

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Monday 8 August 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEWCASTLE AIRPORT

NORFOLK ISLAND

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.00 p.m.]: Today I inform members about recent developments at the State's greatest piece of regional transport infrastructure—Newcastle Airport. In recent results from the Airport Council International Airport Service Quality Program, an international regional airport survey, Newcastle Airport was ranked amongst the best in the world. The survey results are based on an average passenger's on-the-day experience at airports all around the world that have fewer than two million passengers annually. The joint owners, Newcastle City Council and Port Stephens Council, are proud of this community-owned asset as Newcastle Airport's results indicate that the airport is performing above the overall regional airport average for customer service standards. In the period from October 2010 to February 2011 Newcastle Airport ranked in the top 10 internationally for nine airport terminal services.

Of particular note, the airport ranked fifth for the delivery of customer service at the security screening point and sixth for internet access and wi-fi, which is provided free of charge at Newcastle Airport. Victoria and I recently experienced this exemplary service when we boarded a direct flight to Norfolk Island to spend a week in what truly is a marvellous place. With its quiet sheltered beaches, unique flora and fauna, friendly and accommodating people and fascinating history, I encourage everyone to visit. If members want a preview they should visit Port Stephens before they fly out. Discovered by Captain Cook in 1774, Norfolk Island was settled just six weeks after Governor Philip raised the flag just down the road from Parliament House. The first settlement was abandoned a few years later in 1814 and little remains of that settlement.

In 1824 Governor Brisbane was instructed to occupy Norfolk Island as a place to send "the worst description of convicts" and during the next 30 years the magnificent stone buildings, many of which are still there today, were built. The convicts, all of whom were male, suffered brutally and eventually lived in depravity, but they left a legacy of many magnificent buildings, most of which have been restored and are occupied today. The surviving convicts were transported to Tasmania in 1855 and in 1856 the Pitcairn Islanders were given Norfolk by Queen Victoria. Anyone who has researched the *Bounty* mutiny will recognise many of the surnames, both in the cemetery and of course amongst the current population. I was fortunate enough to meet Bryan Griffiths, a New Zealand dental surgeon, who signed a three-year contract seven years ago. I should mention that Bryan is addressed as Griff by everyone and the Norfolk Island telephone book has an index based on nicknames.

Griff took Victoria and I on a tour of the local hospital—a well-equipped hospital with friendly professional staff. The hospital has a fantastic relationship with Hunter New England Health, and Victoria recognised the ultrasound machine as one she calibrated as part of her university thesis a few years ago. I should add that Victoria immediately volunteered her services as a radiographer-sonographer locum if one was required. Griff introduced me to the Hon. Tim Sheridan, the Minister for Community Services in the Norfolk Parliament. Tim is one of nine elected members of Parliament and one of three Ministers. The Parliament is located in the old military barracks, one of the magnificent original second settlement sandstone buildings, along with a very modern courtroom, although for an island that has virtually no crime—probably because it does not have too many lawyers—the court seems superfluous.

When Janelle Patton was murdered in 2002, it was Norfolk Island's first murder since 1893. Griff told me that recently when he left the residence he had rented for his first six years on the island, the owner found the

door keys in exactly the same jar in which he had left them for Griff when he moved in. Tourism is Norfolk Island's main industry. Norfolk Island is an Australian territory and thus is duty free. Our Norfolk Air 737 landed at a modern airport, first constructed by the Americans in World War II. We took a *Bounty* tour with Pitcairn descendant Steve Borg, or "Borgy". Borgy hosted a fascinating tour of magnificent landscapes and historic places. The Norfolk Island school takes students from years 1 to 12. The school follows the New South Wales syllabus and teachers are recruited for three-year contracts from within the New South Wales education system. With no income tax and no land rates, the students benefit from the best teachers in our system.

I should mention that Borgy has a palm plantation, is a local actor, has a spot on the local radio station, and has a fishing charter called Just for Two—just enough passengers to pay for the fuel when he wants to go fishing. And one can be guaranteed of catching a fish—probably a good size trumpeter. Why am I talking about Norfolk Island on this chilly winter's day? I am doing so because tourism numbers have dropped since the global financial crisis, and I point out that Norfolk Island is probably easier and quicker to get to at a lower price than many Queensland destinations and all other international destinations. I encourage all members to give it a go, either out of Newcastle or Sydney, and when they get there, say hello to Griff, Tim and Borgy for me.

ABORIGINAL SERVICE PERSONNEL

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [1.05 p.m.]: I inform the House today of an issue of great import not only to the Blacktown community but also to New South Wales—to the history and unity of the Australian nation. Recently the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation in Seven Hills resolved to organise a committee to oversee further recognition of Aboriginal Australians who have served in past Australian conflicts. This committee will seek to redress the injustices done to Aboriginal Australians who have served in our nation's wars and the discrimination they have faced in the past and that continues to be a challenge for our community. This matter is particularly important to my local constituents in Blacktown, as Blacktown city has the largest urban Indigenous population in Australia, and I hope to see Parliament support the local Aboriginal people in their push for due recognition.

I commend the tremendous amount of time and effort put into this research project by Aunty Sandra Lee, elder of the Darug people, as well as all others involved, and I wish them the very best in achieving the goal of equal recognition for our forgotten peoples. So today I will do my part in raising the profile of this issue in the knowledge that by working together we can achieve a stronger society. When the First World War began, countless Aborigines attempted to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force to defend their country. Their motivations to do so were pure. Patriotism, loyalty to country, family and tribe, and ultimately a pursuit of equality with their Australian peers, were a number of reasons for which they took the initiative and enlisted in the service.

It is with great shame that I report that they were rejected outright from serving on the grounds of their race. Today the House should recognise that willing citizens, who were willing to lay down their lives for the love of this great nation that we share, were refused service because of a racially discriminatory policy. Furthermore, many Aboriginal Australians were arrested for leaving their prescribed areas in order to enlist to fight for their country—an injustice that Australia should never forget. It was only after the failed 1917 conscription referendum and a shortfall of available recruits that the Australian Imperial Forces reconsidered the enlistment of Aboriginal people. Even then, enlistment was restricted to those Aborigines with one European parent. Nevertheless, more than 500 Aborigines served in the war. History reports that during the war they served on an equal footing with their European counterparts in times of combat, with mutual goals and mutual struggles in the face of a powerful wartime opponent.

Upon returning home, however, the Australian community did not offer them the same reception it offered to non-Aborigines. Only one noted Aborigine received a soldier settlement scheme, whereby in recognition of the duties enacted the Australian Government offered wartime veterans land as a reward for their selfless efforts for the nation. I repeat: only one Aborigine benefited from this scheme, despite heroic sacrifices from that section of our community in one of history's bloodiest wars. The Second World War saw an even larger service to the country on the part of Aboriginal Australians. More than 5,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders offered their services to the war effort. Some went as far afield as Libya, Greece and Crete, with others serving closer to home in New Guinea, while many more stayed on Australian shores, prepared to defend their homeland, a duty they took up with pride when the Japanese bombed Darwin in February 1942.

There are many conflicts I have not mentioned to the House today. Aborigines served in the first and second Boer War, the Korean War, in the jungles of Vietnam, in countless peacekeeping efforts, and in the

current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The House should recognise on this day the incredible service Aboriginal people have offered to the Australian Defence Force throughout Australia's history and the essential work of the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation in ensuring their contributions are not ignored. I conclude with a quote from the archaeologist Howard Winters:

Civilisation is the process in which one gradually increases the number of people included in the term 'we' or 'us', and at the same time decreases those labelled 'you' or 'them' until that category has no one left in it.

Past conflicts have played a role in this process of civilisation by forcing communities to work side by side with a common purpose in defence of our great nation. But our history is not complete if we ignore our first peoples in its telling. The work of the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation in unifying our present with our past goes further than the Blacktown community; it stretches across New South Wales and further—across Australia—informing Australia of the heroic deeds carried out by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island citizens in conflicts gone by.

BULAHDELAH DEBUTANTE BALL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.10 p.m.]: On Saturday last I attended the Bulahdelah Debutante Ball as the guest of Bulahdelah Pre-School Inc. I congratulate Bulahdelah Pre-School and those involved in putting on such a wonderful night at Bulahdelah, including the director of the school, Gai Tooze, Hazel Sumner and her committee, the Master of Ceremonies, Roger Horton, and the matron of honour, Georgina Cunich. For the edification of members who are unaware of the tradition of debutante balls, they have been held in many areas over many decades and they are still important events in country communities. Debutante balls and other dances are the highlight of the social calendar in country towns and Bulahdelah has maintained that tradition over many years. The ball is held in Bulahdelah every two years and is a great fundraiser for the preschool.

Debutante comes from the French word "debuter", which means to lead off. In years past debutantes were part of high society; it was their coming out, if you like, and signified their availability for marriage. The tradition has changed somewhat in Australia and the debutantes at the Bulahdelah ball are usually high school girls in years 11 or 12 making their debut. In this case there were nine girls making their debut on the night with their escorts and may I say that every one of the girls looked very pretty. Maybe that has something to do with my age. They were well dressed and performed well. I am sure that I would not have said that when I was younger but now that I am older I can say that I looked at those girls and they certainly were very beautiful. The girls and their partners were: Stacey Crampton and Liam Mason, Mikaela Tooze and Jay Cutajar, Jade Sumner and Joel Clay, Elizabeth Martin and Kieren Fennell, Demi Cookson and Bradley Keaton, Ashleigh Roberts and Tyla Coghlan, Breeanna Gregory and Guy Germon, Tanna Mill and Mitchell Johnson, and Anjelica Sackley and Cameron Blackwood.

All the girls are in year 11 and all but two attend Bulahdelah Central School. One of those two is from Bulahdelah and had attended Bulahdelah Central School but now attends the Hunter School of Performing Arts in Newcastle. I congratulate the girls on keeping the tradition alive and I congratulate the committee on organising such a great night. After the presentation there was a dance and as the member for Myall Lakes it was my task to take to the dance floor. Watching someone dance on one leg was probably a bit amusing for some but my right leg does not work as well as it used to. I thank the committee for giving me the honour and privilege of receiving the debutantes on the night.

CAMPBELLTOWN CATHOLIC CLUB

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [1.15 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to update the House on the forty-seventh annual Campbelltown Catholic Club communion luncheon, which was held on Sunday 31 July. With more than 640 others I was privileged to attend the luncheon with my colleague the member for Wollondilly, Jai Rowell, the Federal member for Macarthur, Russell Matheson, and the Federal member for Werriwa, Laurie Ferguson. The day started with mass, which was concelebrated by Bishop Peter Ingham, Father Christopher Sarkis, parish priest of Our Lady Help of Christians parish at Rosemeadow, and other clergy. The church was filled with people from across the Wollongong diocese, which includes the mighty Macarthur area.

The guests then attended The Cube convention centre at the Campbelltown Catholic Club for a luncheon and fellowship. Mayor Paul Lake from Campbelltown City Council attended and presented the Campbelltown Catholic Club with a community service award for its wonderful contribution to the Macarthur

area. The Campbelltown Catholic Club is located in Campbelltown, the opal of the south west, and is just one of our major success stories. The club had its origins in 1964 at a working bee at St John the Evangelist Primary School when a number of parents who had slaved in the hot sun building classrooms decided over a beer that there had to be a better way to support Catholic schools. One of those men was Bill Meehan, who was a good friend of my father and a magistrate in the Local Court. This led to the idea that perhaps it would be better to start a club to support Catholic schools in the area, which was the genesis of the Campbelltown Catholic Club.

The club began with a small clubhouse in a paddock off Narellan Road, which at that time was considered to be some distance out of town. From those small beginnings the Campbelltown Catholic Club has grown to be one of Australia's premier clubs and entertainment precincts, winning multiple industry awards. The club itself is a magnificent building that has just about doubled in size every two years since its inception. It also encompasses Rydges Hotel, a quality 4½-star hotel, a restaurant and a boutique brewery. It also supports The Cube, the Campbelltown Convention and Entertainment Centre, which hosts a variety of top-class acts and conventions. In fact I was there on Saturday night for *Elvis to the Max*, and the place was full and jumping. I can tell members that Elvis was truly in the building.

The club also supports the Aquafitness and Leisure Centre, which is another leading award-winning organisation that provides health services to the Macarthur area. On Saturday I attended not only *Elvis to the Max* but also the meeting of the Tongan men's group at the Campbelltown Catholic Club. A range of community groups use the club, such as the Macarthur Justices Association. It is where I chose to have my local advisory community meeting; 60 members of the community came in to discuss issues that were important to them. The club is well run and has a wonderful board of directors led by David Olsson, with Mary Ellen Bland, Trevor Seymour, David McDonald, Leo Delissen, John Towers, Steve Carter, Alan Scott and the newest director, Peter Meadows.

The club's chief executive officer is Michael Lavorato, who has been well supported by Glenn Cushion, the operations manager. Glenn recently accepted a senior position with another club. The club has also been a wonderful supporter of Catholic schools, sports and culture in the Macarthur region. This year alone, the club donated more than \$800,000 to those causes. The club also has participated in campaigns to reduce the impact of alcohol and binge drinking, Don't Be a Random, and Youth Solutions. I am very proud to be a member of the Campbelltown Catholic Club.

CAMPSIE SALVATION ARMY NINETY-NINTH ANNIVERSARY

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [1.20 p.m.]: I congratulate the Salvation Army, Campsie, on its ninety-ninth birthday. On 21 June 2011, the Salvation Army in Campsie celebrated its ninety-ninth anniversary and began its centenary year in the Campsie community. I was invited by the Salvation Army in Campsie, along with Majors Glenys and Bruce Domrow, to a special annual event. Each year, the Bulldogs NRL Club has set aside one of its home games to focus on supporting the Salvation Army in Campsie. This "game day food drive" event has been happening for the past several years. Our Community Welfare Centre has greatly benefited on the day from the gifts provided by both the club and its supporters. I congratulate the Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs on yet another of its community-based initiatives. The Bulldogs are a longstanding and integral part of the Canterbury community. The game that day was between my beloved Bulldogs and the Cronulla Sharks, which resulted in a loss to the doggies. That was the only bad thing about the day.

The Salvos in Campsie continue to take an active involvement in strengthening community spirit, supporting individuals and families as well as rescuing the disadvantaged. As a "Bulldogs in the Community Partner", the Salvation Army was the focus for the Round 15 clash at the ANZ Stadium on 19 June. There were opportunities for all supporters to make a contribution to the great work of the Salvation Army. This year the Bulldogs generously donated \$15,000 to the Salvation Army's work in Campsie. On game day, a further \$1,614 was collected at the entry gates to the ANZ Stadium along with almost 300 items of donated non-perishable food items that went straight into the pantry of the community welfare centre.

In a collaborative performance between the Salvation Army Campsie and the Campsie Public School, 44 children from the school took to the field to perform with the Salvation Army Campsie Brass Band at half time. The Salvation Army's community welfare centre could be considered part of the necessary infrastructure of the Canterbury area. Capably led and managed, the Campsie community welfare centre is a regional centre incorporating 30 surrounding suburbs. Its small dedicated team assists people in crisis five days a week, 50 weeks a year. On weekends the centre provides a range of services. In the past six months alone, the Campsie

community welfare centre has distributed more than \$213,500 in assisting 5,400 residential clients within its area. The top three forms of assistance given were electricity vouchers, Woolworths groceries vouchers and food hampers, much of which is provided by organisations such as Foodbank at Wetherill Park.

As well, the Campsie community welfare centre currently provides assistance to 16 homeless persons by way of hot lunches, blankets, sleeping bags and clothing. Within the Campsie community welfare centre, clients are able to access our Moneycare Financial Counselling, which offers help with budgeting, bankruptcy and debt advocacy; the No Interest Loans Scheme program, interest-free loans up to \$1,500; and contact with an emergency relief housing caseworker, who assists several hundred families each year to remain in their homes by providing one-off rental assistance and mortgage relief. I also visited the Salvation Army Campsie After School Homework Help Club, which caters for more than 50 kids from local schools.

The scheme was developed in consultation with local schools and was commenced to help children who struggle with English. Volunteers help the children with their homework. Some of the volunteers have been with the club for a very long time. It is really heart warming and humbling to visit the After School Homework Help Club. These days the Salvos in Campsie connect with people from more than 40 different nationalities, providing a happy and safe place for more than 300 people each week in ways that meet the community's needs, such as the Fun Time Play Group, which is now in its twenty-second year. I look forward to the Salvos at Campsie's 100th birthday celebrations. I cannot say how proud they make me and how much good work they do in the community. They are an integral part of the Canterbury electorate.

ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.25 p.m.]: I know all too well the value of the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the unique service it provides to people in the bush. My daughter was born six weeks premature, weighing just two kilograms. She was safely airlifted from our home in Walgett to Dubbo where she was placed into a special care nursery and received treatment over the following two weeks. At that point I certainly learnt that life is precious and can quickly fall apart. Every day in many ways the Royal Flying Doctor Service delivers care to the farthest corners of our State and nation so that anyone who lives, works or travels in remote and rural areas of Australia can enjoy the best of health and access to health facilities. Without the work of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, many people's lives would not have been saved and they would not be with us today. The value of its service should be commended.

I was reminded of the indispensable nature of the service when I recently joined Her Excellency the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, for whom I hold great fondness and affection, at the re-opening of the refurbished Royal Flying Doctor Service base in Dubbo. The \$1.5 million redevelopment includes a new medical facility, an education centre and an auditorium for public education and training. The refurbishment will mark the beginning of a new era for Royal Flying Doctor Service operations in the Dubbo electorate and the Central West of New South Wales. The upgrade will make Dubbo a major clinical services hub similar in capacity to the service in Broken Hill, and will provide primary health care as well as inter-hospital patient transfers.

I am sure the member for Murray-Darling, Mr John Williams, endorses my expression of admiration for the service. I draw to the attention of the House the outstanding fundraising effort of the Dubbo community support group, which raised \$755, 000 towards meeting the total cost of the redevelopment, \$1.5 million through fundraisers, raffles and public donations. The Rotary Club of Dubbo South alone raised \$200,000 and a Dubbo entry in the iconic Outback Car Trek raised \$200,000—outstanding examples of community contributions to support our iconic Royal Flying Doctor Service. All the fundraising was achieved during drought and at a time of great economic strain throughout the Dubbo region.

Since the second Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft commenced operating in January 2010, the flying doctor has performed 300 more emergency medical transfers out of Dubbo—and the number of medical transfers continues to increase—while significantly reducing its response times to patients in the Central West. In the first six months of its operation, the flying hours of the service out of Dubbo increased by 28 per cent. A second aircraft was purchased with a 60 per cent Commonwealth Government grant and community funding. In my inaugural speech I referred to the need to relieve communities from waiting for health infrastructure and services as a consequence of a failure to deliver. We can no longer deny a city or our communities access to cancer and cardio treatment services that can be found readily in some Third World countries. We no longer need to deny vital infrastructure that is required for our State's growth. I am pleased that the Royal Flying Doctor Service has been able to bridge the gap in services delivery. Continuation of its role will require ongoing support, and I can certainly assure the service of my ongoing support as Dubbo's member of Parliament.

I also draw to the attention of the House that in addition to fundraising associated with the redevelopment, the community has raised just short of \$1 million towards the cost of the Royal Flying Doctor Service base, which is simply outstanding. Revisiting the Royal Flying Doctor Service base in Dubbo highlighted to me how much the people of this State benefit from the dedication of the doctors, nurses, specialists, allied health professionals and administrators associated with it. It was truly a humbling experience to see how these men and women, as many people throughout regional New South Wales do, strive to improve access to health care for those of us who live in regional areas.

INDIA DAY CELEBRATIONS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [1.30 p.m.]: I inform the House that yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the India Day Fair 2011 in Parramatta Park, organised by the Council of Indian Australians and one of my constituents, Dr Yadu Singh. At the fair I was to find out that Indians are lucky enough to have two national days each year—Indian Independence Day, celebrated on 15 August, and Indian Republic Day, celebrated on 26 January. As the Indian-Australian community will not pass up any opportunity to celebrate their country and their contribution as Indian-Australians, it is probably wise that these festivities are spread over two days rather than one.

In my brief time in Parliament I have learnt that the Indian-Australian community sure know how to have a celebration. There was singing and dancing and other festivities which celebrated the wonderful and diverse cultures of our Australian-Indian community. Yesterday's event was a terrific celebration of the success of multiculturalism in this country and a tribute to the wonderful contribution Indian-Australians have made to our Australian way of life. With over 7,000 people in attendance the day was a stunning success and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the organising committee, which included Subbarao Varigonda, Stanley D'Cruz, Praful Desai, Keyu Desai and Ssail Wadhwa. They did a terrific job and I am looking forward to the next event they host.

The fourth most common overseas country for people in my electorate of Hornsby to be born in is India. Hindi is the fifth most popular language and nearly 2,000 people in my electorate have Indian ancestry by having at least one parent born there. I look forward to seeing the latest figures in the census taking place this week. However, I do not need to look just at statistics to see examples of the good work of the Indian community in my electorate. When I attend events like the India Day Fair I see Indian-Australians from all walks of life making a positive contribution to the Australian community. I see people like Dr Yadu Singh working with government to ensure that Indian students in Australia are given a fair go. I see people like Marla Metha working to ensure that the Hindi language is incorporated in the new Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority curriculum.

I see people like Pradeep Singh-Gill and Gurdeep Singh working hard to support our local Sikh community. Most importantly it is because of people like this that the Indian community sees itself as Australian as well as Indian. Our community is made all the richer by its culture. Australia and India's shared history stretches right back to the First World War when Indian and Australian troops fought side by side in the Gallipoli campaigns. Through thick and thin India and Australia have stood side by side. As the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of India I join with my Federal counterparts in calling for the Australian Government to allow the sale of uranium to India—a country that is making a concerted effort to reduce its own carbon emissions.

Most importantly, India is a country that aspires towards a society based around equality of opportunity, democracy and a free press. On my upcoming trip to India to participate in the Asian Forum on Global Governance, I hope to raise the issue of the strong support of the Australian Coalition parties of exporting uranium to India. On my trip I hope to portray Australia as a safe and worthwhile place for Indian students to come and study. I know that people like Yadu Singh and the Council of Indian Australians are not alone in their work in the community. The richness of our community is made all the more so by the contribution of Indian-Australians across our State. I thank them for all the good work they have done and will continue to do in the years ahead.

ABORIGINAL SERVICE PERSONNEL

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.34 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to a cause near and dear to my heart. A gentleman in my local community, Richard Archibald from Tarrawarra, along with the Illawarra-based Kokoda Aboriginal Servicemen's Campaign Committee, is raising funds for Richard and his family to go to

Kokoda and pay tribute at his Uncle Frank's grave site. This has been an ongoing battle for Richard and many of his family. It is important from an Aboriginal perspective for him to be able to pay respect to his fallen uncle, and I am looking forward to trying to assist him to raise money. A fundraising function is occurring at Corrimal RSL Club, in my electorate, on 20 August.

This is particularly important for Aboriginal people because their customs associated with someone's passing or death are part of the many customs that demonstrate their culture. Richard is no different. He has been fighting to try to get to the New Guinea for some time and he has been leading a campaign for Aboriginal service men and women to be more appropriately recognised in this way. It was pleasing to hear the Leader of the Opposition and member for Blacktown, John Robertson, talk today about the importance of the contribution made by Aboriginal men and women in defending our country. Mr Archibald's uncle, Private Frank Archibald, joined the 2/2 Australian Infantry Battalion in 1940, serving in Tobruk and Greece before arriving in New Guinea for the famous campaign to hold back the Japanese advance. For some time Mr Archibald has sought assistance from government departments and private entities to try to support this cause.

It is time governments looked to make this type of assistance possible through small grants and discretionary funds that Ministers have available. Albeit small amounts, they would go an enormous way towards the healing of the local community and Mr Archibald. This man is not asking for a free trip; he is not asking for a holiday. He is asking to do something that many of us take for granted, that is, to pay respect to his loved one, his family member, in the traditional Aboriginal way. He is not in a position to be able to fund this trip for his family himself. I am pleased that the local community, through a variety of different avenues, is getting behind this cause. I look forward to supporting Richard. It is something that we need to look at supporting more often. We need to look at recognising this, as the Leader of the Opposition talked about today. The Government needs to look at ways that small discretionary amounts of money can be applied to these important causes.

They are not asking for large amounts. They are not asking for recurrent funding. Mr Archibald is simply asking for a small grant that can be set up to enable Aboriginal people to pay their respects in the traditional Aboriginal way to their elders and the loved ones they lost on battlefields overseas. This is very important in the electorate of Keira because we have one of the largest proportions of Aboriginal people living in the electorate. They are proud and robust in their views. They have been working with me closely on a range of issues. This is certainly one I am happy to support. I am looking forward to attending the fundraising function, and I hope that all of us on both sides of the House can look at more flexible ways in which small grants can be allocated to important community groups to enable them to pay tribute to their elders and to give them the appropriate send-off and the appropriate respect that is so important in all our communities, but in particular in the Aboriginal community.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.39 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Keira on his contribution. I will be raising the issue with Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victor Dominello, and I encourage the member to do the same. The member paid tribute to Aboriginal servicemen. There is an Aboriginal ex-serviceman, known as Cookie, in my electorate. He was a field engineer in Vietnam. As his regiment was about to be transported back to Australia, he was cleaning his weapon for the last time and shot himself in the foot. So, he was there three months longer than anybody else. He now voluntarily goes into South-east Asia and clears landmines that were left by the enemy at the time. I asked him how he found them. He said the people who laid them are with him, showing him where they are, but they do not know how to defuse them. I thank the member for his contribution.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [1.40 p.m.]: Today I call on all members of the New South Wales Parliament to add their voices to growing community support for a National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is long overdue. The draft report from the Productivity Commission has outlined a scheme that will provide adequate funding and provide security for those who suffer significant congenital or acquired disabilities. I am aware that today the Prime Minister has announced some details in relation to the scheme of the Productivity Commission. I encourage the Federal Government to implement this scheme. Bringing this scheme under a national umbrella will also remove the inefficiencies and anomalies of the current State-based system. The draft plan does not contain extra costs for the States. Very importantly, they will continue to contribute at their current rate of \$4.5 billion, with the Commonwealth picking up the remaining funding responsibility to double the current budget to \$12.5 billion.

