 25 years. During this time he has had several heart attacks and suffered tremendously from angina pain. He has endured a number of surgeries—including two open-heart surgeries—and numerous other treatments. I understand that cardiovascular disease is a serious and all-consuming condition for individual sufferers, their families and the broader community. National Heart Week seeks to promote awareness of the prevalence of cardiovascular disease in Australia. In particular, National Heart Week aims to raise awareness of the prevalence of cardiovascular disease in women. Cardiovascular disease is now the number one killer of Australian women. In fact, 216 women will die each week from the disease. That is four times more deaths than are caused by breast cancer. In addition, cardiovascular disease is now responsible for approximately one-third of all deaths in Australia.

This year the National Heart Foundation has issued a document entitled "Will you recognise your heart attack?" I urge all members to familiarise themselves with this document and to provide their constituents with access to it. It can be downloaded and it may be of particular importance to constituents who fall into any one of the following risk categories: those who smoke, although people who quit are still susceptible to heart attack and heart disease years after quitting; those with high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes; those who are physically inactive or overweight; and those who suffer from depression, social isolation or a lack of quality social support. Heart disease can also be hereditary, and it is important that all Australians are aware of their family's medical history.

"Will you recognise your heart attack?" provides a description of common heart attack symptoms. These include chest discomfort, discomfort in other parts of the upper body, nausea, cold sweats, dizziness and light-headedness. However, the flyer also stresses the important fact that the symptoms of each person's heart attack can differ dramatically and any subsequent heart attack can present with significantly different symptoms. Recognising heart attack symptoms and seeking appropriate and timely treatment can mean the difference between life and death, and can minimise the adverse impacts. It should not surprise members that a large number of people delay seeking medical attention out of sheer confusion.

I have spoken to many people who have suffered heart attacks, particularly elderly people. They often did not seek medical attention at the time and only discovered at their next medical check-up that they had in fact suffered a heart attack. I commend the National Heart Foundation for its efforts in coordinating the National Heart Week campaign and associated events. The Heart Foundation Healthy Community Awards is a further example of the foundation's work in promoting and encouraging local councils to undertake campaigns that encourage healthy communities. I recently attended the Local Government Awards with the Leader of the Opposition, and member for Blacktown, John Robertson, and the Minister for Local Government, Don Page.

Bankstown City Council was nominated for its Active Bankstown program, the recreational expo that it undertakes, its sport of the month activities, its Bike Around Bankstown event, and its cycling workshops as well as other initiatives that include working with women from different cultural backgrounds to improve their health, active aging programs that target seniors and midnight basketball games, which target youth. I commend the National Heart Foundation. I also commend its national president, Associate Professor Peter Sexton, and its patron, the Governor-General, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce. I also commend the member for Macquarie Fields for raising this matter and for his passion in advocating for better community health.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [12.04 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support this fantastic motion moved by the shadow Minister for Health, Dr Andrew McDonald. I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Bankstown to debate on this motion. I have a personal and professional interest in heart disease and heart conditions. Prior to becoming a member of Parliament, I worked as a nurse in a cardiac ward of my local hospital. I saw firsthand some of the problems suffered by women and men who perhaps did not look after their hearts as well as they should have. My daughter has a heart condition. It is a congenital condition, but it highlights the importance of looking after one's heart.

I emphasise that heart disease is the number one killer of Australian women. There is a misconception in the community that breast cancer has a higher mortality rate than heart disease, but it does not. One of the things we can do to reduce heart disease is understand how the heart functions, and it is most important for women to be aware of the risk factors. A number have been highlighted already but it is worth repeating them. Obviously smoking is one of the highest risk factors for women, and also men. Being overweight, having high blood pressure and having high cholesterol are other risk factors.

The fantastic thing about Heart Week is that it works hard to raise awareness. The Heart Foundation ran a great program called the Go Red for Women Healthy Heart Challenge. I and a number of other female members of Parliament participated in that challenge. I probably could have done a little better, but that is something I will certainly work on. I am not going to wait until next year to do it; it is something we should all work on all the time. The Go Red for Women Healthy Heart Challenge ran for 10 weeks. Participants were able to choose the part of the challenge they would be involved in. The choices were to be active every day, improve everyday nutrition, increase one's knowledge of heart disease, quit smoking, lower one's blood pressure or lower one's cholesterol. The member for Blue Mountains chose to improve her everyday nutrition, and I congratulate her on that. Hopefully we will all think more about what we put in our mouths. I chose to be active every day.

For me, it was a bit of a challenge, bearing in mind the routine we have in the House. But I tried to get up a bit earlier and take a 30-minute walk, and I will continue to try to meet the challenge. The great thing is that more than 17,000 people participated in this event, and I was pleased to be a part of it. I commend the member for Bankstown for pointing out the importance of recognising heart attack symptoms. As she acknowledged, recognising the symptoms and understanding the risk factors that go with them is an important step towards saving lives. If one understands the symptoms of a heart attack and reacts appropriately when those symptoms are noticed—by calling 000 or taking action directly—lives can be saved. I congratulate the member for Macquarie Fields, and shadow Minister for Health on raising this important issue.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.09 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by Dr Andrew McDonald, the shadow Minister for Health and Medical Research. Heart disease is the number one killer of

women in Australia. It kills four times as many women as breast cancer. The Heart Foundation runs an annual event called the Healthy Heart Challenge, which encourages women to make small but realistic changes to their lifestyles. The Healthy Heart Challenge is part of the Heart Foundation's Go Red for Women Campaign, which is an initiative to raise awareness of heart disease in women. Participants challenge themselves to choose one of six goals. In turn, they are supported by the Heart Foundation with an online tool to track progress during the challenge, a weekly e-newsletter with tips and information to stay motivated, and a range of healthy recipes to try at home. That is something I would like to have a chance to do.

This program relies heavily on the generosity of corporate sponsors to enable the Heart Foundation to continue to educate women about the risk of heart disease through local and national events, research, advocacy and surveys. Awareness and education play a large role in supporting both men and women who have suffered or are suffering from heart disease. A person's chances of survival are greatly increased if they recognise the warning signs. They may feel nauseous, have cold sweats, and become dizzy or disorientated and short of breath. It is important when someone develops these symptoms that they stop and rest and tell someone about their symptoms. Over half of all people who die from a heart attack do so before they reach hospital. Heart attacks are not what we think. People can give themselves the best chance of survival by having an action plan that can assist in reducing the damage or save their life.

Having a basic understanding of your heart and how it functions is the first step in helping to prevent heart disease. Most women are unaware that heart disease is their number one killer, so it is vital to understand heart disease and why it is relevant to all women. Some of the reasons that heart disease affects women more so than men include menopause, hormone replacement therapy, and oral contraception. It is of particular concern that we are not seeing any decline in the death rate among Australians aged between 25 and 54 years of age. Some risk factors associated with heart disease, such as being overweight and obesity, are on the rise and there has been a lack of inroads into improving others, such as physical inactivity, poor nutrition, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

This is coupled with an ageing population. As a result, there is a very real concern among cardiovascular experts that death rates from heart disease will increase in the future. It is also disturbing to see that heart disease remains the leading cause of death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, accounting for over 15 per cent of all Indigenous deaths. The statistics reinforce the need for action not only at a State level but, equally importantly, at a national level if we are to improve the management of heart disease, stroke and blood vessel disease in both primary and acute care as well as introduce further measures to improve prevention. I commend Dr Andrew McDonald for his initiative in bringing this matter to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted.

GRAFFITI LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 4 August 2011.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [12.15 p.m.]: I support the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This bill fulfils another election commitment by the New South Wales Government to tackle the scourge of graffiti vandalism. The bill will require juvenile graffiti vandals to appear before a court for a graffiti offence. It also gives courts the power to, first, extend the time graffiti offenders spend on learner or provisional licences; secondly, suspend a driver's licence of any class; and, thirdly, as an alternative to suspension for unrestricted licence holders, impose a limit on the number of demerit points that they are able to accrue over a specified period. It also requires courts that impose a community service order for graffiti offences to make graffiti clean-up part of that order.

The bill requires the amendment of several Acts. The amendment to the Children (Community Service Orders) Act 1987 and Crime (Sentencing Procedures) Act 2008 will enable the courts to require offenders to clean up graffiti as part of their sentence. Sensibly, this is not required if it is not reasonably practical to do so. Forcing offenders to clean up graffiti will ensure that they understand the damage that their vandalism has

caused. Hopefully, it will also encourage them to take ownership of their community. Surely if graffiti tagging is partly about identifying their patch, so to speak, then having a clean, graffiti-free community that they feel part of and have a degree of ownership of will help reduce recidivism. We have seen examples of this in my community where young offenders have been involved in cleaning up graffiti. Anecdotally, these areas seem to remain graffiti free for longer. Perhaps there is a degree of honour among thieves.

The amendments to the Graffiti Control Act 2008 and the relevant road transport legislation will provide another mechanism to reduce graffiti re-offence rates. Nothing is more precious to an adolescent than acceptance by their peers. Undoubtedly, many offences occur because of peer pressure that encourages a gang culture. Sadly, the desire for acceptance often leads to behaviour that damages the community, their peers, and themselves. The ability of our legal system to use levers such as suspension of driver licences taps into this desire for acceptance. If your friends are all starting to drive and gaining the mobility and freedom that it brings, nothing will be more disappointing than still relying on your parents, public transport or your own two feet to get around. We all remember from when we were teenagers the sense of freedom that comes with that rite of passage. This will be a potent lever.

Last week I held a mobile office in Mount Hutton, a suburb in my electorate. Seventy-five per cent of people who booked in for an appointment came primarily because of the impact that graffiti and antisocial behaviour were having on their lives. Graffiti makes people feel unsafe, it violates people's rights, and it costs our community vast sums of money every year to clean it up. It takes the actions of only a few individuals to impact negatively on our entire community. Within my electorate we have some particularly notorious areas for graffiti vandalism. Currently the graffiti hot spots program is being used in Cardiff around Myall Road and Harrison Street, Charlestown, along the Pacific Highway; Windale around Merrigum Street and Willow Road; and Warners Bay around John Street. I have been informed by our local area command that the reported incidents of graffiti in these areas between 1 January and 31 July this year are: Charlestown, top of the list with 32 incidents; followed by Cardiff, with 30; Mount Hutton, 27; Warners Bay, 25; Windale, nine; Kahibah, seven; and Gateshead, six.

When I met with residents at our mobile community office many people from Tennant Road and Nursery Grove attended. Their lives are constantly being negatively impacted by graffiti vandalism. However, one of the advantages of holding a community office is the valuable information that the community is able to provide. I commend the residents for coming to me last week about this issue and thank them for the information they provided. I have subsequently discussed the problem with the police and I issue this warning to those responsible for the graffiti and antisocial behaviour in Mount Hutton: The police know who you are, and you will be caught. I congratulate the Government on this measure to tackle the scourge of graffiti and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [12.19 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to speak briefly on the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I have supported legislation introduced previously in the House to address the problems associated with graffiti. Regardless of what has been said about graffiti, it is an act of pure vandalism and it will take some effective legislation to address the problem. While previous legislation was introduced in the best spirit, it certainly did not change the behaviour of graffiti offenders. Graffiti offenders must be recognised as criminals although some believe it is just a juvenile crime that causes no harm. It certainly does harm. For example, it lowers morale in affected areas. Graffiti has occurred in certain pockets of the Murray-Darling electorate and the community suffers from exposure to this vandalism. People who come to an area with substantial graffiti perceive there is a distinct lack of law and order and that it is probably an unsafe environment. Until we arrive at a solution and prevent these acts of graffiti, we will not overcome the many other problems graffiti creates.

Other members have spoken about the actions that local government must take and the investment it must make to remediate sites affected by graffiti. The sooner graffiti is cleaned away, the less effective is the offender's message and possibly it will not happen again. In most instances the offenders do not believe their acts have any impact on the community and they can commit this crime without causing any real damage. Most graffiti artists consider it a badge of honour to recognise their acts of graffiti around the community. Graffiti artists have vandalised cemeteries and monuments, including those built in remembrance of servicemen who died during wartime. Such monuments were erected to honour those individuals and most people consider such acts of vandalism to be abhorrent.

Past laws have not solved the problem so it is necessary for this Government to take action. There has been some criticism about attaching driver licence penalties to vandalism offences. If an Australian chooses not

to vote and does not attend a polling place on election day they are subject to a fine. If they do not pay that fine they can have their licence cancelled. There is no correlation between voting and driving but this is recognised as a most effective means of changing a person's behaviour. Most acts of graffiti are committed by young males who value their driver licence, or the opportunity to get one. If word gets out that being charged with a graffiti offence might lead to losing the chance to get a driver licence, it will not take long for the graffiti artists to curb their actions.

Like other laws that have gone through this place, it is a matter of putting the measures in place and demonstrating their effectiveness. Much thought has gone into developing the bill and there has been a lot of commentary from the community and from key stakeholders who have considered the best way to remove this scourge from our country. When I travel by train from the airport to the city on my way to Parliament it is evident to me that vandalism is a major problem in New South Wales. If we do not deal with it now, things will get worse. I support the legislation and look forward to the reduction in graffiti in New South Wales.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [12.26 p.m.]: I support the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. There are three councils within the electorate of Londonderry—Blacktown, Penrith and Hawkesbury. One has only to speak to the staff or an elected member of those councils to know just how much it costs them every year to get on top of graffiti and vandalism. Each year the three councils in Londonderry spend hundreds of thousands of dollars addressing vandalism. Communities across Sydney and throughout New South Wales are sick of it. This bill will go a long way towards changing graffiti offenders' behaviour. The graffiti problem will decline over the years as young people become aware that their friends' licences have been cancelled or it has taken longer to get a black licence, which is what they all want. The member for Murray-Darling made that point. Over time, the bill will be a major benefit to our community.

People do not like the look of graffiti. They raise regularly with their elected representatives in this place or on the local council just how widespread graffiti is and how it makes their communities look uncared for. They want it cleaned away. Rotary clubs should be congratulated on removing graffiti. They know the level of community concern about it. Service clubs such as Rotary or Lions are always keen to take up issues that are important to their communities. A Rotary club has started in Windsor, in the Hawkesbury council area. The council bought the graffiti removal equipment and Rotary members are doing the hard, labour-intensive work of cleaning up the area. Just this week the North Richmond-Kurrajong Rotary Club, which is in the seat of Londonderry, applied to council for similar equipment. I am sure the council will agree to that request as it is a great partnership between council, the local community and Rotary, and a great way to get on top of the graffiti problem.

Businesses that are targeted regularly by graffiti vandals face a big problem with their insurance. They claim over and over again the insurance companies will not renew their insurance or their premiums will go up. Although we know we need to get rid of graffiti quickly, businesses often put it off until there is a certain amount of graffiti and then they make a single claim. Over the years we will benefit from all of these things, such as insurance for business and how people perceive the appearance of the community. The message will get through that graffiti is not acceptable. Anyone who commits a graffiti offence will not get away with it. If they are caught they will be penalised, perhaps by having their driver's licence suspended.

In June the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the Premier saying that the cost of graffiti to our communities is around \$100 million, of which \$50 million relates to RailCorp. Instead of being used to clean up graffiti vandalism, those millions of dollars could be used to provide services and infrastructure. It is unacceptable for people to think they can enter private property, such as rail yards, to deface trains or other public assets. The sooner the message gets out, the better. During the previous State election I joined with a number of people to clean up graffiti that had accumulated on a long steel fence over the years in the Cambridge Park area. We painted over it all and, surprisingly, the fence has remained relatively intact.

Penrith council has continued to maintain the fence through its graffiti removal program. However, removing graffiti as soon as it appears to help reduce the incidence of graffiti is costing Penrith ratepayers a lot of money each year. Communities are finding things tough financially with costs being passed on even though councils work hard to keep rates down. Graffiti removal comes at a cost to the community. Some councils have been forced to impose special rate levies to stay on top of graffiti removal. Our area is fortunate that Rotary has taken on this task as a community project, as it has done in other areas, including the North Shore where the project commenced.

Rotary is talking to other councils about how they can become involved in the project. I say to all the graffiti vandals, "Take note of what is coming your way. Don't go out and graffiti. Get involved in positive

community programs. Get involved in art the right way by going to the local community centre." Youth programs are available for the many talented "graffiti artists". But graffiti on public and private buildings is not art; it is graffiti vandalism and it is unacceptable. Our message is, "Stop it, otherwise you will be penalised and you will not get your driver's licence." I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.33 p.m.]: I support the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. When I said in this House a year ago that it is ugly, disgusting and illegal, I was not referring to the former New South Wales State Government, I was referring to graffiti—a blight on our society. Graffiti is destructive and malicious; it takes away the value of our suburbs. It is the first sign of a breakdown in social behaviour. Interestingly, the Coalition's research on the prevalence of graffiti revealed that it was rated the number one issue across all suburbs, especially western Sydney. It was a pleasure to travel across the many State electorates with the then Opposition leader, now Premier, Barry O'Farrell, highlighting this policy initiative. We did not have to travel far to find graffiti across the electorates of Riverstone and Londonderry—the member for Londonderry has referred to graffiti in Cambridge Park.

