

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 10 August 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

RESTART NSW FUND BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 9 August 2011.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [10.00 a.m.]: I have been a member of this House for about five years and in that time many bills have been introduced by parties on both sides of politics. In my view the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 is one of the most important. It will establish the Restart NSW Fund as the New South Wales Government's infrastructure fund to build certain essential infrastructure. The introduction of legislation to create Restart NSW was a key component of the 100 Day Action Plan. We took this key component to the people of New South Wales because over the past 16 years many projects were announced but little was delivered. In my electorate of Tweed a number of projects were announced over the years. The Casino to Murwillumbah rail line was closed about six years ago. That was a tremendous blow not only to my electorate but also to many other electorates on the North Coast. A key component that we took to the people in 2007 and 2011 was our desire to investigate the reopening of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line.

A number of other infrastructure projects have been completed in the Tweed electorate. One symbolic project—it is one of the reasons we support the Restart NSW Fund Bill—was the construction of the Tugun bypass, which started in Queensland. Five kilometres of the seven-kilometre long bypass is located in New South Wales. At the time the Queensland Government and the Federal Government negotiated with the then New South Wales Government to construct and complete the bypass. However, the negotiations fell through because the previous New South Wales Government would not come to the party on the project. The Queensland Government and the Federal Government took it upon themselves to construct the bypass, which cost well over \$500 million. I was fortunate to be invited by the Queensland Government to attend the opening of the bypass and I was the only New South Wales politician there. The Tugun bypass has been a tremendous boon for northern New South Wales.

One by-line is that immediately after the bypass opened, although New South Wales did not contribute 1¢ to the project, the then Treasurer, the Hon. Michael Costa, had the audacity to send the Premier of Queensland, Anna Bligh, a land tax bill for some \$250,000. That is right—the Queensland and Federal governments put in about \$300 million for the New South Wales component, and the then New South Wales Government sent them a land tax bill. That is why we need some clarity and direction. Included in the construction of the Tugun bypass was a rail verge that will eventually see an electric train travel from Brisbane to the great Gold Coast airport. Fifty per cent of the Gold Coast airport is situated in New South Wales. It is the sixth busiest airport in Australia. It will process over 5.5 million passengers this year and only about 30 per cent of them will turn right.

I have advocated for the installation of that rail line for a long time and I have the support of the member for Lismore, the Minister for Local Government and Minister for the North Coast, and the member for Clarence. It will be a nation-building exercise. The Infrastructure NSW plan will start to address the New South Wales infrastructure crisis. As a member of a country electorate I often see the problems created in Sydney as a result of the lack of the North West Rail Link, the South West Rail Link and the widening of many highways. However, those problems extend to regional New South Wales which is why this bill is important.

Restart NSW will fund projects such as public transport infrastructure. I am pleased that the Minister for Transport, in conjunction with the Queensland Government, has announced funding of \$1 million for planning works for that rail line. I have had a number of meetings with the Queensland Government, and it has

expressed excitement about the project. More importantly, the project will connect a tremendous corridor of public transport from Sydney to the Gold Coast and Brisbane, which would not be possible without this bill. Restart NSW will fund roads infrastructure to address urban congestion, black spots and missing links, and economic infrastructure to address the economic competitiveness of New South Wales. I have spoken time and again in the House about the unfair playing field between New South Wales and Queensland. I have said many times that the payroll tax rate in Queensland is much lower than our rate, and many charges and infrastructure costs are much lower in Queensland. It is an amazing drain.

Mr Ryan Park: You're in Government.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Yes, we are in Government. I am excited because finally, after 16 years, we are getting something done.

Mr Ryan Park: We cut payroll tax.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I remind the member for Keira that he was working for the Minister for Transport at the time. A lack of foresight and vision by the previous New South Wales Government saw—

Dr Geoff Lee: Incompetence.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: —incompetence and a lack of confidence in the business sector. We saw a massive drain on jobs and lifestyles, particularly on the North Coast. In my electorate the rail link and the finalisation of many roads is critical to our future. If the State average unemployment rate is 5 per cent, the rate in the Tweed electorate is usually about 7 per cent or 7.5 per cent; our youth unemployment rate is usually 3 per cent or 4 per cent higher than the State average. This is critical. In the past, decisions about whether to close a rail line, fund a road and so on were usually done on the whim of various Ministers. Too often I saw politics involved in decision making, to the detriment of the people on the North Coast. Legislation to establish this fund is crucial to the further development of the great State of New South Wales.

The people of the Tweed have been suffering for too long. For example, we made submission after submission about Tweed hospital. Last year the hospital treated 1,200 people in its corridors. In my discussions with the Queensland Government I have been told that there is a lack of cooperation on the New South Wales side. Each time the Queensland Government put forward a plan it was rejected or delayed by the previous New South Wales Government. We have seen opportunity after opportunity go out the door, to the detriment of the people of the Tweed.

That is why it is so important to create this fund and why I am so excited to be part of the positive solution for the State of New South Wales. With the passing of this bill, which I strongly support, we will see the first step in a long journey. We know the current state of the deficit in New South Wales; we know that there is not a great deal of money. However, this bill is the first step in a long journey towards transparency, to provide vision and, more importantly, to give hope, not only to the business sectors but also to the mums and dads across New South Wales who have suffered over the past 16 years. I strongly commend the bill to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [10.11 a.m.] I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 and I congratulate the Treasurer on introducing such an important bill. Restart NSW is part of our 100 Day Action Plan and is our commitment to making New South Wales number one again by lifting our economic performance. Today we find ourselves in a difficult situation: we need vital infrastructure for economic growth but that growth and economic activity are required to fund infrastructure. Therefore, we find ourselves in a catch 22 situation. Under the previous Government housing sales fell. Consequently, revenue realised from stamp duty from house sales is much lower than it was in previous years. Sixteen years of Labor government neglect has put us in a very difficult situation.

The Liberal-Nationals Government has the task of dealing with and putting right the \$5.2 billion budget hole left to it by Labor. During the past 16 years Labor announced 12 rail lines but completed none. That is shameful, at best. And it is not just the Liberal-Nationals Government that is saying this. The latest CommSec report on the economic performance of States and Territories indicates that New South Wales is the lowest performing State, behind Tasmania, in economic performance and productivity. The Labor Party should be ashamed for letting New South Wales fall from the number one position among the States to number eight.

The people of New South Wales recognised this in the March election and voted for the Liberals-Nationals. During that campaign one of the major concerns of people in my electorate was the lack of infrastructure delivered over that time. Traffic congestion is particularly important to many people. The 10 or 12 staff employed by one of my constituents who has a small carpeting business have to leave Parramatta at 6.00 a.m. so that they can get to Sydney by 9.00 a.m. The congestion on Sydney roads is costing that business over \$100,000 a year in overtime payments. An article in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 20 February 2011 under the heading "Morning Peak, a slow, four hour slog" reported:

Traffic has slowed on some of Sydney's main arterial roads by almost 10 km/h in the past five years ... the M4 and Parramatta Rd, which connect western Sydney to the city, are some of the slowest roads in Sydney with motorists averaging 28 km/h each morning, down from 31 km/h in 2006.

That is independent corroboration of my constituent's claim that traffic congestion is impacting on his business. The 2011 report of the NRMA, an independent authority, also confirms the lack of infrastructure by citing the crowded nature of public transport. Its 2011 survey revealed that 78 per cent of businesses claim that it takes their employees longer to get to work today than it did a year ago. That constitutes a significant cost to business and residents and it is slowing down our economy.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to making New South Wales number one again by enhancing the economy by providing infrastructure for economic development. But what is Restart NSW? It is a whole-of-government approach to setting aside money to build essential infrastructure projects. It is a whole-of-State-development approach overseen by Infrastructure NSW, which prioritises, plans and explores different infrastructure projects, based upon a cost-benefit analysis and evidence. It makes decisions in the interests of the whole State. That is in stark contrast to the previous Government's lack of planning for infrastructure.

Restart NSW will make recommendations to the Government, supported by the necessary capital. Infrastructure NSW is an independent board that plans and prioritises the needs of the whole of the State and makes recommendations to the Government in that regard. In the area of funding Restart NSW will consider projects to build roads to reduce congestion, to build missing links and to fix up black spots, and it will look at various rail projects and essential rail links. It is interesting to note that some 90 per cent of our rail infrastructure in Sydney alone was built before the 1900s. I congratulate the Government on the North West Rail Link project, a substantial addition to rail services in New South Wales in the past 100 years. Restart NSW is about looking at developing public transport options, improving public service workplaces and reviewing local infrastructure for areas affected by mining.

I note that 30 per cent of the funds will go to areas outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. How will Restart NSW be funded? It will be funded following the same principles as one uses in one's home or business. One does not borrow to pay for day-to-day operational costs, but it is acceptable to borrow if one has long-term investments—if capital is invested for long-term return. As the Treasurer quite properly said, there will be no borrowing that threatens our triple-A credit rating. There will be strict financial control, and that is essential. Primarily, three types of money will go into the fund, among them tax windfalls. I note with some disappointment that although in the past 13 years of the previous Labor Government tax windfalls amounting to \$8.8 billion went to Treasury, very little was achieved by way of the provision of infrastructure. It certainly was not good economic management by Labor that generated such windfalls; they were the result of unexpected good fortune.

Under the present Government tax windfalls will be quarantined in Restart NSW to build essential infrastructure. Restart NSW will be funded also through the issuance of Waratah bonds, a new mechanism for infrastructure development, into which mums and dads can invest, using their own superannuation funds. They can save for a rainy day through a secure bond that will give them some peace for the future as well as benefit for the proceeds of the long-term lease of the desalination plant. Restart NSW will be an open and transparent body. It will be audited by the Auditor General, who will report annually to the Parliament. The reports will show clearly its operation, the money received by it and what it funds.

For the electorate of Parramatta and other rural areas in western Sydney infrastructure is vital. The Parramatta electorate is home to Westmead Hospital, which although is Australia's largest health precinct, has very few parking facilities. In fact 5,000 people work at the hospital and there is a three-year waiting list for the staff to obtain a dedicated parking spot. The Minister for Health and Medical Research has seen firsthand the problems at the hospital and understands that one of the biggest problems is the lack of parking spaces for staff and visitors alike, as it has been for many years. Visitors to the hospital have to park in nearby streets, where

two-hour parking restrictions apply. That in itself creates a problem, given that the average time one spends in outpatients is four hours, so that half way through one's outpatient procedure, one has to leave and walk up to a kilometre to organise car parking. It is an issue of concern to the local council. I would like to see better parking and better roads in that area, where at the moment there is only one road in and one road out. The parking problems must be resolved.

As is the case in most other electorates, the Parramatta electorate has difficulties with rail services. During its 16 years in office the former failed Labor Government announced the provision of 12 rail lines but failed to complete one of them. All we got was the Epping to Chatswood rail link, but that was delivered for double the cost and in double the time. We are still missing the Epping to Parramatta rail link—about which many people in my electorate have expressed a concern. I share those concerns, and will take up their fight by putting a case for funding to the Minister and Infrastructure NSW, emphasising the benefits such a link will have for those using the service and the benefits that will result from tying Parramatta to Chatswood by rail and offering an alternative to the radial system that requires people to pass through Central station to move to the North Shore. Parramatta, as the capital of western Sydney, will be regarded by managers of businesses on the North Shore as desirable place at which to locate their head offices.

The M4 East extension is also important infrastructure. At the moment a backlog is caused by hundreds of thousands of cars being driven along the M4 travelling east all of a sudden being dumped off at Strathfield. That motorway corridor must be extended. Parramatta Road has become so congested that it resembles a car-parking lot. The delays on Parramatta Road are only getting worse. Parking in Parramatta itself, not just in the hospital precinct, is of particular concern. Every day almost 90,000 people come to Parramatta to work. We need dedicated park-and-ride facilities on the outskirts of Parramatta in order that people can park and use buses to funnel them into the central business district. About 80 per cent of the workforce of Parramatta stays in Parramatta for the entire day, so it makes sense, rather than clogging up inner city areas, to provide long-term car parking facilities outside the central business district.

We welcome the opportunity to extend the rail system from Castle Hill to Parramatta. The North West Rail Link is a particularly wonderful initiative for the whole State, and not just the north-west sector, because it will provide access from developed areas into the city, for example, North Sydney and Macquarie Park. There is also a case for providing a rail link between Castle Hill and Parramatta with a new station at North Parramatta under Parramatta Park. Such a link would alleviate the congestion difficulties faced by commuters at Parramatta station, the fourth busiest station on the State's rail network. That would be a great opportunity to decentralise the central business district into North Parramatta and to service those employment areas.