The scheme is revolutionary. It will guarantee coverage to all Australians and also place the decision-making power firmly in the hands of families through a process of self-directed funding. In effect this means that people with significant disabilities and their families could gain access to the services and programs they need at the time they need it most. Next week I am co-convening a forum in Armidale with the chief executive officer of the Ascent Group, Kevin Mead. The campaign director for the sector's peak body, National Disability Services, John Della Bosca, has agreed to attend and address the forum. This House would be well aware of the former Minister's dedication to improving the lot of people with disabilities in this State. National Disability Services and Carers Australia are also strongly supportive of the commission's draft plan.

The commission presented its final report to Government on 31 July 2011 and there is widespread awareness that strong community support for a National Disability Insurance Scheme is necessary to persuade the Federal Government to adopt and implement it. I am sure that every member of Parliament has encountered the frustration of people with disabilities and their families who cannot access the help they require and feel disempowered by the restrictions and red tape they encounter on a daily basis. Over the past two decades there have been great improvements in the disability sector. People with disabilities are no longer hidden away in institutions and special schools. They have become a visible part of the community, participating in mainstream schooling and in the workforce as never before.

It is often said that the measure of a society can be found in the way it treats those who are most in need. This scheme proposed by the Productivity Commission is one for our time and will benefit not only those born with disabilities but those who acquire them through illness and accidents. It recommends two schemes: one that would be like Medicare, in that all Australians with a significant disability would get long-term care and support. A second, smaller scheme would cover the lifetime care and support needs of people who sustain a catastrophic injury in an accident of any kind. The smaller scheme would be based on motor accident compensation schemes, a matter I have raised a number of times in this place over recent years.

The larger scheme proposes changes to provide sufficient funding to address long-term waiting lists and overcome the overlapping and frustrating form filling and bureaucratic processes that bedevil the sector. It would fund individuals to meet individual needs, rather than provide block funding to agencies to provide services. National coverage would mean people could move between States and not encounter the delays and excessive red tape as occurs at present. All Australians would be insured. Packages of assistance would be provided to all people with significant disability whose needs could not be met without taxpayer funding. It would pay for long-term high-quality care and support. It would provide referrals to other services that are required and ensure the quality of those services. Services such as health, public housing, public transport and mainstream education and employment services would not be covered by the scheme but the National Disability Insurance Scheme would provide referrals to them.

The scheme would fund aids, appliances, home and vehicle modifications, community access supports, respite, specialist accommodation support, domestic assistance, transport assistance, specialist employment services, therapies such as occupational and physiotherapy, counselling and specialist behavioural interventions. It would cover case management, local coordination and development, crisis emergency support and guide dogs and assistance dogs. The forum in Armidale will provide a great deal of detail, and I urge all members to support this scheme.

GREENWAY PROJECT

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [1.45 p.m.]: I refer to an issue of great importance in my electorate and indeed in the inner west, that is, the inner west light rail extension including the GreenWay walking and cycling shared path and bushcare sites. When Labor was in government it committed to a \$500 million investment in the light rail network for Sydney, including extending the existing light rail service from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill station in my electorate. This followed extensive community campaigning, supported by both myself and the former member for Balmain, Verity Firth, amongst others.

The inner west light rail extension will improve transport access and provide important cross-connectivity in the inner west. There will be nine new stops, and it will mean passengers can transfer between light rail and a number of bus routes, as well as railway stations at Lewisham and Dulwich Hill. It will also enhance local access and amenity along a disused rail corridor. Importantly, the GreenWay will provide recreational and transport opportunities for the local community and a chance to regenerate bushcare sites. Our decision to extend the inner west light rail and GreenWay was warmly welcomed by people in the inner west.

For example, on 27 July 2011, the Mayor of Ashfield, Councillor Ted Cassidy said that the implementation of the GreenWay cycling and walking path as part of the light rail extension was a once in a generation opportunity to provide an integrated and environmentally sustainable transport corridor for inner west residents.

Substantial progress was made with the project prior to the election, including extensive public consultation and a formal public exhibition of the Environmental Assessment and development approval by the Minister for Planning. Preconstruction work also occurred on refurbishing the tracks and on the GreenWay, with the first part of the project to be from Marion Street Leichhardt to the existing bike network at Lilyfield Road. I want to focus particularly on the GreenWay, which links the Cooks River cycleway at Earlwood to the Iron Cove Bay Run at Haberfield. The GreenWay Trail is planned to be completed as part of the inner west light rail extension, with the shared pathway running parallel to the light rail service. It will create a north-south bush link or urban green corridor, including community bushcare sites which provide valuable habitat and stepping stones for native flora and fauna.

Significantly, support for the GreenWay began as a grassroots initiative which started gathering momentum in 2001, and it continues to involve many community groups working together. Local environmental advocates were inspired to develop the GreenWay project after seeing what was being achieved elsewhere in Australia and overseas. The inner west freight corridor seemed a natural fit due to the long, shallow valley created by the rail corridor. Local residents have also been involved in bushcare work at sites along the Hawthorne Canal. The bushcare program they began now covers six sites within the corridor. The GreenWay has secured the support of local councils at Ashfield, Leichhardt, Marrickville and Canterbury and is now an integral component of key local planning strategies.

The GreenWay will provide significant recreational, environmental and transport benefits for the inner west. There are 23 schools within the GreenWay catchment and the opportunities for families to cycle for both pleasure and transport, in what is a very built up urban area, have been welcomed by the people of my electorate and in the inner west. In the past few weeks significant community concern has been raised about the current State Coalition Government's commitment to the GreenWay Project as part of the inner west extension of the light rail. There are strong indications that the Coalition is considering axing the GreenWay project in the coming budget, and this has alarmed people across the inner west. I certainly hope that is not the case.

The Premier has already made it clear that the forthcoming budget will be a horror budget, despite 16 years of strong economic management by the New South Wales Labor Government, leading to the Coalition inheriting a robust budgetary situation with its triple-A credit rating intact. We are hearing about cuts to community services, health, corrective services and now the GreenWay due to this Government's inability to manage the budget. Despite numerous requests from friends of GreenWay, and others, to the Minister for Transport to confirm the Government's commitment to implementing the GreenWay, the Minister has failed to do so.

This is extremely concerning. The benefits of the GreenWay are many, and its implementation as part of the extension of the light rail to the inner west clearly makes sense. Labor in government was committed to this and allocated an appropriate budget to allow it to occur. I call upon the Minister for Transport and the Coalition Government to clearly confirm their commitment to proceeding with the GreenWay as part of the light rail extension, and that the Government will not reduce funds for the project in the forthcoming budget. I intend to circulate a petition amongst my electorate and others about this matter. I know it will receive substantial support. The GreenWay Project is very much welcomed by residents of the inner west, and I hope to see it continue.

HUNTER BUSINESS CHAMBER ANNUAL AWARDS

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [1.50 p.m.]: I congratulate the Hunter Business Chamber on its annual awards night held on Friday 5 August, but more importantly I congratulate the winners of awards in the various categories. The Director of Hunter Medical Research Institute, Professor Maree Gleeson, was named Hunter Business Chamber Business Person of the Year. Professor Gleeson has led the institute since 2006. On the night of the awards, chamber president Brett Derwin said:

"Under her directorship HMRI has developed and implemented business strategies to enhance health and medical research in the Hunter region and to promote research. Professor Gleeson has led the project team that facilitated the funding, design and construction of the new HMRI Building which has helped put the Hunter at the forefront of this field."

The Hunter area is incredibly proud of the achievements of the Hunter Medical Research Institute. It is one of Australia's leading medical research institutions. The award of the president went to the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation for its outstanding contribution to regional charities and welfare support groups. The foundation makes an enormous contribution to our community.

Funding of approximately \$1.5 million a year in cash disbursements is available for distribution to not-for-profit community organisations across the Hunter, Central Coast, Mid North Coast, New England and Northern Rivers regions. This level of funding is expected to increase over time. To date the foundation has supported more than 190 local community projects from Woy Woy in the south to Lismore and Ballina in the north with grants totalling \$6.5 million. BHP Billiton was the recipient of the Newcastle Port Corporation's sponsored award of the chamber for Contribution to the Region for the \$600 million remediation of the Hunter River. This enormous project has improved the condition of the river and enabled future development on a strategically important parcel of land.

Rebecca Wilson from Newcastle Airport was named Young Achiever of the Year. She contributes to the Hunter region through her position at Newcastle Airport and in addition devotes an enormous amount of time to charitable causes. It is important to our region not to lose people of her talent to larger centres, for example, Sydney. C-E Solutions was also named as winner of the Small Business Excellence Award. This is a dynamic Hunter-based company specialising in systems engineering and systems integration.

Pace Setters and Pegasus Management were named joint winners of the Business Achievement Award as the judges were unable to differentiate between them. This was a first for the awards. People and Quality Solutions Pty Limited, a firm of organisational and industrial psychologists established in the 1980s, was named as the winner of the Excellence in Safety Award. This firm provides organisations with the tools and support to achieve and sustain their own safety cultures. Compass Housing Services won the Ausgrid sponsored award for Environmental Sustainability. Compass makes an enormous contribution across the State in the provision of affordable housing. Morisset Multipurpose Centre won the Water Savers Award and Newcastle Taxis was named winner of the award for Customer Service by their sponsor Telstra.

The chamber also honoured three of the region's best known businesspeople with life membership: engineer Ian Pedersen, who has made an enormous contribution to our region through his work with the chamber and during the earthquake recovery; businessman Paul Murphy OAM, a past president of the chamber, who has been a tireless advocate for Newcastle and our region. He will continue to ensure our city has a strong voice; and Neville Sawyer AM, who was a director of the chamber and in addition led both the New South Wales and Australian chambers. Neville's contribution to our region and to New South Wales has been profound and he is a very worthy recipient of Life Membership. I congratulate those life membership recipients.

In summing up, the Hunter makes an enormous contribution to the New South Wales economy. In turbulent economic times the role of business generally is critical and nowhere more so than in the Hunter, which is arguably the engine room of the New South Wales economy. I commend the chamber for their work as the peak body for local business. I commend the chief executive officer and president, Brett Derwin, as well as Kristen Keegan, and I commend the winners for their contribution to the economy of the Hunter and New South Wales.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1:54 p.m.]: I congratulate the Member for Charlestown for bringing the annual awards of the Hunter Business Chamber to the attention of this House. As stated earlier, it is gratifying to see that Rebecca Wilson from Newcastle Airport has been named Young Achiever of the Year in those awards. I remind those members who are not fortunate enough to represent a Hunter electorate that the Hunter Business Chamber is an independent representative organisation for Australia's largest regional business community, an adviser, a forum, a source of information and a point of access for its 1,000 members. I again thank the member for Charlestown for bringing the successful award recipients to the attention of the House.

DENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [1:55 p.m.]: New South Wales has the lowest funding per capita for public dental services of any state or territory—only \$23.20 per person. In comparison, Tasmania spends \$54.61 per person. Oral health impacts on quality of life and other health concerns and is one of the greatest areas of health inequity. Oral health is a major concern to low income constituents of my electorate and the constituents of all members—pensioners, Housing New South Wales tenants, boarders and lodgers, homeless

people and disadvantaged and low income people as these people have significantly worse oral health and the most difficulty getting dental treatment. They report painful dental conditions that prevent them from being able to eat, causing significant embarrassment and shame.

I have heard of dreadful situations where people have to blend all their food so they can eat it or they cannot go to a cafe or eat with other people because their teeth are so bad. Some have told me that they never open their mouths or smile, and keep away from other people because they know their mouth smells from an infection or disease. These individuals say they are not able to afford dental services and have to wait long periods for public dental treatment. While some constituents have chronic deterioration, others have suffered serious accidents or injuries that have left them with major oral health problems.

The majority of oral health care is provided by private dentists; however, people on low incomes may not be able to afford fees for private dental services. Sydney Dental Hospital has long waits for dental services for low income earners and does not provide more complex procedures. More than 132,000 people are on waiting lists for public dental services in New South Wales, with more than half waiting at least six months for treatment. Although more than half of the population are eligible for public dental services only 13 per cent of New South Wales dentists work in the public sector. As the member for Sydney, I have consistently called for expanded public dental services for people in need and for an oral health policy, expanded funding for public dental services, more public dentists and public clinics and priority to low income and disadvantaged groups.

The New South Wales Government provides most public dental services with special programs for school-aged children. There is limited Commonwealth funding for specific programs such as the Teen Dental Program and Enhanced Primary Care for people with complex health needs, for example, people with HIV. I commend those people and organisations who are improving access to dental services by organising special programs. Mission Australia's Dental Clinic provides much-needed dental care for chronically homeless people by staff funded by New South Wales Health, the only service in my electorate that treats homeless people. Homelessness service providers link homeless people into this clinic or refer people to private dentists if they fit the tight eligibility requirements for Medicare payment. The Dental Hospital's special needs programs for people in Juvenile Justice Centres and Boarding Houses are vital for these groups.

Filling the Gap is a charity recruiting volunteer dentists to provide dental treatment in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the National Dental Foundation links dentists up with opportunities to provide free dental services for people in need. Others, such as the Australian Society of Orthodontists, the Give a Smile program and Red Cross Dental days for refugees recognise the gap in dental services. However, public dental services and volunteer programs cannot hope to meet need. People who hold government concession cards are eligible for public dental services. However, there seems to be no good reason why there should not be universal access to dental treatment as with Medicare. Even with these restrictions on access there are delays of months or years for public dental treatment, with the system unable to cope with the high demand for services due to lack of funds, limited public clinics, and workforce shortages.

The National Health and Hospital Reform Commission recommended a national Denticare scheme for universal access to basic oral health care as a key priority. I ask that the New South Wales Government lobby through the Council of Australian Governments for a national public dental program. Until there is a national system, I call upon the New South Wales Government to increase funding for public dental services so that New South Wales comes up to the funding levels of other States. We need strategies with more flexible service models to enable more dentists to provide public treatment. Health and community service workers need training to identify and refer oral health concerns. We need more emphasis on preventing dental problems.

Private members' statements concluded.

[The Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.59 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr Peter Nagle, former member for Auburn, who is joined by members of a Chinese delegation, including Mr Chow and Mr Lee of Shanghai City Council, guests of the member for Auburn. I acknowledge also the parents of the member for Auburn, Mr Ralph and Mrs Susan Abood, and the member's cousin visiting from Lebanon Father Elias Kaawe. I acknowledge also the presence of Mr Bob Wilson, who does a fantastic job with Bravehearts, and his guest Mr Shasha Chandler. Welcome to question time in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]

MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Was he aware that the member for Tamworth failed to register as a lobbyist despite admitting that he continued to operate his government relations company Centreboard Media for at least two months while he sat in this Chamber?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: After the performance last week of those opposite the Leader of the Opposition has an absolute hide to ask such a question. Imagine any members of the Labor Party lifting their heads this century to talk about lobbying. The member for Heffron no longer can raise her head because Eddie and Joe are not here to hold the strings.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order. My point of order relates to decency. This House is robust but there is no need for the leader of this State to make personal references that are beneath him.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I was simply quoting that excellent line of the member for Toongabbie on his departure from the job of Premier. We will not take ethics lessons from those opposite until they know how to spell the word.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For 16 years public interest was sold out time and again for political interests and the interests of those who sat on the government benches. They ran government like a bad family company—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —for the benefit of themselves and with their hands in the till the whole time. Have they learned anything?

Government members: No.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: On 9 and 10 July they held their Labor conference. For \$2,500 anyone could have a one-on-one meeting not just with the bloke who has not let his locks down but also with the chiefs of staff and policy advisers. Opposition members ask this question. They keep leading with their chins.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Their conference was in July. The best value for money was being able to meet with the Hon. Tony Kelly. That sums up all that has been wrong with those opposite.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Over half the time has elapsed for the answering of this question and the Premier has gone nowhere near answering it. It is a very simple question: Were you aware that the member for Tamworth—

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the question. The Premier will return to the leave of the question. At this stage the Premier is being relevant to the question. I cannot direct the Premier to answer the question or how to answer the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I was about to ask the Minister for Fair Trading to investigate whether anybody had to pay anything to meet with the member for Maroubra at the Labor Party conference. The answer to the question is no. I am advised—it was clear when I campaigned with the member for Tamworth—that he ran a media business. I am advised that the media business was never a lobbying business.

Mr Michael Daley: Answer the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Hang on. If it is not a lobbying business why is he registered as a lobbyist? That was the question, you dope. The other point I want to make is, as the member for Tamworth was reported in the Sunday newspapers as saying, he has not been involved with the company since the election. Appropriately, he sought to absent himself from the company. I am advised that there was one ongoing project. That project concluded in May. That project did not involve the member for Tamworth. I repeat: Members opposite have apology after apology to make to the people of this State. The Government received a report today that shows the sorts of issues Opposition members were involved in. They cut corners for political interest and cut corners for their mates. We have introduced legislation to toughen up lobbying legislation.

The legislation successfully bans something the Labor Government refused to do. When the member for Toongabbie attempted to introduce that legislation he was knifed in the back. Secondly, we have put in place provisions to stop Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries engaging in lobbying in their areas for 18 months after they leave Parliament. We will continue to operate honestly, openly and transparently. Members of the Opposition should not apply their standards to the Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that Standing Order 128 states that questions should not contain imputations. The question from the member for Maroubra clearly contained an imputation of an improper motive. Such imputations should be made by way of a substantive motion. If Opposition members ask questions containing imputations I will rule them out of order.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: It is not ridiculous, it is the standing order. I call the member for Maroubra to order.

BARANGAROO DEVELOPMENT

Mr ROB STOKES: My question is directed to the Premier. What action will the Government take to implement the recommendations of the review of the Barangaroo development?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Pittwater for his question and for his long-term interest in good planning—planning based on public interest. As members would be aware, the Minister for Planning initiated what he described as a short, sharp review of the regulatory and planning processes to date around Barangaroo. The Minister initiated the review so there could be no doubt about the integrity of the project. The integrity of the project was virtually destroyed by those opposite over their 16 years of handling public projects such as this. That review was conducted by Meredith Sussex, AM, and Shelley Penn. The review identified a number of concerns about the way in which the project has been handled to date. For instance, the report said there has been a lack of transparency around the project and the need for the Barangaroo Delivery Authority to upgrade its approach to consultation, to communication and to transparency.

The report also noted that trust had broken down between the City of Sydney and the Barangaroo Delivery Authority. I am determined to rebuild that trust. That is something I spoke to the Lord Mayor of Sydney about earlier today. The report said the project was "bedevilled by perceived conflicts of interest". The report also raised serious concerns about the way the hotel on the harbour was approved. It said that despite a number of prohibitions the Minister intervened directly, using part 3A provisions to override the prohibitions, and the outcome was not a good public policy outcome.

In fact the review said it looked and felt like an ambush to a number of those who had been involved in the bidding process for the project. The review panel suggests that Lend Lease relocate the hotel elsewhere on the site as a gesture of goodwill. That is a policy I strongly support. The project was far from perfect under the former Labor Government. However, the report found no major breaches of procedures in relation to the planning and implementation of Barangaroo. I am pleased to advise the House that the Government is committed to proceeding with the project.

Ms Linda Burney: That's fairly important.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What the report did find—I commend this to the member for Canterbury—is the arrogance with which the project was undertaken. Secondly, late in the last term the Minister for Planning directly made decisions that should have been referred to the Planning Assessment Commission. Over time Barangaroo will be home to 23,000 workers. Additionally, up to 33,000 people will visit the site each day. We will implement a range of changes to maximise the success of Barangaroo and restore confidence in the project. That includes appointing Mr Terry Moran, the outgoing Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as Chair of the Barangaroo Delivery Authority.

The board of the Barangaroo Delivery Authority will have the job of implementing the recommendations of this review. It will deal with issues such as contamination, the location of a cruise ship terminal, and the suitability of Headland Park as a site for a proposed cultural facility. It is our intention to get on with the planning and development of the three commercial towers on the site and to restore investor confidence. A task force to be led by Transport for New South Wales will develop an integrated transport plan for Barangaroo, which was so lacking under those opposite. We will be adopting the recommendations of the review panel to bring responsibility for the Barangaroo Delivery Authority into the Premier's portfolio.

As the report states, the quality of the design work at Barangaroo is something to crow about—but how can the community support the project if they do not know what is going on? How can the public support it if the professionals seem to be in constant conflict? This Government will get Barangaroo back on track and the community behind the project, and it will deliver a world-class development for the people of New South Wales. This Government puts merit ahead of mediocrity and the public ahead of political interests. It is also determined to deliver for the future generations of this city and this State.

MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

Mr CLAYTON BARR: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Why did the Deputy Premier allow the member for Tamworth to use his photograph to promote his business, which offered advice on grant funding applications and government liaison, while he was serving as a member of this Parliament?

The SPEAKER: Order! I have some concerns with the tone of the question.

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is a shame that five months after a State election in which the public of New South Wales sent the Labor Party a massive message, members opposite still have not heard it. We have been meeting in this House for months and months but members opposite have not asked questions about resolving transport issues, fixing the health system or repairing this State's economy. All we have heard, day in and day out, is grubby questions that indicate the Labor Party still has not heard the message sent to it on 26 March. The public of New South Wales wants to hear about policies from the Labor Party; it does not want the gutter politics that led to its drubbing on 26 March.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The Deputy Premier was asked a specific question but he is not answering it. Madam Speaker, I ask you to bring him back to the question.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The other lesson that the New South Wales Labor Party has not learnt is that it should stay well clear of any advice and counsel associated with the Hon. Walt Secord. He is the bloke behind this completely irrelevant witch-hunt directed at the member for Tamworth. The Hon. Walt Secord never lets a few facts get in the way of a good story, and I am not the only person who has said that.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73, which states that imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on members of either House are disorderly unless they are raised by way of substantive motion. Members opposite should read it.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is exactly my concern about the question. The member should be careful about raising that point of order, given the questions that are being asked.

Mr ANDREW STONER: That is yet another display of double standards by members opposite. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 12 June this year contained a quote about the Hon. Walt Secord from Bruce Hawker, who should be familiar to members opposite. He said:

"He was creative," ... "He could always muster up a [positive] story from virtually nothing. You need someone like that in government."

It is a pity that the former Speaker and Leader of the House, John Aquilina, is not here to tell us about how he mustered up a story from virtually nothing. I am sure members remember the old Cecil Hills story and the smoking gun that led to the end of John Aquilina's career as Minister for Education and Training.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will return to the leave of the question. He is now deviating from it.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I could equally ask who authorised the photograph of the Leader of the Opposition in this fundraising pamphlet.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields should not try my patience.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The Deputy Premier is using a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the Deputy Premier about the use of props.

Mr ANDREW STONER: They are desperate. The Premier has told the House that the member for Tamworth has had no involvement whatsoever in the business since the March election and that the business was wound up in mid-May. Despite that, members opposite continue to pursue this issue. I understand that the photograph was taken in 2006 when I was campaigning with the member for Tamworth. I was aware that the photograph was on the website because the member for Tamworth was not active in the business, which was not a lobbying business. Members opposite should get better material and not listen to the Hon. Walt Secord.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Will he update the House on recent events in the global economy and their impact on New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for his question and for his interest in the economic management of this State. It is good to talk about an issue of interest to the State rather than a conspiracy theory cooked up by members opposite. The United States rating downgrade and the recent decline in global markets are a stark reminder of our vulnerability to global economic events. It also reinforces the importance of preparing for future fiscal shocks. Late last week Standard and Poor's downgraded the United States' credit rating from triple-A to AA+—the first such downgrade in 70 years. That has significant implications for New South Wales and the impact is now being seen on global financial markets. We have seen a significant equities sell-off and an increase in the cost of credit, which results in an increase in the cost of doing business.

The impact on the Australian stock market is well documented and tens of billions of dollars were lost last week. At one stage this morning \$27 billion was wiped off the market. Even before the historic United States credit rating downgrade the pace of growth in the global economy had slowed. That has caused the International Monetary Fund to revise down its outlook for world growth in 2011. The factors causing that are well-known and include the sovereign debt crisis in the euro zone; China's attempting to slow its economy to ease inflationary pressures; and the slowing pace of the post-global financial crisis recovery in the United States—and that will be exacerbated after the events of recent days.

We have entered a period of economic uncertainty for Australia and New South Wales and the economic mismanagement of the former New South Wales Labor Government has left this State dangerously exposed to these external shocks. The former Treasurer and the former Minister for Finance left us with debt and deficits at exactly the wrong time. The incoming Coalition Government found out that, contrary to Labor Government claims on the eve of the election, the budget forecasts did not suggest surpluses but deep and growing deficits.

Indeed, the audit of the State's finances conducted by Michael Lambert found that the budget situation had deteriorated by \$4.5 billion since the mid-year review and that there was a previously undisclosed blowout in costs associated with the solar scheme which left an overall black hole of about \$5.2 billion. Treasury also said that if expenses continued to grow at the rate set by the former Government the triple-A rating would have

been lost within two to three years. The Labor Government left a legacy of debt, deficit and, ultimately, deceit and this Government is determined to turn that around. We are seeing the impact across the world of governments responding to global events when they have lost control of their budgets.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This Government is determined to reverse the Labor Government's failure to prepare our economy for these economic shocks and to put the New South Wales budget back onto a sustainable footing.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will not respond until the Leader of the Opposition has something sensible to say, and that will be a long time.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Here in Australia and across New South Wales business confidence has weakened, employment growth is moderating and consumers remain cautious—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members opposite are not interested in the economy. Consumers remain cautious and consumer confidence is now below average levels—Those factors are made worse by the proposed carbon tax. If members want one suggestion of what would restore confidence in the Australian economy it would be the scrapping of the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax. That is what is rattling households. The events of the past week have caused some concern but the Government has already moved to boost the economy with its Jobs Action Plan. When businesses need support this Government is providing it. When the housing construction industry needs support this Government is abolishing the homebuyers' tax. This Government is trying to support businesses and the economy.