We spent much time highlighting this policy in the media. This policy places responsibility on graffiti offenders for their actions. If they are not prepared to take that responsibility, we will remove their licence or extend the period in which they can obtain a driver licence. I commend the member for Baulkham Hills for raising a good point yesterday in relation to driver licences. When I was a young bloke aged 12 or 13 I was driving on the farm, but I was eager to obtain my driver licence. I wanted a licence and a vehicle so that I had the freedom to explore the deep dark reaches of rural Rouse Hill, as it was in the late 1970s. We did not have any public transport. I certainly would not have done anything that jeopardised getting that licence. I am sure that many young people eagerly anticipate getting their driver licences.

Once the message gets out that graffiti offenders may not get their licence when they are 17 years of age or may not be able to get their learner's permit when they are 16 years and three months, they will think twice before they deface our suburban backyards. Many members have spoken about the cost to the community of cleaning up graffiti. It does not matter whether it is a cost to ratepayers or the Government, it costs millions of dollars. That clean-up cost has been put at around \$100 million across the State annually. Indeed, the member for East Hills said his council had reduced its graffiti-removal cost from \$750,000 to \$40,000, which is quite commendable. Graffiti removal is an enormous and unnecessary cost that is imposed on ratepayers. Graffiti is unnecessary: it is deliberate and it is a crime. We are taking decisive action by introducing this legislation. We will not sit idle and watch the graffiti blight spread across the suburbs.

I bring to the attention of the House the role of an innovative and entrepreneurial young person named Anthony Krkac. He has developed the website—www.vandaltrak.com—with ingenious software that tracks and patrols graffiti. Any suburb can be located on the website. I commend this initiative to all of the Premier's advisers who are listening to this in-depth debate and to the Government. Anthony Krkac has done all the hard work. If police in Blacktown or Castle Hill go to the website they will find where graffiti is located. The website involves the community, and I will explain briefly how it works. Anyone with a mobile phone that has a camera can take a photo of the tag and send it to the website. The global positioning system attached to the website can track the spot immediately. The tag is photographed and the location is placed on the website. Lo and behold, the police can simply go to Anthony's wonderful website and look at any suburb to find the responsible graffiti artist, because they usually confine their activities to a particular suburb.

The police merely monitor that particular area. Using this system would save an enormous amount of resources and would help the police to catch the graffitiists. I commend the bill. It is a wonderful and progressive move on behalf of the O'Farrell Government to bring this legislation before the House. I also commend the actions of Anthony Krkac and his website VandalTrak for what they have done. This system should be used across the State, if not throughout the country. It is a wonderful innovation in which the community can get involved. The community hates graffiti. Research that we did in opposition, prior to the last State election, showed that graffiti was one of the main issues raised across the State. That has been the case for many years.

While education, health, roads and public transport would be right at the top of the list, people looked upon graffiti as being the number one niggling issue. We focussed on it and worked hard to implement policy that would turn that around. That policy is now embodied in legislation, and we are quite proud to support it. I again commend the role of Anthony Krkac and his wonderful innovation. No doubt throughout our lives technology will resolve many issues, and reporting graffiti is a great way for the community to get involved. Police can use this great innovation to establish the location of the graffiti activity and better organise patrols, thus minimising the use of resources, and tracking down and capturing offenders.

Our service clubs—Rotary clubs—have embraced cleaning up graffiti. My club, Rouse Hill Rotary, has been one of the leaders for many years now, assisted by The Hills Shire Council, which provided Rouse Hill Rotary with resources such as cleaning techniques, cleaning equipment and cleaning chemicals. When members of Rouse Hill Rotary see graffiti at a site, they make sure the police have tracked the location before going out to clean it up. Rouse Hill, Kellyville, Beaumont Hills, the whole of The Hills shire and even areas extending into Blacktown are absolutely sparkling and graffiti-clear. Blacktown has been really suffering from graffiti attacks, but the good work of service clubs such as Rotary, the good work of Anthony Krkac, and now this great legislation introduced by the O'Farrell Government will enable us to get right on top of graffiti. It is ugly, it is disgusting, and it is illegal. It is a crime, and we must stamp it out. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [12.42 p.m.]: I support the Government's Graffiti Control Amendment Bill 2011. There is no more regular source of annoyance to local communities than seeing their community destroyed by people who have no sense of obligation to their community or their own social conscience. While this bill focuses particularly on a range of measures to address juvenile offenders, it would be remiss of any member of this House to not realise that not only juveniles are involved in graffiti. Fortunately, I am yet to see any of the esteemed older members of the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council performing such terrible acts, so there seems to be a certain cut-off point.

Mr Paul Lynch: You just haven't caught them, that's all.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Is that an admission of guilt?

Mr Paul Lynch: No. It is an allegation.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: In my time as the local member, numerous adults on the Northern Beaches have been caught in the act of causing this malicious damage. It is very interesting that when allegations of malicious damage in the form of graffiti are made to local members of Parliament, and those issues are then passed on to police, it is very often the fact that other aspects of criminality are involved. Over the years that I have been the local member, allegations have often been made about who may or may not have been involved in graffiti attacks. Of course, as members of Parliament we quietly do a lot of things behind the scenes without making issues public. I am sure some in our communities think we do nothing but appear in the local paper, when in fact members from both sides of politics are dealing with local police and social welfare agencies to address issues affecting our communities, and this is one of those.

On occasions, when a member of Parliament makes an allegation or assertion it becomes a far bigger issue. Quite often it is found that young persons, whether juvenile or young adult, have a number of other issues affecting their lives. Quite often those are criminal aspects, particularly drug-related through involvement with marijuana or some other drug, and police are able to make a much better assessment of the problems that need to be addressed. On the Northern Beaches that has been the case on a number of occasions over the years. This bill enables the community, through government agencies, to get involved and help manage some of these problem people. It sends a clear message that we will not tolerate malicious damage to property, we will not tolerate graffiti, we will not tolerate destruction of the assets of the local community.

The bill, I am sure, will present some problems for a few members of this Parliament. Those of us who have been around for a while understand that over the years it has become clear that young people need to be treated a little differently. Whilst there has been some reluctance to embrace some aspects of youth offenders programs that are now operating, such as youth cautioning, overall I think there has been awareness by members on both sides of the House that that system probably works, or it is more likely to work than to not work, and that it is better to keep children out of the criminal system if at all possible.

But in some instances that has not helped to bring home to offenders the gravity of their graffiti activities. There remains among many young people—juveniles and young adults—a perception that it is all right to be involved in graffiti, that it does not really matter. Obviously, the message has not got through. What the Government is doing through this bill, through the very good direction of the Attorney General, who understands the balance needed in this area, is sending a clearer message to those young people that our society is not going to put up with graffiti, that they will have to come to understand the seriousness with which the community views their actions. This legislation says to offenders and potential offenders: It will not be just a quiet chat with you under the youth offenders program, or just a trip down to the local police station; you will now have that extra weight on your shoulders of appearing in court, you will have to appear before a magistrate.

I might point out that young people under the age of 18 years are still dealt with in the Children's Court, so there is a level of sensitivity about what is appropriate and necessary when dealing with young people. Those over 18 years of age will be dealt with by an adult court. Frankly, they deserve to be before an adult court. And there will be a greater range of penalties available through this legislation. From my experiences—acknowledging that members on both sides have worked within the children's jurisdiction—I have confidence that Local Court magistrates will have that sensitivity and necessary understanding of the issues facing young people to ensure they are not dealt with unfairly.

Magistrates will still have the power to refer young offenders to alternative programs, but this bill will increase their powers and enable them to add to the impact of the offence upon the young person coming before the court by indicating the ultimate sanctions to that person. Those sanctions will connect particularly well with the juvenile brain, because they involve in particular their drivers licence and coming off their P-plates and L-plates. Courts now have the power to say unequivocally to offenders that graffiti vandalism is malicious damage to the community, not a young person's activity, and if they do not behave they will be punished.

As a member of this place for more than 20 years I am heartened that this message is being given to young people. Young people, particularly if they are basically good people, fear having to go to court. Courts are intimidating and frightening for a basically good person. Young people must understand that they live in a serious world and that when they offend against community mores and values they will be punished. I have appeared in court for young offenders who have heard similar messages from magistrates. Their court appearance has impacted on them. This legislation will have the same effect on graffiti offenders. Over the past few years young people who committed graffiti offences did not have a sense of awe about the consequences of their actions. This legislation will change that.

The 152 councils representing broader communities across the State face the frustration of graffiti vandalism. Some councils have dealt with it better than have others, particularly the 43 councils in the Sydney urban area, and in Newcastle and Wollongong, where graffiti is a major issue. Despite the Government's initiatives, councils must continue to implement initiatives. The Government is trying to establish a partnership with local government, not only in the planning area, for which I am the responsible Minister, but in all areas, to deal particularly with issues that drive local communities nuts. I say to elected officials on councils across the State, "Please look at what you are doing and please look at engaging your community." Some councils are implementing initiatives and engaging their communities, but others are not.

During my 20 years in Parliament I have been frustrated by the amount of graffiti I have seen in the Warringah area. On a number of occasions I have put various proposals to my local council, one of which was that council engage service groups such as Rotary, Lions and Probus to adopt buildings on which graffiti often appears. Councils, by definition, have limited resources. The community should not have to wait for the council's limited maintenance staff to remove graffiti. When people see graffiti on a building on a Sunday morning done by yahoos the previous night, a member of the service group that has adopted the building can whip up to the building on the Sunday and whack on a coat of paint. Prompt removal of graffiti acts as a disincentive to others.

Councils should not get caught up in bureaucracy. Over the years I have been told that councils cannot use the services of community members because of occupational health and safety issues. Damn the occupational health and safety issues. I have yet to see anyone suffer an injury simply from painting one wall. It does hurt my back occasionally, but it would not affect most people because they are fitter than I am. These issues need to be considered. We must move forward collaboratively. This legislation is a good initiative, but councils and communities can do a great deal more. I congratulate the Attorney General and the Government on having the courage to introduce this legislation in the early stages of our new Government.

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Government Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [12.53 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit Government Business to be considered past 1.00 p.m. and up to 2.15 p.m.

The Government wants to conclude the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill today so that the bill can be sent to the upper House. Many members have wanted to speak on this legislation. I am sure Opposition members will support the motion because they support the legislation.

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

Motion agreed to.

GRAFFITI LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

[Business resumed.]

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.53 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which will amend the Children (Community Service Orders) Act, the Graffiti Control Act, the Young Offenders Act and the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act. I will not go through all the detail in the bill, as it has been well and truly canvassed by previous speakers. This issue has been raised many times in Parliament because graffiti is a bane of society. It is a problem that councils have to continually grapple with. In 2008 the then Minister for Local Government, Barbara Perry, answered a question from the member for Macquarie Fields, Dr Andrew McDonald, in relation to juvenile justice orders. The member for Macquarie Fields asked her a question about the removal of graffiti. The former Minister referred to statistics and said that more than 2,000 hours had been spent on clean-up programs. Subsequently in question No. 3219 I asked the former Minister how many young offenders were involved in the more than 2,000 hours clean-up work. The former Minister responded:

355 young people have participated in Community Service Order programs from 1 July 2007 to 4 June 2008.

Here was the sting in the tail, as there always was:

Not all of those young people were engaged in graffiti removal.

The department or the former Minister could not accurately assess how many of those 355 young people were actually involved in the removal of graffiti. Community service orders can be wide ranging and people can undertake various activities. In my opinion statistical information to support the claims of the former Minister seemed to be missing. I interjected at the time. The former Government wanted to be seen to be tough. It put out the spin but it could not substantiate its claims. Under this Attorney General things will change. This important legislation will assist in encouraging young people to not deface people's property. Graffiti costs the community an enormous amount of money. We do not have to go far outside this Parliament to see the damage that is continually caused by graffiti vandals. It is not art. I challenge anyone who says that defacing people's property is art.

There are ways and means to encourage art. I have seen wonderful street art on community walls and buildings that were specifically designed for that purpose. All members would encourage such initiatives. But the wanton destruction of people's property needs action. I am glad to see that in the first term of the O'Farrell Government the Attorney General has introduced legislation to provide magistrates with additional tools that will enable them to do their job properly and impose conditions on graffiti offenders. I also raise an issue about the 355 people who were caught for committing acts of graffiti vandalism.

Tens of thousands of acts of graffiti vandalism were reported to police and councils. I have the statistics, but time does not permit me to refer to them all. The Sydney basin alone recorded 150,000 incidents of graffiti, yet only 355 people were caught for 900 acts of vandalism. When we do the sums we can see that the former Government was not concentrating on catching these offenders. It would have to have been by their pure stupidity that the offenders got caught because one can see by the numbers that the former Government was not seriously focusing on bringing these graffiti vandals to task, having them penalised by the courts and made to clean up their acts of vandalism.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [1.00 p.m.], in reply: I thank the 52 members—I will not name them—who contributed to debate on the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill

2011. The fact that so many members spoke on the bill indicates the widespread problem of graffiti. Graffiti is in your face wherever you go and it provokes anger amongst the community probably more than any other offence. I wish to address some particular matters that have been raised in debate by members.

The shadow Attorney General raised a concern that in regional areas, where formal graffiti clean-up programs often do not exist, young offenders will not be able to be sentenced to a community service order. He suggested that magistrates may consider imposing a custodial sentence rather than dealing with the offender by way of caution or referral to a youth justice conference. In response to the shadow Attorney General, I note that when imposing a graffiti clean-up condition is not reasonably practicable magistrates also have the option of imposing a community service order without a graffiti clean-up condition so that the offender would simply be required to perform some other form of community service.

Magistrates will recognise the subjective circumstances of each offender. This Government trusts magistrates to exercise their discretion with skill and expertise when sentencing young offenders. The shadow Attorney General inquired as to whether the lack of availability of formal clean-up programs—for example, in regional areas—would be a factor in considering whether a graffiti clean-up order is reasonably practicable. The Government intends to leave it to the courts to determine whether it is "reasonably practicable" within the meaning of the legislation to require an offender to carry out graffiti clean-up work. This could include a physical incapacity to perform the work.

Obviously, if there was no graffiti left to clean up in the area where the offender lived, or if no supervision is available, a court may well reach the conclusion that it is not reasonably practicable for the offender to do such work. In making this decision the court will be guided by a report from Probation and Parole or from Juvenile Justice in the case of juvenile offenders, which can address the practicability of imposing a graffiti clean-up condition. Where it is not practicable for a graffiti clean-up condition to be imposed, Corrective Services and the Department of Attorney General and Justice will consider the systemic issues as to why not.

Members have expressed concerns regarding the possibility of secondary offending as a result of the introduction of driver licence orders. I am aware of general concerns regarding secondary offending where a person has had their licence suspended, has continued to drive and, as a result, has committed a further offence. This bill minimises the risk of secondary offending by ensuring that licence suspension is one of a number of penalty options that can be applied. By allowing the court to extend the period a person is subject to either a learner licence or a provisional licence or to reduce the number of demerit points that an unrestricted licence holder is allowed to accrue, the bill ensures that the risks of secondary offending are minimised. Drivers in those circumstances will still be allowed to drive, albeit under the restrictions applying to those types of licence.

Members have expressed concerns about the availability of diversionary schemes for young offenders. The Government is committed to reducing reoffending and keeping young offenders out of the criminal justice system. The bill still provides for cautions and diversion into a youth justice conference after a young offender has appeared in court. The purpose of the Government's proposal is to ensure that young offenders realise that graffiti damage is not a trivial matter and that it is a serious and costly offence. Requiring a young offender to appear before a court will ensure that the young person understand the gravity of what they have done.

The provisions in this bill will give effect to commitments that the Coalition made during the election campaign to target graffiti vandals. The bill strengthens the penalties available to courts when sentencing graffiti offenders, it provides courts with an increased range of sentencing options for graffiti offenders and it ensures that young offenders have to appear before a court when charged with graffiti offences. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Paul Lynch.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Schedule 1.1 to schedule 1.3 agreed to.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [1.06 p.m.]: I move:

That schedule 1.4 to schedule 1.6 be omitted.

For the reasons I gave during the agreement in principle debate I seek to amend the bill by excluding schedule 1.4 to schedule 1.6. I put my arguments earlier; I will not waste the time of the House by restating what I have already said.

Question—That the Opposition amendment be agreed to—put and resolved in the negative.

Opposition amendment negatived.