I congratulate the member for Tweed on outlining to the House the necessary infrastructure for rural areas. I agree with him that dedication of 30 per cent of the funds of Restart NSW to regional areas is most appropriate. It is something that Labor clearly did not do in its 16 years in office, but it will be the focus of this Government in the future. In summary, the present infrastructure in New South Wales is barely able to cope with today's needs. Many suggest it is inadequate. This is having long-term consequences, and not just in the economic performance of businesses, with congestion costing millions of dollars a year. Many people in my electorate spend an hour to an hour and a half driving along Victoria Road, the M4 and Pennant Hills Road, just to get to work every morning.

People spend the same amount of time travelling home, and it gets worse when it rains. Those two to three hours a day, every day, would be much better spent with their families, who are the heart of the community. We need sound infrastructure because infrastructure is essential to the prosperity of New South Wales. It underpins economic development and employment growth, and we know that Parramatta as the capital of western Sydney will be the service centre for the whole of western Sydney. New South Wales must regain the number one position among the States, and not just as the best State in which to live but also the best State in which to do business. To do that infrastructure is required.

Restart NSW will capture funds solely for infrastructure purposes. It will provide a capital fund for infrastructure, not just in the short term but for the next five, 10 and 20 years. It is about the planned management of capital to fund essential infrastructure programmes. It will also supplement funds that the Government will dedicate to infrastructure through Infrastructure NSW. It will have an open and transparent process to prioritise essential infrastructure to address the State's needs. Restart NSW is part of the Liberal-Nationals 100 Day Action Plan. We are committed to making New South Wales number one again by lifting our economic performance.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.25 a.m.]: The Restart NSW Fund is an incredibly important initiative of the Coalition Government. As the member for Parramatta has just said, it is the Government's specific fund for major infrastructure projects. It is most important that we send a signal to the community and to business investors that we are serious about building infrastructure in this State to make New South Wales a better place—a place of which we all can be proud. It will provide that welcome certainty to investors in the New South Wales economy that we are serious about wanting New South Wales to be the number one place in which to live, work and, more particularly, invest. We have seen how important certainty is to the investment community with the economic difficulties in the United States of America and the European Community, and how that affects investment in the stock markets and, more generally, in the retail economy. Providing a certainty of framework in which investors can participate in the build up of this State is very important in the current environment.

The bill will enable funding for essential infrastructure to improve our quality of life. It will allow people to spend time with their families rather than driving on congested roads, or sitting on trains that have broken down, or waiting for services that simply do not turn up. It is for the services of the people of New South Wales as well as for social infrastructure. On 26 March this year 2.1 million people vented their frustrations about the lack of quality of life and services, and we have heeded their call by introducing the Restart NSW Fund Bill.

We must remember that investment in infrastructure also underpins business activity, employment and growth—all of which are sorely needed in New South Wales. When we came to government four months ago we inherited a State in fiscal deterioration, where public sector wage growth was higher than that of the private sector—indeed, higher than that of the rest of Australia's private and public sectors together. Our triple-A credit rating is in jeopardy in the absence of major economic reform, of which this bill forms a part. Expense growth was outstripping revenue growth, and we had a deficit that was forecast to continue every year from 2012. It is little wonder, therefore, that New South Wales is at the bottom of the league of economic indicators of all the States and Territories. That is shameful.

As our Premier so eloquently put it in a recent speech to the Committee for Economic Development, there is a plot line that recurs in New South Wales and Australian politics more frequently than it should and that is a Liberal-Nationals Government discovering and fixing up a Labor economic basket case. Business leaders, entrepreneurs and investors in the electorate of Vaucluse are looking for this signal because they, along with other investors, entrepreneurs, and leaders of businesses in New South Wales and across Australia, want to invest to make New South Wales a better State. The simple fact of the matter is that they took their investment outside New South Wales. I had many a conversation with members of the business community who told me the investment environment in New South Wales lacked certainty and they would take their businesses and investment to Victoria or Queensland—in fact, anywhere other than New South Wales.

I will not harp any further about New South Wales's fiscal deterioration although, of course, I could because this Government will arrest that deterioration. Our strategic economic approach, of which Restart NSW is a part, builds on goals we established over three years ago for New South Wales to lead Australia in sustainable economic development; be Australia's number one place to do business; maintain our triple-A credit rating; and ensure expenditure growth is less than or equal to revenue growth. That is a simple household budgeting strategy used by necessity by so many households around this State. Households in New South Wales could teach the former Labor Government a thing or two. Households have to budget from necessity; they cannot spend more than they take in by way of income. The former Labor Government did not understand fiscal responsibility or prudence, or it willingly chose to ignore it at New South Wales's peril.

Infrastructure NSW also plays a key part in the State's recovery from 16 long, dreary years of fumbling of the economy. We will turn that around. Projects to be funded by the Restart NSW Fund will be recommended by Infrastructure NSW and assessed in the budgetary process against the five-year State Infrastructure Plan and the 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy. Now, there is a novel concept—linking funding to strategy. It is something that households and top-listed companies do all the time and it is something that we as a Government will do.

We need a 20-year strategy to ensure that we methodically prioritise the creation of new infrastructure and the much-needed renewal of our existing infrastructure. The New South Wales public expect more from their Government and this includes having a clearly prioritised infrastructure plan and a serious commitment to completing the plan. Being able to fund our infrastructure, like funding a household budget, is just as important as sound investment decisions. It is also a demonstration of our Government's commitment to fiscal prudence

and proper budgeting. This fund will be a big show of faith to the people working on infrastructure plans for New South Wales. Let us not forget them. All too often in the past our public service, consultants and specialists have completed an enormous amount of work on infrastructure projects in New South Wales only to find them cancelled, shut down and delayed indefinitely. What a disgrace. There was no vision for them.

Restart NSW will fund projects and they will go ahead. It will support public transport infrastructure, which the member for Parramatta talked about. It will also support 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—the real workers in our economy that provide the quality of life we should have in New South Wales.

Our Government is committed to whole-of-State development so we will address critical infrastructure needs outside the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong as well. We have a commitment to rural and regional New South Wales. I note that 30 per cent of funding will be reserved for non-metropolitan areas, including mining-affected communities. This is a whole-of-State approach and a fresh approach for New South Wales, one that is 16 long years overdue.

The bill itself proposes a level of transparency and accountability not seen for a long time in New South Wales governments. Payments from Restart NSW will be made in a transparent manner with the Auditor-General reporting annually to the Parliament to ensure that moneys have been invested in line with the fund's investment mandate. This will include the extent of investment of funds in non-metropolitan areas. Restart NSW will be funded from appropriations from Parliament and the budget process, including any money certified as windfall tax revenue—and we are hoping to have some of them in the future. It will also be funded by realisation of the capital invested in assets, such as from the Sydney desalination plant, and potential borrowings, including the issue of special bonds to the people of New South Wales such as Waratah bonds, which the Treasurer has spoken about.

Additional sources of funding will include the interest proceeds from investment of money in the fund, money directed or authorised to be paid into the fund by an Act or law, and money voluntarily contributed to the fund by a government agency or other person or body. We are hoping the signal that this bill will send forward will create confidence so there will be investors who want to invest in our fund. If additional borrowings are undertaken to fund the Restart NSW Fund they will be undertaken in strict compliance with the State's fiscal commitment to maintaining our triple-A credit rating. We all know how important that is for the borrowing costs and capital costs of the State of New South Wales in international markets, which are incredibly jittery at the moment.

The Minister will have to produce an annual report detailing payments from the fund that must include an audit of the fund by the Auditor-General. That report must be tabled in each House of Parliament within six months of the end of the financial year. The Act will be reviewed every five years to determine whether its policy objectives remain valid and whether the Act secures those objectives. I think that is a fantastic initiative. It gives this Parliament a chance to understand whether the policy objectives of the legislation are being met and indeed whether the policy objectives and underpinnings of the Act have changed. This is a really welcome mechanism in legislation that I hope we will see in future legislation that is brought forward by the Coalition Government. A report on the outcome of the review after five years must be tabled in both Houses of Parliament within 12 months of the end of the five-year period.

Sound investment in infrastructure is essential to the prosperity of this State. We want to see cranes on the skyline. We have not seen cranes on the skyline in a long time. When one travels interstate or internationally one sees them and they are an indicator of what is not happening in this State. Investment in infrastructure underpins not only business activity but employment and growth, which provide the kinds of lives the people of New South Wales were seeking when they elected this Coalition Government in March. We have the plan and we will have the money set aside to carefully complete our projects and meet our infrastructure needs. We are getting our house in order. We must kickstart the New South Wales economy. We must and we will regain New South Wales's reputation as Australia's number one place to live and to do business. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.37 a.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. I note 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. I welcome this piece of legislation. As has been stated by a number of speakers, it is a positive way of building, upgrading and maintaining infrastructure in New South Wales. I also note that the bill indicates there is an allocation of 30 per cent for regional New South Wales. I certainly welcome that addition. Having a dedicated fund will enable long-term planning. I note the comments of the member for Vaucluse and agree with them very strongly.

If we are to have a fund it must be linked to a strategy so that we do not have a situation where a project is announced and then just falls away. There must be a strategy and allocations must be consistent with the destination we are trying to reach for New South Wales. Then that is plugged into a budget. If a project is not plugged into a budget, it may not be delivered. I welcome recognition in the bill of a very important yet previously missing element. During hearings undertaken throughout regional areas of New South Wales in 2007 by the Rural and Regional Task Force, numerous submissions were received. Mr Acting-Speaker, who is the member for Tweed, is no stranger to the feedback we received indicating that government decisions were not reflected in a strategy or budgetary process. The bill highlights that very important point.

Concern has been expressed about Restart NSW placing an emphasis on building local infrastructure, including movement of freight, intermodal facilities and access to water in regional areas affected by mining. Although I welcome infrastructure investment in rural communities, I do not want to see part of the 30 per cent of funds being allocated inequitably. The whole purpose of the bill is to increase accountability. The implementation of this legislation will be the subject of reports to both Houses of this Parliament. The way the scheme is linked to the budgetary process is about making sure that funding for projects will be subject to merit assessment.

In distributing 30 per cent of the funds, the Government should avoid placing too much emphasis on one aspect of a community. The allocations must be fair and equitable. For example, communities that are the centre of mining activities should not be given priority, and that single factor should not be justification for an inequitable distribution of funds and resources. After all, education, tourism and the provision of health services also are critically important industries in regional communities, not just mining. I am not suggesting that mining activity should be discounted, but the Government should ensure that the process of distributing funds is fair and equitable; otherwise, as a result of the current boom in mining activity, 30 per cent of the funds easily could be taken up solely by mining communities while the remainder of the regional areas of New South Wales are unfairly disadvantaged.

The Government should avoid overemphasising the importance of one particular economic activity. I urge the Government to ensure that an equitable process is implemented so that communities such as the Tweed, which has a very strong emphasis on tourism, are ranked equal to others when infrastructure projects are being selected. I acknowledge that the mining boom is a significant issue. Nevertheless, the Government must carefully avoid unfair and unjust practices and bear in mind its obligation to meet the infrastructure needs of all sectors of the community. That is a vital element of this legislation. In my view, that is the intent of this bill. My understanding is that this bill will take politics out of the process, link funding to a strategy, and achieve an equitable distribution of funds among the State's communities based on meritorious assessment of projects. Let us not undermine those worthy objectives by inherent discretionary elements of the bill that may cause the allocation process to become unfair or unjust.

In the Northern Tablelands electorate there is a pressing need for major upgrades in key government service deliveries categories, particularly health. The Armidale, Glen Innes, Inverell and Tenterfield hospitals require upgrades. A great deal of work has been undertaken in relation to the Armidale hospital redevelopment, including a clinical services proposal that will require \$50 million in State and Federal funding to bring it to fruition. Clinicians and the area health service are very supportive of the project. In addition, the Rural Medical School is now working with the University of New England and the University of Newcastle, which means that the future of general practice and associated health services will be of increasing importance when that significant level of infrastructure investment is undertaken.

I am pleased to inform the House that planning discussions are being undertaken in Glenn Innes and Inverell by Hunter New England Health, which is doing a very good job of ensuring that proper consultation is undertaken with communities. I also have been involved in discussions and meetings with the Tenterfield community in respect of its multipurpose health service and hospital facility. I will be pushing for these projects to be included in planning for the replacement or rebuilding of ageing infrastructure in our rural health system. Replacement or rebuilding of ageing infrastructure is a critical issue for many communities. I know I will not be the only parliamentary representative pursuing those issues.

Often in large government ventures such as this, the smaller, isolated and remote areas miss out. Obviously I welcome the emphasis on regional support in this bill, but I reiterate the need for the Government to take seriously infrastructure projects in the regional locations that have been neglected or overlooked in the past. Members of Parliament who represent large regional, rural or inland electorates have to fight for their communities to ensure they are not continually overlooked. Evaluation of projects and dispersal of funding being conducted independently of political process is welcome. As the intent of the bill makes clear, there will be an increased level of accountability in the form of reports to Parliament, which will enhance transparency and objectivity.