This economic uncertainty reinforces the need for a strong budget position in New South Wales. Now is not the time to be risking our triple-A credit rating and we need the capacity to absorb global shocks. However, this Government has inherited a structurally weak budget. It is nothing like the budget that was left to the Federal Labor Government by John Howard and Peter Costello with projected surpluses and zero net debt. In New South Wales we inherited the opposite. Labor always thought tomorrow would never come. Today we have global challenges. The O'Farrell Government will continue to look at all options to support our economy and our businesses while we face these economic headwinds. The first thing we need to do is get the budget back under control so that we can help our economy.

BARANGAROO DEVELOPMENT

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. In light of the Premier's description of the previous Government's decision to remove control of Barangaroo from the former planning Minister as a "slap in the face" and an indication that the team was not up to doing the job, why has the Premier now removed Barangaroo from his control?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It is a pleasure to be asked a question by a member who knows nothing about planning. Every step this Government has taken and the aim of every one of the members on the Government benches has been about bringing back integrity and transparency to planning. Every step we will take from now on will be to make sure that transparency and integrity remain part of the process. The member on the Opposition backbench second from the end with her head permanently planted down, a former planning Minister, destroyed integrity. In fact, on the Opposition side a succession of Ministers in the Planning portfolio destroyed integrity.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Canterbury should listen very carefully.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: She never does.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Shrill and dopey.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: You had better get on the nitrous oxide. You look better when you're on it.

Dr Andrew McDonald: I refer to Standing Order 73. The Minister has made a personal reflection on another member and it is disorderly.

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the Minister about using that sort of language. I uphold the point of order. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am immensely proud of what we have achieved in the first 120-odd days of our Government. We have sent a clear message to the whole State that we are serious about bringing back transparency and integrity to the planning system.

Ms Anna Watson: What have you done?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: If the member does not know, she should go back to her electorate and talk to her councils. She will find that they are happy that part 3A, the rotten dollars-for-deals legislation, has gone. To have made the achievement we have with Barangaroo in just over 100 days is incredible.

Ms Linda Burney: Why haven't you got the job?

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It is difficult to answer the question when the member will not listen. She should listen because this is a serious issue for the State. It is the biggest deal in the Southern Hemisphere. Barangaroo needed to be given back a sense of community ownership and integrity. A number of steps were taken by the former Government that, sadly, diminished that sense of integrity. One of them was the switch-off of the requirement to remediate contamination under State environmental planning policy 55, as well as a number of other steps. The report undertaken by the reviewers that we appointed highlighted doubtful processes around the approval of the hotel on the harbour. I recognise a variety of views exist about that in the community. Some have said that a hotel on the harbour will be wonderful and a great exclamation mark. Others believe, as does this Government, that we should not give away our harbour for private development. As the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, I set about appointing a reviewer outside the Sydney and New South Wales framework. We took advice and appointed two reviewers—I did not know either of them—and they have done an amazing job.

Mr John Robertson: You will be rewarded.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Leader of the Opposition should listen because it is important.

Mr John Robertson: I was just singing your praises for doing a good job on the report. That is how you are rewarded.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Page 83 of the report highlighted that the actions of the previous Government caused a conflict of interest between the regulator and the operator. Effectively, a Minister should not be involved in an issue of regulation versus operation. It is a simple concept. On a project as large and important as Barangaroo, where the previous Government destroyed community confidence—

[Interruption]

The Leader of the Opposition should listen; this is important. As the report stated, on a project where the previous Government had destroyed community confidence, it was critical that there was separation of the roles. I am 110 per cent supportive of that concept. The Premier and I are in total agreement that there must be a separation. As we move forward and try to negotiate with Lend Lease, I will be able to supervise probity issues. I will bring the integrity, transparency and the light that the Opposition took away for 16 years.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Dr GEOFF LEE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. What is the Government doing to boost medical research in New South Wales?

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Parramatta for his excellent question. His constituents use many of the wonderful facilities at Westmead Hospital, including the research precinct. I will talk more about that later.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The O'Farrell Government is committed to boosting medical research and delivering on our election commitments. I am pleased to say that we are on track in delivering. We have created New South Wales's first Office of Medical Research within the Health portfolio. We have secured \$27 million base funding for the Medical Research Support Program, with more to come in the budget. We have started development of New South Wales's first 10-year Health and Medical Research Plan, which will be developed by a review team headed by Mr Peter Wills, Deputy Chairman of Research Australia.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The team comprises: Professor John Shine, Executive Director of the Garvan Institute, and Scientist of the Year; Professor Mary O'Kane, New South Wales Chief Scientist; Professor Bruce Dowton, Harvard University Medical School; Professor Don Iverson, University of Wollongong and Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute; Professor Nick Saunders, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle and Hunter Medical Research Institute; Dr Christine Bennett, Chair of Research Australia; Professor Stephen Leeder, Menzies Centre for Health Policy, and Chair of the Western Sydney Local Health District Board; the Hon. Ron Phillips, former Minister for Health, and Chair of the Sydney Local Health District Board; Ms Elizabeth Carr, Chair of the Macular Degeneration Foundation; and Professor Margaret Harding, Pro Vice Chancellor of Research at the University of New South Wales.

I am pleased to report to the House that as part of the plan to undertake an extensive consultation process, which began on 20 July, a call for online submissions has received to date 35 submissions, with 257 submissions partially completed. As of today, 8 August, individual interviews and 12 group interviews have been concluded. A great deal of interest has been shown in the development of this research plan, as we knew would occur when we announced the plan and policy when in opposition. Dr Christine Bennett said at the time:

Research is a critical activity of a high-quality health system that is innovative and continually strives to apply best practices. Whether conducting basic research or evaluation and applying new evidence, health and medical research is key to continuing improvement in health care.

Dr Bennett and others welcomed this review to be conducted by Mr Peter Wills. I said at the commencement of my answer that I would speak about Westmead Hospital. The Government has also provided funding for a number of capital works upgrades. In particular, we promised \$30 million for the Westmead Millennium Institute.

Mr Nathan Rees: That was promised three years ago.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am pleased the member for Toongabbie has reminded me of that. The member, as Premier, responded to a question from Tanya Gadiel, a former Labor member who now serves on a local health district board. He said:

The Government has a fundamental commitment to supporting our medical researchers, pledging \$30 million towards the construction of a new research facility on the Westmead Millennium campus.

What did those opposite do? Absolutely nothing. That is why we have made this commitment. I, along with some of my colleagues, was present at the turning of the first sod for the development of that establishment. The sum of \$20 million was also promised towards the upgrade of the Children's Medical Research Institute. Those

in the area have identified the Millennium Research Hub as being fundamental to medical research that will really make a difference. Mr Ray Williams, the wonderful member for Hawkesbury, helped me dig the soil. Today I spoke with Professor Peter Schofield about approving a \$6 million grant for the Neuroscience Research Precinct at Prince of Wales Hospital—a great deal for medical research in New South Wales.

COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

Ms ANNA WATSON: I direct my question to the Minister for Local Government. Further to the Minister's answer last week to a question about council amalgamations in which the Minister praised so-called collaborative arrangements between councils, will the Minister rule out forcing councils to merge services such as road maintenance, rubbish collection and libraries?

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: I thought I made it pretty plain last week that the Government's policy is one of no forced amalgamations of councils. The Government is in favour of reform in local government, and a lot of local councils, to their credit, have engaged in collaborative arrangements and resource sharing. The Government will not force councils to engage in those activities but it commends those that do. I remind the member for Shellharbour that the O'Farrell Government gave democracy back to the people of Shellharbour and Wollongong in one of its first actions upon winning office. The people of Wollongong lost their democratic right to elect council because the council was corrupt. The member for Wollongong will remember the investigation by the Independent Commission Against Corruption into Wollongong council—

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: I refer to relevance. I ask the Minister to return to the leave of the question. My question was: Further to the Minister's answer last week to a question about council amalgamations in which the Minister praised so-called collaborative arrangements between councils, will the Minister rule out forcing councils to merge services such as road maintenance, rubbish collection and libraries?

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

Mr John Williams: To the point of order. I ask the Minister to make his answer even more simple—members on the other side are pretty dumb.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Government members will come to order. Opposition members will listen to the answer in silence. The Minister has the call.

Mr DONALD PAGE: The Government is not forcing council amalgamations; nor is it forcing collaborative agreements or resource-sharing arrangements. But I point out to the member for Shellharbour that the Government recently amended the Library Act precisely to allow different councils—

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: The Government is not forcing amalgamations of councils, nor is the Government forcing arrangements on councils. I was about to indicate to the member for Shellharbour that the recent amendments to the Library Act enable libraries to make collaborative arrangements and, where appropriate, have one or two library services covering a range of council areas. That is intelligent reform. We are very proud of what we have achieved in our first four months in government. The local government sector is very supportive of our Government, whereas the former Government was completely disengaged from it. I take this opportunity to thank the Local Government and Shires Associations of New South Wales for their support in developing a roadmap for reform in local government over the next 25 years—and the next four years, in particular—in what is being called "Destination 2036". I have invited all council mayors and general managers to attend a two-day conference in Dubbo on Wednesday and Thursday next week. We will discuss at that forum where local government can go over the next 25 years.

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: The Government is keen to ensure that local government is a sustainable sector. In reality, many councils—especially small councils—have a very small ratepayer base and are struggling financially to maintain basic services. Some councils can offer only road maintenance services, and no more.

This issue needs to be considered, and it will be done in a constructive way. I am pleased that many councils—there are 152 councils in New South Wales—have indicated that they will be attending the forum and they want to engage in dialogue with our Government about local government reform. The Government is giving them the opportunity to have a say, whereas the former Government regarded local government with contempt. As I said at the outset, the O'Farrell Government is not about forcing council amalgamations or collaborative arrangements.

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I address my question to the Minister for Fair Trading.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent. I cannot hear the question.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: What are the results of the recent solar audit in north-western Sydney?

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Castle Hill for his question and for his interest in this issue, which affects his electorate. I can confirm that investigations by NSW Fair Trading into solar installations made under the former New South Wales Labor Government's bungled Solar Bonus Scheme have revealed problems similar to those exposed during Federal Labor's Building the Education Revolution scheme and the pink batts scandal. Not only was Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme a financial disaster for the State, it has clearly resulted in significant problems for those who raced to get panels onto their roofs to cash in on the lucrative rates being offered. This will come as no surprise to the public, given the very well detailed fiascos—

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: —that were, and continue to be, Labor's pink batts and Building the Education Revolution schemes. Now we have clear evidence of another Labor-led debacle that has burdened and hurt taxpayers. In June, Fair Trading audited 658 grid-connected solar panel systems installed on homes in north-western Sydney—at Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Kellyville and surrounding suburbs. We all remember this, don't we?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The Minister was about to use a map as a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Minister about using props.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for giving me time to familiarise myself with this Labor conference document. What are those guys running over there? This is a bigger wholesale operation than Costco. It appears from this that you get them cheaper when you buy them by the dozen—but I digress. On 29 June the audit results were announced by the Premier and me, and they were published on the Fair Trading website the same day. Some 122 major defects were identified in that program—that is, an 18.5 per cent rate of major defects, meaning almost one in five installations had major issues. The audit also found that almost two-thirds had some form of minor defect.

Mr John Robertson: What were they?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: We will get to the defects.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is no wonder the member for Blacktown did not want the audit. He tried to put up a smokescreen and discredit the audit because he did not want to let his constituents know that his failed solar scheme had made almost one in five solar installations in his electorate potentially unsafe. But those on this side of the House and the people of New South Wales know that there is one dodgy installation that has more complaints than any other—that is, Sussex Street's work in installing the member for Blacktown as Leader of the Opposition. Unfortunately, despite the great work that Fair Trading does, no amount of rectification orders can fix the mess that exists on the other side.

However, Fair Trading's first priority is safety and requiring those responsible for the faulty installation to fix their defective work. Four Sydney electricians have been served with orders relating to major defects on

multiple solar panel installations, which meant the immediate suspension of their licences for 60 days. They have also been served with notices requiring them to show cause why they should not be subject to further disciplinary action. The previous Government allowed all this to happen due to its incompetence and culture of cover-ups. When it comes to electrical safety—

Mr John Robertson: You don't know anything about it.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Neither do you. When it comes to electrical safety, consumers must be able to have confidence in relation to work done in their homes. Proper process should not be disrespected because when it is corners get cut, advice gets ignored and spasms of stupidity occur as bureaucracies are forced to deliver ill-conceived programs—and I am speaking about those on the other side of the House. My main priorities are to ensure that the people of New South Wales are safe and that electrical systems are installed in accordance with safety standards, and to take action against installers of defective and unsafe panels. Fair Trading will continue to carry out targeted audits of solar panel installations across New South Wales, and will take disciplinary action where required.

In addition to Fair Trading's work, I strongly urge the Federal Government to release the data it has collected from its own solar panel installation audits. Access to this information is important for consumer safety and will help identify substandard installers and get defective work fixed. It is time for Captain Solar to tell his Labor mates in Canberra to stop stalling and give NSW Fair Trading what information they have collected from their audits to enable this Government to protect consumers. If the Leader of the Opposition is serious about solar safety he will pick up the phone to his Labor mates and get them to release the findings of the Federal audit and be as accountable to the people of New South Wales as the New South Wales Government has been.

HOSPITAL DATA

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. How was Darwin? In light of the Premier's recent remarks about the need for greater transparency in the reporting of hospital data—

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

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: —will the emergency waiting times for September, which will not be reported in the next issue of *Hospital Quarterly*, ever be released?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Here we go again. One would think the Opposition would steer clear of talking about openness and transparency. I made freedom of information requests every month for years on end to get data about elective surgery waiting lists out of that lot on the other side of the House when they were in government. I assure the Opposition that there is going to be far greater transparency not only about waiting lists but also about emergency departments, about infection control, about a whole range of things, including how many patients are currently waiting in emergency departments.

Dr Andrew McDonald: When?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: You just wait; it will come to you in good time. It will be quality information that is accurate—unlike the information that the former Labor Government provided to the people of New South Wales on the number of people waiting for elective surgery. We discovered that there were some 30,000 patients, or thereabouts, more because the former Government would not allow doctors to put people on the waiting list. The Labor Party provided flawed data when it was in government; it was not worth the paper it was written on. Our data will be accurate and provided through the independent information bureau, which will be enhanced—

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: What about the emergency departments?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The emergency department data will also be provided through that bureau. Currently we are carrying out a series of audit reviews to determine the accuracy of the basis on which we began. The former Government's information was so flawed that there was no way we could rely on it. There are many issues related to accuracy and transparency. For the first time we have real-time information about what is happening in our emergency departments. We are going to have information about how many patients

are getting hospital-acquired infections—which was reported at the weekend as one of the outcomes of the meeting in Darwin that the member for Macquarie Fields so kindly asked about. Yes, there will be reporting about medical—

[Interruption]

No, it was not just the Federal Minister; it was all States, led by New South Wales in particular. In the policy we released in March 2009 we called for much greater openness and transparency in reporting everything that is happening in our health system.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will cease interjecting.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It will come. I suggest that if the member for Macquarie Fields wants to get stuck into health issues he looks at the totally flawed data that the former Government used. The shadow Minister for Health has been going around hospitals trying to drum up negative comments, but in fact everyone is very positive about the sorts of things we are doing. On the 18 hospital visits that I have conducted so far—when we spent half a day at each hospital, as opposed to the half hour spent by the shadow Minister for Health—people have told us that everything has been much better since the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has been in office.

MAJOR EVENTS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. What recent success has the Government had in attracting major sporting events to Sydney and New South Wales?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I thank the member for Tweed for his question. He is a member who really appreciates the benefits that tourism and major events bring to the economy of our State. Yesterday the Premier and I were extremely pleased to announce yet another two sporting coups for Sydney and New South Wales. The Football Federation of Australia has signed a four-year partnership with the Liberal-Nationals Government to host top-class football in our State. Sydney is to be the home of the Socceroos in their quest to make the 2014 FIFA World Cup finals in Brazil, and that is just part of a wide-ranging package of international football slated for New South Wales.

The first game under this agreement will see the Qantas Socceroos play Oman on 11 October, giving Sydney its first match since the Socceroos defeated Paraguay 1-0 almost a year ago. In fact, Sydney will host not only the round three qualifier against Oman but also two round four qualifiers if, as we expect, the Socceroos progress to that stage. In addition to these three Asian World Cup qualifiers, the home leg of any 2014 World Cup Asian play-offs will be held in New South Wales. As the Premier said yesterday, the entire country and international viewers will be watching our Socceroos begin the exciting journey to Brazil, and Sydneysiders and interstate and international visitors will be able to be part of it in our global harbour city.

But that is not all. Part of the agreement with the Football Federation of Australia includes two Qantas Olyroos qualifiers for the 2012 London Olympic Games, and New South Wales regions will not be left out. At least one of those Olyroos matches will be held in the country because we want to take international football to as many parts of the State as we can. The Olyroos matches will include games against Uzbekistan on 27 November and Iraq on 14 March 2012. It is the road to Brazil for the Socceroos and the road to London for the Olyroos—and both roads start here in New South Wales.

This Government made an election commitment to bring more major events to New South Wales as part of our strategy to rebuild our economy through tourism, and sporting events such as these are part of that strategy. These football events play an important part in the major world-class events calendar of New South Wales, and we are thankful to Football Federation of Australia chief executive officer Ben Buckley for his role in this wonderful partnership with the State Government and Destination NSW in bringing this exciting sporting package to New South Wales.

We have also announced the return to Sydney of Davis Cup tennis, with the important tie between Australia and Switzerland to be played on the grass courts of the Royal Sydney Golf Club at Rose Bay from 16 to 18 September. It will be wonderful for our team to take on the Swiss on these historic courts, once the home courts of Sir Norman Brookes, whose name adorns the Australian Open men's trophy. Sir Norman played

39 Davis Cup matches for Australasia between 1905 and 1920, and these courts last played host to a major tennis tournament in 2001, when Alicia Molik and Nicole Pratt led our Federation Cup team to victory. The Davis Cup is an iconic event in world tennis and Australia is one of the most successful Davis Cup nations. I am sure we all wish our Davis Cup captain, Pat Rafter, and his team the very best of luck in their endeavours. Football and tennis are just the latest coups for New South Wales.

Let us not forget that we have secured the Bledisloe Cup for 10 years. Under the former Government's arrangements, neither Sydney nor New South Wales hosted a Bledisloe Cup in 2011. We have also secured the World Netball Championships, the Australian Open Surfing at Manly, the Australian Badminton Championships, The Red Bull X Fighters World Tour, Tiger Woods for the Australian Golf Open, and the 2015 Touch Football World Cup. This Government promised to bring major sporting events back to New South Wales and it is keeping that promise. We intend, in partnership with the recently established Destination NSW, to re-establish New South Wales as the premier State and restore New South Wales and Sydney to their pre-eminence as the major events and sporting capital of our nation.

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

DEATH OF NANCY WAKE, AC, GM

Ministerial Statement

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.11 p.m.]: It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Nancy Wake, fearless World War II resistance fighter, leader and one of the most decorated servicewomen of World War II. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I extend my sincere condolences to her family and friends. Nancy Wake was actually born in New Zealand, but she immigrated to Sydney—in particular North Sydney—at the age of two and later attended North Sydney Girls High School. She worked as a nurse and then a journalist, living in New York, London and Paris, and it was in Paris where she witnessed the rise of the Nazis and the invasion of France. She was parachuted into France. She joined the Maquis resistance groups and was a courier in the famous resistance network of Captain Ian Garrow.

Nicknamed The White Mouse by the Gestapo because of her ability to evade capture, Nancy Wake was their most wanted person by 1943. Ms Wake coordinated resistance activity prior to the Normandy invasion, led attacks on German installations and local Gestapo establishments, and was involved in leading 7,000 resistance fighters in D-Day preparations. She was praised for her fighting spirit, amply demonstrated when she killed an SS sentry with her bare hands to prevent him from raising the alarm during a raid. After the war, Ms Wake worked in the Intelligence Department of Britain. She returned to Australia to contest the 1949, 1951 and 1966 Federal elections, running as a Liberal candidate in the electorates of Barton and Kingsford Smith. Although unsuccessful, in 1949, competing against the then deputy Federal Leader of the Opposition, Dr Herbert Evatt, she came within 250 votes of unseating him.

After living in Sydney and Port Macquarie, she returned to London following the death of her second husband in 1997. Her first marriage ended when her French husband was killed during the latter stage of the Second World War. Nancy Wake was one of the most decorated servicewomen of the Second World War. She was awarded no fewer than 11 wartime medals and recognitions from New Zealand, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. Australia did not honour Nancy Wake until 2004 under the Howard Government. Just before she was offered that medal—and this comment demonstrates the spirit of Nancy Wake—she was asked about the lack of decorations from Australia and she said:

The last time there was a suggestion of that I told the government they could stick their medals where the monkey stuck his nuts. The thing is if they gave me a medal now, it wouldn't be love so I don't want anything from them.

She was tough and feisty to the end. Two bestselling books have been written about her life: one an autobiography and the other by Australia's greatest storyteller, Peter FitzSimons, called *Nancy Wake, A Biography of Our Greatest War Heroine*. Australian and British television series have been screened about her life. Ms Wake was regarded as a heroine in France, which decorated her with its Legion d'Honneur, as well as three Croix de Guerre and a French Resistance Medal. She received a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2004. She also received the United States' Presidential Medal of Freedom. Ms Wake's medals are currently on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, and I encourage people who visit that establishment to look at them.

The passing of Nancy Wake is a reminder of the heroism and fortitude of the Second World War generation, one that is now in its twilight, but whose legacy of freedom won at great sacrifice we continue to enjoy today throughout the nations of Australia and New Zealand. Nancy Wake was a genuine hero who embodied the ANZAC spirit that so infuses our self-understanding: unflinching in the face of danger and unselfish when circumstances so clearly required determined action. Nancy Wake is one of that generation who plucked the flower of freedom from the nettles of oppression and tyranny, and has dedicated us to the freedom we enjoy today.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.15 p.m.]: I support the statements of the Premier. Nancy Wake served as a British agent during the latter part of World War II and was also known as the White Mouse, a name which the Gestapo gave her. We remember the brave actions that Australia's most decorated World War II servicewoman undertook. She was a leading figure in the Maquis group of the French Resistance where she acted as both a courier and as part of the escape network that was used to save the lives of thousands of Allied troops. After escaping to Britain she joined the Special Operations Executive in preparations for the Normandy invasion. On the nights of 29 and 30 April she returned to occupied France via parachute, where she became a liaison between London and the local Maquis group that was headed by Henri Tardivat. It should be noted that the Special Operations Executive sent 39 female agents into the field, 13 of whom did not return. Her fighting companions from all Allied nations praised her fighting spirit.

We pay tribute to the life she led: a selfless life and a life full of constant danger. She was hounded by the Gestapo, who tapped her phone, intercepted her mail and put a 5 million franc price tag on her head. Tragically, her service to Allied countries even resulted in the death of her husband, who died while being tortured to reveal her whereabouts. Although Nancy had been awarded several international honours including the George Medal, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Medaille de la Resistance, it was only in 2004 that she received the Companion of the Order of Australia, and in 2006 the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association Badge in Gold. Before this time her brave actions attracted no decorations from the ANZAC nations. As the Premier has said, the quote attributed to her when she finally was given the decoration by Australia speaks volumes about this courageous woman. I join with all members of this House in paying tribute to Nancy Wake, her tenacity, her service to our country and her incredible life.

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

PETITIONS

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

Pet Shops

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

Inner City Public Housing

Petition requesting that no inner city public housing stock be sold and that funding be increased for housing maintenance, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Drink Container Deposit Levy

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

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

Northern Beaches Hospital Facilities

Petition requesting the upgrade and retention of hospital facilities, including the development of a level 5 hospital for the northern beaches, received from **Mr Mike Baird**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**Transport Policies**

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [3.19 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority because we have not heard a single coherent statement on transport policy from those opposite for at least a decade. I could go even further. In 2009 the *Sydney Morning Herald* took it upon itself to conduct its own public transport inquiry in an effort to provoke the former Government into action. It was ignored, even though it was chaired by Mr Ron Christie, a respected former senior transport bureaucrat; the same person who delivered transport during the Sydney Olympic Games and who was head of both rail and road agencies for the former Labor governments. But it was typical that professional advice from Government agencies was simply ignored; it appears that inexperienced and ignorant politicians knew better than a man who delivered successful transport services during the Sydney Olympic Games.

I acknowledge that transport was the subject of many grandiose plans by the former Government. In a former role as a general manager in the Roads and Traffic Authority, I cannot forget the promises made in the now discredited Action for Transport 2010, released in November 1998. Indeed, we have had no shortage of announcements. Over the past 16 years New South Wales has outperformed all the other States in at least one area: making announcements and re-announcements that would give the impression that something was being achieved in transport. My motion must be given priority because, in contrast to the great number of announcements, the disturbing fact is that very little was achieved during that period. This lack of achievement has affected profoundly New South Wales.

It is no coincidence that the economic fortunes of this State were going south, literally and figuratively, at the same time as roads and transport were discarded into the former Labor Government's too-hard basket—a basket that grew into a shipping container by the time the community passed judgement on the former Government. If the economy of New South Wales is to be restored, if the quality of life for the people of New South Wales is to be improved, we must get on with the business of proper transport planning and more efficient transport service delivery. That will be difficult, given that a legacy of the former administration was that few businesses were willing to do business in an area of government services that a number of professionals described as "frustrating", "confusing", "wasteful", "lacking any real leadership" and "just plain ignorant". They said:

It appeared that the Government had stopped taking advice from its own specialist agencies.