Schedule 1.4 to schedule 1.6 agreed to.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [1.07 p.m.], by leave: I move Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 6 in globo:

- No. 1 Page 3, schedule 1, line 1. Omit "**and Regulation**".
- No. 2 Page 11, schedule 1.7 [2], line 35. Insert "that is the second or subsequent graffiti offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the child concerned" after "offence".
- No. 3 Page 12, schedule 1.7 [3], line 6. Insert "that is the second or subsequent graffiti offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the child concerned" after "graffiti offence".
- No. 4 Page 12, schedule 1.7 [7], line 20. Insert "that is the second or subsequent graffiti offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the child concerned" after "graffiti offence".
- No. 5 Page 12, schedule 1.7 [8], line 22. Insert "that is the second or subsequent graffiti offence committed or alleged to have been committed by the child concerned" after "graffiti offence".
- No. 6 Page 12, schedule 1.7 [10], lines 26-28. Omit all words on those lines.

I spoke about these amendments during the agreement in principle debate and stated the reasons for my position.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [1.07 p.m.]: The amendments propose changing the current requirement in the bill that all young offenders charged with graffiti offences should appear before a court. The amendments would limit this requirement to offenders who have committed or are alleged to have committed a second or subsequent graffiti offence. The amendments would allow first-time young offenders to avoid going before a court and to get off with a caution or a warning from police.

The Coalition made an election commitment to ensure that juvenile graffiti offenders be brought before the court. This reinforces the seriousness of their offending behaviour and is aimed at reducing reoffending. The Opposition believes that causing offenders to be brought before a court will encourage juvenile offenders to be caught in the criminal justice system. This is clearly not the case as the court will still have available to it the full range of sentencing options, including issuing a caution.

The Government is committed to reducing reoffending and keeping young offenders out of the criminal justice system. The bill still provides for cautions and diversion into a youth justice conference after a young offender has appeared in court. The purpose of the Government's proposal is to ensure that young offenders realise that graffiti damage is not a trivial matter and that it is a serious and costly offence. Young people who are required to appear before a court will understand the gravity of what they have done. The Government does not support these amendments.

Question—That Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 6 be agreed to—put and resolved in the negative.

Opposition amendments Nos 1 to 6 negatived.

Schedule 1.7 agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Passing of the Bill

Motion by Mr Greg Smith agreed to:

That this bill be now passed.

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

[The Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.12 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER: I draw the attention of members to the presence in the public gallery today of Mrs Beatrice McDonald, mother of Andrew McDonald, the member for Macquarie Fields.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO THE SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, MR JOE ANDRADE

The SPEAKER: I wish to convey to the House a very special acknowledgment for a highly respected and well-loved member of the parliamentary staff who marks 30 years of service to this Parliament today—a fact that he chose to try to keep a secret from me. I refer of course to Mr Joe Andrade. He will be embarrassed and very angry that I am doing this. Joe began his career in Parliamentary Catering as a silver service waiter on 5 August 1981, moving to the Legislative Assembly as an attendant and then to his present position under Speakers Rizzoli, Murray, Aquilina, Torbay and Hancock. There is no doubt that Joe has seen many members and Speakers come and go and I am sure he would have some very interesting stories to tell. Indeed, I am sure that if he wrote a book upon his retirement it would be worth a lot of money. But of course he does not tell stories; he is a very loyal confidant.

I personally want to convey my gratitude today to Joe for his invaluable service to me since I took on this role earlier this year. I am sure that the member for Northern Tablelands will join me in thanking him for his outstanding service to the both of us and to the New South Wales Parliament for the past 30 years. I wish him many more years service in this position or in any other position that he chooses to take. I thank Joe also for his patience and tolerant assistance he has given to the Deputy Speaker and the Assistant Speakers who occupy this chair from time to time, whom I will be inviting, along with the member for Northern Tablelands, to a special evening engagement with Joe next week. Thank you very much Joe.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that today I will answer questions asked of the Treasurer, who is absent today attending a funeral. The Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women will answer questions asked of the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, who is also absent today. I remind the House that the Minister for Health is attending a ministerial council and that I will answer questions on her behalf.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SCHOOL ETHICS CLASSES

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. In light of revelations by Reverend Fred Nile today that you told him privately that you shared his desire to repeal the ethics classes legislation, has your Government agreed to a review of ethics classes in 2012?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I listened to some of debate that took place in the upper House today and I heard a speech delivered by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. I do remember having a conversation with Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile that reflected the very public concern that I expressed last year about the potential conflict between ethics classes and special religious education classes. That has been my sole concern throughout this

whole debate. Our situation is clear: We oppose the legislation. The Deputy Leader of the National Party, and Minister for Education announced well before the election campaign that we would retain ethics classes. That is our position and that remains our position.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that interjections are disorderly at all times.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Most of those who have gone through the Trades Hall down at Sussex Street—like that long gone but not forlornly forgotten member of The Greens from the upper House, Lee Rhiannon—are old communists. They are old Reds. The interjection of the Leader of the Opposition shows his fundamental antidemocratic approach to parliamentary democracy.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Even the *Sydney Morning Herald* got this point correct on Saturday. It was a beacon within that story, and that is that Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile was going to introduce his bill, that we were going to consider that bill, and that our election commitment stood. That is where it stands. We are not in the business of running this Westminster-style Parliament, the oldest Parliament in the nation, like a Cuban dictatorship or the second Soviet of the Southern Hemisphere.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: No matter the practices of the member for Liverpool, we are not turning this into a communist regime. We have just rescued the State from a dictatorship of disaster organised by Labor and we intend to operate the Parliament in Westminster tradition. If members want to talk about ethics, I am well reminded by the Deputy Leader of The Nationals that last year in this place we were told by the former Minister for Education that only 15 objections had been received in relation to the ethics trial, which took place over 10 months in 10 schools. But what was the case when half of those submissions, 377, were put up on the website? The number of objections was threefold.

Ms Linda Burney: What is the point?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The point is, Linda, that if the Minister for Education tells lies to the Parliament, what sort of ethics does the Labor Party have? Whilst on the issue of ethics let me refer to my friends The Greens. I heard a remarkable statement by Dr John Kaye, known by his nickname "purely evil", over the past few days that nobody had voted for Fred Nile. Excuse me, but Fred Nile was democratically elected by the people of New South Wales eight years ago, as was his running mate Paul Green at the last election. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and the Christian Democrats are entitled to their views.

In fact, the Hon. Paul Green received more votes than the four Independents, including The Greens, sitting in this Chamber combined. He even outpolled Richard Torbay in Northern Tablelands, who apparently enjoyed a swing. Despite that, according to Dr John Kaye the Christian Democrats are not entitled to their view. Well, here is my view. We went to the election campaign with a commitment to retain ethics classes. We received, I think, a majority at that election. I think we received a reasonable majority—2.1 million people supported us—and we are determined to stand behind our election commitments. And we will.

EYEWATCH PROJECT

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: My question is directed to the Premier. What action has the Government taken to honour its election commitment to bring Neighbourhood Watch into the twenty-first century?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for his ongoing interest in community safety. Sadly, under those opposite Neighbourhood Watch was simply allowed to almost wither on the vine. A great concept put together by Pat Daly, a former police officer who currently works for the Salvation Army, of watching out for your neighbour and of helping to prevent theft and house break-ins in your suburb was allowed to run down and almost disappear in communities across the State. I am pleased to tell the member for Riverstone that the New South Wales Government has honoured its commitment not just to revive Neighbourhood Watch but also to bring it into the twenty-first century.

This morning I was pleased to be joined by the Minister for Police, the Commissioner of Police and others to launch eyewatch—for the benefit of the member for Canterbury that is spelled E-y-e watch—a digital extension of the Neighbourhood Watch program. It will be piloted across 10 local government areas: Tweed-Byron, Sutherland, Newcastle, Parramatta, Griffith, Orana, Campbelltown, the Barrier, Cabramatta, and Quakers Hill in the electorate of the member for Riverstone, where a highly successful group is already up and running.

Eyewatch will give residents the opportunity to participate with their local police in active crime prevention using the social network site Facebook. It is about bringing Neighbourhood Watch into the digital world. I will explain that to the member for Mount Druitt later. This reinvigorated concept of Neighbourhood Watch is about re-engaging the community in active crime prevention. We want local communities to be at the forefront of not just reporting crimes but of active crime prevention across their communities. Local residents have a wealth of knowledge about their streets and what is happening in those streets and around their homes and residences. Eyewatch will enable police to access that knowledge in real time in a way that is convenient to residents.

This morning I met Paul Hutchison. On 11 June his mother's home was burgled and he set up a Facebook site to alert other residents in the suburb about the break-in. Overnight he had a phenomenal response. He said that when he woke up the next day he was astounded at the number of people who had logged on to the Facebook site. He is now a key member of the Quakers Hill eyewatch program. Even this morning after the announcement there was an overwhelming response with posts on the eyewatch group, including one from Daryl—not the member for Wagga but someone who lives at Quakers Hill—who said, "Thank you for your support and also the NSW Police support for helping set up Neighbourhood Watch in Riverstone."

Debby posted, "How exciting is this! To think that our community and the Police Service have started something so innovative and worthwhile is fantastic." Then there was Sue, who posted, "This group is not only keeping us informed it's teaching our children and changing our futures—thank you." Through this initiative, put together by police at the direction of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, who, in opposition, was a strong advocate for revamping Neighbourhood Watch, and using all that modern technology that has been created and evolved since Neighbourhood Watch was first put in place we have a scheme to assist police in their intelligence gathering exercise and to assist communities as they seek to drive down crime.

The concept will also enable the development not just of a rural eyewatch but also of a business eyewatch, which will allow shopkeepers to share intelligence, whether about dud cheques or fake \$50 or \$100 bills being passed in shopping centres, all the way through to bag snatchers. We have had examples of fraudsters who start at one end of a shopping centre and work their way through to the other end before the first shopkeeper has become alert. Eyewatch is about trying to alert police to those instances to try to prevent them happening. By local residents and police working together and building intelligence, eyewatch can help to reduce crime. It gives police an extra weapon in their armoury.

Eyewatch does not replace triple-000, the police assistance line or Crimestoppers. It adds to those features. It enables people to take part in meetings or discussions without being in the school hall where the meeting might be taking place—whether they are on a train trying to get home from work or whether they are simply stuck at work. For too many people across our communities, given the busy lives they lead, it is hard to get to Neighbourhood Watch meetings. This digital form of eyewatch will enable them to be there digitally, keep informed of what is happening in their community and contribute to keeping crime down. I place on record my thanks to the Minister and to Deputy Commissioner Owens and Superintendent Smith for their hard and speedy work in delivering this important improvement to crime prevention across the State.

KINGS CROSS INJECTING ROOM

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee the continued operation of the Sydney medically supervised injecting centre during his term in government?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We have no plans to close the medically supervised injecting centre, but what I have said repeatedly, and what even a great reporter at the *Sydney Morning Herald*, David Marr, understands, is that if that legislation ever comes into this place or the other place it will be subject to a conscience vote. The answer is I do not have a plan. Do I know if anyone else has a plan? No.

Mr John Robertson: What about Fred? Fred has one.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Thank you for the interjection. Has Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile raised the issue with me? No. I am sorry to disappoint the member for Macquarie Fields. His face certainly fell when he got that response. But the face that was looking particularly upbeat on Tuesday night was the face of the member for Toongabbie, former 41 over there. Former 41 was in the sort of form that we have never seen before. He was entertaining journalists in the staff bar. Three-quarters of the press gallery were there and he was working hard. I am sure it is only coincidence that the next day I heard that the Leader of the Opposition had been rolled on the pre-commitment order.

Mr Nathan Rees: Point of order: For the edification of the leader, I absented myself from the Cabinet discussion on that matter because I am a patron of a club.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: And how best to avoid any responsibility for the leak. I hear the leak was from the Leader of the Opposition, but I will come back to that on another occasion. We are delighted to see this revitalisation of the member for Toongabbie, the creation of a member for Toongabbie with a pleasant personality for the first time since he has been in this place, someone who is a joy to share a lift with for the amount of information he is prepared to share, far happier and far friendlier than the member for Canterbury, for instance. He clearly has a goal but I remind him that no matter how many opportunities he takes to befriend the gallery, whether it be the *Sydney Morning Herald* or the other end of the gallery, the fact is they do not get a vote. So, keep working on the member for Keira, keep working on the member for Wollongong, keep working on the member for Mt Druitt. He has one; he has only 10 more to go before he has a majority.

Mr Nathan Rees: How is Manly going?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Tigers beat them comprehensively last time around as I am sure they will beat St George this evening. The most remarkable transformation in the member for Toongabbie was what one of my staff spied on the street, which was that he approached in a good-humoured way, in a friendly way, that former general secretary, that former senator, that former Federal Minister, Graham Richardson.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about the medically supervised injecting centre. The Premier has not returned to that for some minutes. I ask that you get him to return to the leave of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered that question. If the member would like him to embellish his answer I will ask him to return to it.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I was obviously too indirectly trying to work out what has caused the change of personality in the member for Toongabbie. This is not the member we knew in the previous Parliament. It is a much happier version. He is sitting there smiling. I have answered the member for Macquarie Fields' question. I do not know who gave him that question but it was another dud and we have seen too many duds from that side this week.

PUBLIC SERVICE VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCIES

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN: My question is directed to the Premier. What response has the Government had to its incentive offer to excess public servants to take voluntary redundancy?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This is yet another of the areas where Labor over 16 years simply refused to take the tough but necessary decisions to protect the interests of the State and to protect taxpayer dollars. We need dollars on the front line. We need dollars to invest in infrastructure. We need dollars to improve services, particularly to the most vulnerable in our community. But Labor allowed public servants to remain on the payroll for more than five years without a permanent job.

Ms Noreen Hay: You lied to them, Barry.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Every six months for four years I did a press conference about Labor's policy of no forced redundancies. Every six months for four years I put out the story that it would end under a

Liberal-Nationals Government, and we are delivering on that promise. Those opposite could not make the tough decisions. They preferred to allow the taxpayer to foot the bill for public servants who did not have permanent jobs. We moved quickly to end this rot. Members will recall that the Government agreed to make a one-off payment of \$10,000 for existing excess employees to accept a fresh voluntary redundancy offer, to encourage them to either find a job or to exit the public service immediately.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Blacktown, regardless of which job he has opposite, will be here until the next election, so he has a four-year tenure. We are not going to put up with people who do not have jobs—or in the case of those opposite not doing a job—and living on the public purse.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am pleased to advise that of the 365 employees who received the incentive offer, 223 accepted it and have left the public service. That is 223 excess employees who are no longer being paid by taxpayers despite not having a permanent job. Seventy-seven of the employees who took voluntary redundancy have not had a permanent role in the public service for more than two years. A further 54 who were made the offer have taken up permanent positions or have begun a trial for a permanent position. In other words, they are being gainfully employed and have real jobs and finally a real role to play in the State's public service.

Eighty-eight of those who received the incentive offer declined to take it. Their position is clear. They will receive a new reduced voluntary redundancy offer without the \$10,000 incentive payment. They must either find a permanent role or accept the offer and leave the public service within three months or face forced redundancies. That is exactly what the Government of Tasmania has, the Government of Queensland has and the Government of South Australia has. The last time I checked they were Labor governments. So the Leader of the Opposition supports the policy, thank you. I accept the acknowledgement of the Leader of the Opposition that he now supports, having not done so in 16 years in government, a forced redundancy policy supported by three Labor governments around this country.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The suggestion was that some of those without a permanent position have been doing productive work. I accept that. But it is our view that they should have a permanent role rather than drift between roles over many years. These new arrangements are designed to do that. The period for retaining excess public servants will be reduced from 12 months to three months so that we never again have a build-up of people without permanent roles. Our changes will save the State at least \$16 million a year. We would prefer to invest that in improving services rather than simply paying people who do not have permanent roles.

That money could and should have been available over the past 16 years to improve services across this State except those opposite were not prepared to stand up to their union mates, their masters who run the Labor Party, and say it is simply unacceptable. They refused to do what Labor governments in other States have done and say, "Enough is enough." Let us look after taxpayers. Let us put every extra dollar we can into front-line services, investing in infrastructure and in providing services to the most vulnerable across our communities. It is another commitment we have delivered as we continue to deliver in our efforts to clean up this State.

DAYS AND HOURS OF SITTING

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Premier. In light of his recent warnings of a horror upcoming budget, how much has his decision to extend parliamentary sitting days cost the taxpayers of New South Wales, only to have members of the Legislative Council sitting in their offices without legislation to debate?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He obviously wears asbestos underwear: imagine any member on that side asking a question about Parliament being shut down? How much did the shutdown of Parliament last November cost the State's taxpayers as the Government did a down and dirty deal to flog the State's electricity assets for a song? There are tensions between the member for Maroubra and the Leader of the Opposition that I hear, frankly, are well-founded. This question is worse than that provided for the member for Macquarie Fields.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lismore and the member for Auburn will direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Obviously, it was an attempt to show that the member for Maroubra is not cut out to be the Leader of the Opposition, as he so desperately wants to be. This could almost be an attempt to get the member for Toongabbie back into the top job. Maybe that accounts for his good humour. I cannot understand that when the Parliament rose five weeks ago we had complaints from those opposite that we were working too hard. We had complaints from Labor members in the upper House that life was just too tough.