I welcome an independent process that will be open to scrutiny because it will underpin a culture of government best practice and the application of accountability procedures by departments. The most effective delivery of funds is achieved through reducing the chain of command, involvement of too many agencies and too much red tape. The bill's streamlined approach will ensure that funds are directed to projects in a more significant way, rather than just being allocated to process. In my view, process has absorbed a great deal of funding for government projects and often has been the cause of infrastructure projects not eventuating. That definitely must stop.

I refer Infrastructure NSW to the report of the Rural and Regional Task Force. I know the new Legislative Assembly State and Regional Development Committee, which is chaired by Mr Acting-Speaker has examined the report, which was the result of extensive consultation. The report calls for a regional infrastructure fund and grants to local councils and other relevant bodies for the development or upgrading of social and economic infrastructure in regional communities. Although many of the recommendations already have been implemented and an audit of outcomes is underway through the committee process, there is still a long way to go. Restart NSW is a welcome and positive initiative, provided that it delivers equitably for rural and regional communities across the State. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [10.47 a.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011, which will go a long way towards redressing the infrastructure black hole that was left behind after 16 years of Labor incompetence. New South Wales really needs a kickstart, and the Restart NSW Fund will provide exactly that. It is time to revive an ailing State and to make it number one again. The Restart NSW Fund Bill will establish the Restart NSW Fund as a special deposit account. The bill sets out the purpose of the fund, which is to improve the economic growth and productivity of the State.

Infrastructure investment, which the fund will facilitate, will be a godsend to communities in New South Wales that for far too long were overlooked by the previous Labor Government. I remember that in 1995 the former Labor Premier, Bob Carr, visited Queanbeyan. Guess what—it was election time. He promised the much-needed ring-road for Queanbeyan to get traffic out of the central business district. It is now 2011, and guess what? Queanbeyan does not have a ring-road. But wait for it: During the 2011 election, Steve Whan decided to make another announcement, but he was out of touch with the desires of the community about the ring-road. Over time, it had fallen well short of meeting our needs.

Steve Whan and Labor ignored local community needs and failed to address the transport needs of the people of Queanbeyan. Consequently Queanbeyan continued to miss out on vital funding, and safety concerns relating to Queanbeyan's main street continue to be ignored. That was all because of petty party politics always getting in the way. There was another election, another promise, and no accountability for failing to deliver on that promise. We need to take the politics out of important infrastructure projects and make decisions that will set up communities and the State for success for many generations to come.

The bill allows for payments to be made into the fund from the budgetary process or from money advanced by the Treasurer through windfall tax revenues, additional borrowings and other proceeds. The bill also provides for payments to be made from the fund, subject to a recommendation by Infrastructure NSW and approval by the Minister. That is a fair and transparent process. It takes the politics out of the provision of infrastructure in this State. This is in stark contrast with what happened under those on the other side of the Chamber. We have seen the Labor Party dangle the promise of infrastructure in front of voters in marginal seats so many times over so many elections.

How many times did Labor trump out the same project but under a different name or even with the same name but under a different Premier? All Labor was interested in were the media headlines and photo opportunities, and nothing else. We all recall the Epping to Parramatta rail link promise at the last Federal

election. The Federal Labor Government bypassed its Infrastructure Australia mechanism for short-term political advantage. Of course, the then New South Wales Government applauded the Prime Minister for this empty promise, because it is in Labor's DNA to say and do anything for political survival.

Infrastructure Australia was designed to be an independent advisory body at arm's-length from government. We were told that this would revolutionise infrastructure delivery in this country. But independent bodies and accountability do not last very long when the Labor Party is involved. Again, it is in its DNA to destroy accountability, use whatever political interference it desires and to derail proper process. In the last term of the former Labor Government, Infrastructure Australia called for submissions from the States on infrastructure projects. The previous New South Wales Labor Government put in such an abysmal submission that this State was not able to secure its fair share of Federal funding. Infrastructure Australia executives had to send the New South Wales submission back three times because it was so inadequate.

The Liberals and The Nationals have been elected on a mandate to restore accountability to the process of infrastructure provision and to take the politics out of it. The people of New South Wales have had enough of political interference in infrastructure provision. The bill is an important part of the larger reform agenda of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in returning New South Wales to number one again, and making New South Wales Australia's economic engine room and the number one State to do business in. Restart NSW will also seek to partner with the Federal Government to fund further infrastructure delivery. It will be well positioned to make the most of available Federal Government funding for infrastructure projects. The New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals are determined to make the most of any Federal funds which may become available, which this State is determined to fight for.

I am very supportive of the fact that this bill provides for appropriate checks and balances for the whole process. Annual reports will be prepared and presented to Parliament detailing payments from the fund. Infrastructure NSW will also be regularly advised of the balance in the fund. Of particular interest to my electorate is that 30 per cent of the capital fund will be reserved for regional New South Wales. The New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals believe in the potential of regional New South Wales and how it plays a central role in our plan to make New South Wales number one again. I was delighted to hear earlier the good member for Mulgoa acknowledging that regional New South Wales was so important to the future of this State that our strong regional election platform resulted in a greater regional and rural voice in this Parliament by the larger representation of The Nationals and country Liberal members.

The New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals' commitment to Restart NSW will help identify and deliver the infrastructure that we so desperately need in the Monaro, so communities such as Queanbeyan, Cooma, Bombala and Jindabyne, to name a few, will be able to plan for their future. Our commitment to Restart NSW gives hope to the long-suffering Monaro residents whose needs have been neglected by Labor for over 16 years. We recognise that regional New South Wales is a great place to live, work and raise a family. However, it has unfairly borne the brunt of New South Wales Labor's neglect. Infrastructure is run down and it lacks basic services. New South Wales is one State. We cannot stand and watch a two-tiered society and two-speed economy emerge. Regional people are industrious, hardworking and capable. There is no reason for regional unemployment to run above the State average.

Regional New South Wales contributes more than its fair share to the New South Wales economy through industries like mining, agriculture and tourism. It deserves its fair share of economic growth and infrastructure investment. We need to address the shortcomings in regional and rural New South Wales by the delivery of infrastructure and services. I am committed as a member representing a regional and rural electorate, that we get our fair share. In the 2011 election campaign the O'Farrell-Stoner Opposition outlined policies, allocated funds and ran on the mantra that New South Wales was more than just Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. The Restart NSW Fund begins to deliver on the fundamentals of our campaign. This infrastructure capital fund, in conjunction with 40,000 extra jobs through the Jobs Action Plan and the \$7,000 regional relocation grant will allow regional New South Wales to achieve its massive potential. It will begin to give us our fair share.

In my electorate this fund could be used in the future to fund projects already identified by the community and which have significant economic and social benefits for the future of our communities and, of course, New South Wales. These significant infrastructure projects include completing Main Road 92 beyond Nerriga that will provide a much-needed link back to the Bungendore-Braidwood area for the people of Nerriga, and the duplication of Kosciuszko Road at Jindabyne. This road is chock-a-block with tourist traffic during the snow season and is in desperate need of duplication. The connecting road infrastructure with the Australian

Capital Territory is in desperate need of improvement. Each morning Queanbeyan and Jerrabomberra residents experience unacceptably long travel times getting to work in Canberra. The Bobeyan Road, which stretches from Adaminaby to Canberra via the Namadgi National Park, has the potential to open up the northern Snowy Mountains to a greater level of tourism and provide the people of the Lake Eucumbene area with much greater economic opportunity.

There are many other projects including public transport infrastructure; roads infrastructure to address, black spots and missing links; economic infrastructure to address the economic competitiveness of New South Wales, including freight, intermodal facilities and water; hospitals and health infrastructure; improvements to workplaces for front-line workers, schools and universities, and the list goes on. These are examples of the many projects that could be identified and be included in the future as important and strategic infrastructure, and that is where the Restart NSW Fund will come into play. These projects would not have been funded in a million years under the Labor approach to infrastructure. That approach was promised to deliver whatever infrastructure would get it re-elected and then deliver none of it—hollow promises that the previous Labor Government was never going to deliver.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Keira will come to order. The member for Monaro will deliver his comments through the Chair.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This State has been left behind because party politics and political self-indulgence have interfered with good planning. Not looking beyond the current election cycle is typical of the Labor Party, and that has been destructive to the State. I have always believed in promising only what we can deliver and we will be judged on what we do and not what we say.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! All members will be given equal time to contribute to this debate. Members will behave in a parliamentary manner.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Talk is cheap. Getting runs on the board by delivering infrastructure and services that make a difference to people's lives and to the future of communities is the legacy we should all be striving for. The name of the fund, Restart NSW, is very fitting. This State desperately needs to be restarted after 16 years of Labor neglect and mismanagement. In the Monaro there is a critical infrastructure shortage. I have outlined just a few projects that need to be funded in my electorate. These are projects that the previous Government could have funded if it had not been too busy sharpening knives or backdating letters. The Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 will go a long way to redress the infrastructure black hole that was left by the former Labor Government.

The Restart NSW Fund bill will establish the Restart NSW Fund, which will become an important part of the independent and transparent Infrastructure NSW system. This will go a long way to improving the economic growth and productivity of New South Wales after 16 years of Labor ineptitude, topped with Labor's neglect of the needs of our communities, and Labor's addiction to taxes, which have resulted in destroying the economic and social standing of this State. Only the New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals have the positive and practical plans needed to make Monaro and New South Wales number one again. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [10.58 a.m.]: I would like to make a contribution on behalf of the Opposition 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 delivery of major infrastructure projects and other necessary infrastructure. The objects of the bill are very broad. The Opposition wishes the Government every success not only in delivering on all its election promises but also in maintaining the massive infrastructure projects that were set in train by the former Labor Government over 16 years.

In espousing the principle that anything that encourages infrastructure should be supported, I find the arguments for this bill wanting. I listened to the contributions of the member for Monaro and the member for Vacluse, who spoke on behalf of the battlers of Vacluse. They talked about 16 years of inactivity and mismanagement of the State's economy and of Labor's failure to build anything. That theme was picked up by all members of the Government, including the Minister for Transport when she said yesterday that Labor governments had built nothing.

I hope this Government maintains the former Government's continuous expenditure of \$61 billion on infrastructure projects, which were greater than the McKell infrastructure projects and even greater than the

massive J. T. Lang infrastructure projects, later projects such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This bill has the dishonest name "Restart NSW Fund", which is inappropriate because it suggests that something had stopped. One thing that did not stop in New South Wales for 16 years was the economy, which any independent economic assessment will show remains of the highest grade. The only reason New South Wales is not regarded as having a quadruple-A economy is that there is no such rating.

The headlines of the past couple of days tell us that the greatest economy in the world, that of the United States of America, has been downgraded to AA+. The United States economy, which constitutes one-fifth of the world economy, has been downgraded from a triple-A rating while New South Wales has maintained its triple-A rating—which has been reconfirmed since the 26 March election—for the past 16 years. The member for Vacluse must have been on one of her trips to New York when the great infrastructure projects were underway and the former Government was expertly managing our economy. She has obviously been poorly advised not only by the battlers of Vacluse but also by the Darling Point Society, an organisation that has supported her for many years.

Mr Ryan Park: They do it really tough.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: They do it tough. I understand that in light of the global financial crisis they have extended the service intervals on their BMWs—things are really tough out there. The member for Monaro and the member for Northern Tablelands support the bill, which is admirable. But let us not lose sight of what this bill is about. The Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 is just a reshuffling of the way that Treasury spends its money from the Consolidated Fund. Whether we allocate money from the Consolidated Fund to the various portfolios or establish a different fund, it is one big expenditure pool. It is the same money; it will just be managed differently to dovetail with the Government's pre-election promises—and the false expectations that they generate. I challenge the assertions of the member for Monaro. He said that talk is cheap, and I think I got only 5¢ worth while he was speaking. The member for Vacluse said we have not seen cranes in New South Wales for 16 years. Any student studying the economy of New South Wales and its infrastructure projects, which have now been trashed by Government members in misleading the House—

Mr Kevin Conolly: Which projects?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I thank the member for Riverstone for that interjection. He should be very happy with the Windsor Road infrastructure in his electorate. Before 1995 the electorate of Riverstone was basically chook farms, so the member should not interject. Riverstone has been a major beneficiary of Labor Government infrastructure not only over the past 16 years but also under the Wran Government. Is it true that nothing was built in New South Wales for 16 years? That is the theme adopted by Coalition members. I want students of this topic to study the valedictory speeches delivered by members last year before they left this place. They referred to lists of projects built in their electorates by the Labor Government over 16 years. I refer to the former members for Central Coast, for Bankstown and for Miranda. The Government claims that nothing was spent in the Illawarra. But \$50 million was spent on the world-famous Sea Cliff Bridge. Has anybody seen it? For the benefit of the member for Vacluse, I do not know whether a crane was used in its construction—I am not up to speed on the details—but the Labor Government spent \$50 million on it. It spent \$110 million on the extension of the Northern Distributor.