What a damning indictment of the former Government. This motion should be accorded priority because two of the most recent and worst examples of incompetence and waste included the now infamous CBD to Rozelle metro, at a cost of about \$500 million. Having done nothing except annoy our local community in inner-western Sydney and distract valuable resources, the former Government should have been busy building the North West Rail Link. This debacle added more delays to every other major transport initiative that was worthy of more resources. The equally scandalous Tcard project should have been delivered in time for the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

The Tcard has still not been delivered; that is \$100 million in direct costs wasted. Even worse, when it is finally delivered in 2015 the projected cost may be up to \$850 million more than when it was first costed for delivery in 2000. If that is not enough, the former project is in the subject of a legal dispute that may cost the Government even more money. This motion should be accorded priority because planning for rail over the past 16 years, which is so important to our overall transport system, has been—let us call it what it is—one of the biggest screw-ups in our State's history. I note that a former failed transport Minister is now the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Mr Deputy-Speaker—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Does the member for Macquarie Fields rise on a point of order?

Dr Andrew McDonald: I have two points of order.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I will take one at a time.

Dr Andrew McDonald: The member for Strathfield must say why his motion deserves priority over all other business of the House, and he has not done so for some time.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am sure the member for Strathfield is about to do that.

Dr Andrew McDonald: My second point of order is that the member's language is unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw the language.

Ms Linda Burney: Time.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have not ruled on the point of order, but the member's time has expired. I remind the member for Canterbury that she is still on three calls to order.

Member for Tamworth

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.24 p.m.]: My motion deserves priority because the Premier's credibility is in tatters when it comes to lobbyists' control over his Government. Before the election he made the grand promise about a new era of accountability, but ever since it has been business as usual from a Premier too arrogant and too lazy to enact real change. Barack Obama famously campaigned on the slogan "Change we can believe in". But the Premier's platform is "Change Michael Photios can believe in". Now embarrassing weekend revelations have turned this lobbyist cancer into a full-blown leadership test for this Premier.

We know that the member for Tamworth sat in this place for two months while serving as the kingpin of Centreboard Media, a private consultancy offering government liaison services. If clients needed an outcome—a successful grant application—the member for Tamworth held himself out as their man. He served as a member of Parliament by day and lurked as a lobbyist by night, talking himself up on centreboard's website as—

[Interruption]

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Government members protest too much.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Hansard would like to hear and record the debate.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: They do not care about workers, and that is true.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is far too much noise coming from both sides of the Chamber.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The member for Tamworth served as a member of Parliament and lurked as a lobbyist by night, talking himself up as having "a comprehensive understanding of government". He even posed in photographs with the Deputy Premier.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to reflect on another member he must do so by way of a substantive motion. Under Standing Order 79, a member is not supposed to be interrupted while speaking, but I am worried that the Leader of the Opposition keeps interrupting himself.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The member for Tamworth had a message that he would send to his potential clients, "Slip me some dough now I'm in Parliament and I'll fast-track your concerns to the top." The matter deserves priority because in his weak attempts at damage control—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order—

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Sit down.

Mr Brad Hazzard: I thank the member for Marrickville for caring. I refer to Standing Order 73, Reflections on Members by substantive motion only. The Leader of the Opposition must understand that he is casting more reflections on himself and what Labor did in Government than on the Government.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that any attack on a member has to be done by way of a substantive motion.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The matter deserves priority because, in his frantic attempts at damage control, the member for Tamworth is tangled in contradictions. He claims that the business closed in May, that he shut the thing faster than the *News of the World*.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: Mr Deputy-Speaker, you have enforced Standing Order 73 twice; this will be the third opportunity. If the Leader of the Opposition keeps abusing Standing Order 73 I ask you to rule him out of order and cease this debate.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: To the point of order: The matter of when the website was operating is on the record. This is all on the record.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I uphold the point of order. Criticism of another member of Parliament must be by way of a substantive motion. The Leader of the Opposition will give reasons why his motion should be accorded priority.

[Time expired.]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 67

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

Noes, 18

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

TRANSPORT POLICIES**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [3.39 p.m.]: I move:

That this House congratulates the Government on its progress on implementing its transport policies.

The people of New South Wales suffered, and continue to suffer, from the incompetence and ineptitude of the former Government in addressing the most basic roads and transport challenges of a modern city. Earlier today members opposite referred to the State's triple-A credit rating. I reflected on that going down really well with people who are sitting in buses waiting to enter the central business district from the western areas of Sydney and who would take a great deal of comfort from the triple-A credit rating making their journey to work every morning so much better.

I am sure it also will give a degree of comfort to people standing on railway platforms who are waiting for rail services that have been cancelled or, if not, may have the luxury of standing around waiting for a rail carriage that is already full when it arrives. I am sure the triple-A credit rating will add a whole lot of comfort to people sitting in buses who are trying to get to railway stations, but are running late because of traffic congestion and consequently miss their connection and run late for work. I am sure that all commuters take heart from the fact that the triple-A credit rating is working for them each and every day.

Mr Ryan Park: I hope you have spoken to your Treasurer about this.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: Since 1998 there was no reluctance by the former Government to publish documents, and I am sure they hold the record. Since 1998 we have had inaction on Transport 2010, Bikes 2010, the Metropolitan Rail Expansion Program that was released in June 2005, and the New South Wales Metropolitan Strategy that was released in December 2005. Members opposite should read this stuff. It is good reading. There was also inaction on the New South Wales State Plan 2006. The list goes on and on. The plans and strategies were not worth the paper they were written on.

DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Keira and the member for Shellharbour will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: This will come as a bit of a revelation to Labor members, but when I was in the Roads and Traffic Authority it was well known throughout all government agencies that there were too many buses entering the central business district in the early morning peak. We just could not fit any more in George Street and York Street. The professionals were all saying that there was simply no more space in the central business district in which to accommodate increased numbers of buses. Do you know what the former Government did to address that? Get this: It spent \$175 million on duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge to get more buses onto the back end of the bus queue in the central business district. The former Government spent \$175 million to hasten buses getting onto the end of the queue in the central business district. Do people reckon the former Government could have used that \$175 million somewhere else? It reminds me of *Dumb and Dumber*.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: The motion accorded priority is quite clear. In the less than four minutes that remain, we want to hear about the progress of implementation of the Government's transport policies. That is what we are waiting to hear, not what the Labor Government achieved. We want to hear about the current Government's priorities.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Shellharbour will not debate the point of order. The motion relates to progress of the Government's implementation of transport policies. I have listened to the member for Strathfield, who has been referring to transport issues. I am sure he soon will discuss implementation of policies relating to transport issues.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: It is just that I have so much material to work with, Mr Deputy-Speaker. I apologise. I do not need to refer to the many rail projects that were axed or the fact that time and again the previous Government avoided any pretence of planning transport for New South Wales.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: The motion was clear. We voted to hear about the Government's plans being implemented. We have now wasted four and a half minutes and not heard one thing about what the Government intends to do.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have ruled that the motion refers to progress on implementing transport policies. The member for Strathfield is highlighting transport concerns and is about to relate that to policies.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I am just about to get to that. By the way, for the sake of clarification, I do not think you voted on priority, did you?

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

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I just wanted to clarify that in fact the other side did not vote on priority.

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

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: Yes, Mr Deputy-Speaker. On many major roads traffic congestion has become a major issue for the community. The former Government did very little to deal with traffic congestion on those roads.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: Again I point out that what we want to hear is the progress of the Government's implementation so far.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order. I have ruled on her previous point of order, and the point of order she is taking is no different from that.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: What we need in New South Wales is greater emphasis on long-term planning for transport and roads. The O'Farrell Government has taken steps to address that issue. However, I must remind the House of certain failings of the previous Government that give the current Government confidence in what it is doing; that it is the right thing for the New South Wales community. Traffic congestion was brought to the attention of the Government simply because the community voted the former Government out because it could not spell out and deal with the issue. The avoidable traffic congestion in New South Wales has been calculated as costing more than \$1 billion a year, and those opposite have done nothing about it.

Ms Anna Watson: What are you going to do about it?

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: This is what we are going to do about it. I will tell Opposition members two things that we will do about it. The first thing is that we already have established Transport for New South Wales, which is something that you lot could not do in 16 years, even though people who knew about transport had been telling you for the last decade. The second thing is Infrastructure NSW, which is another organisation that was set up because you lot could not deliver a road, a rail line, a railway station or a bus to assist the New South Wales community. [*Time expired.*]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind all members that their comments must be directed through the Chair.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.46 p.m.]: The member for Strathfield was allotted seven minutes for his speech. I am sure the Minister for Transport is in her office thinking, "Oh my goodness." Today the member for Strathfield was given the task, presumably by the Minister for Transport, of outlining the Government's plans for implementation of its transport policies and projects. That is pretty clear, but the member for Strathfield has spent seven minutes rehashing everything we have heard so many times in the past 100-odd days.

Unfortunately, by doing so he has placed the Minister for Transport in a very difficult position. She sent him into the Chamber to explain how the Government will implement transport policies, and in seven minutes he made not one reference to one plan, one infrastructure project, one initiative or one policy. You have spent not one second outlining the Government's policy, yet that was the point of your motion. You do not have to explain that to this House, but you had better go up to Level 8 and explain to the Minister why it has taken you seven minutes to say not one thing about the Government's plans.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask you to instruct the member for Keira to direct his comments through the Chair.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I again remind all members that their comments must be made through the Chair. The member for Keira will confine his comments to the leave of the motion.

Mr RYAN PARK: Let me talk about transport for a moment. When Labor left office I took great pride in knowing that Labor introduced MyZone.

Mr Charles Casuscelli: Oh, it took you 16 years to organise buses that run late. That is fantastic.

Mr RYAN PARK: I advise the member for Strathfield to be careful because his Minister for Transport praised the MyZone initiative in this House. Government members should be very careful about what they say. As a result of MyZone, which the former Labor Government introduced, 94 per cent of fares became cheaper or remained the same price. In addition, the former Labor Government introduced \$2.50 pensioner excursion fares so that every single senior in our community is able to move around the State for \$2.50. The number of people who spoke to me and praised that initiative is incredible. It is an initiative that allows people on low incomes to move in and around the State for \$2.50.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Point of order: The member for Keira is misleading the House when he says that a pensioner can travel around the State on a \$2.50 concession. They can only go just out of the metropolitan area.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: There was a \$2.50 excursion ticket. There was Operation Vision that saw a reduction in criminal activity across our networks implemented. We commenced the easy access program that saw many stations completely upgraded. We introduced a metro-style bus system that has seen patronage on our bus networks increase by more than 40 per cent. We saw on Sundays those in the CityRail network being able to get around for \$2.50.

Mr Andrew Cornwell: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The debate is about the O'Farrell Government, not justifying previous governments. What the member is saying is not relevant.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The House is dealing with the motion that was accorded priority, which is that this House congratulates the Government on its progress on implementing its transport policy.

Mr RYAN PARK: I would love to talk about the O'Farrell Government. The problem is that the member for Strathfield, who moved the motion, did not speak for one second about what the O'Farrell Government is going to do. Government members have a hide to raise that point of order now.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member should read the motion, which deals with progress on implementing its transport policy.

Mr RYAN PARK: I look forward to talking about progress on implementing its policy. I was going to take the lead from the member for Strathfield. After listening to what he said, I would have thought that I would be far more aware of what the progress on implementation is. The problem is that for seven minutes he did not talk about implementation, he did not talk about progress on the Government's initiatives. He spent the entire time speaking about the previous Government. It astounds me to hear one of the Government members say I should stop speaking about the previous Government when the Government's lead speaker spoke for seven minutes on that.

Let us go back to public transport and other initiatives. Just before this Government came into office some months ago the Independent Transport Safety Regulator published a survey that demonstrated clearly that the vast majority—and the Minister will be able to share this with Government members—of those who use public transport are satisfied with it. The Minister for Transport has a big job but she is not helped by people such as the member for Strathfield, who was not able to mention one plan or one initiative in seven minutes. [*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.53 p.m.]: When the former Government left office—one would think they had voluntarily resigned and walked out the door—the provision of public transport was a

popular topic in north-western and western Sydney. In the seat of Blacktown, where the Leader of the Opposition comes from, there was a swing of 18 per cent against the Labor Party. In the seat of Hawkesbury, where people had long been waiting for a North West Rail Link, there was a swing of 29 per cent.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: What do these percentages have to do with the motion that we are debating?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Shellharbour will resume her seat. The member for Riverstone was speaking for only 20 seconds before he was interrupted. The member for Riverstone has the call.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: I will just finish my introductory remarks. In the seat of Riverstone, where public transport is a huge issue, the swing was more than 30 per cent.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: And they still haven't got it.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: They still have not. The news is much better since 26 March, because the integrated transport authority that members on our side of the House have been asking for for years has been initiated. We have already initiated the structures that are going to transform the delivery of transport in New South Wales. The Roads and Traffic Authority is no longer. The Transport Construction Authority is no longer. The Country Rail Infrastructure Authority is no longer. New South Wales Maritime is no longer. We are creating New South Wales Roads and Maritime Services under Transport for New South Wales. The integration of transport is at the core and essence of improving transport delivery in New South Wales. We have moved on that already. We have only been here four months since the election and we have done more in four months than in the 16 years from the other side. The North West Rail Link, which is so central to—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Keira will cease interjecting. He complained about members not speaking to the motion, which is what they are doing now.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: The North West Rail Link, which is so central to the needs of Sydney, is being constructed. It is a big project but we have announced the project team. We have opened up tenders and awarded the first couple of tenders. Many others are closed or in the process of assessment. The tender for engineering and rail systems has been awarded to AECOM Australia. The cost planning tender has been awarded to Turner and Townsend. The tenders for financial and commercial services, geotechnical services, integrated transport and land use, legal services, master planning and urban design, scheduling and program management, land survey, noise and vibration, management services, project definition report, planning approvals and constructability have all closed and are in the process of being assessed right now. The management services, phase two, tender will close on 11 August, in just a few days.

We mean business. We are on the job in producing and delivering the North West Rail Link, and people across the north-west of Sydney know that. For years and years this project was promised, announced, cancelled, axed, transformed, cancelled again and axed again. Over those years the completion date was progressively pushed out and out. Under the O'Farrell Government this is being delivered. The South West Rail Link is also firmly underway. The first section of track was laid in May. Major construction works have commenced at Glenfield station—platform works, piling and excavation for the northern and southern flyovers.

The new South West Rail Link is also important for a major development area in the growth centre of Sydney. Hundreds of thousands of people will be served by these rail lines, and it is the O'Farrell Government that is acting, not just talking. I refer to something the member for Keira said: his much-proclaimed \$2.50 pensioner ticket that will let people travel all over the place. It was delivered in the last 12 months before an election, after years of voting down the proposal from this side— [*Time expired.*]

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.00 p.m.]: You guys on the Government benches have such a hide backslapping each other. It is a wonder you are not all walking around with plaster on your arms after giving yourselves such a big pat on the back. It is incredible.

Mrs Tanya Davies: Point of order: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I request that the member for Shellharbour direct her comments through the Chair.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind all members that they must direct their comments through the Chair. Members will confine their remarks to the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: With all due respect, I did direct my comments through the Chair.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: When a point of order is being taken the member with the call should return to his or her seat until a ruling has been made. I ask that you direct the member for Shellharbour to take note of the standing orders and to comply with them.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I uphold the point of order.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Week after week the Minister for Transport comes into this House with facts and figures, waves her arms around and points. However, the facts and figures are of no relevance to the issues the people of New South Wales want to hear about. The Minister has not yet advised the House how she intends to pay the \$9 million for the North West Rail Link, something that I am sure all members would like to know. This lot talks about a big black hole that the former Labor Government left it. The Government has convinced itself that a big black hole exists, even though the Parliamentary Budget Office has rejected it, Standard and Poor's has rejected it and the Government's representatives in Treasury have rejected it. I do not know why that lot continues to speak about a big black hole; it simply does not exist. Government members know it, we know it and the people of New South Wales know it.

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: I draw your attention to your previous ruling about members directing their comments through the Chair. The member for Shellharbour is directing her challenging comments to me: she is targeting me at the table. I was listening intently to her. If she cannot follow your ruling she should be asked to resume her seat.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind all members to direct their remarks through the Chair. The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The truth hurts. Not one track has been laid for the North West Rail Link, yet week after week the Minister for Transport talks about it and about how the Australian Labor Party failed the people of New South Wales. However, it was voted in for 16 years straight. We had 16 years of government. The people of New South Wales wanted a Labor Government for 16 years because we delivered. I will talk about Labor's score card in relation to transport and then refer to the so-called policy of those opposite. Labor built the \$2.5 billion Epping to Chatswood rail line. It duplicated the Cronulla line and the Richmond line. It delivered 74 OSCars and more have been ordered. It refurbished the Tangaras for greater comfort and cleanliness. In addition, it delivered 450 buses, provided 7,000 extra commuter car park spaces, finished clearways—including Bondi Junction—delivered four more trains per hour for the Illawarra and the Bondi line—

Mr Kevin Conolly: Point of order: The motion is about the O'Farrell Government; it is not about reminiscing over 16 years of the previous Government's failure.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Shellharbour will confine her remarks to the leave of the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I am simply highlighting what the Labor Government did in relation to transport in New South Wales.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Is the member canvassing my ruling?

Ms ANNA WATSON: No, I am not. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [4.05 p.m.], in reply: I have heard it all. The two best things that have been done in this State over the past 16 years that will improve transport services for every member of the New South Wales community have been the establishment of Transport NSW and Infrastructure NSW—

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

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: The best things were the establishment of those two bodies. I will reflect on what they mean. It means we will get the correct priorities in respect of our rail infrastructure. It

means that transport services will be directed by need as opposed to political convenience. I will reflect on what members opposite have said in the past few minutes. Each and every day hundreds of thousands of commuters could not get to work on time under the former Government. That is okay because those opposite told us that pensioners can travel around for \$2.50. They told us that upgrade work has been done in railway stations by the former Government, but they did not tell us that rail services were cut.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: In your earlier ruling you said that the member for Shellharbour could not use the record of the previous Government in this debate, but now the member for Strathfield is talking about the Labor Government's record. Those comments are either in order for both sides or out of order for both sides.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Strathfield is replying to comments made during the debate.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I also refer to the comment about MyZone, a great achievement. I am sure that many people benefit from it. Unfortunately, the Tcard project, which was supposed to run up to MyZone, involved \$1 billion in waste and it does not make MyZone look all that flash. What also escaped the attention of the former Government was that under its administration public transport was so poor— [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

[*Business Interrupted.*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Members' Speaking Time

Motion by Mr Troy Grant agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to restore the speaking time lost during the quorum call of the member for Strathfield in reply.

TRANSPORT POLICIES

Motion Accorded Priority

[*Business resumed.*]

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [4.10 p.m.]: I note for the benefit of the House that the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link are two of the most important rail infrastructure projects that were impeded by the former Government. Another issue that has escaped members opposite is that under the previous administration public transport was made so popular that 87 per cent of journeys are still being undertaken by private motor vehicle and not by public transport. This Government is not promoting a dialogue that seeks to demonise every dollar that is spent on roads.

Some people have suggested that every dollar spent on roads is money that could have been spent on public transport. Much to the shame of those opposite, whenever I speak to stakeholders and to community groups, some of which are ill-informed, I am informed that every dollar spent on roads is a dollar that is not spent on public transport. In the heyday of transport in New South Wales a dollar spent on roads was seen by the public as being complementary to public transport. This Government will not appoint former chiefs of staff or former Ministers to the positions of deputy director general in government agencies in an attempt to improve transport infrastructure in this State.

Mr Ryan Park: We will just appoint former Premiers.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: Yes. Another issue that is being championed by this Government is the expansion of ferry services in New South Wales. This Government has improved school bus safety and it will implement light rail in Sydney. [*Time expired.*]

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It being before 4.30 p.m. the House will now proceed with Government Business.

RESTART NSW FUND BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 22 June 2011.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.12 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. The object of the bill is to establish the Restart NSW Fund for the purpose of setting aside funding for and securing the delivery of major infrastructure projects and other necessary infrastructure. The operative portions of the bill commence at part 2, clause 5, which states:

There is to be established in the Special Deposits Account a fund called the Restart NSW Fund.

Clause 6 states:

- (1) The purpose of the Fund is to improve economic growth and productivity in the State, and for that purpose:
 - (a) to fund major infrastructure projects, and
 - (b) to fund infrastructure projects that will improve:
 - (i) public transport, and
 - (ii) roads, and
 - (iii) infrastructure required for the economic competitiveness of the State (including the movement of freight, inter-modal facilities and access to water), and
 - (iv) local infrastructure in regional areas that are affected by mining operations ...

I find that provision curious. As the Treasurer said nothing of any note about that provision in his agreement in principle speech, I ask him to expand on it when he replies to debate on this bill. Clause 6 continues:

- (v) hospital and other health facilities and services, and
- (vi) workplaces for law and justice officers, teachers, nurses and other staff providing services to the public.

Staff members who are providing services to the public have now had their Industrial Relations Commission gutted and their wages and conditions similarly have been gutted. Clause 7 states:

Payments into Restart NSW Fund

- (1) There is payable into the Fund:
 - (a) all money advanced by the Treasurer or appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of the Fund ... and
 - (b) money borrowed for the purposes of the Fund—

that relates to money sourced by the Government from loans, bonds and things such as that—

- (c) the proceeds of the investment of money in the Fund, and
- (d) all money directed or authorised to be paid into the Fund by or under this or any other Act or law, and
- (e) all money received from voluntary contributions to the Fund made by a government agency or other person or body.

Essentially, those are the operative provisions. Clause 8 deals with payments, clause 9 deals with the Minister's reporting obligations, and clause 10 refers to investment money in Restart NSW. Technically, this bill, which is unremarkable, forms part of the Government's so-called 100 Day Action Plan and, therefore, it takes its place with bills such as the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 and the Library Amendment Bill 2011, which were debated ad nauseam as part of the Government's post-election fluff. This Government is proceeding on the basis of a monumental lie in respect of a budget black hole that does not exist and it then resorts to other tricks and stunts such as this bill. Clause 6 refers to "infrastructure required for the economic competitiveness of the State".

Examples of infrastructure that might fall into that type of description are things such as the \$1 billion redevelopment of Port Botany in my electorate. Port Botany, the busiest port in the nation, is the most important piece of infrastructure in the economic competitiveness of this State and nation. Every cent of the \$1 billion that has been applied to expanding and modernising that port and building a third terminal is New South Wales State Government money. Not a cent came from the former Howard-Costello Government at a time when it was amassing surpluses upwards of \$20 billion. Clause 7 refers to payments that are to be made to the Restart NSW Fund. Clause 7 (1) (a) states:

- (a) all money advanced by the Treasurer or appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of the Fund, including any such money that is certified by the Treasurer as windfall tax revenue in excess of Budget forecasts ...

So what! Clause 7 (1) (b) states:

- (b) money borrowed for the purposes of the Fund, including by the issue of special bonds to the people of the State and others ...

The Government can source loans, borrow and put that into this fund. Under section 5 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983 the Treasurer is required to hold certain accounts—special deposit accounts—other than the Consolidated Fund. I stand to be corrected, but from my reading and understanding of the Act this bill is unnecessary. As at 30 June 2011 the Crown operated nine special deposit accounts, including a State Infrastructure Fund, which was established by this Government. The Government does not need to introduce a bill that sets up a fund in the special deposit account; the Treasurer can do that with the stroke of a pen. Why then are we debating this bill?

Mr Troy Grant: You didn't do it for 16 years and regions missed out.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: As at 30 June the Crown entity operated nine special deposit accounts, including a State Infrastructure Fund. In 2009-10 the Crown entity annual report had this to say:

The State Infrastructure Fund was established in 2008-09 to hold development contributions collected from special contribution areas across the State. These moneys are set aside to fund the provision of State infrastructure, land purchases and conservation requirements in these contribution areas.

That was done by the former Government. I refer members to the state of the economy that was inherited by this Government. Fifteen of the 16 years of Labor Government resulted in budget surpluses. I remind members that the former Labor Government maintained—

Mrs Tanya Davies: You cooked the books.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I find quite extraordinary the interjection, "You cooked the books." A Government member just said that Treasury officials—the same bureaucrats who now serve this Government and who the Premier described on Thursday or Friday last week as a professional outfit—are liars and that they cooked the books.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: It was a \$5 billion black hole left to us by the former Labor Government.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Government members are now saying that Treasury officials lied and that they cooked the books.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George) Order! I am sure the member for Myall Lakes will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Government members said that all the money in the bank accounts was not real money; it was monopoly money. The member for Myall Lakes does not have a clue what he is talking about. I refer next to maintaining this State's triple-A credit rating. We have seen what happened of late to the United States of America. One of the ratings agencies downgraded the credit rating of that mighty nation. The Parliamentary Budget Office and Lambert reports reveal how important it was to maintain the triple-A credit rating. This Government inherited a bullet-proof State economy. What has it done since it was elected? The then Opposition leader, Barry O'Farrell—who is now the Premier—and the Treasurer reiterated their claim in this place that the mere election of a Coalition Government would improve the business outlook and confidence, and instantly transform New South Wales economically.

The Coalition inherited a budget and State economy with 2.2 per cent steady growth and employment figures below the national average. In a mere four months 38,000 jobs were lost in this State, after the Premier's promised pre-election commitment to create 100,000 jobs in his first term of government. He is now 38,000 jobs in the negative. The Coalition has not started well. The previous Labor Government, our Government, created 195,000 jobs in its last two years in office. In the current budget we spent about \$16.6 billion on infrastructure alone. Until the global financial crisis the national Labor Government started spending on infrastructure and nation-building items: \$1.4 billion on the Hunter expressway, \$617 million on the Kempsey bypass, and \$3.1 billion on roads in the first Rudd Government budget.

In the 10 years in which the Howard Government amassed surpluses of \$20 billion in favourable growth New South Wales received \$1.5 billion for infrastructure for the Pacific Highway—a road that traversed electorates of The Nationals almost from start to finish. The previous State Labor Government spent about \$2.2 billion from an economy and budget one-eighth the size of the Commonwealth, and the first Rudd Government budget spent \$3.1 billion. That is the Labor Party's record on infrastructure.

Mr Troy Grant: Federal Labor.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: State Labor spent about \$16.6 billion on infrastructure in the current budget. Until the global financial crisis, the State Labor Government's capital spending was by far the biggest in the nation's history. Former Premier Rees will confirm that our infrastructure spend in 2009 was twice that of the Commonwealth Government. We can proudly talk about our record on infrastructure. If Government members have any doubt, they should read the enormous detail of last year's infrastructure statement by the former Labor Government. Difficulties in providing funds for certain marquee infrastructure programs will be the same for this Coalition Government because this fund in its current form is simply a political stunt.