Mr Robert Furolo: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. While fairytales may pass for answers in this House these days, the Premier needs to answer the question. The answer bears no relation to the question about the costs to the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have been listening to the Premier's answer, which has been relevant. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thought I was making the case. The member for Lakemba is too busy thinking about the next flash car he may take for a drive or discussing defensive policing with the member for Kogarah. I was arguing that before the winter break those opposite, particularly those located in that other place, were complaining that we were simply working them too hard.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Yesterday the Legislative Council had a 15-minute break and one would think that productivity had ceased. As I said on radio this morning, I suspect the upper House could disappear for a year and productivity would not be affected.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am sorry the former Speaker Mr Aquilina is not here because in the time he was Leader of the House I would like to know how much those late-night sittings that were put on time and again—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Again I remind the Premier that the graffiti bill has been in for 66 days—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Canterbury for her point of order because I remind her about the disgraceful display by Labor and The Greens members in the other place when they spoke for hour after hour irrespective of the impact on the staff of the Parliament.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I ask the member for Marrickville and the member for Macquarie Fields, given their support for the Parliament, where were they to close their debates this morning? They were missing in action. Neither of them closed his or her debate. That is why I say to the member for Maroubra that he has been poorly used by his leader. He has been sacrificed so that his career is further damaged, if that is possible. We will continue to work the Parliament heavy.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra having been called to order three times, I ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him from the House.

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

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is Education Week being celebrated in public schools across New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Smithfield for his question and his interest in public education. I recall prior to the election when he was the candidate for Smithfield, that Liberal heartland of Smithfield-Fairfield, visiting a number of schools with him. He showed his obvious interest in the future of public education in New South Wales. It is a pleasure to be asked a question by the member for Smithfield. It has been a terrific week for public education. As I said yesterday, I hope everybody in this Parliament has had the opportunity to participate at an Education Week event at one of their schools.

Mr Richard Amery: On Monday.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes. Unfortunately, Richard, you have to be here when Parliament is sitting. So, it would have had to have been Monday, particularly if one does not live in Sydney. A number of spectacular events have been held, commencing with the SimuLaunch on Monday at Central railway station. All members of Parliament have attended many school events and performances by students, but the Flash mob I saw on Monday at Central station perhaps was the most incredible by students. It started with about half a dozen students dancing, who were then joined by 30 more students from the crowd and then another 50 until in the end about 300 students were dancing in unison. Perhaps most incredible was that six or seven students had choreographed the performance, put it on YouTube and all of the other schools involved, about a dozen, watched it and learnt the steps.

Then they practised it together only once and then performed it on Monday. It was incredible. The energy, power and talent in that group of people was fantastic. It was an absolutely fantastic showcase of the great things that happen in our public schools. The dance also was simulcast and performed by over 4,000 students across New South Wales using video technology. It was incredible. We heard from Melanie from Inverell High School in the Northern Tablelands electorate who wrote and performed a song, which became the song for Public Education Week. On the same day the song was performed by other students from another dozen schools. Last night I was at an event with the member for Drummoyne and the member for Strathfield when that song was performed by another student from one of our great public schools.

On Wednesday I was at an event showcasing the IT skills of students in our public schools. Students were given a video camera, and essentially took part in a competition in which they were asked to prepare a short video about how wonderful their schools are. We saw about a dozen of those videos. Perhaps the most compelling was the Pocket Public School, in the electorate of Ballina. This is a little school on the North Coast filled with incredible young students. It was fabulous to see their enthusiasm and joy so evident in the video. It was absolutely fantastic.

Today I had the pleasure of going to a gathering at Banksmeadow Public School, hosted by the principal, Kathy Lucantonio, to launch "Schools A - Z", which is available as an app or as a website. There will be an android version coming out soon, and that will be a resource for parents. We know that the greatest contribution to students' performance is the support they get from their parents. Schools A - Z is a resource for parents to enable them to deal with the nightmare scenario where the student comes home and asks, "What is an acute angle?" If you cannot quite remember what it was from when you were at school, you are able to go to this resource, which assists on matters to do with maths and English, for example.

If the student comes home and says, "I need to do an assignment on Antarctica," there are hints about how a parent might advise their children how to start an assignment about Antarctica, or World War I, or the causes of World War II. This is a fantastic resource for parents. It includes hints for recipes for your child's lunch box. I would recommend this resource to anybody. We saw the winner of Australia's Got Talent—another great student from our public high schools here in New South Wales. I conclude by saying that we have had the great fortune in New South Wales to appoint a fantastic director general, Michelle Bruniges. She will take up the position later this month in New South Wales. She is currently working for the Commonwealth. Michelle is a great product of our public education system, and I cannot wait for her to start here in New South Wales. *[Time expired.]*

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Mr RICHARD AMERY: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister guarantee that the majority of trains on the North West Rail Link will carry passengers directly into the Sydney central business district without having to change trains?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I love getting questions on the North West Rail Link because it gives me the opportunity to talk about what Labor failed to do in its 16 years in office. I know the member for Mount Druitt has been around since about 1988 and so would have been here in 1998, when Labor first announced the North West Rail Link. Guess when it was supposed to be finished? It was supposed to be finished by last year. The member would not have had to ask this question if Labor had done what it said it would do; the rail line would have been built. Then in 2005 they delayed it again and said: No, it will be finished by 2017. But in February 2008 they axed the project altogether. In October 2010 they re-announced that they had put in a submission to Infrastructure Australia, but then axed it again. What I am saying is that members on the Opposition side of the House have no credibility when it comes to the North West Rail Link. Now that they have seen what we have done in government they want to get on the train.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: They know the train is coming, and they want to get on board. Labor failed to address this issue for 16 long years. Now that they see what we have done in just three months, they want to get on board the train. I am happy to tell the House what we have done since we were elected to office. On 6 April we announced our strategies—

Mr John Robertson: We've heard all this. Just answer the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Well, you haven't listened hard enough.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: When the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Transport, he did nothing about this.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is on three calls to order, and is close to being the second member ejected today.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to tell the House that on 6 April we announced fast-tracking of the North West Rail Link. We established a project team to fast-track this project. On 13 May we released a series of tenders in relation to the project. In fact, we have announced about 15 tenders since we were elected to government, that is, in the past three months. We have announced and actually established the community information centre. I am pleased to advise the House that more than 700 people have visited the centre, to demonstrate exactly what we have done. This is where the Opposition really needs to listen, because we have issued tenders in relation to geotechnical services.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. An Opposition member asked the question, and they should listen to the answer.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: We have also issued tenders in relation to integrated transport and land-use services, which relates directly to the question.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 129. So they will be changing trains? Is that what the Minister is saying?

The SPEAKER: Order! Standing Order 129 refers to relevance, and the Minister's response is relevant.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Not only is the member's question embarrassing, but so also was that interjection. It demonstrates how little they understand.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It demonstrates how little they understand about public transport infrastructure.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It also explains—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It also explains—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In the past 16 years how many rail lines did they promise? They promised 12 rail lines. And how many did they complete? None. In 16 years they promised 12 rail lines, and now they have the hide to get up and ask a question about integrating services on a rail line. In 16 years they did not build a single rail line.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In fact, seven of those 12 rail lines were promised for western Sydney, and not one was delivered. That explains why the Coalition has so many members representing western Sydney. Labor let them down on public transport. The member for Mount Druitt should know better, because I have received a lot of letters from him, and from many others on that side of the House, about rail services that Labor slashed. In fact, it slashed 416 daily rail services. Yet members opposite have the hide to get up in this place—

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: My point is under Standing Order 130. The Minister should not debate the question asked. She should answer the question. Could the Minister please answer the question? At what stations will commuters have to get off?

The SPEAKER: Order! I have no powers to direct the Minister how to answer the question, or indeed to answer the question; only that the response be relevant, and the Minister's answer has been relevant. That is as far as my powers extend. The Minister has the call.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: To highlight the member's embarrassing point of order, I can say that passengers can choose to get off at whatever station they please. Rather than go around and around the network, they can choose to get off at whatever station they want. [*Time expired.*]

DISABILITY SERVICES FUNDING

Mr MARK COURE: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. How is the Government improving funding arrangements for people with a disability?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Oatley for his question. I note that he was one of 62 people who attended a workshop recently held at Kogarah to discuss the person-centred approach. The O'Farrell Government is determined, as I have said previously in this place, to ensure that people with disabilities are part of the decision-making when it comes to their own lives. As part of our short- and medium-term reform agenda, particularly in the community care space, we are determined to ensure that early intervention and prevention programs are properly funded, to ensure that we devolve decision-making back to communities and individuals, and to work with the non-government sector to make sure people have as many opportunities and options as possible available to them and to ensure that they take personal responsibility for their decisions.

Through the winter break the O'Farrell Government embarked on consultation around the person-centred approach. I am pleased to report to the House that a summit was held at Acer Arena, and that it was attended by almost 500 people from across the disability sector, to discuss what the person-centred approach means for them and their lives. It is important to reflect on some of the outcomes of that summit, given the importance of the process on which we embarking. Some of the things that people said matter most to them included the fact that they were having a real say in the planning of services and supports, that they were having their views respected. They wanted to exercise greater choice and control over the services and supports that they require.

They wanted to have their views respected. They wanted to exercise greater choice and control over the services and supports they required. They wanted to control their personal budget and they wanted the ability to access services and supports in a flexible way that suited their lifestyle. When I reflect on some of the individual outcomes that came through this process, the people with disability made clear that they wanted to have a life full of possibilities. They wanted to achieve their potential and they wanted to live the life that they chose. They wanted to have control and freedom of choice, they wanted to be respected and treated with dignity, and they wanted to be a valued member of the community.

The O'Farrell Government is determined to ensure that individuals are supported to achieve their full potential and to participate in their community and the economy. Some of the feedback directly from individuals who attended the summit was humbling. Having attended the two-day summit in its entirety, I can bear witness to the goodwill, passion and commitment that people have for moving to the individualised funding model. Ann O'Brien, carer of 24-year-old Jonathan who has autism, thought the summit was brilliant. She said:

It was informative. Everyone was so professional and thoughtful. As a carer I don't get much of a break but at the summit I was made to feel like I mattered. The opportunity to have a say at the summit was terrific. It felt like the Government was actually trying to set up a workable system that will help us.

Nicholas Gleeson from Vision Australia said the information sharing was beneficial and that establishing a strong relationship between government agencies, service providers and individuals would facilitate the person-centred approach and enable people to achieve their goals and dreams. Over the next couple of months we will hold 100 workshops around the State. I urge all members of Parliament to attend those consultations, if possible. The workshops held so far have been well attended. The workshop at Campbelltown held a few nights ago had 56 people in attendance; the workshop at Fairfield held this morning, which I attended, had 46 in attendance; and 64 people attended the Kogarah workshop.

I state clearly that it is not up to government, the community, advocates or service providers to dictate to people with disability the services they can have, by whom they will be delivered and when they will be delivered. This Government is determined to ensure that people with disability are at the centre of decision-making in relation to their services. That is why we are moving to the person-centred approach. That is why we are determined to be the leading State in the provision of self-directed support, and to do so by July 2014. We will ensure that the State is ready for a national disability scheme, which should be implemented by the Commonwealth as soon as possible.

ELIZABETH BAY MARINA

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Will the Minister confirm that the City of Sydney or the Central Sydney Planning Committee will be the development application consent authority for any expansion of the Elizabeth Bay Marina? Will the Minister inform the House what plans and proposals have been shown to Planning NSW in the past 18 months?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Government appreciates that the member for Sydney in her capacity as Lord Mayor of Sydney would be interested to clarify the ongoing role of the city in determining the future of the Elizabeth Bay Marina. As the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in the O'Farrell Government, I have been conveying the message to local government across the State, as have all the Coalition members in this place, that the State Liberal-Nationals Government wants to work closely and more openly in a true partnership with local government. That comes into stark focus in Sydney. Sydney is the gateway to New South Wales, indeed to Australia. When Sydney is doing well it has a positive effect on regional New South Wales and on the other States.

It is critical in that partnership that there is a sense of trust. That is certainly not the legacy left by the former Labor Government. Whether it is the biggest development in town, Barangaroo, or some of the more modest developments, that partnership with the City of Sydney, that transparency and openness, is important to the State Government. In relation to the Elizabeth Bay Marina, a couple of intervening factors destroyed any reliance on the existence of openness or transparency under the former Labor Government. Media reports of 21 May 2011 confirmed that the first intervening factor was the involvement of that Labor dealmaker, that person of great trust. Who was it?

Mr John Sidoti: Eddie Obeid.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Eddie Obeid.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Fast Eddie.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It was not only Fast Eddie. Another person was also involved, who in the past few weeks has regularly been doing the grand walk down to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Who is that former member? It is Tony Kelly. In summary, some very interesting players were involved in this process. They seemed to have an agenda. As the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, I have had the opportunity to look through the documents. I have looked into the darkness of what has gone before under a Labor Government and I have seen how it works. The Elizabeth Bay Marina was co-owned by Mr Fitzhenry and Michael Dalah, who now probably considers himself unlucky to have been a long-time neighbour of Eddie Obeid's son Moses. The development they wanted to proceed with represented a massive increase in the size of Elizabeth Bay Marina—effectively four times its current size.

Looking back, I am sure that Mr Fitzhenry would not see it as fortuitous but Tony Kelly, the man who cannot get dates right on letters, also cannot remember meetings that he had. Mr Fitzhenry cites the fact that he well remembers taking a phone call from Eddie Obeid and Eddie Obeid just happened to hand the phone immediately to Tony Kelly. Tony Kelly said to Mr Fitzhenry basically, "What do you want, mate?" He effectively wanted to know how many berths they needed and how much they needed to grow the marina. It then became a question of dealing with the formalities. A letter dated 22 February 2010 requested that the development be referred as a part 3A development. In other words, slip it past the City of Sydney. That letter was signed by Tony Kelly. One can only imagine what they were doing behind the scenes to try to make sure it became a part 3A development.

On 1 July they were told that could not be done. All was quiet until three weeks before the election. Suddenly another letter was written, this time asking for the development to go to the joint regional planning panel. They did anything they could to keep it away from democracy and the City of Sydney. That was Labor's style. I say to the member for Sydney that the Coalition Government takes the view that the law is that the development application go to the City of Sydney. I ask the City of Sydney to deal with the application in an open and transparent way, as it does with all developments. The new State Government will work with the City of Sydney to make sure that the outcomes are achieved in an open, transparent and democratic way. We can forget about the dark days of Labor. We are now in the light of a Coalition Government.

CARBON TAX

POKER MACHINE REFORM

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier outline the New South Wales Government's relationship with the Federal Government?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Clarence for his very good question. Like all relationships, this Government's relationship with the Federal Government has its ups and downs. One thing remains constant—that is, this Government will always put the interests of New South Wales first in its dealings with Canberra. When it came to the national health reform agreement, we were happy to work with the Gillard Labor Government to reach an agreement that sees our State \$3 billion better off than the deal that those opposite were happy to sign up to. When it comes to policies that are clearly not in the interests of this State, such as the disastrous carbon tax and the job-killing mandatory precommitment policy, we will oppose the Federal Government every step of the way.

It is clear that the carbon tax, in particular, is a job killer that is forecast to cost this State more than 30,000 jobs. The Liberal-Nationals Government in New South Wales has been absolutely crystal clear about its position on the carbon tax and this precommitment policy, unlike the Leader of the Opposition. Although he has been out banging his drum trying to scare hardworking public servants about a wages policy that is basically identical to the one his former Government had in place, he has been struck dumb when it comes to a couple of Federal Labor policies that will cost literally thousands of jobs in this State.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The last timid little peep we heard from the member for Blacktown was on 3 April, when he said he would wait for more information before taking a position in relation to the carbon tax. That fence must be well and truly cutting into the old backside because it has been 124 days since 3 April and he still has no position. The Leader of the Opposition is stuck on the fence. One might have thought that over the

winter recess the Leader of the Opposition would have been out there trying to get this further information about the carbon tax. But it appears not. The Leader of the Opposition went AWOL and all that happened was old 41 grabbed the opportunity with both hands—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Former 41.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Former 41, as the Premier says, grabbed the opportunity to raise his profile. In relation to the other job killer proposed by his Federal Labor mates—the mandatory precommitment for poker machines—it is another leadership rival who has been making clear his position around town, telling everyone who will listen that he rolled his leader in shadow Cabinet.