Mr Kevin Conolly: They may have spent it: you just didn't see it.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The member for Riverstone didn't see it. He is the only person I know who could travel across the Sea Cliff Bridge and not see it—a lot of other people have seen it. Has he seen in the budget papers the \$110 million for the Northern Distributor? Is that another one of those so-called "nothing" projects? The former Government allocated \$30 million to the great WIN Stadium and \$40 million for the upgrade of Picton Road. Have Government members driven on Picton Road? They probably have, but did not see it.

Mr Nathan Rees: Hawkesbury Valley Way.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Yes, and Hawkesbury Valley Way. The Government provided \$85 million for the expansion of the new surgical ward at Wollongong Hospital. I was interested to hear the Minister for Health and Government members say that the former Government did nothing for 16 years. I have referred to a health infrastructure project in the Illawarra. The member for Monaro probably lives in his electorate but has not seen it.

Mr John Barilaro: Born and bred there.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I was told the other day about another scandal involving the police. The member for Monaro was arrested and charged with being intelligent but I am pleased to report that he was found not guilty. One of the great achievements of the former Government was its investment in infrastructure in the Health portfolio. I have often talked proudly about not just the past 16 years of Labor Government but the Whitlam Government, the Wran Government and so on. It is very hard to find a major hospital project in New South Wales that was not—

[Interruption]

You are not going to talk about your privatisation attempts, are you? Those opposite should not embarrass themselves. They should raise their IQs by staying silent. That is the best thing they could do. On the subject of health infrastructure icons, let us pay credit to the great man Gough Whitlam, who funded Westmead Hospital. I have often received praise for the Wran Government's construction of Mount Druitt Hospital but it was the former Government, which Coalition members now malign, that built the new Blacktown Hospital and gave a commitment to upgrade it further. It is an historical fact that Labor built not only the new Blacktown Hospital but the original hospital in the early 1960s.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: What happened about Frenchs Forest?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I hope the member is not suggesting that he has been to Frenchs Forest but has not seen it. I have been in this House for 16-plus years and I have heard many things. Family members of mine have spent time in Liverpool Hospital and we have seen it grow over the years. Members on both sides of the House could say that their fingerprints are on it. If members have any memory of what it looked like years ago—I am sure some members opposite have had occasion to visit that hospital—they should see how it looks now after major infrastructure works. I point out to members opposite that that major infrastructure work has not happened since March. Work has been carried out over many years and it is due to be completed this year.

The Nepean Hospital near my electorate is another old facility that has been progressively improved over a number of years. If members are interested, they can read the various plaques that have been erected to mark the completion of various stages of the construction. The bright sparks opposite should examine the budget papers and see the amount the Labor Government spent on upgrading that hospital. One of those bright sparks opposite said that the former Government spent money on that hospital because it is in a Labor-held electorate. The Labor Government also built a new hospital in Orange, and I do not believe the Labor Party has ever won that seat. If it has, it certainly has not been in the nearly 30 years that I have been in this place. The Coalition has assumed office and produced a number of catchy slogans. We have also had many unnecessary debates in this place. We can build bridges, hospitals, schools—

Mr Kevin Conolly: Metros.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Did I hear someone say "trains"?

Mr Kevin Conolly: No, metros.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I might put a question on notice directed to the Minister for Transport asking for an extensive list of the rolling stock provided by a Coalition government at any time in the past century. I predict that the answer will fit on one page, in large print. I will not need the answer in shorthand. Given that the member interrupted me to mention transport, I must point out that rolling stock in New South Wales has the Labor Party brand on it from start to finish. Only one piece of rolling stock was provided by a Coalition government, and that was the Explorer train.

Mr John Barilaro: If you've done such a great job, why were you thrown out in March?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The member for Monaro should not worry about my opinion, he should simply read something. The little clusters of pages bound together are called books—try one. He is still smarting about the fire that burnt down his library. I understand that both books were destroyed. If this bill leads to the provision of major infrastructure and the new Coalition Government's continuation of the former Government's allocation of \$61 billion for infrastructure, I wish it well. We all want major infrastructure in New South Wales. However, there is no need to restart that process; it has been going on for years and the former Government has

a proud record in that regard. Members have used this debate to launch an attack on the state of the economy when they took office. I point out that the New South Wales Labor Government left this State with what the United States does not now have: a triple-A rating that has been renewed year in and year out and confirmed by the ratings agencies since the election of the Coalition Government. I am pleased to make a contribution to this debate to rebut the nonsense spoken by members opposite.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [11.13 a.m.]: As we consider this important bill, I am reminded of a particular international organisation that brought together well over 100 national non-government organisations to advance their common cause. Founded largely by its European members, this organisation also represented many small and fledgling grassroots organisations trying to find their feet in developing nations. At head office they gathered funds from the membership and from organisations such as the United Nations. Somehow little of the money made its way to the members based in developing nations. African members, in particular, were regularly told that their turn would come; that the money to establish offices, to buy computers and to run education and community programs would soon be theirs.

They just had to be patient. Finally a timetable was set and the African member organisations began preparations for the promised money to arrive. However, that was the year the Berlin Wall came down. "Surely you must understand," said the European members to the African members, "how important this moment is. We must immediately divert all available funds to rebuilding and restructuring the membership offices in Eastern Europe rather than Africa." Those of us sitting in this place who represent the regions of New South Wales have endured an unfair and lengthy period of neglect of regional infrastructure by previous State governments.

It is with decidedly black humour that vast areas of our State refer to the Sydney-centric thinking that has gone on in Macquarie Street. Perhaps the tragedy of this neglect kicked up a gear when the State's assets were cashed in or run down to fund a party held in Sydney in 2000. Government buildings were sold, roads were left unrepaired and businesses were isolated. Because of the importance of that moment, the money was spent on polishing up Sydney. The crucial reform embodied in the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 is the promise that 30 per cent of the fund will be spent on infrastructure projects in the regions of New South Wales. It gives me great pleasure to be part of a government that has set that in stone. Proposed section 9 states:

- (1) The Minister is to produce an annual report detailing payments from the Fund.
- (2) 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 outside the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, and whether it represents at least 30 per cent of the total payments from the Fund on infrastructure projects.

This bill is the necessary partner to Infrastructure NSW because there will always be vital, timely and important infrastructure projects in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle waiting for funding—always. In the absence of leadership from previous governments, infrastructure projects in the regions always seemed so remote and were so easily deferred. Regional Development Australia—an organisation that is a partnership between the Australian, State and Territory and local governments designed to support the growth and development of Australia's regions—has prepared a regional plan for the Murray region for 2010 to 2015. This plan includes provision for the electorate of Albury. According to the report, the Murray region is the third largest vegetable-growing area in New South Wales, it produces a third of the State's grapes, a quarter of its citrus fruit and more than half of Australia's rice crop. The plan notes:

The region's location provides some areas with strategic and economic advantages.

These economic advantages have much to do with creating opportunities in transport and distribution.

As well as agriculture, Albury is an important centre for manufacturing, producing annual economic output of \$11.48 billion from manufacturing alone.

However, the regional plan notes a number of barriers to economic growth in this region. Among the key economic challenges noted in the plan are: the impact of water buy-back programs on existing and future industry development; lack of public investment; increasing energy costs; the ageing and shortage of infrastructure especially transport, bridges and roads; and the lack of awareness of regional attributes. In part, I am dealing with the last of these points now, helping to explain the economic attributes of the Murray region and of Albury itself. Work is also progressing with the Government's plans to establish a cross-border commissioner to deal with red tape, taxation and other border anomalies that inhibit economic development. Infrastructure is essential for the regions to develop, to provide employment opportunities and to encourage

people to move out of the economic and lifestyle traps that can so easily hold people back in large and expensive cities. Good roads, rail links, airports, hospitals and so on create the structure for private businesses to develop and thrive. Proposed section 6 states:

- (1) The purpose of the Fund is to improve economic growth and productivity in the State, and for that purpose:
 - (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,
 - (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.

This is good news. Importantly, major infrastructure assets also require maintenance if they are to function to their full potential. For example, in my electorate we will be looking for timely replacement of the Mulwala-Yarrawonga bridge, widening of roads between Albury and Corowa to handle the traffic load, upgrading of roads in Tumbarumba and Greater Hume shires to support the timber industry, and the replacement of the ageing ambulance station in Albury, which serves not only Albury but also a large section of the Hume Highway.

This month the Minister for Resources and Energy will visit Albury to hold discussions with the Norske Skog paper mill management about plans to develop a biomass cogeneration plant, which has the potential to release substantial energy resources. While that is essentially a private sector project, it will benefit from government involvement and facilitation. It has its own infrastructure issues, which, I am sure, will be addressed. This is a new era, and it has started well. Infrastructure NSW and the Restart NSW Fund are integral components in a comprehensive plan to get New South Wales functioning properly once more. And it is particularly pleasing to have this commitment to spending 30 per cent of the fund in regional New South Wales. For these reasons I support the bill.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [11.20 a.m.]: After 16 years in opposition, and some five months into its term of government—

Mr Mark Coure: We've achieved heaps.

Mr NATHAN REES: I am coming to that. We now have the Restart NSW Fund, otherwise known as the "establish a bank account" fund. Clearly, the theme this week is: great stunts and frauds of our time. In Australia in the recent past we have had the Cannonball Express stunt. We have had people going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, Evel Knievel trying to cross the Grand Canyon, the great catalytic converter, the member for Balmain introducing and flogging horny goat weed, the Peter Foster slimming teas, and, now, the Restart NSW Fund. On the political stunt front, we have had former Premier Beattie in a shark tank, the multifunctionpolis, John Howard in a flak jacket, the Cecil Hills High School incident, the Darwin to Alice Springs railway—

Mr Kevin Conolly: That is a real railway.

Mr NATHAN REES: Yes, but not many on it. We have had Pauline Hanson, and Peter Phelps—he is a good stunt. We have had a National Party member—I think it was Mr Cobb—drinking Roundup in Federal Parliament. We have had Alexander Downer in tights and the occasional Council of Australian Governments walkout. But for stunts—

Mr Mark Coure: What about the panther?

Mr NATHAN REES: The panther is now your issue, if it does emerge. Clearly, the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 establishes what is, in effect, a bank account. Last week the Government ran out of legislation—after 16 years in opposition and only five months in office. In recent weeks the House has dealt with the 52-word library bill, and there were dozens of speakers on that. More recently, we dealt with the graffiti bill, with dozens of speakers on that. Last week, the Government ran out of legislation—after 16 years in opposition.

Call me a political junkie—call me boring on that front, if you like—but running out of legislation is a cardinal sin for a government, let alone one that was in opposition for 16 years and built up expectations right across the State.

It is a pity that the member for Bathurst has left the Chamber, because yesterday the member told the House that the previous Government had done nothing for Bathurst. I would be prepared to wager that when the new Bathurst hospital is opened in a few weeks time, the member for Bathurst will want his name on the plaque. Clearly, he has been weighed down by the chains and robes of the mayoralty and has not noticed that a new hospital has been built in Bathurst, a new hospital has been built in Lithgow, multipurpose service centres have been built at Blayney, Oberon and Rylstone, a new CAT scanner has been provided in Bathurst, a new fire station and new TAFE building have been built in Bathurst, Kelso High School was rebuilt after a fire, a number of rural fire sheds were built, and \$10 million was allocated for the Mount Panorama race track.

Mr Paul Toole: Here I am.

Mr NATHAN REES: He's back.

Mr Paul Toole: I'm back.

Mr NATHAN REES: For the edification of the member, I will run through those again. These are capital works in his patch that he missed. I would be willing to wager that he was at the opening of some of them. Bathurst and Lithgow have new hospitals, multipurpose health services were built in Blayney, Oberon and Rylstone, and a new CAT scanner provided for Bathurst, along with a new fire station.

Mr Paul Toole: Which you built back-to-front.

Mr NATHAN REES: As the Minister who was there and opened it at the time, I know that was done in full consultation with the local fires. The member has clearly fallen prey to the activities of some of the industrial agitators on his patch. In addition, we built a new library and a hall at Kandos, built the Wallerawang sports centre, relocated and built the State Debt Recovery Office at Lithgow, and funded dozens of community projects, such as fixing wooden bridges, halls and so on. Those were the works in just one electorate, involving hundreds of millions of dollars, including a new hospital that people are actually going to be treated in. People will be treated in the Lithgow hospital. I have to say that, as Premier and as Minister, when you travel up the Great Western Highway and go down Victoria Pass heading to Lithgow and Bathurst, you feel the weight of the world leave you as you enter the band of prosperity that is the Central West—a terrific part of the world, and well serviced by the previous Government.