This bill should not be taking up the time of members, as happened with the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which took up three days of last week's sittings after being in this place for 66 days. The other place had no work because 52 members spoke on the graffiti bill as part of the schedule of this most busy Government—a Government that promulgated 27 bills in its first three months compared to the Iemma Government's 54 bills over the same period. A 12-year-old Government did twice as much work as this new Government has done in its first three months of life. The Treasurer could have established this fund in the special deposits account. We do not want to hear why the Treasurer thought it necessary to sit here for three days and talk about doing this instead of just establishing the fund. He should answer the real questions about infrastructure in New South Wales.

This fund is simply a mechanism for capturing and committing funds, that is all; it will do nothing else. I recall the Premier saying he will place \$5 million initially into the Restart NSW Fund. If the Government's infrastructure spending remains the same, \$11 million will be left in the Consolidated Fund for the Premier to spend elsewhere. He can mix the numbers all he wants, but the people of New South Wales want to know whether the Government will spend more on infrastructure than we did. If so, from where will those funds be sourced and on which projects will that funding be spent?

I appreciate that Government members say a good portion will be spent on the North West Rail Link, but what contribution will alternative funding sources, such as public-private partnerships and others, have on infrastructure spending? This bill basically is unnecessary fluff; it is more time wasting having members talk about setting up an account that can be done quite easily. The \$64 questions are: What funding sources will the Government come up with and what are the projects to receive that funding? We should not even be debating the purpose of this bill; the Treasurer should have just set up this fund in his office.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [4.27 p.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011, one of the most honest and visionary bills introduced in this House by the new New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. I commend the Premier, the Treasurer and Cabinet for quickly implementing the means to bring about the radical change in direction for New South Wales for which the people mandated. The Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 will set in place the mechanism for setting aside funding for and securing the delivery of major infrastructure projects and other necessary infrastructure for the State.

The New South Wales Liberal Party and The Nationals took to the 2011 State election five key priorities: first, to grow the economy; second, to improve our services; third, to renovate infrastructure; fourth, to restore honesty and accountability to government; and, fifth, to give people a real say in what counts in their communities. These five critical priorities of change for New South Wales resonated so much with our local

electorates that this entire portion of the Chamber I am indicating is filled with members of the Liberal Party and The Nationals. These five key critical priorities were not plucked from thin air like the previous Labor Government's numerous and empty announcements, plans and promises.

These five critical priorities were identified because they are very real and desperately needed changes that must be delivered to our State. Throughout the Mulgoa campaign I spoke to thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds. People were crying out for actual change, not just the glossy spin and rhetoric of the previous State Labor Government. "Just do something" was the common cry from the community. Just do something. The local community had switched off from listening to the former Government's announcements. They had switched off from listening because the State Labor Party had consistently failed to enact its promises. The State Labor party had lost all integrity.

I would like to refer to a local piece of road infrastructure: a missing link, as it is commonly referred to, that is within the Smithfield electorate which is now represented by a Liberal member. The electorate of Smithfield is adjacent to Mulgoa. It impacts the constituents of Mulgoa. This critical road infrastructure is called the Erskine Park Link Road. It is a 3.1 kilometre four lane divided road between Erskine Park Road and Old Wallgrove Road. Under the former Labor Government, for more than seven years promise after promise was made to deliver this piece of road. It was never delivered.

In 2004, Bob Carr—do we remember him?—promised a link road between the Erskine Park employment areas and the Westlink M7 during a speech to the Sydney Futures Forum. In 2009 the then Premier—I do not know whether he recalls this announcement—that he would fund and deliver the Erskine Park Link Road for \$80 million. Was it delivered? No. Then we move to the last Western Sydney region.

Ms Linda Burney: I can't take it.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: We heard another empty promise from Kristina Keneally to commence the construction of this vital link before the end of 2010. In this one example of the Erskine Park Link Road the Labor Party secured a hat-trick—three promises and three failures. These types of failures were multiplied time and time again in electorates across New South Wales. We lost potential for growth of the economy, we lost potential investment, and families were forced to travel further and further for employment opportunities when those opportunities should have been available locally.

It is the people of New South Wales who brought about a change in Government. This Government changed hands on 26 March this year. The focus shifted from self-serving vote-buying announcements to actual, real, believable and achievable action. On 25 May this year, 23 days after being sworn in to Government, the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Ports announced that Nace Engineering Pty Ltd had won the contract to build the Erskine Park Link Road. Following seven years of announcements from the former Government, it took just 23 days for our Government to sign up and deliver. This road is critical for investment, for jobs, and for prosperity in the western Sydney region and within 23 days of forming Government we delivered it.

It has been recently quoted that if New South Wales growth had kept pace with Victoria over the last 14 years the New South Wales economy would be \$50 billion larger; that would have delivered more jobs to our constituents, and it would have delivered \$10 billion in revenue to the State Government. That \$10 billion would have enabled the Government to return more resources to the community by delivering improved services, infrastructure and even tax cuts.

During the housing boom of the late 1990s and the early part of the previous decade the former Government had a windfall tax income from property taxes. My constituents asked me, "Where did the money go? What will we be seeing from it? Where has it gone?" The answer to those questions is that the money has gone and there is nothing to see for it. Under the O'Farrell Government the wasteful mismanagement of windfall income will not ever happen again. Under the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 any money certified as windfall tax revenue or the realisation of capital invested in assets such as from the Sydney desalination plant and other sources of income will be secured in the Restart NSW Fund for future infrastructure delivery.

The Restart NSW Fund Bill is a dedicated infrastructure savings and delivery model. The O'Farrell Government's serious commitment to the people of New South Wales to honour our election promise to

renovate the State's infrastructure has led to the development of this bill. That is why members are debating this bill today. It is a part of our election promise, and the O'Farrell-Stoner Government delivers on its promises. I am excited to be standing in this place as part of a genuine, hardworking, trust-rebuilding Government delivering on, yet again, another hundred day action plan item. Planned infrastructure works are an essential component to foster the economic prosperity of this State. That is why the Government has delivered on its election commitment to establish Infrastructure New South Wales. Infrastructure New South Wales will identify and prioritise the infrastructure projects that will enable the New South Wales economy to once again begin growing.

Infrastructure planning must be equally met with funds to implement those plans. The Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 will provide the funding for the projects recommended by Infrastructure New South Wales. The bill will fund projects such as public transport infrastructure; roads infrastructure that addresses urban congestion and missing links; economic infrastructure to address the economic competitiveness of New South Wales, including freight, intermodal facilities and water; local infrastructure in regional areas that are affected by mining operations; hospitals and health infrastructure, and improvements to workplaces for front-line workers including law and justice officers, teachers and nurses.

This Government is committed to a New South Wales vision, not a major metropolitan vision, which was the former Government's view. This Government will address critical infrastructure needs outside the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, as well as the metropolitan regions. We are a true government for the people of New South Wales and that is demonstrated by the 80 per cent growth in the National Party members who are now in this place after the recent State election. The National Party has grown from 10 members to 18 members in this place. We went to the election demonstrating a vision for New South Wales.

To further demonstrate this commitment to the whole of New South Wales, 30 percent of funding will be reserved for non-metropolitan areas including mine affected communities. Payments from the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 will be made in a transparent manner, with the Auditor-General reporting annually to Parliament to ensure that moneys have been invested in line with the investment mandate for the Restart NSW Fund. It will include the extent of investment of funds in non-metropolitan areas. The Restart NSW Fund Bill is about restoring fiscal discipline to the operations of Government and ensuring that as moneys become available they are directed to the future of this State, not lost in day-to-day waste and mismanagement and vote-buying attempts at policy announcements.

The investment of funds must be conducted in ways and means that will grow the profitability of this State. This bill provides the O'Farrell Government with a dedicated source of funds to restart New South Wales and regain New South Wales' reputation as Australia's number one place to not only do business but to live, work and play. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [4.39 p.m.]: My contribution will be brief, but I will make a couple of points. First, this is nothing but a stunt. The Government did not need to introduce legislation to establish this fund. I repeat: Legislation is not necessary to establish this fund. I do not know whether anyone has told them.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Repeat it again.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: You be quiet, Swampy, or I will get stuck into you.

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: The member should be directed to address her comments through the Chair, not across the table.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I do not know if I can cope with that interjection, but I will try.

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

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am happy to do that, Mr Deputy-Speaker. The idea that legislation is necessary to establish such a fund is nonsense. In fact, about nine of these funds were established by the previous Government. Cabinet makes a decision about the funding and it is then set aside; legislation is not necessary. Members opposite refer to the budget black hole. It is interesting to note that this fund will have a

budget of \$5 billion. Members of the Opposition are looking forward to 6 September, when the budget will be delivered, and we will examine it closely. When it is delivered members opposite will have to start owning a few things. The rhetoric from the Government benches about who owns what problems is getting tedious, although it is understandable. However, I wish it was a little more original; it is mind-numbing. They will have to own these issues after 6 September.

Mr Kevin Conolly: As if we wouldn't.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: He speaks! I do not know whether I can take it.

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: I refer to the member's conduct. She is bordering on being disorderly. She has been called to order three times and ignored your ruling, Mr Deputy-Speaker. In addition, she has not resumed her seat, which is worthy of another point of order.

Ms Linda Burney: I am speaking.

Mr Troy Grant: Have some respect for this place for a change. Sit down.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member should be seated while a point of order is being taken.

Mr Troy Grant: Sit down.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Dubbo will also be seated. I again remind members that all comments should be made through the Chair.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Through the Chair, am I getting under the skin of the member for Dubbo?

Mr Troy Grant: No, not at all.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: You sit down.

Mr Troy Grant: Address your comments through the Chair.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The Opposition does not oppose this bill, which was introduced by the Treasurer. As we know, it seeks to establish this fund in a special deposit account held and administered by Treasury and its purpose is to fund major infrastructure projects. I wonder what infrastructure projects will be funded and it will be interesting to see how that happens. We also understand that this is about infrastructure. I return to today's Cabinet decision about the Barangaroo review and the fact the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will soon have nothing to do if the Premier keeps relieving him of his responsibilities. He has lost responsibility for Infrastructure NSW in favour of Nick Greiner, and that will be interesting to watch. The Premier today relieved the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure of all responsibility for the rollout of Barangaroo.

A pattern is emerging with regard to infrastructure and planning. Members opposite know that they already have a major problem with the North West Rail Link. We will be watching how many jobs are cut from the Department of Community Services, Housing NSW and Corrective Services NSW. That will be the mark of this Government; that will demonstrate what that mob opposite is made of. We know that the only way to pay for these infrastructure projects—apart from this cute little exercise of introducing unnecessary legislation—is to cut services provided to the most needy and vulnerable in this State. That is what they did last time they were in government and they will do it again—but the Opposition will be watching.

The Government can set up as many funds as it wants and it can call them whatever it likes, members opposite can even drive home carefully if they so desire. However, the Opposition will be watching to see how they pay for infrastructure and planning. This cute little exercise of establishing Restart NSW will not deliver on the promises that Government members have made, some of which are unaffordable and unattainable, and they know that. A stunt like this will not cover over the cracks in the fullness of time. I will focus on the fullness of time, Mr Acting-Speaker.

Mr Troy Grant: He is the Deputy-Speaker. Use his correct title.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I think the Deputy-Speaker is big enough to cope with a small slight like that. New members opposite do not understand the concept of the fullness of time. There is a beginning, a middle and an end to any election cycle and this one has just begun. Members opposite might think that this is all fun now and that hubris is okay, but it is quite tedious.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Not for us.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I acknowledge that interjection. Time moves on in opposition and Government members should be aware of that and be careful. The passage of time will unfold the nature of this stunt. It will also demonstrate that this legislation was unnecessary and that \$5 billion in a fund like this for the entire State is paltry, and I say that based on experience. I do not know whether members opposite believe they have a magic pudding, but if they do they will soon see it deflating when they attempt to roll out their promises. Restart NSW is a stunt—nothing more and nothing less.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.48 p.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. The long title of this legislation is "A Bill for An Act to establish the Restart NSW Fund for the purpose of setting aside funding for and securing the delivery of major infrastructure projects and other necessary infrastructure." It goes hand in hand with the Government's announcement about Infrastructure NSW. Introducing legislation to create Restart NSW was a key component of the Government's 100 Day Action Plan. It is getting on with the job of funding vital infrastructure projects to provide better public transport, road improvements to reduce congestion, water utilities, freight facilities and hospital upgrades.

Importantly, the legislation will ensure that funds are available for projects in regional New South Wales. The Government has announced that 30 per cent of the fund has been quarantined for regional New South Wales, which is home to 25 per cent of the population, as an acknowledgment of the previous Government's neglect of those areas for the past 16 years. It was interesting to hear members opposite refer to "post-election fluff", "unnecessary fluff" and "a stunt". That is a bit rich coming from the kings of stunts and making announcements and promises but not delivering. One could be forgiven for thinking that they believe nothing happened on 26 March—they are living in fantasy land.

Once upon a time there was Disneyland, then Wonderland and now we have Laborland—a land where those opposite are in total denial and have absolutely no idea what is going on. On 26 March this year they were given the greatest lesson in political history and they still do not understand. It is unbelievable. I will return to this important issue, the Restart NSW Fund and Infrastructure NSW. The purpose of the Restart NSW Fund is to improve economic growth and productivity in this State by funding major infrastructure projects that will improve public transport, roads, infrastructure required for the economic competitiveness of New South Wales, local infrastructure in regional areas, hospitals and other facilities, and workplaces for law and justice officers, teachers and nurses.

The member for Canterbury talked about the loss of jobs. Building infrastructure creates jobs. That is a point those opposite did not understand during their 16 years in government. They did not know that building infrastructure creates jobs because infrastructure does not just happen. For 16 years when they were in government nothing happened because they did not understand that point. They need to be reminded of that. The member for Maroubra talked about lies. His comment about lies is the greatest hypocrisy I have ever heard. The first big lie by Labor was prior to the 2007 election when those opposite said they would not sell the State's electricity assets. When they were elected, they sold them for a song—for nothing. It was disgraceful.

Mr Nathan Rees: Not the poles and wires.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I know the member for Toongabbie would not have been part of it but he was rolled in Cabinet. The member for Keira was involved with the Minister—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Myall Lakes to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I say that through you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. I will refer to their record when they were in government. In 1998 Labor promised the North West Rail Link, to be delivered by 201. It was axed. Then it was reannounced and axed, and reannounced and axed. This Government is delivering, and the Restart NSW Fund will help us do that. In December 2004 those opposite promised the South West Rail Link project, which was supposed to be completed by 2012—axed. They put it back on the table again and axed

it, then put it back on the table again in 2008 and 2009. They announced the West Metro project and then pulled it. The Chatswood to Parramatta rail link is an interesting one. They delivered half a railway line. I have always wondered: Did they deliver the front half, the back half, the right half or the left half? It went nowhere.

They announced the Penrith fast rail project in 2006. It was axed. They promised the North West Metro in 2008—axed. The Rozelle Metro cost taxpayers \$500 million. What a joke that was. They spent \$500 million and not a sod was turned. They have absolutely nothing to show for it. We could do so much in regional New South Wales with that amount of money. Those opposite spent another \$100 million on the Tillegra Dam project but not a blade of grass was disturbed. Their record is disgraceful. Yet they preach to us about what we should do or say that we are not doing it right. We have been in government for four months and they are telling us what to do when they have a record like that. It goes on.

The Penrith fast rail and the North West Metro were axed. The Hurstville to Strathfield rail link that they promised in 1998 was axed and the Bondi Beach rail link, which they promised in 1998, was axed. The high-speed rail link to Newcastle and the Central Coast, which they announced in 1998, was axed and the high-speed rail link from Sutherland to Wollongong, which they promised in 1998 also, was axed. The central business district new harbour crossing rail link that those opposite promised in 2005 was axed. They announced all those projects immediately before an election and, upon their election, axed them.

The member for Maroubra likes to interject and call members "boofhead". He would not have the brains to cover the knuckle of a canary. He talked about lies. They announced projects before an election and when they were elected they pulled them. The CBD to Rozelle Metro, which they spent \$500 million on, was axed. I will refer to Labor's transit way projects. The Parramatta to Blacktown transit way, which those opposite promised in 1998, was axed. The Parramatta to Strathfield transit way was axed, the Penrith to St Marys transit way was axed and the Blacktown to Wetherill Park transit way, which they promised in 1998, was axed. It goes on and on. The bill before the House establishes the Restart NSW Fund for the purpose of providing funding for infrastructure in New South Wales. Infrastructure NSW will prioritise five-year and 20-year plans.

[*Interruption*]

That is the boofhead from Maroubra again. He should just sit there and keep quiet.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Myall Lakes to direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Mr Deputy-Speaker, the boofhead from Maroubra should keep quiet because he knows absolutely nothing. The Restart NSW Fund will fund Infrastructure NSW to provide projects such as the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.55 p.m.]: I speak on the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. Once again, with much fanfare, the Government has presented to the House a bill with an important-sounding name. We are assured that the bill is the start of something bigger and better. Like children who open their presents on Christmas Day or their birthday expecting something fantastically new, we are left unsatisfied. The Government has presented yet another bill that is all form and no substance. Essentially, the Treasurer is establishing a bank account. He has our hearty congratulations. Despite the Treasurer's claims, the fund is hardly a groundbreaking development. Previous governments have established similar funds for the provision of infrastructure.

The bill is a critical first step, but it is only the first step. The self-congratulatory nature of the Government members' speeches, particularly that of the member for Myall Lakes, is premature. The most important question—a question the Treasurer is happy to leave unanswered—is the size of the fund. How much money will be set aside for infrastructure development as part of this fund? We are still waiting to find out. While the Treasurer may not be able to provide an exact figure, he must have estimates that he could make available to the House. It is even more troubling that the sources of revenue for this fund must be questioned. The simple fact is that the sources the Government has indicated are unlikely to produce the type of revenue necessary for infrastructure investment.

The Treasurer claims that there will be "windfall tax revenues" but this may not be the case. The Government may receive windfall tax revenues but the Treasurer does not know that in advance. To suggest that he does is at best disingenuous, and at worst outright deceptive. The Treasurer also assures us that the much-maligned Waratah bonds will contribute to the fund. We are told that these bonds represent a guaranteed

investment in the New South Wales Government. If that is so, it means that New South Wales taxpayers are guaranteeing these bonds. It means that all taxpayers are guaranteeing the small number of citizens who are investors.

The Premier has claimed that the Liberal Party is now the party of western Sydney. Yet the New South Wales Liberal Party seems to be having difficulty shaking off its North Shore roots. This is middle-class welfare of a type that would make Peter Costello blush. I wonder whether the people of Smithfield approve of this inappropriate use of taxpayer funds? Do the people of East Hills approve or the people of Mulgoa, Strathfield, Parramatta and Campbelltown, or further afield in Myall Lakes? It was mentioned in the Coalition's pre-election documents; I do not argue with that. But no explanation was given as to what it means for the constituents and residents of New South Wales. Waratah bonds are not the solution to infrastructure development. They are simply a way to take from the many and give to the few.

I am pleased to see the Government seems to be taking some responsibility for infrastructure development. I am reassured that it is no longer playing the blame game and realises it is no longer in opposition. I commend the Government for this wonderful new development. It is starting to behave like it is in government. The bill is not the silver bullet it is claimed to be. It is a basic first step towards delivering infrastructure but it has been blown up to be more than it is. The Government received this State in a strong financial position, with a triple-A credit rating. The Government is making a lot of promises. Let us hope that Barry's barren State does not eventuate in a decade's time.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.00 p.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. It is part of an essential package of legislation to correct the miserable failure of 16 years of Labor neglect in New South Wales. What was the worst Government in the postwar era?

Mr Chris Hartcher: Whitlam.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Federal or State?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Federal or State. The answer is: that lot over there. The member for Canterbury said this is all mind numbing. Tell that to the people of north-west Sydney who are waiting for their rail link. Tell that to the people of my electorate who are facing train commuter times slower than they were 50 years ago. Tell that to the people of my electorate who watched the member for Heffron, the former Premier, not only put the F6 at the end of the queue but also take it out of the Metropolitan Strategy altogether. New South Wales has had 16 years of a government that could not deliver necessary infrastructure for the State. New South Wales has had 16 years of a government made up of Ministers who thought it was mind numbing to talk about traffic congestion on the M5. Tell that to the people stuck day after day in traffic jams on the M5 and the M4 or because there are no train services in the south-west and the north-west. What is the response of those opposite? They do not want us to talk about it because it is all boring and mind numbing.

Mr Michael Daley: Who said that?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Was the member for Maroubra not listening? The member for Canterbury said it. New South Wales has suffered the worst infrastructure neglect by any government in postwar Australia. That is why this legislation is so important. Time and again, we hear nitpicking speeches from those opposite but do they oppose or support the legislation? Not only did the former Government fail to deliver infrastructure for 16 years but it remains devoid of ideas or any positive suggestions to improve infrastructure in New South Wales. The O'Farrell Government has delivered a package that creates Infrastructure NSW as the independent, expert decision-making body that will plan into the future, as well as a fund to deliver that infrastructure.

Major infrastructure projects will be funded to improve growth and productivity in New South Wales. Public transport and roads will be improved. Infrastructure required for economic competitiveness in New South Wales will also be improved. For 16 years economic competitiveness was ignored and now New South Wales has the worst key performance indicators of any mainland State, and perhaps any State, in Australia. That lot on the other side would not build needed infrastructure. They were too interested in announcing and then cancelling infrastructure projects rather than delivering to the people of New South Wales. Hospitals and health infrastructure will also be funded by this fund, as will improvements to workplaces for front-line service staff, including law and justice officers, teachers and nurses. For 16 years those front-line workers were ignored by those on the other side—the so-called "friends of workers".

Restart NSW will be funded by moneys advanced by the Treasurer. Funds will include windfall tax revenue in excess of budget forecasts, and borrowings and interest proceeds for investment of money in the fund. We are planning for the future. The process will be transparent, with regular reporting. Annual reports will be prepared and presented to Parliament that will detail payments from the fund—including details of payments in rural and regional areas—and there will be an audit by the Auditor-General. This legislation is a complement to Infrastructure NSW—the flip side of the coin. It is part of the delivery of the O'Farrell Government's Five Point Action Plan—the third point being renovating infrastructure—and part of our 100 Day Action Plan. After 16 years of talk, negativity and non-delivery from those opposite, the O'Farrell Government is delivering on its promises. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.05 p.m.]: The object of the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 is to establish the Restart NSW Fund for the purpose of setting aside funding for, and securing the delivery of, major infrastructure projects and other necessary infrastructure. The bill seeks to establish the Restart NSW Fund in a special deposits account—an account held and administered by the Treasurer in addition to the Consolidated Fund. The bill provides also that the purpose of the fund is to pay for "major infrastructure projects", defined as those projects that carry a capital expenditure in excess of \$100 million or those that have been designated by the Premier, as well as other defined infrastructure projects.

The sources of revenue for the Restart NSW Fund shall be: funds advanced by the Treasurer—in effect, ordinary appropriated funds identified by the budget, including windfall tax revenues—debt moneys advanced, which may include the so-called Waratah bonds; investment proceeds of the fund; money received from voluntary contributions to the fund by a person or government agency; and any other money settled into the fund by the Government. Creating a new bank account with a snappy new name is easy enough; the key is acquiring the funds and directing them appropriately.

The Government has given us absolutely no reason to be confident that it can do that. The concept of holding a special purposes account with settlement investment and spending parameters is nothing new. In 2008-09 the Labor Government established the State Infrastructure Fund to hold development contributions, with those funds to be spent on land acquisition, conservation and infrastructure provisions. This is just more smoke and mirrors from the Coalition Government. First, it copied the name of the infrastructure body from the Federal Government. Now those opposite have rebadged some rehashed old methods as something new. As I said, establishing the account is easy; acquiring and directing funds is the key.

Important questions need to be answered. For example, how much money will be placed into the fund? Before the last election, and during the election campaign, the Premier promised \$5 billion. Is that figure still current? Does the Premier have as much as he thinks he does? Will the Premier be able to put as much into this account as he thinks he can? The Lambert report estimates that this financial year taxation revenue will be \$1.674 billion less than budget estimates. Where does that leave this fund? Nothing in this legislation ensures that the Government will spend more on infrastructure than governments in previous years. The former Labor Government had a strong infrastructure investment record. In the 2009-10 budget, the Labor Government invested a record \$65.5 billion in infrastructure spending—in one year. That massive investment was the biggest infrastructure spend in the history of New South Wales.

I will now make a short comparison of infrastructure spending by the Greiner Government, which was in office from 1988 to 1995—the last Coalition Government—with that of the former Labor Government, in office from 1995 to March 2011. The Greiner Government closed 30 hospitals; the former Labor Government rebuilt or redeveloped every major hospital in New South Wales. The Greiner Government sacked 2,500 teachers from the public education system and closed 74 public schools; the former Labor Government employed 3,000 more teachers, reduced the average kindergarten class from 24 to 19 children, quadrupled funding for literacy programs and opened 82 public schools in New South Wales.

We heard a lot of talk from Government members about rail. The Greiner Government axed 8,000 rail jobs in its first year, terminated 13 country rail services and closed 13 country rail lines. That is how much that Government cared about its rural friends in those days. When in government New South Wales Labor delivered new Oscar and Waratah trains, it rolled out Metrobus routes, it was in the process of building the South West Rail Link, and it was delivering the inner west and CBD light rail extensions, the Kingsgrove to Revesby quadruplication and the Richmond line duplication. That shows what Labor did in 16 years. Labor was elected four times by the people of New South Wales. Many Government members speak as though we were in government for the full 16 years after just one election. But the people of New South Wales voted Labor in four times.

There was massive spending on essential infrastructure to support our front-line services and our front-line staff, and we provided critical infrastructure to the health, education and police portfolios, amongst others. That spending by the former Labor Government underpinned more than 165,000 jobs in New South Wales, jobs that this Coalition Government is shedding while other States continue to grow their workforce. Under Labor, jobs are supported and new jobs generated. In stark contrast, under this Coalition there are cutbacks and diminishing numbers.