[Interruption]

I hear the member for Keira interjecting to ask, "Which rival?" He must be in the left right out faction because everybody else knows it was the missing Machiavellian member for Maroubra. It is no wonder the member for Blacktown is getting frustrated—listen to him carping away over there, whingeing—after a week of questions based on speculative media pieces on everything from ethics to guns to wages, jail, council amalgamations, and even uranium. There he was yesterday yelling at his staff, "There is no point asking these questions"—and this is from the champion of the workers. Tut, tut. It is no wonder the vultures are circling. The Leader of the Opposition needs to understand that it is time he actually led. He should take a lead from the member for Heffron and grow some. I am not talking about hair; I am talking about spine. My advice to the Leader of the Opposition is to get off the fence and take a position on the big issues that are worrying the hardworking families of this State—the carbon tax and the poker machine legislation.

ELIZABETH BAY MARINA

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Further to the answer I just gave to a question from the member for Sydney, I am sure that my colleagues on the other side of the House will be delighted to have this correspondence out in the open—

Mr Richard Amery: I knew you would get to the point sometime.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: You haven't got to any point in the last 25 years. I seek leave to table a letter from the Hon. Tony Kelly, MLC, Minister for Planning, to Mr David Furlong, Director, Plan Urban Services Pty Ltd, regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Elizabeth Bay Marina, undated, and a letter from the Hon. Tony Kelly, MLC, Minister for Planning, to Dr John Roseth, Chair, Sydney East Regional Panel, regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Elizabeth Bay Marina, dated 2 March.

Leave granted.

Documents tabled.

If any members would like further access to any other document that the department holds I will have it made available.

Question time concluded at 3.13 p.m.

AUSTRALIAN SPORTING CHAMPIONS

Ministerial Statement

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY (Miranda—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.14 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I address the House today to publicly acknowledge and congratulate a number of sporting champions who have done us proud on the international stage recently. Two weeks ago Cadel Evans, who spent his early years on the New South Wales North Coast, cycled his way into sporting immortality when he became the first Australian to win the Tour de France. Regarded as the most prestigious of cycling's three Grand Tours, the Tour de France attracts riders and teams from around the globe. This year competitors were asked to cycle 3,430 kilometres in search of the winner's yellow jersey. I dare say Cadel's inspiring performance to win the great race captured the imagination of all Australians, not just cyclists, because for every single kilometre of the

epic race—particularly in the last few days as the finish line loomed—people were glued to their television sets. Cadel's success will do wonders for the sport of cycling, with people of all ages set to don helmets and start pedalling in search of their dreams, or simply just for enjoyment or to improve their health or fitness.

Moving from the sport of round wheels to the sport of the round ball, the performances of the Matildas in the FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany were outstanding. The Matildas have now broken into the top 10 in the world for the first time, and as the reigning Asian Cup champions their collective star is on the rise. I should add that the continued success of the Matildas is in no small way attributable to the outstanding efforts and contribution of the New South Wales Institute of Sport. In the Matildas 2011 World Cup squad no less than nine members are products of the institute.

I make special mention of Caitlin Foord and Teigen Allen, who are aged just 16 and 17 respectively. They are the future of women's football and role models for thousands of young women who play football across New South Wales. It would be remiss of me not to mention the sensational strike of Ellyse Perry in scoring from outside the box in the semifinal against Sweden. It was simply incredible and one of the best goals one will ever see in any form of the game. The Matildas' next challenge is the road to the 2012 London Olympic Games, and I am sure that every member joins me in wishing them well.

Another team with outstanding success recently, the Australian Diamonds, sparkled in beating arch rivals New Zealand 58-57 in extra time to win the world netball title in Singapore. The victorious squad included Chelsea Pittman and Erin Bell, both originally New South Wales juniors, as well as other New South Wales stars Kimberly Green, Monier Gerard and Diamonds' vice-captain and New South Wales Swifts captain Catherine Cox. All played their part in avenging last year's double overtime loss to the New Zealand Silver Ferns in the gold medal game at the Delhi Commonwealth Games.

A week ago today a young man affectionately dubbed "Billy the Kid" stepped into the ring at the Olympic Park Sports Centre in Homebush to the applause of a very parochial New South Wales crowd. Twelve rounds later he stepped from the ring as the new International Boxing Federation featherweight boxing champion. Billy was born at Kogarah Hospital in Sydney and has suffered from chronic asthma since birth. Sport is often looked upon as the best medicine for early childhood health issues and in Billy's case he chose boxing to try to overcome his condition. Billy's first professional fight was in 2004 when he was just 18 years old. Billy won, and went on to win his next 20 bouts. He joins a long list of Australian boxers who have captured International Boxing Federation world titles, including Daniel Geale, Jeff Fenech and Kostya Tszyu.

From the ring to the pool, James Magnussen created a wave of headlines when he became the first Australian man to win swimming's glamour event, the 100 metres freestyle, at the world championships in Shanghai last week. The Port Macquarie swimmer clocked 47.63 seconds to win the final, which followed his effort four days earlier when he swam the fastest 100 metres freestyle time in history—without the aid of a super suit—of 47.49 seconds. I am very proud to say that James trains with the Sydney Olympic Park Aquatic Centre swim club under Brant Best.

I have highlighted a number of well-publicised sporting achievements thus far but I also briefly mention the success of a group of youngsters who unfortunately have not yet received the accolades they deserve. In July this year 22 children from New South Wales aged 10 and 11 went to Spain to compete in the Donosti Cup—an internationally recognised football tournament for the stars of tomorrow. I am proud to announce that the under-10s won the grand final. During the presentation they spontaneously started chanting "New South Wales" while holding the Australian flag. All three teams made the quarter finals, highlighting the potential of our sporting youth and the fact that they can compete at an international level.

I was also advised by some proud parents that the Aussie spirit won over the Spanish team. The Spanish crowds were cheering and supporting our under-10s at the grand final. I congratulate all the people I have mentioned on their respective sporting achievements, representing New South Wales and Australia. They all have a rare gift, courtesy of sport. Sport gives a similar rare gift through its ability to bring together people from all walks of life for the betterment of communities throughout this great State and our wonderful country.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.20 p.m.]: I join the Minister for Sport and Recreation in congratulating the individuals and teams who have recently achieved some remarkable results on the world stage. First, Cadel Evans's historic Tour de France victory is up there with our country's all-time greatest sporting achievements. Thousands of Australians who endured weeks of late nights were rewarded with an inspirational performance, culminating with his thrilling time trial performance in Grenoble. Evans did not win

the Tour de France because he was lucky. He was not blessed with a field of weak competitors. He won the tour because he conquered each challenge that he faced, and by riding the best he ever has in his career. Unlike in past years when the complexities of injuries, accidents and team politics diverted his attention from the main prize, Evans' steely determination set him apart from the rest.

The climax of the tour was the time trial in Grenoble. Needing to haul in 57 seconds on his main competitor, Andy Schleck, Evans obliterated his rival to win by 1 minute 34 seconds. Evans has become the first Australian to win the Tour de France, after 98 tours in its 108-year history. Not long ago the possibility of an Australian winning this event seemed impossible. As we look towards 2012 and the inclusion of Australia's first ever Tour de France team, GreenEDGE, in the peloton, it seems that Evans' victory will certainly encourage thousands of young Australian to take up the sport.

I also congratulate the Matildas on their efforts at the recent FIFA Women's World Cup in Germany. Due to the Matildas' achievements, the Australian team is now ninth in the world rankings. The group stage of the World Cup was always going to be tough for the Matildas, facing Equatorial Guinea, Norway and Brazil. Although they lost to Brazil, they won 3-2 against Equatorial Guinea and 2-1 against Norway. The team finished second in their group and moved to the next stage where they faced Sweden straight out of the group stage. The Matildas reached the quarter finals only to be knocked out by Sweden—a commendable achievement. I mention especially Ellyse Perry, who was a member of the winning Australian team at last year's T20 Cricket World Cup. Perry is an extraordinary sportswoman, who made her debut for Australia's female cricket and football teams at just 16.

I once again congratulate the Matildas and wish them luck at next year's Olympics. They have been assisted in their efforts by experienced team management and a growing and well-established grassroots game in New South Wales and throughout Australia. I also join the Minister in congratulating the Diamonds. None of the millions of Australians who watched on television or listened on ABC Radio to the Australian Diamonds netball team winning the world championships will forget that exciting game. Any close game is exciting, but to win a world championship by one goal in extra time is truly amazing. The team's win in Singapore on 10 July was a huge credit to the team, to Netball Australia and to coach Norma Plummer and her colleagues. Every member of the team—including the Diamonds' injured captain, Sharelle McMahon—played a tremendous part in either the championships or in the lead-up games, and I add my congratulations on behalf of members on this side of the House.

I must also mention and congratulate James Magnussen, who at only 20 years of age won two gold medals and one silver at his first swimming world championships. His was the best individual performance by an Australian male swimmer since Grant Hackett's three gold medals at the 2005 world titles in Montreal. I also understand that beyond his exceptional ability, he has shown the capacity to inspire teammates to better performances. Finally, I join the Minister in congratulating Billy Dib on his boxing prowess. He has joined Australian legends Jeff Fenech and Johnny Famechon as our latest featherweight world boxing champion. It must have been a great bout, because Bob Carr was there. These performances remind us of what a great sporting tradition we have in this country and the ability of our great sports men and women to punch above their weight on the world stage. I join the Minister in congratulating Cadel Evans, the Matildas, the Diamonds, James Magnussen and Billy Dib.

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**.

Pet Shops

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

Mental Health Services

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

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

Palliative Care Community Services

Petition requesting increased funding for northern Sydney palliative care community services and for palliative care community services in all areas of New South Wales, received from **Mr Rob Stokes**.

Greendale Planning

Petition requesting the overturning of the decision of the Joint Regional Planning Panel regarding DA-1291/2010 and the cessation of all development applications for cemeteries, crematoria and places of worship in Greendale, received from **Mrs Tanya Davies**.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

JUDICIAL COMMISSION OF NEW SOUTH WALES CONDUCT DIVISION

Appointment of Community Representatives

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council.

Madam SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that, having considered the Legislative Assembly's message of 2 August 2011, it has agreed to the following resolution:

That, according to clause 4 of Schedule 2A of the Judicial Officers Act 1986, this House concurs with the nomination of 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.

Legislative Council
5 August 2011

DON HARWIN
President

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LIVERPOOL ELECTORATE FOOD 4 LIFE PROGRAMS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.39 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the Food 4 Life programs in the electorate of Liverpool. On 21 July I attended a function at the Food 4 Life Market at Warwick Farm. This function was held on the second anniversary of the establishment of the market and was also the launch of a community garden there. I attended the event with the Mayor of Liverpool, Councillor Wendy Waller, the Manager of Food 4 Life, Simon Gregory from the Salvation Army, Mary Enkababian and other officials from the local health service, including Mandy Williams, Acting Director of the Health Promotion Service, Clinical Support Division (Western), Pat Hall from Warwick Farm Neighbourhood Centre, other partner organisations and, most importantly, volunteers and users of the Warwick Farm service, including Alison Pringle, who addressed the event.

The development of this important service has had a long genesis. In 2006 Family, Food and Fun Day was held at Warwick Farm. More than 500 people and about 20 services attended on the day. A significant number of residents expressed an interest in being volunteers if a food cooperative was established. Further consultations followed and a much larger group confirmed that a food cooperative would be a useful facility for residents in the area. The result of this process was that in July 2009 the Food 4 Life market was launched by the Salvation Army in partnership with the health promotion service of what was then the Sydney South West Area Health Service.

The aim was to decrease food insecurity in the Warwick Farm area. This was done by making fresh fruit and vegetables more available as well as providing healthier options of bread, cereals, pasta, milk, meat and

rice in addition to frozen and canned foods. Food was sold at an affordable price at \$10.00 per bag. One membership per household was allowed and membership was open to all residents of Warwick Farm. The market is run by volunteers from the local community. Liverpool TAFE outreach provides training for volunteers, developing and improving the skills of those volunteers. The Salvation Army offers counselling services around the market, which is in a house on Lawrence Hargrave Road, Warwick Farm. It also provides referrals to agencies such as Housing NSW and Centrelink. The role of the Salvation Army has also been quite interesting. It has been focused as much on what was once called community development work as simple handouts—it is providing a community service rather than simply charity.

The market becomes much more than just somewhere to get food: It becomes a community hub where residents can meet and obtain information as well as tips on healthy eating. Other organisations have also become involved. Liverpool council has a Living Streets Program, which is a community cultural development project. It generally focuses on revitalising public spaces and transforming plots of public land. In this case, it was used to develop a community garden in the backyard of the market house. This will provide further items to be sold at the market. The market house features some quite impressive mosaic work done by volunteers and participants in Outreach courses. Another significant contribution came from the Warwick Farm Neighbourhood Centre, which helped to identify local needs through joint planning involving community groups. That joint planning has been particularly important for the culturally and linguistically diverse community in Warwick Farm.

One of the phrases I used earlier was "food insecurity", which is defined as the limited availability or ability to acquire nutritionally adequate and safe foods in socially acceptable ways. Both national and New South Wales health bodies have listed this as a significant public health issue in this country. Certain groups in this country are at risk of being food insecure. Many of those groups are located in areas within parts of my electorate, including Warwick Farm. Food insecurity is linked with ill health and chronic health disease—things such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and higher rates of preventable morbidity and mortality—and poor nutrition. It can also result in what may be called psycho-social problems—anxiety, fear, shame, exclusion and social stigma. Counterintuitively, it is also associated with an increased risk of obesity, given the sorts of food people suffering from food insecurity often end up having to eat.

A number of elements contribute to food insecurity. Obviously money is one and income is another. The less a person's income and the higher the price of food, the greater is the risk of food insecurity. The New South Wales Cancer Council found that families receiving an average income would need to spend 22 per cent of their income on a healthy food basket in comparison to a family in the lowest income quartile, who would need to spend more than 50 per cent of their income on a healthy food basket. Demographic data establishes that many people in the Warwick Farm area have a restricted income. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics data, 32 per cent of people in the area are single-income families, 46 per cent rent from the housing authority, and 58 per cent are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that the median family income in Warwick Farm is 34 per cent lower than for the State as a whole. There are no fresh food shops in the area, although there are three fast food outlets and a bottle shop. The nearest fresh food shop is five kilometres away. A phone survey in 2004 is reported to have shown that 26.9 per cent of Warwick Farm households experienced food insecurity. It is no surprise in this context that a food cooperative was established in Warwick Farm. The practical results of the market have been impressive. Residents advise that access to fresh affordable food has increased—they do not have to travel outside Warwick Farm with the extra barrier that that may impose.

Many residents now do about 40 per cent of their shopping at Food 4 Life. This has meant not just healthier food, but also cheaper food and that has enabled people to spend money saved on other essential items. The aim of the market becoming more than a shop but a community hub has worked. The market has more than 600 members, and has had 8,000 visits. More than 200 tonnes of food have been consumed. The referral process I referred to earlier has been successful. The project will be replicated in the suburb of Miller, which is also located within the electorate of Liverpool. Again, it will involve the Salvation Army and funds from the Community Building Partnership program.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [3.44 p.m.]: Today I speak about Homelessness Action Week and the plight of the homeless generally in my electorate of Coogee. Every night, more than 27,000 people are homeless in New South Wales: 10,000 of them in the coastal Sydney region, a region that

stretches from Hornsby in the north to Sutherland in the south; 49 out of every 10,000 people in coastal Sydney are homeless on any given night; and 37 per cent of Australia's homeless population hails from the coastal Sydney region. What is alarming about these figures is that they were taken from the 2006 census. When the data from next week's census is released it is likely that that number will have risen. The statistics get worse, especially when we consider Indigenous homelessness. The rate of Indigenous homelessness in coastal Sydney is three times the non-Indigenous rate. In the inner-city ring—the lower North Shore, the eastern suburbs and the inner west—this rate increases to four times that of the non-Indigenous population.

Move to the city core—the city of Sydney, Leichardt and Marrickville—and that proportion is five times that of the non-Indigenous community. This is simply unacceptable. Thankfully, the number of homeless people sleeping rough, who are termed the primary homeless, is in the minority. We also need to cast our gaze to the secondary and tertiary homeless. Secondary homeless are those who move frequently from shelter to shelter, moving from refuges to emergency accommodation to boarding houses and back again. Secondary homeless do not have certainty of securing accommodation on any given night. The tertiary homeless are those who live in premises but do not have the security of a lease to guarantee them accommodation, and those who live in these premises on a medium- to long-term basis. What must be noted is that the secondary and tertiary homeless do not require any less of our attention. These are people without the security of guaranteed accommodation every single night of the year. These are people who could be out on the street at a moment's notice.

What are the solutions? The harsh reality of homelessness is a constant issue for our community. New South Wales requires a new, sophisticated approach to dealing with homelessness because the old programs are not working. The New South Wales Government and the new Department of Family and Community Services are working not just to improve the services for the homeless but also towards improving the lives of the homeless. We have heard from the Minister for Family and Community Services about the targeted initiatives such as Platform 70 to deal with the effects of homelessness. Tackling the causes by targeting local homelessness and giving people the opportunity to take real responsibility for their lives is a prime goal of this initiative.