This bill is a political fraud. It is the establishment of a bank account for a line item in the Government's budget. That is all it is. In part 2 is clause 9, entitled "Annual and other reports relating to Restart NSW Fund". That is otherwise known as a bank statement. The Government establishes its account—having shown its 100 points for identification—and every six months is sent a bank statement. I have not seen a stunt better than this. This is the Government's legislative equivalent of the multifunctionpolis. Government members ought to be ashamed of themselves that, after 16 years in opposition, the Coalition has wheeled this sort of pap into this place, chewing up the time of the House. They must have an agenda—particularly those on the front bench.

Surely, after champing at the bit for 16 years, and not knowing what portfolio they would get, they would have had three big ideas on their desks for each portfolio that they were ready to whip out, knock into shape through a Cabinet minute, get through the budget process, and introduce in legislation. I am hoping, for the sake of the people of New South Wales, that that is the case. But five months into its term, the signs are not good: the Government has run out of legislation, after we have dealt with a graffiti bill and the Library Amendment Bill 2011 and are now debating the establishment of its bank account. It does not get much poorer than that. It is an ordinary performance. As I look around I see a cast of thousands in this place. For the first two weeks I was scared to look to my left, because they just kept coming round the Chamber. There are a lot of them; I concede that.

Mr Mark Coure: And we're going to keep coming. What is your margin?

Mr NATHAN REES: Swamped it. But if this bill is the result of the collective efforts of all members on the Government side, New South Wales is in for a world of pain because it is a nonsense. I do not think

I need to go further. The previous speaker for the Opposition covered the massive injections of funds and capital works, and the successful navigation of global financial crisis number one. In fact, our Government not only retained the triple-A credit rating of New South Wales, but improved the State's credit rating during the global financial crisis—the only jurisdiction in the world to have done so. Government members are now going to get their chance to navigate the travails of the world economic situation and the difficulties that that will throw at them. They will now get their chance. I hold grave fears for public transport and what will be allocated to those services. Minister Gay and Deputy Premier Stoner have done a very good job of pointing publicly to the roads that the Government is supposedly going to build so I will be very surprised if there is much left for public transport.

This bill is a nonsense. It is indicative of a government that has run out of ideas a mere five months into its term, after 16 years in opposition. I can tell by the looks on the faces of some Government members that they are embarrassed about having to be in the Chamber and listen to debate on this nonsense. They are embarrassed that this is all they could come up with after 16 years in opposition. There are too many of them in this place at the moment; they should be back in their offices, drafting legislation with substance. I can think of important things that members opposite could be doing for every single one of their patches. How many people are employed at Cadia mine—a couple of thousand? The member for Bathurst should be cementing their future in legislation. Instead, he is in the Chamber listening to me. He has better things to do.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [11.30 a.m.]: During the past 16 long years of Labor government that thankfully ended in March, the people of New South Wales endured enormous waste and mismanagement, including waste and mismanagement of windfall revenue in excess of budget forecasts. Expectations sank to new lows as the former Government failed to invest effectively in promised new infrastructure for New South Wales. That investment would have improved our economic growth and future productivity. In June 2011 Infrastructure Australia submitted its most recent infrastructure update to the Council of Australian Governments arguing that:

... there is a sense that our infrastructure networks are barely adequate for current needs, and that they are beginning to impose significant, long-term costs ... There is a powerful need to change, especially in the way we fund our infrastructure ...

Infrastructure Australia consequently called for a "deeper, more mature public debate about infrastructure planning and investment decisions". The bill has facilitated debate, despite the infantile comments of the member for Toongabbie. I note with some pleasure that the member for Mount Druitt, who has been described as ageing infrastructure in this place, has praised it as admirable. The pathetic comments from the member for Toongabbie are a sad reflection of why he was dumped by his own party. The bill will establish the Restart NSW Fund with the purpose of setting aside funding for and securing the delivery of major infrastructure projects and other necessary infrastructure. It will complement other sources of New South Wales infrastructure funding, as well as the functions and activities of the recently established Infrastructure NSW.

Infrastructure NSW will recommend where the fund's capital is to be spent, as well as help to ensure that it is well spent. Negative outcomes are often not immediately obvious with neglect over long-term planning. Often one sees a lack of political accountability in the short term for a government bereft of foresight, a government focused instead on media spin and the 10-second news grab. This was apparent in the Carr years of the previous Labor regime. The results of infrastructure incompetence are not seen for many years, with the legacy of short-sightedness moved to future electoral cycles—to the detriment of every person in New South Wales. The North West Rail Link, in its various forms under New South Wales Labor, is a good example of that.

The Restart NSW Fund will improve economic growth and productivity in this State through funding major infrastructure projects, including improved public transport and roads, improved economic competitiveness of New South Wales, improved regional areas affected by mining operations, improved health-related facilities, and improved workplaces for front-line staff. For me, the bill promotes two main positive outcomes: greater financial discipline and increased accountability. First, there will be greater financial discipline with a mechanism to better ensure that extra money is invested in long-term infrastructure assets. That money will emanate from various sources, including the lease of the wasteful desalination plant and the issuing of Waratah or other special bonds within the confines of the State's triple-A credit rating. But the most important source of funds will be any future windfall budget revenue.

For 13 years the Carr-Iemma governments received \$17.5 billion in windfall revenue, which disappeared on mismanaged initiatives, and waste and recurrent expenses that were not properly controlled. Fat cats, backroom bureaucrats and Labor's patrons prospered while public infrastructure projects were repeatedly

undelivered or mismanaged. That waste and mismanagement continued in the last three years of the former Government under two more Labor Premiers—including the previous speaker—who were never endorsed by the people of New South Wales. As with infrastructure under Labor, they promised much but delivered inadequately. Secondly, infrastructure expenditure accountability will be increased. The Auditor-General will report on both fund expenditure and compliance with the fund's mandate, including the extent of investment in non-metropolitan areas, given the minimum 30 per cent spending target for rural and regional areas.

I look forward to seeing those reports. As Chair of the Public Accounts Committee I will take a special interest in any of the Auditor-General's recommendations. Finally, a review is to be undertaken after a five-year period from the commencement of the Act, with a report to be tabled in each House within 12 months. I expect that report to reflect an improvement in the focus on longer-term infrastructure delivery compared with that in recent years. This Government will better focus on planning and will deliver projects that will contribute towards a brighter and more prosperous future for New South Wales. As my local Davidson logo and by-line reminds us, we should be "Building for Tomorrow". I am pleased that the new Government is building for tomorrow.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [11.36 p.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011, which delivers on yet another commitment in the Government's 100 Day Action Plan. The Restart NSW Fund will set aside funding for securing much-needed infrastructure in this State. The people of New South Wales have been denied much-needed infrastructure for far too long. The previous Government was criminal in its neglect in not providing the people of New South Wales, and my constituents in particular, with much-needed infrastructure in order to go about their daily lives.

Mr Paul Toole: It was criminal all right.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: Absolutely. The billions of dollars wasted by the former Government would have been better spent on infrastructure to enhance local communities rather than to concentrate on its re-election to office. The Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 will identify and prioritise infrastructure projects to help grow our economy with the clear goal of lifting economic growth above the national average in order to improve the lives of the people of this State. Essential infrastructure projects such as public transport, roads, water utilities, freight and hospital upgrades, and the workplaces of front-line workers, including law and justice officers, teachers and nurses, will benefit from this capital fund.

The member for Toongabbie mentioned political fraud. As Premier he and his Cabinet took the South West Rail Link off the agenda. Six months later, after public scrutiny and pressure, it was brought back. That delayed its opening by another two years. When the South West Rail Link was first announced it was costed as a \$688 million project, but after former Premier Keneally's tenth announcement it was costed as a \$2.1 billion project—that is infrastructure fraud. The member for Toongabbie, a former Premier, should be very embarrassed about that.

Mr Paul Toole: He should hang his head in shame

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: He is not here—clearly, he is hanging his head in shame. I commend the member for Cabramatta for remaining in the Chamber and for listening to this debate on behalf of his colleagues. Infrastructure NSW will make recommendations and determine priorities for projects to be funded through the provisions in the bill and assessed in the budget process against the five-year infrastructure plan and the 20-year State infrastructure strategy. In the last four terms of government no foresight was given to the provision of infrastructure, let alone a plan to get things done for the people of New South Wales. The Government does not have the luxury of wasting the next 16 years, and from day one it has set about fixing the problems left by the former Government, with the clear goal of making New South Wales the premier State it once was.

Infrastructure NSW is an independent body, which is its strength, and the people of New South Wales can have confidence that decisions it makes will be in the best interests of the State and not the electorates of Labor Party mates. This Government will be a transparent government that will withstand public scrutiny. Indeed, we welcome public scrutiny. This Government is ensuring transparency, ensuring there are no back room deals and ensuring that money is not poured into mates' projects. The member for Mount Druitt mentioned the valedictory speeches of his former colleagues. However, he neglected to mention a good friend of mine, the former member for Camden, Geoff Corrigan. He did so because poor Geoff and the Camden electorate clearly got nothing. Camden was a forgotten electorate. Poor Geoff and the electorate were sold out by his Labor Party mates.

Mr Paul Toole: Shame.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: It is a shame. It is a crying shame because Geoff is a good friend and a good bloke. He is also a good friend of the Minister for Fair Trading. The Auditor-General will report to Parliament annually to ensure that all funds are invested properly. Funding for Restart NSW will come from windfall tax revenue, the realisation of the capital invested in assets, the proceeds of issuing Waratah Bonds and the proceeds from the proposed desalination plant transaction. Additional funds could come from interest earned from investment money in the fund, money directed or authorised to be paid into the fund by an Act or law, and money voluntarily contributed to the fund by government agencies or other persons or bodies. Our Government is committed to maintaining the triple-A credit rating and any borrowings, including those from the Waratah Bonds, will be conducted in a sensible manner.

Only a few days ago the member for Keira cautioned about the Government's ability to manage the State's triple-A credit rating. That is rich coming from a bloke whose colleagues wasted billions of dollars over the past four terms of government. Camden needs Restart NSW. Camden has voted for a Government that will invest in our State's infrastructure. Our Government is aiming to provide New South Wales with the infrastructure it so desperately needs. Camden is one of the fastest-growing areas in New South Wales. The Camden electorate is expected to grow from 70,000 to 300,000 people in the next two to three decades. Just a week and a half ago the Minister for Roads inspected Narellan Road and announced that investigation work for the upgrade was progressing well.

Narellan Road is a key road for anybody in Camden who needs to get to the F5, trains, Campbelltown's central business district, TAFE and university. The extended length of time it can take a person to travel the distance of Narellan Road is remarkable considering that it is under 10 kilometres in length. The road has never coped from when it was upgraded and then opened as a pre-election stunt in 2007. The people of New South Wales need to know that provision is being made so that the Narellan roads of New South Wales get the funding they desperately need. Camden and its surrounding electorates are experiencing a huge strain on public transport, roads and hospital infrastructure.

The member for Mount Druitt referred to health: he was spruiking all the areas that received great health infrastructure and services under the former Government. At the election my good friend the former member for Camden, Geoff Corrigan, and the member for Macquarie Fields were embarrassed to spruik a promise of some \$200 million from the former Government that was undeliverable and unachievable. The member for Macquarie Fields must be wearing that promise like a burden, a cross he bears around his neck. Each time he walks into Campbelltown Hospital and looks at his colleagues, the doctors and nurses he has worked with, he must be embarrassed by a promise of something that simply could not be achieved and would never be delivered. He bears that cross stoically but he is embarrassed that he must do so.

The people of Camden and New South Wales not only deserve infrastructure but need it just to go about their day-to-day lives. I want to see business activity and employment in Camden and the New South Wales economy grow. Infrastructure is the way to encourage and grow our economy. Restart NSW is creating stability for the future of New South Wales. I am confident that the people of my electorate will be included in the five-year infrastructure plan and the 20-year infrastructure strategy. I will not miss an opportunity to represent the people of my electorate and highlight the need for Camden Valley Way to be upgraded from the goat track it is. I believe that this would be money well spent from this fund.