The Treasurer likes to talk about his Waratah bonds. I guess he needs something to talk about since most of his Treasury responsibilities are handled by his colleague in the other place the Minister for Finance. Waratah bonds are just like ordinary bonds except that they will be issued in far smaller amounts to far more clients than existing TCorp bonds. What this simply means is that there are more administrative compliance and transaction costs tied to the issuing of each bond. Each of these costs, be they administrative, compliance or transaction costs, will be borne by the taxpayer. Increased costs mean the taxpayer has to shoulder the increased burden. All these Waratah bonds will do is increase the cost of borrowing for the taxpayers of New South Wales. Once again, as we are becoming accustomed to seeing, the Treasurer's plan to supposedly help New South Wales will in fact hurt New South Wales.

The triple-A credit rating that was built and maintained with much discipline by the former Labor Government has made TCorp bonds amongst some of the most sought-after financial products in this part of the world. We have just seen one of the greatest nations in the world, the United States of America, being downgraded to a double-A+ credit rating. We have kept our triple-A rating but the Government wants people to believe that it has inherited a black hole of billions of dollars. People should realise that Standard and Poor's would have downgraded this State's triple-A rating if that were true.

Our strong financial position has been maintained by prudent governance and responsible management of the Treasury benches by the former Labor Government. Whether this Coalition Government's supposed economic credentials stack up remains to be seen, and whether it is worthy of governing also remains to be seen. If the Coalition Government guarantees the Waratah bonds, as it has previously suggested, the State's balance sheet bears that risk. This translates to taxpayers rather than investors bearing the inflationary risk. That is this Government's preferable method of finding more investment dollars for infrastructure—an increased risk to the taxpayer. Waratah bonds do not add anything new; they only increase costs and risks. This is blatant economic mismanagement from the Coalition Government.

I move on to the Government's windfall tax revenue. Windfall tax revenue is not the guaranteed revenue stream that has been suggested by this Government; it is unpredictable. At times the Government gets more than it thought it would and at other times it ends up with less than it expected. The Lambert report has suggested that in 2010-11 transfer duty would bring in \$500 million less than expected, GST would bring in \$863 million less than expected and payroll tax would bring in \$311 million less than expected. This means that windfall tax revenues for 2010-11 come to a whopping minus \$1.674 billion. At that rate the entire Restart NSW Fund would not be able to pay for all the upgrades for the Princess Highway and the North West Rail Link, which the Government is hanging its hat on as its greatest project, may never get off the ground.

The Restart NSW Fund is less than 30 per cent of what was spent by the former Labor Government on infrastructure, which the former Government did without threatening our triple-A credit rating. This entire fund is worth less than 2.5 per cent of the State budget across forward estimates. It is smoke and mirrors from the Coalition, but not enough smoke and mirrors to prevent the public realising that Barry O'Farrell is not and will not be the infrastructure Premier he thinks he is.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [5.15 p.m.]: It is interesting to hear members of the Opposition speak on the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. Given that apparently they will not oppose it, they spend a considerable amount of time nitpicking the bill. Maybe it is to somehow justify the fact that they did not come up with something like this. The big difference between what is in front of us and what the previous Government did is the discipline involved on government finances. For most of the 16 years of the former Government it received more revenues than it budgeted for. One would think because of that we should have far more infrastructure and far more to show for all that money. But the expenditure of the former Government over most of the years it was in government also exceeded its estimates and it blew the money.

This bill is about what to do with income in excess of what is budgeted for. The windfall income will be put into a fund and will be used for real infrastructure—not for recurrent spending, not frittered away on pet projects and certainly not frittered away on ad hoc, back-of-the-envelope projects that get announced one day and

cancelled the next. That was Labor's approach in its 16 years in government. One Opposition member said that the only way a government can pay for infrastructure is by cutting this and cutting that. What I would like to cut is the \$500 million wasted on the Rozelle Metro that never happened and the \$100 million wasted on a Tcard that never happened. So many other projects were announced, delayed, cut, re-announced, delayed again and cut again, and there was so much waste that occurred along the way as bureaucrats were sent scurrying in one direction to plan for this and then back the other way to plan for that and nothing eventuated. That waste has to stop.

The approach of the O'Farrell Government is to take a strategic view. We have set up Infrastructure NSW to plan priority projects in a strategic, objective and independent way and we have set up the Restart NSW Fund into which we will put windfall profits so that we can afford to pay for those strategically planned projects—to take windfall income out of the pork-barrelling regime and out of the ad hoc, back-of-the-envelope calculations and handle it properly. Over time we can drive that dollar a heck of a lot further than New South Wales has seen in the past.

I heard a number of speakers from the Opposition boasting about the record expenditure on infrastructure the former Government announced in various budgets. It is fairly easy to announce lots of spending if there is lots of money left over from last year and it is rolled over again to the next year. If it is not spent the next budget again has a record expenditure. People in New South Wales are not interested in the dollars promised in the budget nearly so much as they are in the outcomes on the ground—what they got for the money. People across New South Wales clearly were unhappy with what they got for all that money. One of my colleagues suggested that boasting about how much you are going to spend on infrastructure is like boasting about how much you spent on a new car. If I say that I spent \$60,000 to buy a Corolla it hardly sounds like a great deal but it is wonderful to boast about how much money I have spent.

The people of New South Wales feel a bit like that. Labor boasts about how much it spent in government but it delivered very little. I had a bit of spare time earlier so I read through the brochure on the new Windsor bridge over the Hawkesbury River. I think it might have been announced in 2008, and it may have been the member for Toongabbie who was Premier at the time—or was it his predecessor? The project was to be completed in 2010. I point out to the members of the Opposition that if they drive up Windsor way at the moment they will not see the new bridge. The new bridge is still only in the picture books, but it is coming under the O'Farrell Government. It will be built under the O'Farrell Government.

There are similar projects all over New South Wales. The Riverstone overpass to replace the level crossing was announced for at least four consecutive elections by my predecessor. It may have been more than that, but I was not around to hear it because I was not involved in politics earlier than that. For at least 16 years it was promised and not delivered. There is a desperately needed high school in the Stanhope Gardens-Kellyville Ridge area that was not delivered by the previous Government. I am confident that I am going to be able to stand here in the not too distant future and tell people about that project. We have heard a number of Opposition speakers today refer to the duplication of the Richmond line as though it were complete. I invite members from the other side to travel to Richmond. They will find that a fairly large proportion of that track is single track; the duplication is far from complete.

There is something real and different about the approach we are taking. It is a strategic, planned, disciplined approach to providing infrastructure. Restart NSW is just one cog in the wheel that is going to deliver much better outcomes for the people of New South Wales. The process will be much more transparent than what has happened in the past because the Treasurer will be accountable for the money that goes into the fund. The legislation sets limits on what that money can be spent on, which is a real discipline imposed on Government. The Government will not come along and penny pinch it later on for some pet project elsewhere that does not meet the definitions. It has a whole-of-State focus which, as we have heard from other speakers, means that regional and rural New South Wales will not miss out on their fair share of infrastructure.

It does involve publicly accepting the possibility of borrowing through infrastructure bonds—the Waratah bonds. I have heard some members of the Opposition claim that there is something sinister in government-guaranteed bonds. I would have thought that members who have sat in this House for a number of years would know that this is a traditional and time-honoured way for governments to raise money. There is nothing new or surprising in that and there is nothing whatsoever to alarm the taxpayer in the fact that the Government guarantees what it does.

We must use our limited resources in New South Wales to the best possible effect. It is not about a magic pudding. It is not about creating more money in any way other than through simple hard work and

growing the economy so that more money is available. However, we do have to make sure that the Government's resources are spent in the most cost-effective, strategic and important ways to benefit the people of New South Wales. That had not happened in the 16 years prior to 26 March 2011 and it is about time that it did happen. I commend the Government led by Barry O'Farrell and Andrew Stoner for introducing Infrastructure NSW and for putting this legislation to create Restart NSW before the Parliament so we can move on to a more strategic, disciplined, defined and ultimately much more productive path. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.23 p.m.]: When I encountered this bill titled Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 I got quite excited because, on behalf of the people of the Hunter, I was sure that funding would pour in and the priorities of the Hunter would be satisfied by this bill. However, based on replies to at least 10 of the questions I have asked the Government about different priorities in the Wallsend electorate alone I am not quite so enthusiastic any more. However, I will wait and see. I am going to refer to 10 of the questions answered by the Government and talk about what sort of funding priorities are occurring in the Wallsend electorate because, after all, we are talking about restarting funding, and I presume that includes the Hunter.

I posed my first question in May. It concerned the Newcastle inner city bypass stage 5, which is to run from Jesmond to Rankin Park. My question was whether funding will be budgeted for and provided to build this essential road which we were criticised before the election for not building. Unfortunately, the response I received was that there is currently no funding for building stage 5 and no further work is planned by the O'Farrell Government at this time for the last stage of this important inner city orbital road. That missing link on the inner city bypass is not going to be built or planned for by the O'Farrell Government at this time. That is the first disappointment for the Wallsend electorate and all of the commuters in the Hunter.

My second question concerned the Glendale police station. The Labor Government proposed to build a police station in the Glendale area for the benefit of those people in the western suburbs of Newcastle and we budgeted \$1 million for this. It had the support of the Police Association and of the local community: people want a police station in the area. I asked when the Government would purchase the land, as provided for in the 2009-10 budget, for the Glendale police station, which will house the local area command. In the answer I received on behalf of the community the Government talked about improving policing infrastructure in Lake Macquarie but it did not answer my question of whether the Government was going to build the police station at Glendale.

I then posed a further question: Is the Government proposing a funding commitment for the Glendale area and, if so, is it going to build the Glendale police station? The Government referred to its previous answer. This did not answer my question about the Glendale police station. So the people in the Cessnock electorate, part of the Charlestown electorate and the Wallsend electorate do not know whether a police station, which will accommodate the local area command, will be built in their area.

My next question was about the John Hunter Children's Hospital. The Labor Party made a commitment of \$10.3 million earlier this year to build an intensive care unit at John Hunter Children's Hospital if re-elected. My question to the Liberal Government was whether it will build the same intensive care unit. Unfortunately, the answer to this question was that funding priorities will be announced after the budget process. Maybe the O'Farrell Government will consider this important project as a priority. I will leave that issue up in the air.

My next question was about investment planned for the Calvary Mater Hospital in the next 12 months. Again, the answer I received was that it is all in the hands of the budget process in September. I also posed a similar question about funding for the John Hunter Hospital—the largest regional hospital in the Newcastle area and north of Sydney. Of course, the answer provided was that it is all in the hands of the budget after September. I am going to be optimistic and leave that one up in the air too. In June I posed a question about the Government replacing the railway gates at the Adamstown railway station, which abuts the electorates of Wallsend and Newcastle. The community has recently talked to me about better access, particularly for cars on a busy day.

Mr Tim Owen: And for the last 20 years, I might add.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Yes. The answer I got from the Liberal Government was that there is currently no plan to replace the railway crossing gates, or to replace the gates with an overpass at Adamstown railway station—another no to the community of the Hunter. My next question was whether the Government would match the former Government's election commitment to provide upgrades to school science laboratories

at Callaghan College, Wallsend. The answer was that the present Government is not necessarily going to uphold any of the previous Government's commitments and it will be considered in the fullness of time in the context of future capital works priorities. So who knows if the side slabs will ever be built at Wallsend High School.

The next question I posed was about providing upgrades to the science laboratories at Glendale Technology High School. I received a similar answer to that question: Funding for the project will be considered in the context of future capital works priorities. The community and the parents of students at Glendale Technology High School will ask when those priorities will be matched. I then posed a question about which schools in the Wallsend electorate still do not have security fences, and there are a number of them, including Argenton Public School, Elernmore Vale Public School, Glendale East Public School, Glendore Public School, Jesmond Public School, New Lambton Heights Infants School and New Lambton Public School. There was no answer as to when security fences would be built at those schools. It will be interesting to see when the O'Farrell Government will build those security fences for schools in the Wallsend electorate.

Finally, I posed a question about priorities for the Hunter: What are the top priorities of the Minister and the Premier not only for the Wallsend electorate but for the Hunter over the next four years? I got a general answer about rebuilding the economy, returning quality services, renovating infrastructure, restoring accountability and protecting our local environment. Do not get me wrong—they sound terrific. Unfortunately, there were no specific answers. So the people in the Hunter are up in the air about the funding priorities for the Hunter. Of course, the people of the Hunter will ask how they will benefit from the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. I guess that is a question for the Government specifically, not generally. How will the people of the Hunter benefit from this bill?

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [5.31 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to speak on the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011, which is all about providing essential services for the people of New South Wales. It is about ensuring the economic productivity of our State by ensuring that Infrastructure NSW can do its job and developing five-year plans that roll into a 20-year strategic plan. That is where this approach differs from that taken by the previous Government. It is all about strategy, transparency and planned outcomes. The bill outlines the projects to be scoped: public transport, roads, and improvements that reduce urban congestion; building up the economic infrastructure of the State, especially in relation to freight and intermodal services; building up our health infrastructure; and building proper workplaces for front-line workers, law and justice, teachers and nurses. It is strategic, fair, planned and responsible.

The bill enables other levels of government to participate and assist New South Wales to achieve its goals. It enables the Federal Government to know where we are going. It assists local government with planning. This Government has returned many planning powers to local councils, and this bill will enable them to work with the State Government for the betterment of all of New South Wales. The people of Campbelltown and Macarthur—Campbelltown is the opal of the south-west and the shining light for Sydney—know full well the importance of infrastructure. They are looking forward to having connectivity that enables productive lifestyles. They are looking forward to the M5, which is now the cheapest car park in Sydney, being opened up. They are looking forward to improved regional roads that enable people to get about Macarthur, roads such as Narellan Road that feed into Campbelltown and Macarthur Square, which is perhaps the most outstanding shopping centre in the Southern Hemisphere.

Mr Ryan Park: That's a big call.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: It is a big call. People travel from all over Sydney, the southern highlands, Keira and Wollongong to Macarthur Square. The member for Keira is smiling; he knows that people come to Macarthur Square. Indeed, I am sure the member has also been to Macarthur Square.

Mr Ryan Park: I have.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: The bill is all about health infrastructure. It is about improving the health services we provide to our community. In Campbelltown an upgrade for our surgical and emergency ward will meet the future needs for a growing south-west. I am fortunate—indeed, the people of Campbelltown are truly blessed—that we have the best railway Minister this State has ever seen. Under her leadership many great things will happen for rail in New South Wales, including better trains. That is right—New South Wales will have better trains, more express trains and the South West Rail Link. One can hear the rail tracks being laid as we speak. The bill will provide for upgrades to stations and commuter access, similar to that at Ingleburn railway

station with its commuter lifts, and the development of intermodal and supportive business. It is also about looking after workplaces for law and justice officers. I was interested to hear the member for Wallsend talk about the need for police stations.

The previous Government closed the police station at Eagle Vale in the electorate of Campbelltown, which is the opal of the south-west. The police station was brand-new, but the previous Government closed it and walked away from the people of Campbelltown. However, it left the lights on so that people would think it was still operating. The infrastructure is still there. What the bill does, and what the Government will do, is bring a degree of planning and orderly thought to the process of providing infrastructure for New South Wales. Listening to members opposite, I imagine that at their strategy meeting today they probably scratched their heads and said, "We couldn't do it. How can they do it?" We can do it because we have strategy, planning and good governance. The people of New South Wales elected this Government because they know that we will deliver good governance to New South Wales.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [5.37 p.m.]: Essentially, Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 will create a bank account. I am sure it is a big bank account. I hope it is a big bank account. While that seems reasonable, I am interested in some of the detail. Clause 6 of the bill states:

6 Purpose of Restart NSW Fund

- (1) The purpose of the Fund is to improve economic growth and productivity in the State, and for that purpose:
- (a) to fund major infrastructure projects, and
 - (b) to fund infrastructure projects that will improve:
 - (i) public transport, and
 - (ii) roads, and
 - (iii) infrastructure required for the economic competitiveness of the State (including the movement of freight ...
 - (iv) local infrastructure in regional areas—

I will return to that in a moment—

that are affected by mining operations, and

- (v) hospital and other health facilities and services, and
- (vi) workplaces for law and justice officers, teachers, nurses ...

The people in the electorate of Keira and the broader Illawarra community can tick everything on that list. Do we need good public transport? Of course we do. Do we need better roads? Of course we do. Do we need the infrastructure required for economic competitiveness? Of course we do. Is our community affected by mining? Yes it is. Is our community heavily focused on health? Yes it is. Does our community have significant law and justice areas? Yes it does. Some weeks ago I asked each Minister a simple question: What are the priorities for the Keira electorate and the broader Illawarra region? Nineteen of the 20 answers were identical and contained the same pre-election rhetoric. The Government was unable to articulate one key infrastructure project, priority or initiative for the electorate of Keira.

I then widened it to include the broader Illawarra region. I thought that with Keira being a smaller electorate the Government might be thinking about other things in the broader Illawarra region. In fact, that was not the case. Let us return to the bill because the member for Myall Lakes talked about how the funding was guaranteed for regional New South Wales. As someone who comes from regional New South Wales I can say that if that were the case it would be a fantastic deal and I would thoroughly support the bill. However, for the eighteenth time this session the member for Myall Lakes went to his bottom drawer and pulled out the same speech he has delivered on previous occasions to the point where the Hansard reporters did not even have to write it down. They just wrote, "Ditto, as previously." The problem is that the member for Myall Lakes missed proposed section 9 of the bill, which refers to annual and other reports relating to the Restart NSW Fund. Proposed section 9 (2) states:

The annual report is to include information on the total amount of payments made from the Fund for infrastructure projects in rural and regional areas—

So far so good—

outside the metropolitan areas of Sydney,—

Members would agree with that.

Newcastle and Wollongong—

This reminds me of a debate we had a couple of weeks ago when we discussed a policy to give people \$7,000 to flee Wollongong. It also brings to mind a debate we had several months ago when the Government talked about its policy to allow payroll tax incentives and associated job targets for Wollongong to be grouped in the same category as the Sydney central business district. If members ask any person from the Wollongong-Illawarra region they will say they do not consider their area to be a part of Sydney. I have appealed to the Treasurer and to the Cabinet before: please, when you are looking at these programs ensure that you place Wollongong and the Illawarra outside the boundaries of the Sydney central business district. We are not the same; we have very different challenges and needs. The bill then goes on to say:

and whether it represents at least 30% of the total payments from the Fund on infrastructure projects.

The reality is this: If the payments total less than 30 per cent it does not matter but if they are more than 30 per cent the report will say so. But all the report has to do is say whether the figure is at least 30 per cent of the total payments; there is no guarantee regional areas will get 30 per cent of the funds. Members in regional electorates who are planning to issue press releases saying, "We are going to get 30 per cent" should be careful because 30 per cent is not guaranteed.

Just an hour or so ago the Minister for Strathfield spoke in this Chamber because my very good friend the Minister for Transport, who is at the table, gave him the task of talking about the Government's transport plan priorities and their implementation over the next couple of years. As someone who is interested in transport I was very keen to hear about that, but, tragically, the member for Strathfield spoke for seven minutes and did not outline a single infrastructure project, plan or initiative for transport. I am sure the Minister for Transport, the member for Willoughby, could do that, but she tasked the member for Strathfield to do it and he let her down dismally. What he also did, which relates strongly to the Restart NSW Fund Bill, was to let the cat out of the bag that the Government does not care about a triple-A credit rating.

Sorry, but if members opposite are not reading the world news at the moment or do not understand the basics of economic credibility they have to realise that a triple-A credit rating actually makes a difference. I will go over Economics 101 for members opposite to make it simple for them. Economics 101 says that if you do not have a triple-A credit rating your cost of borrowing is higher, which means you are put on CreditWatch and it is more difficult to negotiate borrowing and that puts pressure on the local economy. It may not be important to the member for Strathfield that New South Wales has a triple-A credit rating, but I am sure it is important to the member for Manly. As I speak the member for Manly, as the Treasurer, is carpeting the member for Strathfield. He has him in his office and is carpeting him for letting the cat out of the bag about the triple-A rating.

The Government cannot say a horror budget is coming and that it wants to maintain the State's triple-A rating and be fiscally responsible and then have the member for Strathfield lead a debate and say, "Who cares about triple-A?" I tell you what, members' communities will care about the triple-A rating because when the Government carries on in the way the member for Strathfield did and loses the triple-A rating and puts pressure on the local economy and unemployment rises and the cost of living increases, members opposite will start to care about it. I suggest they think long and hard about that fact. I also want to talk about the fact that my very good friends in the Hunter have a Hunter Infrastructure Fund. I stand to be corrected but I think it is about \$300 million. That sounds pretty good.

The only problem is that the Illawarra has similar challenges and similar needs, and similar cities as far as size and demographics are concerned. The Illawarra also had a reliance on steel and now has a heavy reliance on education and health and related services, but it has not received and nor is there any talk of an infrastructure fund targeted at that region. In fact, we hear the Government talking about taking away one of our vital economic stimulus packages, the Illawarra Advantage Fund. I know for a fact that the member for Wollongong has placed this on the *Business Paper* and asked very clearly what the plan is for the Illawarra Advantage Fund. It would be disastrous if that fund were taken away when the Hunter is getting a significant increase in government spending and a dedicated fund to boot.

In conclusion, those of us who represent regional areas should not be comforted by this bill. It does not guarantee 30 per cent of infrastructure spending will go to regional areas. Members should be very careful when they go on about that aspect. They should read proposed section 9 (2) on page 4 of the bill and look at the word "whether". They should also understand that under this mob opposite the Illawarra and Newcastle areas are no longer considered to be regional areas. Finally, the electorate of Keira ticks all the boxes for the purpose of the bill so I look forward to early September and a budget that is going to deliver big time for the people of the Illawarra and big time for the people of Keira.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.48 p.m.]: I commend the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. First, the member for Strathfield could not have been getting a carpeting from the Treasurer 10 minutes ago because the Treasurer was in the Chamber a few minutes ago listening to of the debate. That clearly shows that Labor makes policies on the run and members opposite say whatever they think is appropriate at a particular time. The member for Keira also said that all the projects in his electorate would tick all the boxes. So would every project in my electorate tick all the boxes, but the fact is we now have a Government that has a whole-of-government approach and will take into account the whole of New South Wales to ensure that prosperity grows across the State. The member for Keira forgot to mention that in the past there was a culture in which Labor looked after its mates when making political decisions, and the rest of the State missed out badly. My electorate of Bathurst missed out for a very long time because regional areas were forgotten.

Regional areas received no attention, so I commend this bill because it will ensure that—finally—regional areas will get their fair share when it comes to decision-making for this State. The Restart NSW Fund has been established for the purpose of setting aside funding for and securing the delivery of major infrastructure projects and other necessary projects across the State. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government will establish Restart NSW to kickstart investment in crucial road and transport infrastructure and make New South Wales number one again. There is a whole lot of work to do, but we are committed to doing it because we have been left with the biggest mess ever left to an incoming government in the history of Australian politics.

[*Interruption*]

I point out to the member for Maroubra that the public spoke strongly on 26 March because of 16 years of incompetence and Labor failing to build infrastructure. The people had had enough and booted Labor out of office. Today the member for Maroubra referred to economic growth and activity. For more than 16 years the State lost numerous opportunities. Under Labor the New South Wales economy grew more slowly than that of any other Australian State. Between 1995 and 2010 the gross State product of Queensland increased 90 per cent and in Western Australia gross State product increased by 80 per cent. But what was the rate of increase for New South Wales?

Mr Tim Owen: What was it?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: For New South Wales, the increase was 46 per cent. We were coming dead last. We were even worse than Tasmania simply because for 16 years we did not have essential infrastructure. If New South Wales had increased gross State product by the rate achieved in Victoria, which was 65 per cent, we would have had an additional \$50 billion. That would have amounted to approximately \$2.4 billion each year in State revenue and would have enabled us to build infrastructure and other projects that the State needed. Labor wasted the State's money and demonstrated that it cannot manage a budget.

The purpose of the Restart NSW Fund is to improve the economic growth and productivity of the State. For that purpose, Restart will fund major infrastructure projects to improve public transport, roads and other infrastructure required to boost this State's economic competitiveness, including the movement of freight, intermodal facilities and access to water resources. It also will involve the provision of local infrastructure in regional areas that are affected by mining operations, additional hospital facilities and services, and workplaces for law and justice officers. For the benefit of the New South Wales public, this Government also will provide the necessary infrastructure to improve services offered by teachers, nurses and other service delivery personnel.

Dr Geoff Lee: Tell us more.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I thank the member for Parramatta for his interjection. He really cares about New South Wales and has been working hard on behalf of the people of his electorate. From July 2000 to July 2010 the unemployment rate in New South Wales was above the national average. Thank goodness we now have a Government with vision that will create an additional 100,000 jobs for this State, 40,000 of which will go to regional areas. The Restart NSW Fund will provide certainty. Good governments manage their budgets, but New South Wales Labor consistently blew its budget through overspending. That is why the current

Government has been left with a big mess and a \$5.3 billion budget black hole. Rather than investing the State's budget overspends in critical infrastructure that would have protected the future of New South Wales, Labor used them to prop up its broken budget bottom line.

Small businesses walked away from this State at an alarming rate under the former Labor Government. Small businesses had little confidence in the Labor administration because there was too much bureaucracy, too much red tape, a shortage of incentives, increased State taxes and payroll tax, and stamp duty rates that were hurting. That is why the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is ensuring that it will restore the confidence of small businesses in this State. It is also critical for a State government to ensure that the provision of infrastructure keeps pace with increases in population. Over the next 25 years, Sydney's population is expected to increase by 31 per cent. If we do not kickstart infrastructure investment now, we will find ourselves in an even bigger mess in years to come. The current Government adopts a whole-of-State approach. We know from experience that Labor's answers were to cut regional hospitals and close regional rail lines.