We are also helping the homeless work through the issues that brought them to the streets in the first place. We want to improve the lives of these people, not just the nights. Combating the plight of homelessness is a difficult task. The problem of homelessness is so multifaceted, so complex, that the most common response of many of us is sorrow, followed by despair—indeed helplessness—particularly because many of us are at a loss as to what we can do to improve their plight. Homelessness is a very complex problem. One of the most effective things we can do is to raise awareness of homelessness. Awareness campaigns, especially in areas where people have become desensitised to the plight of the homeless, are crucial for making communities aware of these issues. When more people are aware, more people are passionate. When more people are passionate, governments respond.

That is why tonight I am sleeping rough at the Coogee Surf Club. This is an initiative of my office. Along with Russell King, the Chief Executive Officer of Waverley Action for Youth Services, with local councils, local business people and local youth, we will sleep under the stars to raise awareness in my community about the effects of homelessness. It is my hope that through this I will be able to assist people to better understand homelessness in our area. It is a serious problem affecting tens of thousands of our fellow citizens. I hope our efforts this evening will contribute, albeit in a small way, to taking people off the streets permanently. If we can ensure a more secure future for at least one person it will have been worthwhile.

GOULBURN TO SYDNEY CYCLE CLASSIC

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [3.49 p.m.]: I am proud to tell the House today about the oldest and most popular bicycle race held in New South Wales: the historic Goulburn to Sydney Cycle Classic. This event was first held on 9 August 1902 and is one year older than the Tour de France that Australia's own Cadel Evans has just won. I will mention some important points about the history of this event in which my electorate of Wollondilly has played such an important part. In 1913 the Australian Olympic Committee asked that the Goulburn to Sydney Cycle Classic be used as an Olympic selection race. In 1922 the race became an Australian Championship race for amateurs, with the fastest-time rider being crowned the Australian Champion. Goulburn produced Australia's first Olympic cycling gold medallist, Edgar "Dunc" Gray, at the 1932 Los Angeles Games. Dunc Gray rode the Goulburn to Sydney race in 1930.

The race has always finished on the urban fringes of Sydney, with the exception of the 1944 race when it finished in the city and was used to help rally the nation during World War II. The fastest average speed on

what were dirt roads in 1902 was 25 kilometres per hour, but in 1992 Olympian Brett Dutton averaged 48 kilometres per hour in three hours and 40 minutes, chased by a howling tailwind. This race has lured Australia's best road riders, including Sir Hubert Opperman, Gary Sutton and in 2005 Australian Tour of Italy Stage winner, Victorian cyclist David McKenzie. The Goulburn to Sydney Cycle Classic will again be hosted by the Macarthur Collegians Cycling Club on 17 and 18 September 2011, with support from the Southern Highlands and Goulburn cycling clubs.

This event is made possible by the tireless commitment and volunteer hours given by the club's president, David Macefield; race director, Michael Gleeson; event spokesperson and my good friend, Paul Hillbrick; Noel Lowry of the *District Reporter* newspaper; treasurer Andrew Gilman; vice president Kevin Fisher; Peter McLean; Phil Gale and all the club members too many to mention. This classic is a Cycling Australia National Road Series race. The 170-kilometre race has had some exciting finishes since the Macarthur Collegians Cycling Club resurrected the event after a five-year hiatus that ended in 2005 when David McKenzie crossed the line to recommence the history.

In 2005, Rugby International Simon Poidevin became the ambassador of the Goulburn to Sydney Cycle Classic, and will again lead 130 of his fellow corporate riders in his annual 150-kilometre dash from Goulburn. This year Simon hopes that his Corporate Charity Challenge will break the \$1 million dollar mark in funds raised since he and six other riders left Goulburn back in 2005. Past beneficiaries of the charity ride have included Odyssey House Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation centre in south-west Sydney, Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, Youth Solutions, and Goulburn's St John of God Palliative Care and Oncology Support Unit. The Campbelltown Catholic Club has been a great supporter of the cycle classic since 2005 and will again promote the ever-growing Aquafit charity cycle ride, which finishes in Camden's main street prior to the cycle classic finish.

The Aquafit race gives local riders a taste of the terrain that the elite race will travel and adds a great spirit to the Camden Spring Fair, where it finishes. My good friend the member for Camden, Chris Patterson, has always supported this event in his capacity as mayor of Camden. The race has a unique history by starting in Australia's first inland city, Goulburn, and finishing in the birthplace of Australia's wool, wine and wheat, the historic town of Camden. Cycling New South Wales is proud to have one of Australia's oldest classics on its calendar. But most importantly, I am proud to say that the Wollondilly electorate has the most number of towns along the race route. Wollondilly has the dreaded Razorback Range that the elite field has to climb twice. Wollondilly shapes the final stages of this historic race. With so much history behind this race, it is important that we support such a historic sporting event.

The Goulburn to Sydney Cycle Classic receives extensive local, State and national media coverage and support. In previous years the event has enjoyed support from Alan Jones on 2GB, as well as 2SM, 2UE, C91.3, Ian "Macca" McNamara on the ABC radio network. SBS television provides a 30-minute highlights package of the race. This year a short time trial will be held at Goulburn's Victoria Park from 11.00 a.m. on Saturday 17 September with the historic 170-kilometre classic commencing on Sunday 18 September at 7.30 a.m. The historic race departs Goulburn and follows the Hume Highway to Berrima and passes through Mittagong, Bargo, Tahmoor, Picton and the Razorback Range before finishing to a friendly Camden welcome at 11.15 a.m. I look forward to presenting a cheque in support of the Goulburn to Sydney Cycle Classic, demonstrating this Government's ongoing support for the race. I recommend this event to the House.

COUNTRY AND REGIONAL LIVING EXPO

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.54 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the Country and Regional Living Expo that I attended today with a number of my colleagues from The Nationals at Rosehill Racecourse. I was joined by the Minister for Local Government, Mr Don Page; the Hon. Rick Colless, MLC; the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC; the member for Lismore, Mr Thomas George; and the member for Myall Lakes, Mr Stephen Bromhead. Our attendance sent a clear and strong message that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is serious about a whole-of-State approach. We showed that we care and that we are aware that the wealth of this State will eventuate only if we support our regional areas. The expo has been running for eight years. I congratulate Peter Bailey, who has been the driving force behind it. The exhibition used to be known as Country Week but it now carries the title of Country and Regional Living Expo.

The one simple, key message from the exhibition was that houses are affordable in regional areas and there is plenty of industrial land for investment. We have pristine natural environments and some of the most wonderful and resilient communities. This message was displayed strongly by the Government team that visited

and supported the expo. The 60 exhibitors spoke about the policies and initiatives of the new Government, including the Jobs Action Plan. The creation of 100,000 jobs will go a long way towards helping regional areas. Regional councils and other exhibitors displayed jobs available in their regions. Anyone considering relocating to a particular area can be assured of employment opportunities.

A jobs board displayed listings of more than 1,000 jobs for secretaries, council workers and various other positions. People can pack up and move to a regional centre and find plenty of employment opportunities. Regional cities have good hospitals, schools and services. In the past the Government has been too city-centric and not focused on anything outside Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. I was pleased to be able to attend the expo. Research shows that many people are considering moving from metropolitan areas. All the expo exhibitors welcomed the O'Farrell-Stoner Government's commitment of \$7,000 relocation grants to assist those who sell their metropolitan houses and buy a property under \$600,000 in a regional centre.

People sometimes need just a little incentive to move to a different area. Some of the exhibits were manned by people from my electorate. David McMurray was doing a wonderful job manning the Oberon stall along with Wayne Cooper, who is involved in the Oberon Progress Association. I spoke to other exhibitors from Cowra, Albury and many other places. They all were proud of their communities and were keen to show the desirability of their towns. Available industrial land was displayed on 11 stalls. The expo is running for the next three days. I am pleased that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has shown its commitment to regional areas. I throw the challenge to Opposition members to visit the expo.

ALBURY AMBULANCE STATION

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [3.59 p.m.]: If anyone ever has the misfortune to be in a vehicle accident on the Hume Highway near Albury, they can bet their life that the paramedics will rescue him or her in rain or shine, night or day and in temperatures below zero or well above 40 degrees. Albury's paramedics will get him or her out of their damaged car or truck and off to hospital. They are highly skilled professionals working in demanding and sometimes dangerous environments. We can rely on them.

When these men and women return to their base, the 77-year-old Albury ambulance station, to clean up after yet another rescue, they are faced with this: There is only one shower. In Albury, male and female paramedics do not have separate bathroom facilities. They must share the same space. They have every right to complain, but they do not. Even allowing for their good grace and temperament in making do with outrageously poor facilities, they still must come in from the cold and dust, grime and trauma of the accident scene, and queue up for their turn in the single shower. Albury ambulance station runs nine ambulances and has a staff of 26, eight of whom are women. It is anticipated that the ratio of males to females will eventually settle around 50:50. And there is just one bathroom, one shower.

Recently I went on another tour of this facility. The first thing you notice is that it is a museum of interior decorating styles. Different sections of the building reflect the eras: the ceilings, the plaster and door mouldings, the light fittings and so on. This is not a problem in itself. The problem, however, is that it reveals what past governments have believed was good enough for these hard-working men and women: a thrown-together, patched-up and, frankly unsafe working environment.

Having announced an intention to rebuild as part of a 2007 pre-election promise, the last Government turned off the tap for funds to keep this old working building in fit shape. It is in terminal decline. In the upstairs office there is a picturesque bay window. To keep harsh summer sunlight off the desk, they have tacked a bed sheet to the window frame. When they run a professional development session they leave the ambulance station; there is nowhere to hold this on the premises. Numerous occupational health and safety concerns have been identified on site. Parking provision is inadequate for the private vehicles of the paramedics. At present they must park their cars out in front of the station, virtually on the street. Streetside parking is unacceptable when officers face occasional violent threats from members of the public.

An ambulance station, when it falls due for replacement, is not automatically rebuilt in the same location. Time passes and circumstances change. That is why the first step is to undertake a research investigation. We need to understand how the road networks have evolved, how patterns of usage have altered. We need to look at the demand for ambulance services in an entertainment precinct, as opposed to responding to workplace or highway accidents, and moving patients between hospitals in different towns and cities. Existing despatch information will be correlated to help determine best placement of a new ambulance station to meet current and future needs as Albury city expands. What ambulance officers tell me now is that the current station is no longer in a suitable location. This places lives at risk.

A new ambulance station will cost money, and there are many deserving projects in this State. Indications are that we will need more than \$2 million. To place this in some kind of value context, the Federal Government is constructing a new building for the Tax Office in Albury. This week I heard that the internal furnishing alone will cost \$19.2 million. It is another great project for Albury. Fortunately I have identified State health department land in Albury, which either has been sold recently or is on the market. The proceeds will be sufficient to pay for a new ambulance station. I was able to get a commitment from the previous Government to quarantine this health money for use on developing other health assets in Albury and I have received a similar commitment from our new Health Minister. There is potential funding here. It will not be taken away from any other worthy project in New South Wales. It is a good deal.

Albury sits at the top of the list of ambulance stations requiring replacement. This is a project that was approved by government five years ago, but left unfunded by Labor. I have met with my local ambulance officers and Albury City Council, and I have received requests for action from constituents. I have made sure I am well informed about the situation. I have made it my task to present this desperate need to the Health Minister and her staff, to take action where Labor fell short, to support Albury's brave and deserving ambulance officers. These are the men and women who stand guard over the roads, cities and towns of the Albury region. They handle difficult and often traumatic situations most of us hope never to encounter. And so we rely heavily on them and extend our deep appreciation. They have earned our support for a new ambulance station.

MENAI ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.04 p.m.]: Today I would like to share some of the achievements and events from my local school communities. The electorate of Menai has 29 primary and secondary schools, each one with a hardworking and close-knit school community attached to it. In my short time as the member for Menai I have already enjoyed a number of school events that have left long-lasting impressions. In fact, today I only have time to speak about the western side of my electorate.

As many members are already aware, Holsworthy is home to the Army barracks and many Defence Force families. After speaking to the school staff, I learned about the different pressures that these families face. Many families are from out of the area and relocate to be near their defence loved one. They move into a new area, many without family support networks, operating essentially as single-parent households. After a few years, these families are usually posted to a new base, and the family once again relocates. The young students finally get settled, only to move away again. For the school, this periodic upheaval makes it difficult for them to gauge class numbers each year, which also impacts on the provision of teachers to staff the school.

Since the election, sadly, three soldiers from the Holsworthy Barracks have been tragically killed in action. A soldier's death rocks the entire community, including the school staff. Each death affects not only the immediate family, but those families in a similar situation, their teachers and, in turn, the community. My eyes were definitely opened to a whole new understanding of the extra pressures faced by defence families and the largely invisible impact it has on the school community around them, and I am currently investigating whether there is a need for more school counsellors to deal with such extraordinary events.

Last week I attended the Holsworthy Community of Schools Concert at Holsworthy High School, supported by Moorebank Sports Club. I spent the evening marvelling at the amazing range of talent, skill and performances from Holsworthy High and the Holsworthy, Wattle Grove and Hammondville public schools. One particular act showcased their connection with the nearby Army base where the students, dressed in Army fatigues, performed a fantastic dance routine. It once again brought home the personal connections students from a defence family share. Cultural ties were also on display with a colourful Bollywood dance group, capturing the vibrant Indian and South East Asian communities in Wattle Grove and surrounds. It was a pleasure to witness over 300 students with their theatrical make-up, hairdos and costumes all on display.

I was so impressed by the wide range of styles, talents and themes showcased in the combined schools concert and with the effort that parents and teachers put in. My electorate office is nestled amongst the Hammondville Shopping Centre and opposite Hammondville Public School. Each day I see young families dropping their kids off to the school and the chaos of the afternoon pick-up. It is not hard to notice the friendly school community. Just the other week I noticed the school principal, Mr Craig Levings, hard at work manning the pedestrian crossing stop sign. I waved hello and watched as he personally said goodbye to each child as they safely crossed the road. It was a lovely thing to witness. I am proud to represent such a close-knit school community and I am lucky to have one so close to my office.

One of the first school celebrations I attended was Holsworthy public's fiftieth anniversary. They celebrated with the students performing dances throughout the different eras—from the "Time Warp", Michael Jackson's "Thriller", and Billy Joel's "We didn't Start the Fire". They even danced and sang jingles from years gone by like the "Aeroplane Jelly" song, and "We're Happy Little Vegemites". The principal, Wayne Roberts, showed a copy of the newspaper of the day with a headline that focused on the price of electricity—proving how similar we are in our concerns 50 years later. In a congratulations card after the election, Lorna Stone, the former member for Sutherland and now chairman of the Sylvanvale Foundation, shared with me a personal memory from her time as a young teacher at Holsworthy Public School. She was called up to help out at the official opening of the school.

Lorna remembers watching the Army mow lawns and clean windows in readiness for the local member of Parliament of the day, Gough Whitlam, who was to officially open the school. The school had photos and memorabilia on display and actual super 8 footage, which they had converted, from the opening day. While unfortunately there was no sound, it is a lasting reminder of how fashions change—with the women in hats and gloves and the children all in their Sunday best for such a special day. As can be seen, my electorate has a wealth of memories related to the schools. This short speech only covers a few of those schools, and only on one side of my diverse electorate. I hope I will get the opportunity to share more about the schools on the eastern side of the electorate and the countless achievements they have made.

JEANS FOR GENES DAY

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [4.09 p.m.]: I wish to speak about the importance of Jeans for Genes day, supporting the Children's Medical Research Institute—the CMRI as it is affectionately known. The first Friday in August is Jeans for Genes day, and today is Friday 5 August. I would like to put on record some facts about Jeans for Genes. Jeans for Genes day is a major national fundraiser for the Children's Medical Research Institute, based at Westmead in my electorate.

As we all know, Westmead Hospital is a leading health and research precinct in Australia and internationally and it has 900 researchers and doctoral students. Today is Jeans for Genes Day, which raises money to support the Children's Medical Research Institute. I was delighted to note when I walked through Martin Place today to see schoolchildren selling pins to raise money for the institute. Many fundraising events have been organised around the country today to help, including a cocktail reception at the Castle Hill RSL, and the Lions club of St George organised a breakfast this morning. The member for Oatley, who is in the Chamber, supported that function.

More than two million Australians will wear their favourite jeans today and donate much-needed funds to support the work of the Children's Medical Research Institute. More than \$56 million has been raised since the campaign started in 1994 and all of the money goes to research. Prior to the election, I had the privilege of visiting the institute to learn firsthand of its great work and I met Professor Roger Reddel, the Director of the Children's Medical Research Institute. I also had the privilege of getting to know the institute while I judged the Western Sydney Awards for Business. The institute won one of the many prestigious awards partly because of the long-term vision it displayed. Long-term vision is vital in the research world because results can take 10 to 20 years to emerge. The institute has been dedicated to achieving research breakthroughs for 50 years.