I highlight only one of the former Government's failed infrastructure projects, the Rozelle Metro. If the \$500 million of taxpayers' money that was wasted on that project had been put into upgrading Camden Valley Way the road would no longer be the goat track it is but, rather, the safe dual-lane road that the people of Camden need and expect. This Government is not only planning for major infrastructure to be delivered to this great State, it is also planning for the finances to deliver major works through establishing this fund for major infrastructure projects. Without this fund and without this bill being passed New South Wales cannot be number one again. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.46 a.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. There is probably no greater challenge in New South Wales than to meet the infrastructure backlog that was left to us by the former Labor Government. Sixteen years of State Labor saw a government that had no consistent framework, plan or vision, and absolutely no delivery of the infrastructure needed for New South Wales. We had reached

the stage where Infrastructure Australia, a Federal body set up by a Federal Labor Government, was not only disappointed in but disparaging of the former New South Wales Labor Government's capacity to deliver on infrastructure.

Time and again we had announcements by press release that came to nought. The damage that was done to the State, in the context of our reputation within Australia and worldwide, cannot be underestimated. One of the worst examples of the failure to get infrastructure right was the back-of-the-envelope announcement of the metro rail—confirmed through press release and agonised through for months, and disputes with business owners whose businesses lay on the proposed route. Eventually it all collapsed in a heap, and about \$500 million of taxpayers' funds were wasted. Through all that State Labor tried to justify the project. The then Premier, the member for Heffron, sought to add some depth to what was nothing more than a shallow back-of-an-envelope proposal for infrastructure that would never be delivered. The message went worldwide. It sent a clear note of concern around the world to potential infrastructure delivery firms and to the consortia we need to come to this country, this State and Sydney to do business.

I recollect being at an infrastructure forum in London two years ago when a major Italian company that was involved in the metro proposal indicated it would no longer work in New South Wales because it had been burnt by State Labor. That is just one company, but many other companies across the world lack confidence in coming back to New South Wales to do business. As the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure I can tell the world that New South Wales is back in business. New South Wales is ready to do what it should have been doing for the past 16 years. The Restart NSW Fund is one of the Government's major initiatives together with the establishment of Infrastructure NSW to get us back into business. Labor Party members are finding very few advantages in being in opposition, but if they got off their backsides they would start to pick up the skills they lost during the past 16 years.

When I was the shadow Minister for infrastructure I spoke with a lot of people in New South Wales, across Australia and across the world. One of the messages I brought home, particularly from British Columbia and Ontario in Canada and from the United Kingdom was that you must have an organisation that is totally focused on infrastructure delivery. The Government understands the concept of bringing together various partners to deliver infrastructure and make recommendations to Government about funding models. I remind Opposition members who may never have been aware of it that the former Greiner Government was a world leader in public-private partnerships. When I visited the United Kingdom a couple of years ago and I spoke with Partnerships UK I was reminded of that fact that the world had benefited from the actions taken by the Greiner Government in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since that time we have seen many combinations and permutations of public-private partnership, and thankfully we have moved on from the worst of that period when Labor argued against anything that involved private money.

I recall that when I was a member of the previous Coalition Government Labor's bandwagon gave Port Macquarie Hospital a hard time because it was privately funded. Yet during its 16 years in government Labor started to realise that public-private partnerships have their place—carefully considered, carefully monitored and carefully worked through—which resulted in support for two tranches of public schools in New South Wales, which now has in excess of 20 schools built and constructed through public-private partnerships. When I visited those schools as the shadow Minister for Education the educators in those facilities told me that it was an absolutely marvellous outcome: the facilities had been delivered on time and reflected the educational needs of the schools; and the educators were free to educate because, as part of the ongoing service obligations, contract maintenance and other ancillary aspects were being dealt with outside the education department.

Today everyone understands that public-private partnerships are significant, and are part and parcel of the future. Infrastructure NSW, contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said in this House yesterday, is not a party political organisation; it is an organisation built on the best models that have applied overseas. It is a hybrid of what I and others have seen in Infrastructure Ontario, in Partnerships BC in British Columbia and in Partnerships UK. The people who have been appointed to the board know their role, which is to ensure that as part of Restart NSW they have incisive input into how we can rebuild this State on the back of a revolution in infrastructure delivery. I acknowledge the former Premier, Nick Greiner, in his role as chairman of the board.

The trite criticisms, the carping, the small mindedness and the meanness of the people who actually occupy the last rump of Labor in New South Wales indicate clearly why they are but a rump. Nick Greiner, supported by his board of very capable people, made sure there was a real focus on delivery. As Minister for Planning and Infrastructure I place on record my personal thanks and the thanks of the Government to the various board members who have been prepared to put their time and effort into trying to bring New South Wales back from the dark ages of Labor and into the new light of infrastructure delivery.

I thank Mr Gonski, who is on the board of several companies including Investec Bank, Singapore Airlines and Coca-Cola Amatil; Mr Roger Fletcher, the Managing Director of Fletcher International Exports, who is also Chairman of the National Export Lamb, Sheep and Goat Industries Council and Director of the Australian Meat Industry Council; and Mr Rod Pearce, who has held senior roles with companies including Boral, Shell and CSR and is currently a member of the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council expert panel on cities. I remind the Labor Party that the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council is a cross-government body. Mr Pearce is on the board because Federal Labor understands his great capacity to contribute to our State and our country.

I thank also Mrs Carolyn Kay, who is a Director of Allens Arthur Robinson as well as Brambles, the Commonwealth Bank and the Sydney Institute. And of course I thank Max Moore-Wilton, who is a former Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and currently Chairman of the Sydney Airport Corporation. Members of this House who seek to criticise these people show their level of ignorance and their shallowness if they continue that attack. What they should do is get on board and come on what could be a great journey for New South Wales. We need infrastructure in this State. We must be a society that supports those from the business community who give up their time for relatively small remuneration and relatively small recognition to provide us with their expertise to get this State moving again.

The Restart NSW Fund together with the Infrastructure NSW board will ensure that politics do not enter into it. This objective set of criteria was developed to capture the value-add that we can achieve with careful use of our dollars. It is not the old days of the public service throwing \$50 million here and that is it. This is about finding out how we can use taxpayers' money to add to other opportunities to create maximum benefit for the people of New South Wales, whether it is roads, trains or our other great infrastructure. That is what Infrastructure NSW should deliver. I invite members of the Labor Party to join with us in a bi-partisan manner to support New South Wales becoming the number one State in this country once again.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.49 a.m.]: I will contribute very briefly to the debate on the Restart NSW Fund Bill. This bill is clearly a part of the enabling process for Infrastructure NSW to establish a specific fund to allow for the collection and contribution of funds to infrastructure projects across New South Wales. I support that process and I support Infrastructure NSW. I believe that the Government was given a mandate in these areas. Clearly, the Government has a very lofty agenda. However, let me cut to the chase. Way too much time has been wasted on debating the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. The member for Toongabbie very articulately stated that this legislation really is about adding a line item to the accounts. There is no doubt that is the case. In my view, debate on this bill is a reiteration of the debate on Infrastructure NSW. It is a given and that point is taken.

The Government's mandate was applied well in establishing Infrastructure NSW, but now the Government is making it pretty obvious that it has run out of matters to debate in this Chamber. That is the major problem. The Government has embarked on a significant learning curve and has encountered a range of issues since being elected on 26 March. I acknowledge that I disagree with the Government's handling of some matters, but overall it has been performing very well and has been delivering on its mandate from the people of New South Wales. However, it becomes a bit of a joke when so much of the time of Parliament is spent on Restart. I certainly hope that the debate will not involve the number of speakers who participated in debate on the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

Mr Ryan Park: Or libraries.

Mr GREG PIPER: Or the Library Amendment Bill 2011. If the Government is bereft of legislation to introduce there is at least one Independent member who has proposals for private members' legislation relating to matters that are very important to our communities. The proposals will not be supported by the Government but have been set to one side because the Government believes it is not in its interests to support a private member's bill. I suggest that the House could be dealing with better legislation than the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. I ask the Government to move on and deal with important issues. Perhaps the Government will give consideration to supporting some Independent or private members' bills.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [12.01 p.m.]: The bill before the House is an example of how serious we are as a Government to restarting and rebuilding infrastructure for the New South Wales economy. I notice that the member for Keira is very interested in what I am saying. The Coalition, once elected, set out the Government's 100 Day Action Plan to invest in essential infrastructure. This bill honours its promise to the people of New South Wales. The aim of the Restart NSW Fund is to set aside funds to secure and build essential

infrastructure that this State was denied for 16 years by members opposite. My electorate of Wollondilly, and I am sure many other electorates throughout New South Wales, suffered dramatically as a result of failed projects such as public transport, roads and hospital upgrades. Those failed projects robbed New South Wales of its status as the number one State in Australia.

As we are all well aware, the New South Wales Coalition Government was left with a black hole in the budget, courtesy of members opposite. Economic tragedy and vandalism have had devastating effects on the economy. Vital infrastructure projects have been abandoned, resulting in a severe infrastructure deficit across the State, including in my electorate of Wollondilly. After 16 years of Labor, the electorate of Wollondilly was left desperately needing road upgrades to ease congestion on Narellan Road and to improve safety on Picton Road and Appin Road. After 16 years of Labor Wollondilly also was left desperately in need of sewerage systems in towns such as Buxton, Douglas Park, Wilton, Yanderra and Bargo. I should note that Bargo is one of the largest towns in New South Wales without sewerage connection. Labor's failure to deliver vital infrastructure projects to our communities is entirely unjustified. Its inaction has resulted in hundreds of families suffering daily from the pressures of continually paying pump-out fees as well as general increases in the cost of living.

Labor's failure also has resulted in severe degradation of our roads systems. Many of the roads in Wollondilly are filled with potholes and the edges are crumbling. Many of our highways are dangerous. The unfortunate loss of life is a constant reminder that more needs to be done for road safety. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Roads and Ports, Duncan Gay, for his recent visit to Picton Road. The New South Wales Government has committed an additional \$12 million for the installation of much-needed safety barriers. Furthermore, after years of neglect our hospitals are in desperate need of upgrading. Thankfully during the election the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research, Jillian Skinner, recognised how vital the local Campbelltown Hospital is to my electorate and to the greater South West region of the State by pledging \$40 million for upgrades. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Health for her continued support for the south-west and Campbelltown Hospital which is located in the Wollondilly electorate.

I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the Treasurer. I know how strongly committed he is to the people of Wollondilly and to this great State. We look forward to his presentation of the State budget shortly. The issues I have mentioned demonstrate that infrastructure is a matter of primary concern for the people of my electorate. I will continue to fight for on behalf of my constituents in the electorate of Wollondilly. My electorate and many similar electorates are crying out for a bill such as the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 to lead us in the right direction. I am pleased our Government's continued dedication will lead to the provision of valuable infrastructure to communities across New South Wales through the introduction of the Restart NSW Fund. The fund will work in conjunction with Infrastructure New South Wales. The Government appreciates the importance of sound planning for infrastructure initiatives as well as ensuring transparent and appropriately allocated funding. Restart NSW is a major commitment that the Government has made to all of the State, including regional New South Wales. The fund will enhance and provide funding for projects such as public infrastructure, roads and hospitals. The fund will restart local and statewide social and economic infrastructure to assure the future of New South Wales.

Projects will include investment in freight intermodal facilities and water resources to sustain the economic competitiveness of New South Wales. The bill stipulates that Restart NSW will be funded from, and not limited to, appropriations by Parliament and the budget process, including any money that is certified as windfall tax revenue in excess of budget forecasts and borrowings, including the issue of Waratah bonds to the people of New South Wales. Any additional borrowings that are used to assist in funding the Restart NSW Fund will not endanger the State's triple-A credit rating. The Government will ensure that 30 per cent of funding will be reserved for non-metropolitan areas. The fund will be open and transparent. Its annual reports will detail infrastructure investments made through the fund. The reports will be released and the process will be audited by the Auditor-General.

Funding will be fulfilled in a manner that ensures an open and transparent decision-making process. In conjunction with Infrastructure NSW, the Restart NSW Fund will enable the Government to improve the identification, prioritisation and delivery of infrastructure developments. As a result, no longer will we see cost blowouts, overexpenditure or, worse still, half a billion dollars spent without any work commenced before the project was scrapped, which happened under the former Labor Government. This Government will ensure that planning for infrastructure will be undertaken in a practical and positive way by engaging communities, and will not involve dictating to them as Labor did.

For too long the people of Wollondilly and western Sydney missed out due to Labor's incompetence and lack of vision, but that will all change for the better. I commend the Premier and the Treasurer for their vision and involvement in ensuring that infrastructure is a major priority of the Government. I know that the Premier, as the Minister for Western Sydney, understands the needs to address infrastructure in western Sydney. I know that because, as the former Leader of the Opposition and now as Premier, he visited Wollondilly and the adjoining electorates of Camden and Campbelltown on numerous occasions, delivering on promises and meeting with my community. The Premier understands it, the Treasurer understands it, the Government understands it and I certainly understand it. It is about time Labor got it too.