Labor failed to spend money on water security projects, adequate infrastructure services and suitable business conditions to support regional New South Wales. I will not deal in detail with the list of all the things that Labor promised and then axed over the past 16 years. My colleague the member for Myall Lakes stated very clearly all the promises that Labor made and all the promises that Labor failed to deliver on. New South Wales is caught in a very vicious cycle. Economic growth drives government revenue. New South Wales lacks requisite infrastructure, and that has prevented our economy from growing. Without growth, no additional revenue is generated that can be used to replace failing infrastructure. Something needs to change, and it needs to change very quickly. We need to restart the New South Wales economy. We must regain the reputation of New South Wales as Australia's number one place in which to live and conduct business.

The Restart NSW Fund will assist in building essential infrastructure such as public transport, roads, hospitals and water resources to support people who work in the delivery of frontline services. The fund will have a specific mandate to increase productivity in New South Wales and will have the clear goal of lifting New South Wales economic growth to above the national average. The Government is sending the very strong message that New South Wales is back in the business of big infrastructure projects and serious about making New South Wales the number one State again.

The bill also will strengthen transparency and will ensure regular reporting on expenditure in rural and regional areas. Furthermore, this legislation complements the Infrastructure NSW Act 2011, which was passed by this Parliament on 22 June. I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill because it focuses on the whole of New South Wales. This legislation will ensure that regional areas do not miss out as they have in the past. The Restart NSW Fund Bill is legislation of which we in the Government can be proud because it will assist all the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.57 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I participate in debate on the Restart NSW Bill 2011 on behalf of The Greens. This bill establishes the Restart NSW Fund to set aside funding for and secure the delivery of major infrastructure projects. Much has been said by both Government and Opposition about infrastructure and economic expansion during this debate. Projects that will be funded by the Restart NSW Fund will be recommended by Infrastructure NSW and assessed in the budget process against the five-year Infrastructure Plan and the 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy. Projects may include public transport infrastructure, roads infrastructure that deals with urban congestion, economic infrastructure, local infrastructure in regional areas that are affected by mining operations, hospitals and health infrastructure and improvements to workplaces for frontline workers, including law and justice officers, teachers and nurses.

The bill has the capacity to deliver improvements to their workplaces, and I welcome such improvements. In the electorate of Balmain we have seen the potential of quality infrastructure to improve the lives and opportunities of local residents. In May I gave notice of a motion calling on the Government to extend light rail services in Sydney's inner west to improve public transport options for thousands of residents who commute to the central business district and travel across the inner west. I am pleased to see the Minister for Transport in the House, a great champion of light rail. I have also spoken in this place about problems with the Balmain ferries service. I will continue to campaign for publicly owned better transport connections and improved quality of ferry services for the constituents of Balmain.

In this place I have also called for the proposed relocation of the cruise ship terminal from Barangaroo to White Bay to be reconsidered. This project is yet another example of top-down planning that is unacceptable to communities. A great way for the Government to save money would be not to proceed with the proposed cruise ship terminal at White Bay and for that to be moved to Barangaroo for a range of reasons. Firstly, it is not supported by the industry. The Tourism and Transport Forum does not support it being at White Bay. The cruise

ship industry does not support this piece of infrastructure being at White Bay, nor does the local community or local councils because it is clear that it is not supported by the tourist industry because of the poor quality of service it provides to our tourists. In our planning we must listen and respond to community concerns, rather than enforce decisions and ignore community feedback. The Restart NSW Bill 2011 has the capacity for great success if it is responsive to the needs of our community.

The people of my electorate have experienced the negative impacts of funding cutbacks and botched public transport infrastructure services. We remember the botched Metro scheme, the impact of the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge—a range of infrastructure projects, hundreds of millions of dollars that have not led to any real improvement to the electors of Balmain; nor has it led to any transport or traffic improvements. My first question as the member for Balmain was about an important piece of public infrastructure in our community, the 24-hour casualty service at Balmain Hospital. That was removed by the former Government. The removal of this essential service not only affected the people of Balmain but also placed additional pressure on the already overloaded casualty service at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Camperdown. In this way, poor infrastructure decisions can have far-reaching consequences and flow-on impacts to the community.

However, we are disappointed that the Government, which was so quick to condemn Labor's service cuts, has been unwilling to fix this problem. The Greens look forward to the opportunities that the Restart NSW Fund promises in delivering much-needed services to the people of the State. We will campaign for the fund to be administered with foresight and recognition of the fact that great infrastructure plans for New South Wales need not mean bigger roads, more cars, increased urban congestion and overdevelopment. We strongly support the idea of borrowings, and we have supported the Government's position on Waratah bonds, to support the fund. We recognise that the raising of bonds for long-term infrastructure projects that deliver prosperity, productivity and congestion improvements are appropriate and we believe the Government is making the right decision when it comes to raising money for this fund to look at things such as Waratah bonds.

The Greens propose a similar type of bonds, our Green bonds, which we propose should be used to fund a solar thermal plant in western New South Wales. We believe that bonds that deliver long-term investments for the community are justified and the Government should seriously consider demonstrating its commitment to the bonds by issuing these bonds to raise funds for the Restart NSW Fund. However, we raise concerns over the Government's intention to make payments to the fund using proceeds of privatisation of public assets, including the Sydney desalination plant, as the Treasurer mentioned in his agreement in principle speech. We are concerned that other public assets may be sold by the Government to resource this fund.

We have outlined our concerns about the privatisation regime of the former Government because we do not believe that this delivers in the long-term interests of people. We see the folly of privatisation as endured under the former State Government and we will continue to scrutinise the Coalition Government to ensure it does not follow the same path. The Government must not use this infrastructure fund as an excuse to sell off public assets. Good infrastructure provides the essential framework of a great State and provides a tremendous opportunity to deal with issues of inequality in our community. Public transport provision is the key.

We know that public transport infrastructure not only delivers productivity improvements but also deals with inequality, allowing people to have a lower cost method of travelling to work as well as environmental benefits. We also recognise the inevitability of the need for further infrastructure in our community and we look forward to the Government delivering these expansions with innovation, insight and aspiration. We will continue to campaign for the sustainable development of people-centred infrastructure—infrastructure which improves the lives of the people we serve. I look forward to the details of its funding and the projects to be delivered by the Government. I commend the bill to the House.

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 22 June 2011.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [6.05 p.m.]: The Government Advertising Bill 2011 demonstrates how policy is made in the O'Farrell Government: Talk tough in Opposition, work weak in Government. In Opposition the Premier introduced a private member's bill—the Government Publicity Control Bill 2007—that he said would:

put transparency and some accountability into the process, designed to ensure that New South Wales taxpayers' funds are not misused by any government of any political persuasion for purposes that are simply designed to suit the party in power.

Now that Barry O'Farrell is in government his position has significantly changed. This bill is a weak version of the legislation he introduced four years ago. Do not be mistaken: He uses the same rhetoric but he has weakened the bill. This bill was another one of the Government's 100 Day Action Plan commitments, the 100 days of failures. There were 39 appointments, audits, tabled papers, reviews, plans that the Premier's transition team put together before the election, and they could not even deliver on any of them. Like most of those commitments, the bill is very different to what was promised.

I turn to the details of the bill. According to the Government, this bill stops Ministers and government agencies spending funds on advertising unless the campaign complies with the new laws. The Government says the bill does a number of things, including prohibiting party-political material in government advertising; prohibiting advertising campaigns designed to benefit a political party; protecting the independence of heads of government agencies authorising advertising campaigns, ensuring they are free from interference by a Minister; providing a role for the Auditor-General to scrutinise government advertising campaigns; and making governing political parties liable to pay back the cost of advertising campaigns that breach these laws.

Governing political parties will need to ensure that the provisions of the bill are not breached, at the risk of having to pay back the cost of an advertising campaign that is prohibited under the new laws. A government advertising campaign must not contain the name or give prominence to the voice or image of a Minister, a member of Parliament or a nominated candidate for election to Parliament. The name of any political party, its logo or slogan may not be in a government advertising campaign. Government agencies need to comply with the provisions of this bill. They are set out in part 1 and include public service departments, statutory bodies representing the Crown, the New South Wales Police Force, the teaching services and New South Wales health services. Other bodies may be prescribed by regulation. State-owned corporations are not subject to the arrangements in the bill.

Government advertising campaigns must not be designed to directly or indirectly influence support for a political party. If a government advertising campaign breaches the requirements of clause 6, the prohibitions on political advertising, the cost of the campaign is payable by the governing political party from the time the campaign commenced. The Premier has always used the subject of government advertising to score political points and that is what this bill is about—it is a political stunt. All governments spend money on advertising, and the O'Farrell Government will be no different. A large part of the government advertising expenditure is on important routine government business, including things such as the recruitment of nurses, teachers and police, as well as tender advertisements and public notices.

In advertising campaigns, one of the largest expenditures is the Cancer Institute of New South Wales, which runs important campaigns such as breast cancer awareness and encouraging people to quit smoking. Another big spending area is the Roads and Traffic Authority, with its important road safety awareness campaigns. Whilst the name might change we anticipate that those road safety awareness campaigns will continue. These are legitimate public awareness campaigns with clear benefits for the people of New South Wales. Many parts of this bill are the same or very similar to the current government advertising guidelines. For instance, clause 7 requires that the head of a government agency must ensure that a cost-benefit analysis is carried out for a proposed government advertising campaign that is likely to exceed \$1 million, and a peer review is required if any proposed campaign is likely to exceed \$50,000.

The requirements for cost-benefit analyses and peer reviews for campaigns are part of the current guidelines, as is the requirement for the head of a government agency to provide a compliance certificate in relation to a campaign. However, it is important to note that the requirement—that a peer review panel include a reviewer independent of the public sector—is in the current guidelines but is missing from this bill. I ask members opposite to explain why a number of guidelines have been included in this legislation but, significantly, that important provision of an independent peer reviewer on the panel has been left out. As I have said, this bill is very different to the private member's bill introduced in 2007 by the member for Ku-ring-gai, the current Premier. Four years ago the then Leader of the Opposition said:

This legislation is simple ... it enables the Auditor-General to order a public authority to stop dissemination of government publicity in certain circumstances, and it may order that a political party pay back the amount of expenditure on government publicity for political purposes incurred by a public authority where that party is held to be responsible for the publicity.

The current bill does none of those things. The bill introduced in 2007 by the member for Ku-ring-gai would have required the Auditor General to review a campaign costing \$200,000 or more. Amazingly, that provision is missing from the bill. When we compare this bill to the bill introduced by the member for Ku-ring-gai in 2007 we find that this bill weakens the role of the Attorney General. Clause 14 provides for the Auditor-General to

carry out an annual performance audit of the activities of one or more government agencies only in relation to their advertising campaigns. Unlike the private member's bill introduced in 2007 by the member for Ku-ring-gai, this bill does not make it clear who has responsibility for making a decision that there has been a breach or a prohibition, and who has responsibility for taking cost recovery action. If it is not the Auditor-General, as promised by the Premier before the election, we can only assume that it is the head of a government agency.

This bill states that the heads of government agencies will be responsible for independently managing and vouching for the integrity of the campaign. They will not be subject to ministerial control concerning any government advertising campaign, which is ridiculous. Ministers appoint the heads of agencies and approve their pay increases. There is not much more ministerial control than someone who appoints the heads of agencies and who determines their pay increases. How popular would the head of an agency be with the Minister if he or she decided that the Liberal Party or The Nationals should pay for an advertising campaign? In reality the head of an agency would not do that. It is worth noting also the hypocrisy of those opposite in relation to this matter. When introducing this legislation the Premier said:

The people of New South Wales should be able to expect that each dollar spent on a campaign is spent for their benefit, and not for the benefit of politicians or political parties.

Opposition members recall when the Howard Government spent more than \$100 million spruiking the benefits of WorkChoices—\$100 million is about what the New South Wales Government spends on all advertising campaigns for the whole of the financial year. When the Howard Government abused taxpayer's money to suit its agenda the member for Ku-ring-gai said nothing. If the Premier were really concerned about the use of taxpayers' money he would have attacked the Howard Government's blatantly political promotion of WorkChoices. But he did not. Instead, as we now know, he was planning to introduce WorkChoices style laws of his own.

I conclude by reminding the House that when the member for Ku-ring-gai introduced his private member's bill in 2007 he said that if the then Labor Government did not support his bill it would be considered hypocrisy—which is an example of a leader saying one thing and doing another. Those words were meaningless rhetoric then and four years later they are incredibly appropriate. Lately the Premier has made a habit of promising one thing and doing another. This legislation is yet another example. I flag now that the Opposition will be moving amendments in the Legislative Council to help the Premier deliver on his promises. If the Premier will not deliver on his promises he should be pleased that the Opposition is only too glad to help.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.16 p.m.]: I support the Government Advertising Bill 2011, the aim of which is to restore integrity to taxpayer-funded government advertising. This bill provides incentives for compliance with existing New South Wales Government Advertising Guidelines published as the Premier's Memorandum 2010-08. For far too long in New South Wales we have been exposed to a self-serving regime that used taxpayers' money to promote its own political ends. Surprise, surprise, this was most evident close to an election. The hardworking people of New South Wales deserve to have each government dollar spent effectively and transparently. This bill provides for the Premier to publish advertising guidelines, which must be followed by all government agencies undertaking advertising campaigns. The Attorney General estimates that in the decade from 1999 to 2009 total annual expenditure on government advertising was approximately \$80 million to \$120 million, that is, about \$1 billion during that time.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Blue Mountains will be heard in silence.

Mrs ROZA SAGE: The Leader of the Opposition alluded to the fact that the Government needs to spend money promoting awareness of important issues such as advertising campaigns to inform people about road safety; television advertisements featuring medical Professor Brian Owler to inform them of the dangers of speeding; driver fatigue advertisements; and excess alcohol consumption advertisements, for example, "Know when to say when." It is abhorrent when governments flout flagrantly political advertising campaigns. To this end this bill provides for regulation of government advertising as committed to in the Liberal-Nationals 100 Day Action Plan.

Prohibition clause 6 provides that an advertising campaign must not be designed to influence support for a political party; contain material that contains the name, or gives prominence to, the voice or any image of a Minister, or any other member of Parliament, or a candidate nominated for election to Parliament; or contain material that contains the name, logo or any slogan of, or any other reference relating to, a political party. For

far too long governments have been using the public purse for political gain. I vividly remember the 2007 State election campaign. One of the many regulations with which small businesses are obliged to comply is the payment of workers compensation. When I opened the literature for the workers compensation forms that I needed to fill out, lo and behold, I found a letter from the then Labor Government Minister which extolled his virtues and the virtues of what he called his wonderful Government.

Needless to say I could not believe such a blatant piece of political advertising. The following year, after the election, no such letter was received. The Government Advertising Bill 2011 addresses this form of blatant taxpayer-funded electioneering. Where advertising is to take place the head of a government agency must ensure that peer reviews and cost-benefit analyses are carried out prior to the commencement of a campaign when the costs will exceed \$1 million. If the cost of the campaign is likely to exceed \$50,000 the head of the government agency must ensure that a peer review is carried out before the campaign commences.

Clause 8 provides that a campaign must not commence unless the head of the agency has given a compliance certificate that states that the proposed campaign complies with the Act, regulations and guidelines, contains accurate information, is necessary to achieve a public purpose, is supported by analysis and research and is an efficient and cost-effective means of achieving that public purpose. The Auditor-General must also undertake at least one annual performance audit of a government advertising campaign to ensure compliance with the proposed Act. Breaches of the prohibitions are found in clause 11. It is important to note that the bill states that the head of a government agency is not subject to a Minister's direction or control in determining or approving the method, medium or volume of any campaign of the agency, or in determining whether to issue a compliance certificate. This will distance political interference in any government advertising campaign, a refreshing concept after years of political interference by those opposite.

If a government advertising campaign breaches the prohibitions in clause 6, the governing political party of the day automatically incurs a debt due to the Crown for the cost of the campaign. This liability might arise even if an advertising campaign had not been the subject of an Auditor-General's report. Importantly, proceedings for the recovery of the debt can be initiated by a representative of the Crown and the head of an agency is not subject to the control or direction of a Minister in respect of any debt recovery action. A party might seek relief from the Supreme Court concerning its liability to pay back the campaign costs. In conclusion, this bill will provide the checks and balances that will ensure integrity in government spending of hard-earned taxpayers' money in funding advertising. This is what the community expects and deserves. I commend this bill to the House.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.23 p.m.]: I join in debate on the Government Advertising Bill 2011 to point out that clearly it is a matter of public interest that public moneys used on advertising remain firmly restricted to campaigns that do not contain elements designed to promote the image of political parties and political players. I could not agree more that the use of party political material and advertising campaigns intended to create a favourable impression of a political party should be denied public funds at all times and without exception. I could not support more fully steps taken to protect the independence of heads of government agencies authorising advertising, in particular, in the light of concerns that such individuals could find themselves subject to inappropriate pressure from Ministers. Departmental heads undeniably are most suited to independently managing and vouching for the integrity of any given campaign and, as such, must be allowed to operate completely free of any interference or the suggestion of it.

The Government's bill contains two other elements to which I wish to refer tonight. The first aspect relates to the provision of a role for the Auditor-General to scrutinise government advertising campaigns and the second aspect relates to assurances that governing political parties will be compelled to pay back the costs of advertising campaigns that breach these laws. The bill, when viewed objectively—that is, without context or background—appears to be an appropriate piece of legislation. However, Opposition members, in vigilantly undertaking their responsibility to hold the Government to account, find themselves once again having to address a government bill that to all intents and purposes appears to be nothing other than a publicity stunt. This is not an accusation or a false alarm; rather it is a fair assessment that any reasonable persons would make should they find themselves privy to the facts.

Last week the Opposition again had to pull the Government into line by illustrating the similarly non-substantive nature of the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which reflected a blatant ignorance of existing laws and attempted, disingenuously, to dress up a minor tweaking of current laws as a bill of substance, which clearly this is not. It appears as though this is becoming a weekly ritual. I wonder whether our time could have been better spent. It is a shame that this is not such an occasion. The Government has chosen to introduce a

bill that is markedly different to the one introduced in 2007 by the member for Ku-ring-gai, the current Premier. That bill would have compelled the Auditor-General to review a campaign costing \$200,000 or more and given him or her power to stop a campaign if it did not comply with the guidelines. This critical aspect is missing from the bill in its current form.

The bill fails adequately to clarify who bears responsibility for deciding whether and when there has been a breach of a prohibition, and who carries the onus to take cost-recovery measures. Although the bill suggests that the heads of agencies will be responsible for playing these roles, there remains a critical weakness in the governance framework; that is, Ministers do appoint heads of agencies. This is one of the reasons why the Opposition will be moving amendments in the other place. It is with the greatest of irony that Opposition members will be moving amendments to ensure that the Premier delivers on statements he made in 2007. Were they just rhetoric then? In the past did the Premier make a promise that he does not want to deliver on now? It certainly seems to be the case with this Premier that he promises one thing and he does something else.

I read with keen interest the July edition e-brief of the New South Wales Parliamentary Library. I note in particular that one of the main points to be made in that e-brief is that many of the components in this bill are already in effect and are well reflected in current guidelines. However, the e-brief from the New South Wales Parliamentary Library, when discussing this bill, notes the following under the heading "Similarities with Existing Guidelines":

The Bill's requirements for cost benefit analyses and peer reviews for campaigns exceeding a certain threshold are part of current guidelines.

The Bill's requirement for the head of a government agency to provide a compliance certificate in relation to a campaign is very similar to a provision in the current guidelines.

The e-brief contains also the following particularly noteworthy quote:

By way of comparison, it can be noted that Mr O'Farrell's 2007 Bill would have given the Auditor-General the power to order a political party to repay the costs of a campaign which breached the guidelines.

As I previously mentioned, one of the Opposition's main concerns is that what the Premier said in 2007 in relation to this bill does not seem to reflect his current statements. One must ask why that is. Accordingly, I join the Leader of the Opposition and my colleagues in pressing the Government unequivocally to embrace the amendments that will be moved by the Opposition.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [6.28 p.m.]: I was gobsmacked when Opposition members suggested earlier that the Government Advertising Bill 2011 does not go far enough. For 16 years the former Government refused to take any action to stop the sorts of rorts that we witnessed election after election. Massive government expenditure spiked quite conveniently in the year of an election. For example, in the 2007 election, government spending increased by 21 per cent compared with spending in the year before—a very curious coincidence.

This bill is designed to stop that sort of rort once and for all. We went to the election with a strong five-point action plan: to rebuild the New South Wales economy, to return quality services, to renovate infrastructure, to restore accountability to government, and to protect our local environment and return planning powers to the community. Part of restoring accountability to government was to eliminate taxpayer-funded advertising. Taxpayers' money should not be used for political advertising. Labor was spending about \$1 billion a decade of taxpayers' money on government advertising, which curiously spiked in election years. New South Wales became the seventh-biggest advertiser in the country with an annual advertising expenditure bigger than McDonald's and the Commonwealth Bank combined.

Our motivation and concerns to introduce this bill are supported by the comments of the Auditor-General in his December 2009 report when he said that the increase in government spending on advertising leading up to the 2007 election "contributes to the perception that government advertising may inappropriately serve the political interests of the party in government." This bill is designed to stop that sort of rort and perception. The bill fulfils our election promise and delivers the Government's commitment contained in the 100 Day Action Plan to introduce legislation to eliminate taxpayer-funded political advertising. The bill will stop Ministers and government agencies spending funds on advertising unless the campaign complies with the new laws.

The bill will regulate government advertising campaigns by, first, providing for government advertising guidelines; second, prohibiting government advertising campaigns and other material that could influence

support for a political party; third, requiring cost-benefit analyses and peer reviews of government advertising campaigns to be carried out for campaigns costing more than a specified amount, and an advertising compliance certificate to be given before a campaign is commenced; fourth, requiring a political party whose parliamentary representatives are Ministers in the New South Wales Government to pay the costs of government advertising that contravenes the prohibitions relating to political advertising; fifth, giving a right to seek a Supreme Court review of the liability to pay those costs; sixth, requiring the Auditor-General to audit government advertising activities and report the findings to Parliament; and seventh, requiring advertising compliance certificates to be made publicly available as open-access information.

This bill, if enacted, will cover a wide range of government agencies, including public service departments, statutory bodies representing the Crown, the police force, teaching services and health services, and other bodies as prescribed by regulation. State-owned corporations not engaged in the types of businesses and activities that lend themselves to politicised advertising will not be subject to these arrangements, but the Government will monitor their advertising practices to determine whether they should be regulated at some future time. Clause 4 defines government advertising campaigns as disseminating to the public under a commercial advertising distribution agreement by means of radio, television, the internet, newspapers, billboards, cinemas or other media information about a government program, policy or initiative or any public health, safety or other matter funded by or on behalf of a government agency.

For this purpose reports required to be published by Acts and private campaigns sponsored by government agencies will not be government advertising campaigns. Regulations may exempt certain advertising campaigns or classes of advertising campaigns from the whole or specified provisions of the proposed Act. Clause 5 requires the Minister to prepare government advertising guidelines and publish them in the *Government Gazette*, and make them publicly available on the government website. The guidelines cannot be inconsistent with the Act or its regulations. The bill provides that the Premier, as the responsible Minister, may augment and detail the practices for government advertising through guidelines. Clause 6 is a key clause of the bill as it contains prohibitions concerning advertising campaigns.

First, a government advertising campaign must not directly or indirectly influence support for a political party. Second, a government advertising campaign must not contain the name or give prominence to the voice or image of a Minister, member of Parliament or a nominated candidate for election to Parliament. Third, the name of any political party, its logo or slogan may not be used in a government advertising campaign. The legislation provides for some exceptions—for example, information provided by the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Funding Authority. Under clause 7 the head of a government agency must ensure that a cost-benefit analysis is carried out for a proposed government advertising campaign likely to exceed \$1 million. A peer review is required if any proposed campaign is likely to exceed \$50,000.

The agency head must certify that those steps occurred prior to the government advertising campaign going to air, into print or live on the internet. The clause contains provisions for exceptional circumstances—for example, a civil emergency or sudden health epidemic—in which case the peer review or cost-benefit analysis can be undertaken and certified after the commencement of the campaign. The Government took action recently to improve the integrity of parliamentary processes by introducing legislation that effectively means that any future Government can prorogue Parliament only from Australia Day before a general State election. Clause 8 requires that before an advertising campaign commences, the head of a government agency issue an advertising compliance certificate certifying that the campaign complies with the Act, regulations and the government advertising guidelines, contains accurate information and is necessary to achieve a public purpose, is supported by analysis and research, and is an efficient and cost-effective means of achieving that public purpose.

A certificate can be issued after the commencement of the advertising campaign in the case of urgent public health or safety matters or other urgent circumstances. Clause 9, importantly, provides that the head of a government agency is not subject to ministerial control when determining or approving the method, medium or volume of a government advertising campaign or determining whether to issue a compliance certificate, subject to certain exceptions. Clause 10 is equally important, particularly as it prevents similar patterns to that which operated under 16 years of Labor control with spikes in government advertising in election years. Clause 10 prohibits government advertising campaigns from being conducted after Australia Day and before election day in a year when a State election is to be held. However, the bill provides for exceptions for non-contentious categories of advertisements, such as public health and safety matters, service announcements, legal notices, jobs or tenders.

Clause 11 gives the bill teeth by providing for enforcement provisions. If a government advertising campaign breaches the prohibitions of clause 6, the cost of the campaign is payable by the governing political

party from the time the campaign commenced. That cost can be recovered as a debt due to the Crown. Evidence supporting the Crown's claim may include a report or finding of the Attorney General. Clause 13 gives a governing political party the right to apply to the Supreme Court for a review of its liability to pay the whole or part of the cost of an impugned campaign. The Supreme Court may determine whether there was a breach, determine the cost and may relieve the governing party of the obligation to pay the whole or part of the cost.