Most people do not know that one in 20 children born in Australia have a congenital abnormality or genetic disease. The Children's Medical Research Institute is working to prevent diseases before they occur in children. Its mission is to reduce the number of children born with genetic illnesses. Its research is dedicated to understanding our biological development and how our genes and cells work so that better treatments and cures for disease can be developed. The institute starts by researching the very beginning of diseases. One of the institute's real strengths is the people who make that happen. There is a dedicated team of hardworking people with a common goal to help children. The institute employs more than 100 scientists and doctoral students, with 50 support staff in operations, administration and community services.

The Children's Medical Research Institute works in collaboration with the University of Sydney, the University of Western Sydney, Macquarie University and Wollongong University and scientists and laboratories around the world. The institute works in four important areas: oncology, embryology, gene therapy and neurosciences. The institute is committed to its cause and it has big plans to expand its valuable research capability. It has plans to implement a multistage, \$185 million development. It will continue working while the development project proceeds by integrating it with its current activities. Stages 1 and 2 are estimated to cost \$88 million and will be completed by 2014 if funds are made available within the next year.

The research facility will provide facilities for 500 scientists and 100 other staff. It will include 35 state-of-the-art research laboratory zones to reflect the activities of the various research groups. It will also have tailored space for CellBank Australia and will provide for multiple incubation and work zones. There will also be expanded and improved bioservices and connection to research hub partners. It is estimated that the project will take six to eight years to complete. Recognising the valuable work being undertaken by the Children's Medical Research Institute, the New South Wales Government has committed \$20 million for the first stage of the development. The institute is a world-leading research facility dedicated to unlocking mysteries of diseases such as birth defects, cancer and epilepsy.

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR WILLIAM FLETCHER

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [4.14 p.m.]: I speak in loving memory of the late Arthur William Fletcher, more affectionately known as "Bill", who passed away on 22 June. Bill was born at the Crown Street Women's Hospital on 12 January 1938 to Arthur and Dulcie Fletcher who, like many during the years of the Great Depression, worked tremendously hard and sacrificed everything they had to provide for their families. Bill's father was a horse breaker and when the Second World War broke out Bill, his brother Wally and his mother spent years living in bush camps and horse yards until an Army discharge allowed the family to move into a housing commission house in Lidcombe. After having lived in tents and huts for more than five years, the house seemed palatial to the boys, who by now had been joined by another brother, Johnny, who was born in 1943.

The simple things that we all now take for granted, such as hot running water and a stove, seemed like a godsend to the family, as did the bushland at the back of the house which provided no end of fun for the Fletcher boys as they were growing up. As a young boy Bill soon proved to be hardworking and industrious, albeit a little too entrepreneurial and cheeky at times. The family laughingly recalls the occasions when Bill would wriggle under the fence around Australian General Electric with his younger brother Wally to gather discarded copper wire to cash in at Simms Metal. Not long after Bill found a less adventuresome way to earn a little pocket money. He had his dad affix a basket to the front of his bike and before long became an amusing sight for the locals as he would routinely whizz by delivering weekly groceries for the local grocer Harry "Pinkie" Brown.

Legend has it that when the cash started rolling in Bill promptly dragged Wally up to Auburn for a short-lived meal in a Chinese restaurant. Apparently the waiter thought that the sight of two young boys ordering meals was a little suspicious and they were soon asked to leave. That was just the kind of person Bill was: abundantly generous, hardworking, full of initiative and an all-round completely unique and lovable character. He was also tremendously talented, smart and studious. Bill attended Lidcombe Public School where he performed brilliantly at every subject, earning him the ultimate crown, dux of the school. His high school years were spent at Parramatta High School, where he excelled no less and he quickly found himself on his way to becoming school dux once again.

Bill soon caught the eye of Castrol Motor Oil, which approached him during his fourth year in high school with an offer to become an industrial chemist. Trainee wages at the time were meagre and before long Bill found it impossible to support his new wife, June Ford, and their delightful baby girl, Deborah, and so he gained work as a contract cleaner. It seemed that Bill and June were not meant to be and Bill soon found himself single once again. His return to bachelorhood was swiftly put to an end when he met his true soul mate and the love of his life, Joan Rowley, which was shortly followed by the birth of their son, Matt.

After having spent years as a cleaner, Bill became a compounder in the pharmaceutical and confectionery industry and purchased a house in Dalley Street, Lidcombe, where he settled down to raise his family. However, being the person that he was, Bill was not content merely to provide for himself and his loved ones, he needed to give back more. Using his impressive talents and seemingly endless energy and passion, he became a rising star in the trade unions and the Australian Labor Party. He was appointed chief representative of the Food and Confectionary Union on the Trades and Labor Council in Sussex Street. He also served admirably as the Secretary and Treasurer of the Lidcombe branch of the Australian Labor Party.

As an avid baseball player Bill joined the Lidcombe Waratahs where he played, coached and managed from the age of 10 until 40. Bill and his long-time buddy Sid Grant established the Royal Oak Baseball Club, which went on to become a very successful club in the Cumberland Baseball Association. I know that the many members of these clubs that were coached and mentored by Bill are feeling his loss and are grateful for the memories he left them with. Bill embodied the Australian spirit. He was hardworking, good-natured,

overflowing with respect, love and compassion for his fellow Australians and tough as they come. Having been born in the Depression and suffering from life-long partial deafness he knew what it meant to struggle, but it only made him a better person.

Bill's life is an inspiration to us all. As he grew ill and was confined to St Josephs Hospital, Joan was right by his side, loving and caring for him as she did when his terminal illness set in at home. They enjoyed a lifetime of love, affection, friendship and innumerable fond memories. They were the best of friends and happiest of couples. I offer my sincerest condolences to Joan because I know that the passing of Bill came as a terrible shock and much pain and sadness remain after his loss. Bill is terribly missed not only by Joan but also by his many loved ones, friends and countless others who knew him over the course of his life.

I extend my sympathies to his daughter Debbie, son Matthew, grandchildren Danelle, Joshua, Emily and Joel and great grandson, Brayden. Bill is also a much-loved and greatly missed brother to Wal, John, Reg and Dennis, loving brother-in-law to Ann, Carol, Bev and Therese, and a loving uncle to Nicole, Sharon and Ruth. As the member for Auburn, I place on the record my great appreciation for all that Bill did for our local community, branch members, sporting clubs and the workers he represented in his union days. His was a life well lived and I join Bill's family, the Lidcombe Branch of the Australian Labor Party, the Auburn State Electorate Council and his friends in mourning his loss.

SNOWY MOUNTAINS NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [4.19 p.m.]: As I travel around my great electorate I encounter many wonderful community groups, individuals and organisations that play a most important role in the wellbeing of my community. Today I pay tribute to the Snowy Mountains Neighbourhood Centre, which is one of many outstanding community initiatives in my electorate. Many areas have local neighbourhood centres. These centres may have outreach workers, programs and services and will probably have a good idea of what other local services are available in the area. They are an essential part of every community because they have community ownership.

The Snowy Mountains Neighbourhood Centre is a not-for-profit agency. It has a part-time worker funded by government grant, but it depends on local volunteers to provide a referral service to visitors and to the permanent residents in the Jindabyne and Snowy area. The Snowy Mountains Neighbourhood Centre is the only neighbourhood centre of its type in Monaro, providing invaluable support services to residents. The services include community information and advice, family support, child care, playgroups, neighbour aid, community transport and shopping services, emergency assistance, food vouchers, clothing, personal and financial counselling, community workers, youth projects and programs, equipment and facilities for local community use, and programs for unemployed people.

Currently the group is running a community investment project, which informs the community about the services available to people in the area; the Snowy Mountains Domestic Violence Project, which supports victims of domestic violence in our community; and a library service to ensure that the community has more access to library services. These projects and services are vital to our community and ensure the wellbeing and positive progression of people living in the Monaro area. The staff are committed, compassionate and dedicated community members, without whom our communities would grind to a halt.

Like many such groups, the Snowy Mountains Neighbourhood Centre runs on the smell of an oily rag. It depends heavily on the support of government grants, the generosity of the local community and the enormous support of the Snowy River Shire Council, which I acknowledge and recognise. We all know that the Government does not have the resources to accommodate all the needs of our community and it depends on partnerships with non-government organisations to deliver the services that are desperately needed but at times slip through the gaps, especially in rural and regional communities. Non-government organisations without doubt deliver more than any government could, with little resources available to them. I am determined that the Government continues to support and shoulder the burden, and I will continue to fight for additional and recurrent funding into the future.

The Snowy Mountains Neighbourhood Centre staff work hard to ensure that the people of Monaro have the best opportunities possible. I know the clients and their families have been impressed by the commitment of the Snowy Mountains Neighbourhood Centre workers and their energetic and compassionate approach to the community. I personally thank those individuals who have given up their time to contribute to the Snowy

Mountains Neighbourhood Centre. It is the contribution of such people that makes the Snowy Mountains the wonderful community that it is. Special mention must be made of program coordinator Narelle Willems, whose efforts are greatly appreciated by the community and by the Government.

I am very proud to be the local member for a community where people get involved every day to make our community a better place for everyone. I hope that in my time as the member for Monaro more community initiatives like this are introduced to the electorate and they receive the support that they truly deserve from both the Government and the community. I encourage all members of this House to get to know more about their own local neighbourhood centres in their electorates and see how they play a pivotal role in their community, and to join me in advocating for more support to a deserving and valuable community service provider.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DISABILITY FORUM

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [4.23 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of an important community services and disability forum that took place in my community during the parliamentary recess. On 11 July I had the privilege of hosting my friends and colleagues, the Hon. Pru Goward, Minister for Family and Community Services, and the Hon. Andrew Constance, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, at a talk to service providers in my electorate about the many challenges this sector has. We met at the Oatley RSL and the event was well attended. Attendees included representatives of Mortdale Community Services, Pole Depot Community Centre, Sunnyhaven, St George Community Services, St George Community Housing, St George Community Transport, Kogarah Community Services and Learning Links.

The forum gave both Ministers an opportunity to outline their vision for these important areas of public policy as well as the challenges we currently face, particularly in relation to the pressure of tackling the \$5.2 billion black hole left to us by the previous Government. The unique challenges across both portfolios include the need for momentum and drive for a National Disability Insurance scheme. I commend Minister Constance for his commitment to empowering those who rely on disability support and giving them individual choice and opportunity through current consultations on the Person Centred Approach.

On a side note, I was fortunate to attend a consultation session at St George Leagues Club in Kogarah earlier this week. It was great to hear firsthand from parents and carers who face incredible challenges each and every day looking after their loved ones. There was also some positive discussion at the forum I hosted in relation to the Government's pre-election commitment to transfer all children in out-of-home care to the non-government sector. All the participants were engaged and we had a very constructive conversation across a range of issues that affect these important service providers. It was also a great opportunity to reflect on the outstanding and tireless work undertaken by community service providers in my community.

So much of their work is done on a shoestring budget and with reliance on a number of volunteer hours to provide an incredible range of services, including ageing and disability services, transport for the frail aged, working with children and assisting people of a non-English speaking background. I am constantly in awe of what they are able to achieve for the most vulnerable and needy in my community, and some of the most enjoyable events I have been to as the member for Oatley have been fundraisers and other events to raise awareness of and support for these groups. I will continue to work with all of these groups to ensure that their voices and concerns are communicated to the Government and do my bit to ensure that these services are adequately supported.

ST ANDREWS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [4.26 p.m.], by leave: As part of education week, I was invited to be principal for a day on Monday 1 August 2011 at St Andrews Public School, St Andrews. I was invited by the principal Mrs Kerry Sweeney and was well supported by the deputy principals Mrs Donna Barton and Mr Chad Harris. "Principal for a day" was an initiative by the school to showcase the great things about St Andrews Public School and education in New South Wales. I had no hesitation in accepting the invitation. I know that our youth are the greatest of our opals in Campbelltown, the opal of the south west.

The school community were sensibly advised in advance by newsletter of the change of principal. Upon arrival, not only was I greeted by a relieved Mrs Kerry Sweeney, but also by the school notice board which read, "St Andrews Public School, Welcome Bryan Doyle, Open Day, 9.30 a.m." Mrs Sweeney welcomed me on board and kindly noted that she had in fact started the day at 6.30 a.m., so I had some three hours to catch up on. Fortunately for me, Mrs Sweeney kept a close eye on her new principal and, in the spirit of the school,

I was provided an extensive orientation, which lasted the entire school day. This included a Flash Mob dance demonstration by the whole school. The choreography was superb, with staff and students thoroughly enjoying themselves. The depth and range of artistic talent and movement was just amazing.

I told the school assembly that the week before I had presented first place at the School Rock Eisteddfod in Wollongong and what I saw there would have stood well with the high school students. The students also performed their new school song. I was also treated to a range of school displays, including the Boys Club, a debating session which touched on the issue of school facilities after hours. I might say the skills that were on display in debating would have been useful in this House. Other activities included: public speaking demonstrations; an art display, some of which I have asked the principal to have displayed in my office, so high was the quality; Korean language courses and a choir performance. At the school assembly I was able to tell parents how impressed I was with the student exhibitions, and I noted that fruit does not fall far from the tree.

It was great seeing education in action. At each of the presentations I was able to speak with the teachers, parents and students of St Andrews Public School. The students were very well presented and well mannered and their educational and cultural displays were excellent. The teaching staff's commitment to education and their care for their students was obvious. Under the leadership of Mrs Sweeney the school is committed to the continuous and professional ongoing development of all the teaching staff. I enjoyed a lunch with the school leadership team during which we discussed a range of educational issues. Later there was an in-depth presentation on the educational improvements being conducted at the school, its engagement with the National Assessment Plan—Literacy and Numeracy process, its boys club engagement and also the school's strategic plan.

For more than 30 years St Andrews Public School has been committed to providing high-quality public education within the context of a strong discipline. The school believes that quality education comes from quality teaching and that every staff member—permanent or casual, experienced or new—is crucial to ensuring the very best education for our students. St Andrews Public School is involved in a community of schools that looks at developing and equipping its graduating students with a strong foundation for the rest of their lives. I had the most wonderful day as principal of St Andrews Public School. The school is an absolute credit to the students, parents and teachers, and I was glad that I could share a day with them and return the school to them in almost the same state in which I found it.

RECREATION SPORTS AND AQUATIC CLUB

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.31 p.m.], by leave: This afternoon I inform the House about the recent presentation awards and luncheon at the Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club. At the outset I am proud to advise the House that I am a patron of this great organisation with my current lower House colleague the member for Lakemba and our former upper House colleague Kayee Griffin. The other two patrons are John Murray, president of the Bankstown Sports Club, and Philip Sansom, Mayor of Hurstville. The Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club is a community-based not-for-profit organisation based in south-west Sydney that provides sporting, recreational and social opportunities for people with physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities. As well as providing opportunities for sporting events, the Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club also hosts social functions for its participants.

These functions include events such as discos and luncheons and they give the club's members a chance to socialise. The club receives some government funding but relies heavily on community support including Community Development and Sport Expenditure funding and funding from the local councils. I acknowledge and congratulate the Bankstown Sports Club for the facilities and funding it provides for the club. I also acknowledge Bankstown City Council, Canterbury Council, Hurstville City Council, Revesby Workers Club, the Canterbury Bulldogs and many other sponsors, including many local community businesses, for the valuable contributions they make to the club. I urge the State Government to consider providing further funding to this very worthwhile organisation.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the president of the club, John Gorrie, for his hard work and commitment to the organisation. I also acknowledge the executive officer of the Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club, Jenny Bombadieri, and pay tribute to her tremendous efforts in running the organisation. The athletes who compete in the Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club live with a variety of disabilities. However, they possess some extraordinary talents and abilities and they also have a great passion for life that belies any disadvantage they might also possess. Recently I attended the club awards presentation luncheon. In attendance were the Federal member for Banks, Daryl Melham, and the State member for East Hills.

We enjoyed the luncheon and presentation of awards and the day also featured entertainment provided by the club. I would like to congratulate the RSAC Dance Ensemble, the RSAC Drama Group and the CPA Young Stars for their respective performances on Sunday 17 July. I wish them well for the future and hope they keep enjoying and sharing their love of music and theatre. I also acknowledge the contribution of the Mayor of Bankstown, Councillor Khal Asfour, who was the main guest of honour at the luncheon. Together with parliamentarians and other councillor colleagues, he presented many awards.