It is no wonder the Federal Government would not deal with the former New South Wales Labor Government on infrastructure projects, yet is now more interested in dealing with this Government because it recognises that this Government will not waste hundreds of millions of dollars. The Federal Government knows that this Government will get on with the job of infrastructure delivery for this State and that infrastructure will be a key element in making New South Wales number one again. The delivery of infrastructure for the people of New South Wales through this bill will provide my community and the people of this great State with essential infrastructure that has been lacking for too long. We promised we would, and now we are delivering—for city and regional New South Wales. A good government is a government that acknowledges the need for proper infrastructure. A good government is one that plans accordingly. A good government is one that manages its finances. That is why I am proud to be a part of an O'Farrell-led Government, and this is why I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [12.08 p.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to building infrastructure that has been denied to the people of New South Wales for so long. New South Wales needs to be restarted, and that is exactly what the legislation will achieve. Under Labor, our State was stuck in a vicious cycle. A State's economy drives the generation of government revenue. Under Labor, New South Wales lacked essential infrastructure with which to generate economic growth. Without economic growth there is no revenue for the provision of future infrastructure. We need to restart the New South Wales economy. We need to regain the State's reputation as Australia's number one place in which to live and to do business.

In the lead-up to the 2011 election the Liberal-Nationals Coalition pledged that Restart NSW would be established to administer a capital fund for the purpose of providing essential infrastructure, including public transport, roads and other infrastructure that will reduce traffic congestion, and to support people who are delivering frontline services. Restart NSW will fund projects such as transport infrastructure and roads infrastructure to reduce urban traffic congestion, black spots and missing links. It will also fund economic infrastructure to address the economic competitiveness of New South Wales, including freight inter-modal facilities and water; hospitals and health infrastructure; and improvements to workplaces for frontline workers including law and justice officers, teachers, and nurses.

Restart NSW will be funded from windfall tax revenues that exceed budget forecasts. These revenues are not the result of disciplined financial management but revenue that results from unexpected changes in economic conditions. Despite the significant size of these windfalls, New South Wales has very little to show for its windfall gains. In relation to additional borrowing, including new Waratah Bonds, the New South Wales Liberals-Nationals will provide new investment opportunities for mum and dad investors, superannuation funds and others by issuing Waratah Bonds directed to specific essential infrastructure projects. Waratah Bonds are New South Wales Government-backed debt instruments that will enable government to access new, untapped capital markets. They will enable mum and dad investors to make a contribution to the task of delivering the essential infrastructure New South Wales needs.

Waratah Bonds will provide an additional funding model available to finance quality public infrastructure. Waratah Bonds will be an alternative debt structure in addition to the currently available options of Government borrowing through TCorp bonds and private debt through public private partnership arrangements. Any public sector finance method, including Waratah Bonds, will be undertaken in strict compliance with our fiscal commitment to maintaining the triple-A credit rating and ensure expense growth to be less than, or equal to, revenue growth. Any additional borrowing will be undertaken in strict compliance with our fiscal commitment to maintaining the triple-A credit rating.

Finally, in relation to proceeds from the \$1.2 billion long-term lease of Sydney's desalination plant, the New South Wales Liberals-Nationals will enter into a long-term lease contract for the Sydney's desalination plant. It is expected that the leasing will realise \$1.2 billion to \$1.5 billion. Importantly, there will be no impact

on water prices as a result of the lease. Sydney Water will continue to control pricing and volume via a services agreement, with retail pricing continuing to be governed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. And there will be no impact on water security. Sydney Water will continue to control volumes produced via a services agreement and, if required, additional capacity could still be added to the plant. There will be no change to the current operating and maintenance arrangements for the plant.

At the conclusion of the term of the services agreement the asset will be returned to the State. The proceeds from the lease will be transferred to the Restart NSW Fund. To ensure Sydney Water is not disadvantaged as a result of the transaction liabilities held against the desalination plant will be transferred to the general government sector. A long-term lease contract for the Sydney's desalination plant will also introduce additional contestability into the supply of water in Sydney, introducing competition in water supply to the Sydney Catchment Authority. The fund will have a specific mandate to grow economic productivity in New South Wales and a clear goal of lifting New South Wales economic growth to above the national average.

Last year New South Wales received more than \$1.1 billion in windfall tax revenue and over the past 13 years that figure reached \$8.8 billion. If Labor had spent this money on infrastructure rather than on cost blowouts of failed projects such as the Rozelle Metro and the implementation of the Tcard, or more accurately the non-implementation of the Tcard, the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link could have been built by now. Perhaps the former Government could have delivered one of the 12 promised new rail lines during its term, or even the expansion of the M4 and M5. This Government will ensure that windfall revenues are not wasted. Rather, the Government will ensure that the money is spent on vital infrastructure.

This Government is determined to address the previous Labor Government's legacy of 16 years of neglect. No government in the country's history did less in terms of building infrastructure than the previous Labor Government. It promised no less than 12 new rail lines, seven in western Sydney, and failed to deliver one of them. The approach of the New South Wales Liberals-Nationals could not be any more different. Unlike Labor, that ploughed all its money into projects for their mates, we will leave it to Infrastructure NSW to determine the priorities for how the funds from Restart NSW are spent. In other words, an independent body—without any obligation to do favours—will ensure the funds are allocated where they are needed most.

Unlike members opposite, this Government understands that the acronym NSW stands for New South Wales and not Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. The New South Wales Liberals-Nationals understand addressing New South Wales's infrastructure crisis is essential to making New South Wales number one again. Coupled with Restart NSW, which is designed to fund the infrastructure, the Government has already begun the establishment of Infrastructure NSW, with an independent expert board comprising the best people from the public and private sectors to make recommendations about infrastructure priorities.

The appointment of former New South Wales Premier Nick Greiner as chair of Infrastructure NSW is an important signal that New South Wales is back in business. The board of Infrastructure NSW will oversee Restart NSW, giving it the teeth to make a difference. Infrastructure NSW will not only have the mandate to make recommendations to Government but the initial capital to underpin its decisions. Important to constituents in my electorate, Restart NSW will help deliver the infrastructure Smithfield and greater western Sydney needs to grow. Through Infrastructure NSW I will be pushing for funding for the M4 East extension, the extension of Reconciliation Drive, in the Wetherill Park, industrial estate, which I want to see, delivered to help rejuvenate the Wetherill Park Industrial Estate and the western Sydney economy.

The fulfilment of our commitment to Restart NSW gives hope to the long suffering Smithfield residents whose needs have been neglected by Labor for 16 years. As I stated in my inaugural speech, I will fight for our fair share of funding so that we get the public transport, roads, hospitals and water infrastructure needed to support people working in front-line services in my electorate. Restart NSW represents this Government's commitment to fixing the mess that was left behind by the previous Government, after the election of 26 March. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [12.17 p.m.]: The Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011 culminates part of the Coalition's 100 Day Action Plan and is yet another example of the Liberal-Nationals Government getting on with the job of running this State. The electorate of Newcastle has been starved of infrastructure investment. For the largest regional city in Australia it lacks what most would consider basic infrastructure and services. It is a true testament to the laziness and incompetence of the former Labor Government that Australia's largest regional city which hosts the world's largest coal export terminal has such archaic infrastructure.

It is the same laziness and incompetence that has been seen in decades past without a decision or action on the future of the divisive rail issue in Newcastle. It is the same laziness and incompetence that has seen Newcastle's central business district suffer with shops along Hunter Street boarded up and left remaining businesses struggling. It is the same laziness and incompetence that has seen public hospitals, roads and transport systems in the Hunter and the Central Coast crumble over the past 16 years. All we have received in the last term of the former Government was a broken down post office that it sold and rebought at twice the price two years later.

The former Government promptly knocked down half a hotel and put up a tent for some cruise ships—that is the sum total of infrastructure development in our city. Newcastle desperately needs real investment in infrastructure; the Hunter desperately needs real investment in infrastructure; and this State needs real investment in infrastructure. We finally have a disciplined and accountable process and it has been delivered by this Government. This bill is another major step towards establishing a framework designed to deliver that infrastructure. This is exactly what Newcastle needs and I strongly support this bill.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [12.20 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak on a bill that delivers yet another infrastructure commitment made in the Government's 100 Day Action Plan. After 16 years of infrastructure decisions based on political imperatives this bill provides the financial framework for a transparent, merit-based approach. Strategic investment in infrastructure underpins economic growth and therefore creates an environment conducive to that growth. The turmoil in financial markets over the past month, the downgrading of United States bonds by Standard & Poor's, the collapse of retail trade in Australia and loss of consumer confidence all combine to make this bill a vital part of turning around the New South Wales economy.

If the Federal Government needed an excuse to scrap its toxic carbon tax this is it. The threat of that dead hand on the economy has played a part in the collapse of consumer confidence over the past six months and every retailer across the nation must be cursing the day that Julia Gillard offered this tax as a dowry to Bob Brown to establish the ultimate marriage of convenience. If the New South Wales economy had simply kept pace with the Victorian economy it would be \$22 billion larger, it would have another 274,000 jobs and it would have generated an extra \$6 billion in revenue to fund government services. Under the Labor Government the Hunter received less than 5 per cent of government investment despite being home to 10 per cent of the State's population and producing 20 per cent of the State gross product. Given the backlog in infrastructure in the Hunter, I believe that this accountability mechanism will greatly benefit our region. I take great pleasure in commending the bill to the House.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [12.23 p.m.]: I support the Restart NSW Fund Bill 2011. It is clear to everybody in this State that New South Wales is in dire need of infrastructure development. However, it is one thing to see a problem but another to act on it. It is simply nonsense that despite the fact that this State and our nation continue to be prosperous our infrastructure is often barely adequate and sometimes not even that. That mismatch is a reflection of the lack of forethought and general poor governance that this State has put up with for the past 16 years. The transport sector is a good example of that poor governance.

False promises and bandaid solutions have failed to cover up the fact that many communities in New South Wales have woefully inadequate access to public transport. People are given no option but to get into a car and contribute their two cents worth to the congestion that we see every morning on the road from Castle Hill through the M2 to the city. We have a basic problem when the people who make this State tick cannot get from A to B and back again reliably. This is a particular issue in my electorate of Castle Hill. For years everyone has acknowledged the importance of a north-west rail link. To give credit to the Opposition, when it was in government it identified the need for the rail line; in fact, it did so five times.

However, it failed to provide the funding. Although the former Government announced plans to construct the line but said that it could not afford it, it did find \$5.3 billion to fund the Rozelle Metro project or the Parramatta-Epping line while cancelling the North West Rail Link project. As I said, it is one thing to see a problem but it is another to act on it. The Restart NSW Fund will complement Infrastructure NSW so that it will be in a position to identify and prioritise infrastructure projects that will help the New South Wales economy to grow and prosper. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Treasurer) [12.24 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to this debate. We proudly say that this bill delivers on yet another key commitment made in the Government's 100 Day Action Plan. It is a critical part of the plan to turn around this State and it facilitates investment in essential infrastructure in New South Wales. Members made a number of points in the debate. However, rather than deal with every issue I will focus on those raised by members opposite because some of what they said

must be corrected. It is interesting to see the passion displayed in this House when members talk about infrastructure in their local communities and across the State. We witnessed the outpouring of years of frustration because of a lack of delivery of tangible, on-the-ground improvements in people's lives that result from the provision of infrastructure.

Restart NSW is determined to stop that trend and it is a key component of getting on with the O'Farrell Government commitment to delivering the infrastructure that must be delivered. Members opposite said that this legislation is unnecessary. Indeed, the King of Swing, the member for Maroubra, said that rather than introduce this legislation I should have simply established the fund in my office. We all know what went on in the former Treasurer's office during 16 years of Labor Government. It is surprising that the shadow Treasurer seems to want to draw attention to that. That behaviour is the reason this Government is establishing the infrastructure fund; we want transparency and accountability with regard to the expenditure of taxpayers' money. We will not have it squirreled away in dark corners.

Governments come and go, but this legislation will remain. This Government wants to entrench the notion that decisions about infrastructure and funding are made independently and not based on political whim. The legislation specifies that any money spent by Restart NSW must be allocated based on the recommendations of Infrastructure NSW. It also provides that Infrastructure NSW must receive regular reports on the balance of money accredited to the fund. In other words, the legislation provides for expert input into the oversight of infrastructure in this State. It also ensures that payments from the fund are reported to Parliament annually and that receipts and payments are audited annually by the Auditor-General, which will increase the transparency of the fund.

It must also be noted that the bill introduces discipline. If future governments adhere to this legislation, never again will windfall revenue be washed away; it will be allocated to the provision of infrastructure in this State. That is why the fund is so important and why that discipline should be applied in government. The shadow Treasurer lauded the State Infrastructure Fund that was established by the Labor Government in 2008. I asked about that fund and I was advised that \$1.3 million was allocated to the fund but not one payment was made. Notwithstanding the fanfare and the fact that the former Government made some attempt to address infrastructure in this State, that says it all. Members opposite were all talk and no action when they were in government. That is why Restart NSW is important. The member for Cabramatta misled the House in his contribution to this debate. I was not aware of his deep interest in financial markets. He said in respect of Waratah bonds 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.