Those enforcement provisions allow for a rigorous and transparent process. The Auditor-General has an important role under clause 14 to monitor government advertising campaigns and sound the alert when the Act is breached. The Auditor-General must carry out an annual performance audit of the advertising campaigns of one or more government agencies to determine effectiveness, economic viability, efficiency and compliance with the Act, regulations under the Act, other laws and government advertising guidelines. The Auditor-General can determine that the content or other circumstances of a government advertising campaign constitute a breach of proposed section 6 or the regulations and, if so, must specify the cost of the campaign. I support the bill because it is another delivered promise of the O'Farrell Government. The fourth point of our five-point action plan was restoring accountability to the Government. Restoring integrity, ethics and accountability in the government advertising process is important to achieve that point.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [6.39 p.m.]: The Government Advertising Bill 2011 is another O'Farrell Government bill that has no substance. It is all a big stunt. So many parts of the bill are very similar to the current guidelines. The Government has reworked a few minor parts of the bill and is attempting to pass it off. It is a joke. The object of this bill is to regulate government advertising campaigns by providing for government advertising guidelines; prohibiting government advertising campaigns and other material that could influence support for a political party; requiring cost benefit analyses and peer review of government advertising campaigns costing more than a specified amount, and an advertising compliance certificate to be given before a campaign is commenced; requiring a political party whose parliamentary representatives are Ministers in the Government of this State to pay the costs of government advertising that contravenes the prohibitions relating to political advertising; providing a right to seek a Supreme Court review of the liability to pay those costs; requiring the Auditor-General to audit the advertising activities of Government agencies and to report the findings to Parliament; and requiring advertising compliance certificates to be made publicly available as open access information.

This bill purports to be about the honesty and integrity of a Government. However, it is so similar to existing legislation that one could easily think that the Government does not fully comprehend that a simple re-jigging of terms does not constitute meaningful legislative change. Political parties that have formed the Government of the day will have to be careful and ensure that they do not breach the provisions of this bill regarding government advertising. Should a breach of the bill be found to have occurred the governing political party of the day will be required to pay the costs of that advertising campaign.

Any government advertising campaign must not contain or give prominence to the voice or image of a Minister, a Member of Parliament or a nominated candidate for election to the Parliament. For obvious reasons this legislation does not allow the name of any political party, its logo, or its slogan to be used in any government advertising campaign. The management and organisation of the advertising campaign will fall under the purview of the head of the relevant government agency. This is reasonable as it allows the department or agency to not be under ministerial control when managing the advertising campaign.

Part 1 sets out which government agencies are required to comply with the provision of this bill including, but not limited to, public service departments, the NSW Police Force, teaching services and NSW Health Services. This list is not limited and further bodies may be prescribed by regulation. State-owned corporations are exempt from this bill as it is deemed that their line of work leaves them separate from political advertising. Part 1 provides that a government advertising campaign is the public dissemination of information about matters of government or public importance and the information is distributed under a commercial advertising agreement and paid for by or on behalf of a government agency. Just like any other advertiser a government agency purchases time or space on television, in print media, or broadcast media.

Part 2 of the bill provides that the Premier or Minister responsible may augment and detail the provisions for government advertising through guidelines. Clause 6 of the bill sets out those prohibitions concerning advertising campaigns. The first prohibition is that a government advertising campaign must not be designed to directly or indirectly influence support for a political party. Clause 7 requires that a government agency head must ensure that a cost-benefit analysis is carried out for any proposed government advertising campaign that will exceed or is likely to exceed \$1 million in expenditure. Any proposed campaign exceeding or

likely to exceed \$50,000 will be subject to a peer review. Clause 14 specifically provides that the Auditor-General will carry out a performance audit annually of the activities of one or more agencies in relation to their advertising campaigns.

As I stated earlier, if a breach is ruled to have occurred under clause 6 the governing political party will bear the cost of the advertising campaign. Under current legislation the requirements for cost benefit analyses and peer reviews for campaigns already exist. So too is the requirement for the relevant government agency head to provide a compliance certificate in relation to a campaign. That is typical of this O'Farrell Government—more stunts, lots of smoke, plenty of mirrors, but very little action. The question should be asked: Why does the current requirement that a peer review panel include a reviewer independent of the public sector not appear in the new legislation? It will come under the control of the Minister. This bill is more smoke and mirrors.

In the Australian Capital Territory, campaigns with expenditure exceeding \$40,000 are subject to review by a person who is not a public servant and whose appointment must be approved by the Legislative Assembly. This bill in its current shape and form is not even consistent with the one introduced by Barry O'Farrell in 2007. That bill required any campaign with expenditure over \$200,000 to be subject to review by the Auditor-General. That bill would give the Auditor-General powers to stop a campaign if it did not comply with the appropriate guidelines. All those requirements are missing from this bill.

It is easy to speak and to make promises when in Opposition, but the situation changes when in Government. The Government may change its mind. The Government does not want to paint itself into a corner. The Government finds loopholes and that is what this bill has—loopholes. The bill does not even make it clear who decides if there has been a breach. There is no clear delineation of who is responsible for deciding if a breach has occurred and whether cost-recovery action needs to take place. If it is not the Auditor-General adjudicating, will it be the department head adjudicating on his or her government department's campaign? It makes no sense whatsoever.

This bill purports that the head of the agency will be free to develop and organise a government advertising campaign free of ministerial control. Let us just look at how this will work. Agency heads are answerable to their relevant Minister over issues in their department and portfolio. Agency heads have their remuneration and pay increases signed off by that Minister. How anyone can fathom that is not ministerial control is beyond me. This bill expects the head of an agency to tell a Minister that the Minister's political party must foot the bill for an advertising campaign that has breached the guidelines of this legislation. It would take a certain level of fortitude for that person to be willing to do that. Let us not kid ourselves, it is unlikely to happen. Government Ministers can sack their agency head at any time. This legislation was either very poorly thought out or not properly thought through.

How hypocritical of this O'Farrell Government to introduce legislation in relation to government advertising when he never took a stand against the Howard Government's \$100 million advertising campaign spruiking WorkChoices. No matter how far the Coalition runs, it cannot hide from WorkChoices. The Howard Government spent \$100 million on one advertising campaign. That was almost the entire budget of the New South Wales Government's advertising budgets for the past financial year. They did not have a problem with WorkChoices and the punters having to foot the bill for that failed campaign. The taxpayers of Australia paid that bill. Still, they want to take the high moral ground here in New South Wales. People are going to see through the dishonesty of the O'Farrell Government and the former Federal Government.

The Government Advertising Bill 2011 is nothing more than a stunt. government advertising is a necessary part of governing the State. Essential Government business such as the recruitment of people to fill frontline service positions—police, teachers and nurses—is an effective and worthwhile use of government advertising. Important campaigns warn people of the dangers of smoking and make them aware of various health issues, and this is what government advertising should be used for. The Government needs to stop putting out wonky legislation that barely makes a difference. The Opposition's amendment allows the Auditor-General to halt the dissemination of an advertising campaign deemed to have breached the guidelines and gives the Auditor-General the power to order a political party to pay the cost of any government advertising campaign that breaches the guidelines. I support the right of the Opposition to move amendments to the bill in the other place.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [6.50 p.m.]: As previous speakers have noted, this is not the first time a bill of this type has been introduced in this Parliament. However, this is the first time such a bill has been

introduced by the Government of the day. Bills such as this are typically presented by an Opposition in an attempt to highlight the fact that the Government of the day is spending money inappropriately on advertising, and of course governments have traditionally opposed them. Members opposite certainly did so when legislation designed to prevent inappropriate government advertising was introduced by Andrew Tink and Barry O'Farrell.

Although they have referred to those bills in this debate, members opposite have not said that they opposed them. Kevin Rudd promised to introduce legislation in the Federal Parliament to prevent such spending once he became Prime Minister, but he obviously forgot and his successor has not picked up the ball. The protests voiced by members opposite fall a little short of the mark given that they did nothing to prevent inappropriate spending on advertising when they were in government. This bill is different because it has been introduced by the Premier of the day to control his Government. It demonstrates that this Government is fair dinkum and is delivering on its commitments.

The bill outlines guidelines for government advertising and, importantly, prohibits government advertising that is designed to achieve political purposes or benefit. It provides that the Government must ensure that a cost-benefit analysis is undertaken if the cost of a campaign is likely to exceed \$1 million. Further, heads of government agencies must ensure that a peer review of an advertising campaign is carried out if the cost is likely to exceed \$50,000. The prohibitions on advertising in the lead-up to an election are made clear, which has never been required in previous legislation, with proposed section 10 of the bill disallowing any government advertising campaigns to be carried out after 26 January in the year of an election.

The bill goes further by ensuring that the regulatory system is enforced and proposed section 11 sets out the measures that will be taken if a government breaches the regulations. If an advertising campaign breaches the regulations, the governing political party will have to pay the cost of the advertising involved. Proposed section 14 of the bill requires the Auditor-General to conduct performance audits of one or more government agencies in relation to their government advertising campaigns each year. The bill does what the public of New South Wales expects of this Government. Many promises have been made over the years about this issue, but this is the only Government that has introduced legislation to fulfil its promises.

The people of New South Wales will note that this Government's approach is distinctly different from that of the previous Government. Whatever guidelines were in place under the previous administration, clearly they did not stop the political advertising campaigns that were run every fourth year of the election cycle over the past 16 years, and the budget figures are proof of that. Whatever guidelines members opposite say are already in place, they clearly did not work. Previous Labor governments have a shameful record with regard to government advertising.

Bob Carr addressed the New South Wales Labor Council as Leader of the Opposition in February 1995 and promised to ban advertising for party political promotion and to create a veto committee comprising the Auditor-General, the Electoral Commissioner and the Ombudsman. Two months later he became Premier and his promise was forgotten. Efforts have been made to hold Labor to account on this issue, including Andrew Tink's introduction of Bob Carr's proposed legislation as a private member's bill in 1996, but still the Labor Government did not act. In fact, members opposite voted down the private member's bill that Bob Carr drafted originally.

In early 1999, as the people of New South Wales faced an election, Bob Carr swore that there would be no government advertising from late January that year. However, four days after the writs for the election were issued the Roads and Traffic Authority spent up big, distributing a glossy brochure about the Woronora bridge project, which had already been axed by Labor and then resurrected. Of course, that would have had nothing to do with the fact that Heathcote was held by Labor by only 2.4 per cent—which we have remedied in recent times. Then in 2000 Labor began to resurrect its broken commitments to regulate government advertising once again. Bob Carr made all the right noises and said in this place, "If I can be convinced that the Government is spending a single dollar unwisely on newspaper, radio or television advertising, I will cut it." Yet, once again, Labor failed to deliver. By 2002—after seven years of Carr's premiership—spending on government advertising had increased by 150 per cent.

In September 2002 the Labor Government announced a review. A Cabinet subcommittee on advertising was even established and chaired by none other than Morris Iemma. In responding to a question about what action he would take as chair of that subcommittee, he said, "Well, much of the \$104 million expenditure I've been tasked to investigate has already been spent." He could not nominate a single instance of that committee rejecting a proposed advertising campaign. Barry O'Farrell then introduced Carr's own

Government Publicity Control Bill 2002 in an effort to draw attention to the broken promise and to the Government's continuing inaction. It was rejected again. By 2003, the Hon. John Della Bosca was ebullient in crowing that the State Government's advertising binge had been reduced to only \$250,000 a day. What essential government information was being imparted to the citizens of New South Wales? Which department spent the most on advertising? Was the money spent providing information about public health or road safety? No, \$19 million was spent advertising NSW Lotteries.

I will fast forward to 2006. A new broom had swept through the Government ranks and Morris Iemma was Premier, but nothing had changed. In the first half of 2006 alone, Labor spent \$8.8 million hiring more than 100 media and policy personnel, on an average salary of \$87,000 a year. It did that because the election was looming. We all remember the advertising spree that bombarded us before the 2007 election. Do members remember the "State Plan: A new direction for NSW"? It was full of rail links, health upgrades, roadworks and all sorts of other lovely things. The Government also spent \$4.1 million to tell us that we were using too much water and \$1.3 million to tell us how many new police officers it had hired.

It also spent the odd million here and there to whinge about the unfair distribution of the goods and services tax and to address other Federal issues. Coincidentally, we were subjected to those campaigns in the lead-up to the 2007 election. Labor's advertising bill over 12 years was more than \$1 billion. By December 2006, Morris Iemma was challenged to stop government advertising during campaigns, but he refused. It has taken an O'Farrell Coalition Government to deliver on a promise to prevent rorts in government advertising. The Labor Government spent \$111.7 million on advertising in 2006-07, which is more than Toyota's annual advertising budget. Emails between government staff also indicate that the Hon. Eric Roozendaal was intimately involved in the preparation of advertising campaigns.

A WorkCover television advertisement was changed at his request. I could go on, but it is clear that this had to stop. The people of New South Wales obviously thought so too, and voted overwhelmingly for a Liberal-Nationals Government. We made a commitment at the last election that we would introduce this bill, and that is exactly what we have done. I am proud to have had the opportunity to speak on this legislation and I am a proud member of a party that honours its commitments. I am also proud to tell the people of New South Wales that the Coalition Government is now taking action to prevent blatantly political government advertising. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

HENDRA VIRUS

Matter of Public Importance

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [7.10 p.m.]: The Hendra virus continues to infect horses in Queensland and northern New South Wales. I raise this matter of public importance as a reminder of the risks surrounding Hendra virus and of the need for preventative measures to minimise the risk of infection of horses, humans and companion animals. The Hendra virus is now affecting most of the State, particularly the North Coast. The electorate of Lismore is filled with a mix of wonderful people who enjoy the benefits of regional living, including the joy of contributing to a thriving rural sector from their own little farms. Sadly, in the past six weeks a silent killer has emerged on the North Coast. It has claimed the lives of five horses, threatened families and caused widespread community concern.

Since 30 June the menacing Hendra virus has hit four properties on the North Coast. Situated close to the Queensland border, the Hendra virus is always a threat. However, this is the first year such devastating losses have occurred in the State of New South Wales. The first horse to die was on a quiet rural acreage near Wollongbar. The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has a research station there and it has since provided the venue for a local disease control centre. Tragically, a second horse from the same Wollongbar property also became infected. Horses have also died at Macksville, Corndale near Lismore, and,

most recently, at Mullumbimby. My immediate concern has been for the owners and families on these properties who have been affected by the virus. I am told they are coping with the loss of their animals as well as can be hoped.

I have personally spoken to two concerned owners. Some have also faced further testing of their surviving animals and themselves, not to mention the quarantining of their properties. The O'Farrell Government has been working around the clock to quickly provide expert support to them, including support from veterinarians and medical workers. The Minister for Primary Industries, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, and her department are very involved in this difficult issue, because this disease can affect any human in close contact with an infected horse. The Government is doing everything possible to ensure that humans are not affected.

My second major concern has been that the disease does not impact the wider community. The Department of Primary Industries is leading the O'Farrell Government's disease response. It has established a State disease control headquarters at Orange and a local disease control centre at Wollongbar. Departmental veterinarians and support workers, the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, and private industry are working under policies set by the Chief Veterinarian to contain the outbreaks. I pay tribute to Paul Freeman and his team at Wollongbar, who have done a tremendous job. Their communication to horse industries and the general public, as a key part of the response plan, has been critical. Public meetings were recently held at Wollongbar, Macksville and Mullumbimby. Almost 100 people attended the meetings held at Wollongbar and Macksville, and about 75 people attended the meeting at Mullumbimby.

Public information about the risks of the Hendra virus and how to reduce the risks has been the subject of a media advertising campaign. It has also been distributed in factsheets across the North Coast, and a comprehensive range of information is available on the website of the Department of Primary Industries. The latest newsletter, distributed by email to the hundreds of people and horse groups registered on the departmental website, provides an update on surveillance since June this year and information, including that 111 properties having tested as negative—they do not have the virus. That information puts the disease in perspective: whilst it is very serious, it is still rare. The Hendra virus mainly infects large flying foxes—fruit bats—and it can be passed on to horses. The only other animals to be infected by the Hendra virus in New South Wales have been horses and, in each case, the affected horse has been in or near a paddock containing a fig tree. Flying foxes were most likely the source of infection.

Since 1994 seven people and one dog—all in Queensland—have been affected after coming in close contact with an infected horse. There is no evidence of a human-to-human or flying fox-to-human spread of the virus, nor has there been any evidence of spread of the virus from a flying fox direct to a dog or cat. I repeat that the community is very concerned. Advice clearly states that to reduce the likelihood of infection horse owners should, first, protect their horse from flying foxes; and, second, observe good hygiene around their horse, monitor its health and contact a veterinarian if it gets sick. The Department of Primary Industries advises horse owners to take the following precautions in areas with flying foxes. First, remove horses from paddocks where fruiting or flowering trees have temporarily attracted flying foxes. If it is not possible to remove horses from such a paddock then horse owners should tape off the area under the tree.

Secondly, place feed and water containers under cover. Thirdly, do not place feed and water under trees, especially trees with fruit. Fourthly, do not use feed that could attract flying foxes, such as apples, carrots or molasses. I urge all horse owners across the State, not only those on the North Coast, to take this advice and act upon it. The New South Wales Department of Health advises people to always take the following precautions. First, cover any cuts or abrasions on exposed skin. Secondly, do not kiss a horse on the muzzle—especially if it is sick. Thirdly, use personal protective equipment to protect yourself from the bodily fluids of horses. Finally, if a horse suffers a sudden onset of fever and rapid deterioration associated with either respiratory or nervous signs one should suspect the Hendra virus.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [7.17 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on this matter of public importance. I applaud the member for Lismore for bringing this serious issue, which needs to be properly and cooperatively addressed, to the attention of the House and, more broadly, of the community. The Department of Primary Industries is to be commended also for its actions in tackling this virus. The outbreak of Hendra virus in northern New South Wales follows similar outbreaks in Queensland. Action must be fast and effective to prevent its widespread and crippling effects. In August 2007 equine influenza took a firm grip on the New South Wales equine industry. The disease seemed to have spread from a similar outbreak in Japan. The equine influenza outbreak infected 47,000 horses on 5,943 properties across New South Wales. The impact that had on industry, employment, families and their livelihoods is well reported and documented.

I place on record some important facts about our primary industries, not just equine industries. Our broader primary industries are worth more than \$9 billion and account for almost 20 per cent of Australia's total exports. Employment in primary industries accounts for one in every 20 jobs in New South Wales. The equine influenza virus required fast and decisive action to prevent it from becoming a terminal event for equine industries. With other global diseases such as foot and mouth disease, mad cow disease and of course the Hendra virus, it is imperative that we in New South Wales remain in a state of readiness, and that requires good planning and foresight. New South Wales is currently well placed for the outbreak of many such diseases should they be found in our industries.

We have strong and vigorous research going on during times of both calm and crisis. We have a network of expert veterinarians, scientists and institutes constantly striving to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment. We have a biosecurity strategy that has as a foundation commitment the intent to work cooperatively with other State and Federal agencies, industry and local communities. We have a primary industries community that takes very seriously their responsibility to maintain vigilance and transparency. The primary industries community must, by nature, be willing to be open and honest, even when it may well impact on their own business and prosperity, because the decisions that they make can impact on a much broader community, well beyond their own fence line or bottom line.

Five key outcomes are being sought by the New South Wales' Biosecurity Strategy: to prevent the entry of biosecurity threats into New South Wales; to contain and eradicate biosecurity threats before they become established and spread in New South Wales; to effectively manage biosecurity problems to minimise their impacts in New South Wales; to ensure cooperation between the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries and other agencies, industry and the community to manage biosecurity threats and problems; and to maintain the capacity of the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries to manage biosecurity within New South Wales. This strategy describes an intention to deal with events exactly like the Hendra virus.

The Department of Primary Industries has done an outstanding job in reacting to the Hendra virus and in implementing the plan and strategy. In the past 12 months, under the previous Government, there were a number of suspected Hendra outbreaks and the plan was put into place time and again. At some later date, after testing, it was found that the cause was not the Hendra virus; but the practice, the effort and the preparedness were there. Now we have the outbreak of the Hendra virus the plan has been kicked into gear quickly, effectively and responsibly. There can be no doubt that this follows on from the millions of dollars that the New South Wales Labor Government put into research and preparedness for biosecurity. This work is now being continued by the new Minister and I commend Katrina Hodgkinson for her work in this area at this time.

I also hope that the current Government will not cut the funding to this important element of primary industries. While it might seem an easy thing to do and could go largely unreported and away from the major headlines—a soft target perhaps—the error could be catastrophic to families, communities, New South Wales and Australia. The Department of Primary Industries is to be commended for the various forms of information and education that it has quickly rolled out to affected regions and industries. There can be no doubt that New South Wales will withstand this disease because of the good work of the Department of Primary Industries and the funding afforded it by governments past and, hopefully, future.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.23 p.m.]: Tonight I speak not only as the member for Hawkesbury and the Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney but also as a former Australian Jockey Club registered racehorse trainer between 1985 and 2005 and as a person with a lifetime of experience in the thoroughbred racing industry. The Hendra virus was first detected in the mid-eighties following the passing of Vic Rail, the former trainer of the champion Vo Rogue, who died after contracting the Hendra virus, which was so named because of the location of his training establishment at Hendra. The only known carrier of that particular disease was the grey-headed flying fox.

The research that is currently being undertaken on behalf of both New South Wales and Queensland is led by Professor Martin Jeggo. Professor Jeggo contacted me last week because he was very, very interested in my thoughts in relation to the transfer of the disease from the grey-headed flying fox to horses, given that the transfer of the disease from horses to humans via saliva has already been established. To date, much of the research undertaken on the Hendra virus has been based on the theory that the virus is being transmitted from the flying fox to horses via faeces or by contamination with urine from the flying fox. I pointed out to Professor Jeggo that it was never my belief that a horse, especially a horse in training, would come into contact with another animal's faeces and that I firmly believed that the transfer of the disease would be in the same manner, through saliva.

The flying fox is a known carrier of the disease and it is a transporter of fruit from trees, as is often witnessed around my area in Bilpin—a flying fox will carry an apple some hundreds of metres before dropping it on the road or in the surrounding paddocks after consuming only a small amount of the fruit. If the fruit was carried in this manner around racing stables and was dropped in an area close to thoroughbred horses it is quite likely that the horses would nibble on the fruit and thereby contract the disease in the same way as humans contract the disease through horses.

Professor Jeggo has taken my theory into consideration. There have been some studies in the area and Professor Jeggo pointed out to me that a considerable amount of saliva is required to transfer the disease. So there is much research to be done. The point needs to be made that this disease was unknown until 1985 when Vic Rail passed away. Since then it has lain dormant until only some 18 months to two years ago when there was another outbreak of the disease. I believe that we can attribute the prominence of this disease to an increase in the numbers of flying foxes. Flying foxes have been treated as an endangered species. They should not be. Flying foxes have grown in numbers by hundreds of thousands, especially over the past decade. At one time the National Parks and Wildlife Service used to undertake regular counts of that particular species, but it has not undertaken a count since 2005.

The last person to undertake a count of flying foxes in 2005 was Patrina Birt, who recognised that the numbers of bats had increased by hundreds of thousands. Therefore, I state once again that these bats should not be regarded as an endangered species. The bats have grown to plague proportions, they are known to carry this virus and we must do something to control them. No-one likes to see any animal killed but every year we kill millions of kangaroos, our national symbol. Why do we do that? Because they would be at plague proportions and everyone would have a dozen or so in their lounge room if we did not cull them. The same can be said with flying foxes. If we do not take reasonable measures to cull some of these species of flying foxes this disease will continue and it could decimate the racing industry.

We have a problem with flying foxes in the Botanical Gardens and we have a significant problem with them in our orchards in the Hawkesbury area. Now this virus is being passed not only to horses but also to humans. It is about time that we woke up to ourselves and started to take into consideration that these animals are not an endangered species and that they need to be culled not only to protect our horses but also to protect human beings and canines.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [7.28 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Cessnock and the member for Hawkesbury for their contributions this afternoon on this matter of public importance. The member for Cessnock mentioned equine influenza. The outbreak of that influenza gives an indication of what can happen in the horse industry, which has been highlighted by my very good friend the member for Hawkesbury. I agree with the member for Cessnock and the member for Hawkesbury that we need cooperation. This is not about warfare on flying foxes or fruit bats.

Many members in this place have communities within their electorates that have a problem with flying foxes or bats. In my area the grounds of a retirement village at Murwillumbah have been overtaken by flying foxes to the point where the residents cannot open their windows or go into their backyards. But nothing is being done about that. These elderly people are locked up indoors and they cannot even get fresh air through their houses. That is an example of what happens. We have heard time and again about the bat problem at the Maclean High School. A suggested solution I have heard is to shift the school.

Mr Jai Rowell: What?

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: Shift the school. As I said the other day to the Minister, we now have a major problem. As the member for Hawkesbury said, this virus was unheard of in 1985 but look at the problem we have today. If we do not keep an eye on this virus it will become a major issue. We must take control of this problem and one way to do that may be to control the flying foxes or fruit bats. This problem needs the cooperation of everyone, not just the horse owners who cannot continue to put up with it. The horse owners, the community, the industry and the people who have been affected by this virus must work together. I thank the Premier and the Minister for the New South Wales and Queensland governments' combined contribution of \$6 million towards research into the Hendra virus. That is a positive move and is part of the cooperation that has been called for by the member for Cessnock and supported by the member for Hawkesbury. Unless we have cooperation we will not bring this problem under control.

I created a bit of a laugh in the House earlier when I mentioned kissing a horse. We must remember that a lot of young people throughout this State keep horses as pets. Young people get very close to their pets

and they may kiss the horse around the neck or otherwise come into contact with the horse's saliva, such as when putting on its bridle, or cleaning out the feed bins. Again it is a matter of highlighting this virus and raising awareness in the horse industry that horse owners right across New South Wales must be very conscious of the measures they need to implement to keep it under control. The horse that lost its life at Corndale was on a property where flying foxes just flew overhead. They did not even land on the property—

Mr Kevin Anderson: They are a swarm.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: That is right. But some of their droppings must have fallen on this property on which a child's pony died. Everyone knows that it is a disaster when a child or an elderly person loses a pet, and it is something we do not want to face anymore. I thank the House for listening to this matter of public importance and I certainly ask for cooperation throughout the State to clean up the problem.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.33 p.m. until
Tuesday 9 August 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