The sports and the arts should always be available for everyone. I am proud that my local community has a cultural landscape that is inclusive rather than exclusive. The Recreation Sports and Aquatic Club was founded in 1987 and this was the twenty-fourth annual presentation ceremony. No doubt next year's twenty-fifth anniversary will involve many celebrations. I congratulate each and every one of the worthy award winners. In particular I congratulate the perpetual trophy winners for their achievements. Once again I commend the club to the House and look forward to working with the organisation in the future.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.35 p.m.], by leave: This afternoon I speak about some wonderful events that have been taking place in the Hawkesbury region over the past couple of months. Last Monday, 1 August, I had the great pleasure of launching the Hawkesbury Harvest Food Trail Map at the Apple Bar in Bilpin. Hawkesbury Harvest is an initiative that was undertaken 13 years ago by a group of people that included Alan Eagle. Hawkesbury Harvest works towards protecting the rural and scenic amenity of Sydney's rural hinterlands and surrounding regions from urban expansion by encouraging food production by the various farmers and artisans involved in activities related to things such as in cheese making, preserves, baking and chocolates. This community-based organisation, which was initiated back in 2000 by a small band of people, now has a formidable website and it supports our small- and medium-size farmers, of which there are many right across the Hawkesbury electorate.

Recently I was very proud to have the Minister for Ageing and Disabilities visit my electorate to have a look at a wonderful facility called Hear the Children Early Intervention Centre. Hear the Children, originally started by Yvonne Keane and some other wonderful people, teaches children who have a hearing impairment to learn and listen. The centre's methods are so effective that these children—who have hearing aids or a cochlear implant—can start mainstream kindergarten after going through this early intervention program and they do not miss out on anything. The Minister kindly donated \$50,000 to the facility, and we were very grateful to receive that funding from the New South Wales Government.

It is just another way the O'Farrell Government is supporting people across our area with a hearing impairment and disabilities. The Minister for Ageing and Disabilities travelled out to another wonderful centre known as Nordoff Robbins. Nordoff Robbins provides music therapy for a wide range of people, including people who are severely handicapped, and those people derive great benefit from going through the music therapy programs. Jillian Ritherdon has been an inspiration to the people at that centre and I am sure that the Minister was suitably impressed when he visited it.

Last Sunday my great friend Heather Smith launched her book. I grew up and spent a lifetime with Heather Smith. She was great mates with my friend Ian, who sadly passed away a couple of years ago. Heather worked at Windsor police station for just over two decades and she has written a book called *Leaving the Barracks*, which is a record of Windsor police from 1862 to 2010. We were blessed to have the presence of former police commissioner Ken Moroney at the launch and the entire Smith family were in attendance with Heather—Kevin, Mandy and Michelle. They were all very, very proud of their wife and mum, as we all are. We wish her the best and I certainly commend her book to the community.

On 1 August, every horse's birthday, I was privileged to attend the yearly Riding for the Disabled fundraiser. For the past decade or so Riding for the Disabled has provided a wonderful facility at Tall Timbers, Box Hill—it was originally at Kellyville. Riding for the Disabled offers a wonderful service for disabled people who marvel at being given the opportunity to ride horses there. The good people who have been involved with that association for many years, such as Kerry Souter, Karen O'Neill, Nicole King and Margaret Norman, deserve our respect.

Graeme Howells was recently welcomed to the Rouse Hill Anglican Church. Even though Graeme is formerly from Miranda—one of the southern areas of Sydney—he has been welcomed to the beautiful north-west. We wish him all the best as the new reverend of Rouse Hill Anglican Church. I also met some

wonderful people at the Boystown San Miguel Charity Race Day, which was held at my old stamping ground of Hawkesbury Race Club. I spent some time there with Paul Maher, the proprietor of Loxley on Bellbird Hill, and a considerable amount of money was raised for that worthy facility. They are but a couple of the initiatives, fundraising and events that I have attended in the Hawkesbury in recent times. No doubt there will be many more in the future.

ROAD TRANSPORT RULES

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.40 p.m.], by leave: Recently Mr Julian Borgert, Director of Operations for Structural Concrete Industries Australia Pty Ltd, approached me seeking my urgent help with a problem impacting on the operation of that business. He explained the difficulties with transporting over-mass and over-length items on certain roads because of rules that are being applied to limit the permissible times for the transport of large precast concrete items from the site. I visited the company's factory at Teralba and I was impressed by what I saw. Structural Concrete Industries Australia manufactures large structural building components for the civil construction industry. It employs a local workforce of around 100 people, and is also a significant employer of apprentices. It encourages the upskilling and self-improvement of its employees. All those people and their families depend on the ongoing viability of the business for their livelihoods.

Many of the engineered products are quite large and require transportation permits from the Roads and Traffic Authority, with police escorts en route to customers' sites. Mr Borgert informed me that the New South Wales Police Force, Northern Region, recently unilaterally dictated that none of these types of deliveries may occur during any school holiday period via the Pacific Highway between Twelve Mile Creek—just north of Raymond Terrace—and the Queensland border. Effectively, this means that for a 12-week aggregate period each year the company cannot transport its products to most northern destinations. That is a significant problem in itself, but if finished jobs cannot be cleared from the yard it also affects the factory's production capacity.

Structural Concrete Industries Australia is currently producing 166 prestressed concrete girders for the Bulahdelah bypass, but deliveries and production suffered an imposed two-week break in the July school vacation. For the entire Bulahdelah bypass project there will be a 10-week loss of production in total. The normal procedure is for these large items to depart at 1.00 a.m., under police and company escort, and arrive at Bulahdelah at 5.00 a.m. It is a two-lane divided carriageway all the way from the point where these large loads join the Pacific Highway. Little scope exists for more than a negligible effect on school holiday traffic, yet this will cause a 10-week production delay. This will also translate into a 10-week delay for major precast items scheduled to be produced for the Hunter Expressway.

Concrete girders from the factory are a major component in the State's bridge infrastructure, yet the constraints on transport interfere with the industry's capacity to supply. Only a limited number of vehicles are suitable for transporting these large items, so there is no reserve capacity to speed up the delivery process following one of these forced delays. Mr Borgert advised me that the new rules on transporting over-length and over-mass loads have been applied across the industry in an ad hoc and sudden manner, with no opportunity for discussion or consideration of the flow-on effects. The restriction on transporting these large items also appears to be confined to one administrative area of the New South Wales Police Force and to one section of its roads. In contrast, there are no problems transporting large items south to Sydney or north via the New England Highway.

The management of Structural Concrete Industries Australia is deeply concerned that this action by the New South Wales Police Force, Northern Region, is adversely and unnecessarily affecting the output of its factory and the job security of its employees. It further points out that the Lake Macquarie area is home to two of the State's major precast, prestressed concrete manufacturers, which means that a significant number of local employees stand to be adversely affected by this decision on the part of the New South Wales Police Force. Mr Borgert reports that on several occasions the company and its transport service providers have contacted the New South Wales Police Force, Northern Region, with a view to discussing the new rule and hopefully reaching a reasonable compromise. He reports that these attempts have been unsuccessful and that police have not pursued a course of action that reasonably considers the sustainability of the businesses.

Structural Concrete Industries Australia appears to be the victim of an unnecessarily bureaucratic approach to what is either a very minor problem, or perhaps no problem at all. If the overnight and early morning transport of large precast items were allowed to resume almost no-one would notice, but the viability of this industry would be enhanced and some of the State's largest infrastructure projects would benefit. I call on the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to investigate this matter with a view to finding a solution to what should be a simple problem.

REGENTVILLE RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [4.45 p.m.], by leave: In June this year I was pleased to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Regentville Rural Fire Service. As well as celebrating the sixtieth birthday of that service, it was a night for recognising a number of volunteers. Regentville Bush Fire Brigade, as it was formerly known, was begun in 1951 by a group of local residents and landholders under the guidance of the "father" of Penrith rural fire brigades, the late Arthur "Noddy" Downes. The brigade began with a borrowed trailer and very little else. During that evening of celebration a fascinating history lesson was delivered on the growth and modernisation of the Regentville Rural Fire Service.

Back in the 1950s it was located in a tin shed with no personal protective equipment for the volunteers. Volunteer crews rode on the backs of trucks. To keep warm in winter they fought for the middle seat in the trucks, which was positioned over the exhaust pipe. They used hand tools to fight fires, there were only six helmets available—the seventh volunteer missed out—and there was no training whatsoever. In the 1970s Regentville Rural Fire Service relocated to its current site on Jeanette Street, Regentville, and it was soon identified that regular meetings ought to be held to better inform and prepare people for fires. Today a magnificent, fully equipped, purpose-built station exists.

Through the blood, sweat and tears of its members and a "little" fundraising, the station is now an excellent modern facility, with meeting and training rooms, offices, technical communication systems, a third base for the vehicles, a huge carport, and an outside area that obviously includes the barbecue. The service has two Cat 1 tankers, a four-wheel drive pumper, a personnel carrier and a fire boat. Such is the experience and expertise of the Regentville Rural Fire Service that, whilst still serving our local and regional community, it has assisted in the Bondi storms, the Wollongong floods and the Victorian fires in January. I congratulate Rural Fire Service Superintendent Richard Petch, New South Wales Rural Fire Service Region East Manager Chief Superintendent John Parnaby, New South Wales Rural Fire Service Superintendent Brian Graham, Captain Glenn McCarthy and Lesley Smith for organising the evening.

Four national medals for diligent service were issued that evening. The first went to Christopher Harper, known as Grumpy. He received a national medal and a first and a second clasp for 38 years of diligent service. The second went to John Foster, known as Fuzzy. He received a national medal and first clasp for 25 years of service. Andrew Heffernan received a national medal for 19 years of service, and Michael Burg for 18 years of service. Two New South Wales Rural Fire Service long service medals were also issued. The first went to Henry Taylor, including a first clasp, for 22 years of service. The second went to Guy Baddock, for 11 years of service. Between them, those six gentlemen have accumulated 133 years of voluntary service to the community. I congratulate them and I congratulate all New South Wales Rural Fire Service volunteers for their selfless service in protecting our community.

HEXHAM SWAMP REHABILITATION PROJECT

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.48 p.m.], by leave: I thank the Acting-Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary, Government members and all staff for not bundying off at 4.30 p.m. today. Did members know that Australia is home to more biodiversity than any other developed country in the world and that it is one of the sixth most biodiverse nations on the planet? It is for that reason we must do more to maintain and protect our richly varied wildlife. Members should be concerned that more than 1,500 mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and plants are now listed as threatened and almost 3,000 ecosystems are facing extinction in this country. These statistics are all the more worrying when we consider that 80 per cent of Australia's plants, mammals and reptiles are endemic; meaning, the protection of many species relies solely on us as a country.

I am privileged to have the Hexham Swamp, an internationally-recognised wetland of approximately 2,000 hectares, right in the heart of the Wallsend electorate. Just west of Newcastle, it combines the freshwater of the Hunter River and the saltwater of the Pacific Ocean; thus creating a habitat in which many creatures thrive. For those of us living and working on a floodplain, flooding has been a fact of life—as it was for our ancestors. It was due to the devastating Hunter floods in 1955 that in the 1970s the Hunter Valley Flood Migration Centre constructed floodgates on Ironbark Creek within the swamp. While the intention was sound, the detrimental effect on the ecosystem of our swamp was not considered.

Many species have been unable to cope with the subsequent low levels of salinity. The freshwater system has replaced the mangrove communities that previously dominated the swamp, much affecting the

estuarine food chains in the area. Where salt-marsh plains once stood common reeds now stand, but they provide little nourishment to the birds and fish living in this environment. For this reason, three years ago private land owners, industry groups, the local community and the State and Federal Government came together to form the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project. The aim was to slowly re-open the floodgates and return the swamp to its natural state, with the hope that the ecosystems that once were in abundance would thrive again.

It is fantastic to see a project like this going ahead in my electorate. I was delighted recently to attend the group's meeting and learn that stage two of the project has been so successful. Stage two involved the partial opening of three floodgates and big changes were predicted. I was interested, upon reading over the stage two report, to see that once-widespread species are already beginning to reappear in the wetlands. Before the introduction of floodgates it was a fishing area renowned for its abundance of fish, prawns and other aquatic species. However, once the gates were in place such wildlife was unable to cope with the new conditions of the swamp and their populations dwindled.

It was great therefore to read about the different species that are slowly returning to the swamp, and the increasingly suitable conditions to house these species. I am sure all members are aware that the balance of the ecosystem is affected by its components—one small alteration can result in massive changes. Interestingly, since the floodgates have been opened there has been a notable difference in the types of birds now frequenting the swamp. Sightings of white-bellied sea eagles have increased and black-necked storks have been sighted—a bird that has not been seen in the swamp since the floodgates were erected. Jenny Castles of Shortland said to me:

As the facilitator of the Shortland/Wallsend Landcare group, and having lived in the area for about 47 years, I have seen many changes to the Hexham Swamp. I think it is marvellous for the environment what the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project is achieving. I can see the wetlands coming back to life and it is wonderful.

Not all the changes are so obvious, and it is the subtle changes that make all the difference. It will be interesting to hear about the progress of stage three, which will be underway soon. This phase will involve the staged opening and partial opening of eight of the floodgates, which means that big changes are likely to occur. I can only wish the project the best of luck from me and my constituency and thank those involved in it for their great achievements so far.

ETHICS CLASSES

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.53 p.m.], by concurrence: I speak today on the matter of ethics classes and the irresponsible proposal by Fred Nile that the classes be removed from our primary schools. The Greens campaigned for years to introduce ethics classes as an alternative to religion classes in State schools, and we were pleased to support the previous Government's ethics legislation. I have received a number of phone calls, emails and letters from constituents in my seat of Balmain—as I am sure many other members have—who are greatly concerned that ethics classes might be in jeopardy. Parents are particularly concerned that when there is no alternative offered to scripture classes, there is a wasted period of time when children are not offered learning opportunities. Instead they sit and watch videos, or they might do colouring in and other activities that we would not consider a constructive use of valuable learning time.

Of a total of 13 primary schools in my electorate, 11 are currently conducting ethics classes. I have received a great deal of positive feedback about the classes. Indeed, one of the pilot programs for the ethics classes was at the great Rozelle Public School in the electorate of Balmain. The successful implementation of the classes is testimony to their continued importance in our primary schools. Previous concerns about the feasibility of ethics classes in our schools have now been dispelled. Giving our kids the opportunity to attend ethics classes does not undermine religious education; rather, it provides an opportunity for all children to learn valuable life skills. Indeed, the very existence of these classes encourages inclusiveness, understanding and coexistence.

I thank the local residents for their support on this issue, the dedicated public school teachers and support workers, and the parents who have worked to ensure these classes are implemented successfully and are made available to our young people. I also thank the countless community members who have expressed their support and encouraged The Greens in our support for this issue. In particular I thank Mr Robert Smith, President of the Balmain Public School Parents and Citizens Association, who wrote a very eloquent letter to me on this matter. The peak parents' organisation in New South Wales has urged the Premier to support ethics classes. Both the Anglican and Catholic churches have recently acknowledged that ethics classes should not be

removed from schools. Bryan Cowling from the Anglican Education Commission, the church's peak education body in the Sydney diocese, recently told the Sydney Morning Herald: "I am comfortable with the current arrangements and so is the Anglican Church."

We must seek to live in communities that recognise and celebrate our differences. In our differences we are able to explore our capacity for empathy and genuinely ethical behaviour. If there is no alternative provided to religious education then some of our children find themselves excluded—and precious learning time is utterly wasted. If we cannot stand up for the right of every child to an equal education then we are failing our children and we are failing our communities. On behalf of the people of Balmain, I call on this Government to put the issue to rest and to unequivocally deal with this matter. The Premier has said that he will allow Mr Nile's bill to repeal ethics classes to be considered, leading to obvious concerns about a deal on the matter. And why are there questions? It is because Mr Nile is being treated more favourably than any other non-Government member in the Legislative Council.

For example, this morning during private members' business in the other place, the Government granted Mr Nile contingency—allowing his matter to jump the queue and be dealt with ahead of all other members' items in the order of precedence—to introduce his legislation to repeal ethics classes. Many of us fear that this is the down payment on Mr Nile's deal with the Government to guarantee safe passage of the Government's anti-public sector worker legislation through the upper House. Even more concerning was the way the Government then permitted Mr Nile to adjourn the debate today until 16 September. If the Government did not support Mr Nile's anti-ethics class bill it could have simply debated and voted on the bill without this artificial delay. Instead it was adjourned with support of the Government.

The Greens welcome debate and look forward to this bill coming forward at the next available opportunity. The Premier has said on numerous occasions that he will not repeal the ethics classes and he has not made any deals with Mr Nile. We genuinely hope that is the case, despite the special treatment that Mr Nile and his bill have received. The Greens' position and my position are clear. Parents, teachers, students and even the peak religious organisations have made their voices heard. I will work hard in my electorate with local parents and citizens associations, local schools and residents, as well as with teachers and parents organisations across New South Wales to ensure that this issue is not forgotten, although it has been deferred, and that it is consciously focused on by this Government and by the community of New South Wales so that ethics classes remain intact.

Private members' statements concluded.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I acknowledge that earlier today Vicki Dunne, MLA, a member of the Australian Capital Territory Parliament, was in the gallery.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 4.58 p.m.
until Monday, 8 August 2011 at 1.00 p.m.**