That is incorrect. I am glad that the member is in the Chamber to hear my explanation. A retail bond is different from a wholesale bond. The relatively small administration cost associated with retail bonds is embedded in the yield offered. There is no cost to taxpayers associated with the Waratah bonds. It is important that the member for Cabramatta understand that. My advice from the Treasury Corporation is that the Waratah bonds diversify the New South Wales Government's funding at no extra cost. The events of the past few weeks—and particularly the past few days—highlight the need for capital protection for investors looking for safe investments. Waratah bonds will be increasingly important. I think we will see that going forward.

It is also very important for the State to diversify its funding sources. As has been seen in the past few days, capital markets are dislocated, there has been a contraction of liquidity, and the cost of credit is going up. The more opportunities that government has to diversify its funding, the better position it will be in to ensure it can meet its commitments and, in relation to infrastructure, fund and build the infrastructure that the State needs. So the Waratah bonds are a critical part of that process, and the Government is delighted that it is pursuing that path. I note that my other good mate over there, Mr 70, the member for Keira—

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order—

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I did say "the member for Keira", lest the member missed that.

Mr Paul Lynch: Standing Order 75 requires that members be referred to only by their title. I suggest that the Treasurer read the standing orders and stop flagrantly breaching them. I say that in response to the interjection by the Treasurer. The point of order is that the Treasurer referred to the member for Keira by other than his title. That is in breach of Standing Order 75.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I feel absolutely gripped by shame.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! There was substance to the point of order, but being the gentleman that he is I am sure the Treasurer will refer to members appropriately.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am not sure that I am allowed to say I am a good mate, but the member for Keira regularly expresses concerns about the definition of Wollongong as metropolitan. The House needs to understand some important points on this. While the member for Keira was chief of staff to the Minister for the Illawarra, his own department defined Wollongong as metropolitan. The Department of Planning's "Metropolitan Development Program 2008-09 Report" defines Wollongong as metropolitan. That was on the member's watch, so he might like to explain how that definition differs from his. There are other Labor Government publications on this matter. In Housing NSW's analysis and research report 2010, the Greater Metropolitan Region included Wollongong. In the Department of the Environment's 2007 inventory on emissions, the Greater Metropolitan Region included Wollongong.

I could go on and on. But, if I were the member for Keira and I wanted to argue for the economic future of his region, I would be opposing the carbon tax. That is what I would be doing, because I would be worried about the loss of 7,000 jobs, on the preliminary modelling, and I would be standing up for those workers and supporting retention of those jobs. He should watch that the member for Wollongong does not run from the Chamber when a vote on the carbon tax is called for, leaving him to take the heat. If the member is acting in the interests of his community, he should be arguing against the carbon tax, because it will impact his region.

Some comments were made about how local infrastructure works would be determined. It is great to have that debate, and we will see that going forward. But Infrastructure NSW has committed to allocating 30 per cent of the funds to regional New South Wales, and part of that funding will go to mining communities, as was outlined by the Deputy Premier in the lead-up to the State election. These are exciting times for regional New South Wales, because this is the first time that a government in Macquarie Street has determined to put a fair share of infrastructure in regional New South Wales.

The member for Balmain spoke about the rules and policies determining the manner in which money from the fund can be invested. I appreciate the member's interest in that sort of detail, because it is important that we understand that scrutiny. The manner of investment will be outlined, but I am happy to advise the House that the funds in the Restart NSW Fund will be invested in TCorp's Hour-Glass investment facilities and is in accordance with the Public Authorities (Financial Arrangements) Act 1987. The investment of money in the Restart NSW Fund will be determined based on the expected "time horizon" for payments from the fund—that is, expected payments from the Restart NSW Fund over the forward years. Obviously, that will have a longer investment profile, given the nature of the commitments on infrastructure programs that the Government is undertaking.

Also, the default investment rule will be for investment in the cash sector, which include short-term assets such as bank bills and other interest rate securities, and will be benchmarked against the UBS Australian Bank Bill index. Those were the main points raised. The important point on which to conclude is that the bill provides the framework and capacity for the initial capital required to start building the State and regain New South Wales's reputation as Australia's number one place in which to live and do business. It will impose discipline on government, so that windfall revenues are not wasted but are put to work for New South Wales. It will instil overall discipline and ensure that the infrastructure that the O'Farrell Government promises—and hopefully that is promised by governments in future—will be delivered and not be just words. It is about time we got this State moving again, and Restart NSW is an important part of that process. I commend this bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE**Membership**

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Madam Speaker

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That Mrs Mitchell be discharged from the Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office and Mr Khan be appointed as a member of the committee.

Legislative Council
10 August 2011

D. T. Harwin
President

GAMING MACHINE TAX AMENDMENT BILL 2011**Agreement in Principle****Debate resumed from 3 August 2011.**

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [12.36 p.m.]: I welcome the students of William Carey Christian College to the Chamber. The college is not quite in my electorate, but is very close. Indeed, some of the students' parents probably live in my electorate. I lead for the Opposition in this place on the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. The shadow Minister with responsibility for it is Mr Steve Whan, in the other place. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. We accept that it follows an election commitment by the Government. However, we will comment on the priorities that it perhaps reflects. The object of the bill is to amend the Gaming Machine Tax Act 2001.

The amendments include reducing the gaming machine tax rates payable by registered clubs; renaming the community development and support expenditure tax rebate scheme as "ClubGRANTS"; increasing the tax rebate available to a registered club under that scheme from 1.5 per cent to 1.85 per cent of the club's prescribed profits, being a club's gaming machine profits that exceed \$1 million during any tax year; creating a new category of community development and support projects and services, category 3 projects and services, for large-scale projects or services associated with sport, health or community infrastructure and to apply 0.4 per cent of registered clubs' prescribed profits towards a fund for such projects and services; and making other consequential, savings and transitional amendments.

I note, from the explanatory notes to the bill, that the effect of the amendments is that amounts equalling 2.25 per cent of registered clubs' prescribed profits in every tax year are to be returned to the community from gaming machine tax receipts through ClubGRANTS—being 1.85 per cent to clubs as ClubGRANTS tax rebates and 0.4 per cent as payments to the ClubGRANTS Fund on behalf of clubs. The Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme has been quite successful. It has undoubtedly brought great benefits to a whole range of communities throughout New South Wales. On Monday this week, because the House was sitting, I missed the presentation on the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme held in the Liverpool council area, at the Liverpool Catholic Club.

Certainly, clubs in my area have contributed significantly to the scheme, and the end results of the measures have been very positive. But for the clubs in my area—in particular the Liverpool Catholic Club and Mounties, which is not technically within my electorate, but very close to it, John Edmondson VC Club, and also Kemps Creek Bowling Club, I note I am an honorary member of two of those clubs and also a social member of the Austral Bowling Club—there are a remarkable number of positive things flowing from this scheme for local communities, youth disability groups, aged care groups and volunteer emergency services.

I place on record a list of some of the recipients of grants recently allocated in my electorate: Autism Advisory and Support Service, associated with Grace Fava, in particular; Autism Spectrum Australia; Cerebral Palsy Alliance; Community 2168 Management Committee, for projects in the Ashcroft and Green Valley areas; Disability South West Incorporated, a service organisation that supports people with disabilities; Hoxton Industries; Karitane; Inspire Community Services; Liverpool Refugee Week Committee, for its Refugee Week

Festival awards that I was able to attend; the Healthy Living project, Liverpool Public School; and Liverpool Seniors Computer Club; Liverpool Youth Accommodation Assistance Company, which has been in operation for at least 30 years and does very important work in Liverpool.

Other recipients included Liverpool Youth Refuge; Miller Public School Breakfast Club, which has been receiving money for some time and does important work; Lurnea Public School, for aid for literacy volunteers; Salvation Army Food 4 Life project, which I spoke about last week in a private member's statement; St Therese Catholic Primary School; Ted Noffs Foundation, for its street university project; and the White Ribbon Committee for White Ribbon Day. This year a total of 48 projects were funded, totalling \$509,159.

Since 2001 the Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme has delivered some \$5 million in the Liverpool council area. Liverpool council administers the expenditure and assists clubs in running and organising the scheme. The scheme is a very useful way of spending clubs' money. But a disjuncture often occurs in debates about clubs, and often it is geographically based. People tend to have a one-size-fits-all attitude—that is, clubs are either all good or all bad. I am fond of saying that if one lives east of Ashfield one probably does not get what clubs are about, but if one lives west of Ashfield maybe one does. That may be too blunt an analysis but there is a bit of truth to it. Clubs are absolutely essential in communities such as mine. I often give the example of the Miller Shopping Centre, which lost all its banks a couple of years ago. We tried to re-establish a Bendigo Bank branch there, but it did not happen. Bendigo Bank was still a bank and it could make more money elsewhere.

The financial contribution of the clubs in our area outstrips the contribution of anyone or anything else. They understand the local community and the people who use the clubs and their services. I remember telling the Labor caucus when there was discussion about this matter the story of the Bendigo Bank. Government departments were not prepared to put up money to get the Bendigo Bank reinstated in Miller Shopping Centre, but the clubs were. To my mind, that story describes the role of clubs in areas such as Liverpool and south-west Sydney. Other clubs in other areas perhaps might not do as well—and I suspect they do not—but I am particularly lucky in my area to have clubs that make the contributions they do, and the Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme is a clear example of how that works.

The bill proposes to create a ClubGRANTS tax rebate scheme to increase the taxation rebate available to a registered club under that scheme from 1.5 per cent to 1.85 per cent of a club's prescribed profits—that is, poker machine revenue in excess of \$1 million per annum. Over the next four years the Government will contribute \$300 million to registered clubs through \$200 million in tax rate changes and \$90 million through the ClubsGRANTS scheme. The original Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme was established in 1998. It established two categories: category 1, expenditure related to specific community welfare and social services, community development, community health services and employment assistance activities; and category 2, expenditure related to other community development and services.

The amendments seek to establish a third category, which provides 0.4 per cent of revenue over \$1 million. This category is to develop a statewide funding pool for large-scale projects associated with sport, health and community infrastructure. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. It accepts it was an election commitment and that the Government has a mandate to do it, but it does raise some interesting questions. Why has the Government kept this promise yet broken so many others? The Government has broken other election commitments by cutting the wages and conditions of teachers, nurses and police. It has removed the independent umpire in industrial relations, it has attempted to rip up Solar Bonus Scheme contracts, and it has failed to reintroduce the offence of drunk and disorderly—I am glad it has not, but it is a clear breach of its commitment.

The Government has failed to reintroduce mandatory life sentences for police killers, but it introduced mandatory life sentences for a very small selection of people who kill police officers. The Attorney General conceded in debate that he was simply putting in statutory form the current existing legal position. It has also failed to reopen Gulgong Hospital. The contrast between those breached promises and the Government having the money to deliver on this promise is interesting. It comes in the context of talk about horror budgets, closing one prison—or maybe three—and privatising a range of others, cutting 600 jobs, cutting \$1.3 billion in child protection services, and the manufactured \$5.2 billion budget black hole.

Mr David Elliott: You don't like money going to the community.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: Those boss advocates on the other side, like the member for Baulkham Hills who interjects, have written in their DNA the phrase "cut government services and sack workers". While the Government

is doing that in a range of areas, it has managed to find the money for this. That poses some very serious and fundamental issues about the Government's priorities and where it is going. Why on earth would the Government honour this promise yet break the other long litany of promises? The Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [12.46 p.m.]: I am 100 per cent for the Tweed and 100 per cent for the club industry.

Mr George Souris: You are still 100 per cent?

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Absolutely 100 per cent. The Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 is a crucial bill. It is a true recognition of the value of clubs. Before my election to Parliament I worked for around 27 years in club land. From 1996 the club industry was continually attacked by the former Labor Government. I applaud the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing. I have known the Minister for a number of years and in all that time he has listened to the clubs and understood club issues. I remember seeing the member for Upper Hunter protesting, placard in hand, out the front of this place. Importantly, I have also seen him visit the Tweed to listen to our local clubs. Time and again, representatives of the club industry in the Tweed came to Sydney to meet with officers of the former Labor Government but they were totally ignored.

Members on both sides of the House know how good clubs are, and we strongly support them. But over the past 16 years Labor has continually eroded and harassed clubs. It has forced many clubs to amalgamate or to go into liquidation. Last year alone, the club industry allocated more than \$63 million to a wide range of community projects and services, including for the disadvantaged, the aged, youth, people with disabilities and volunteer emergency services—\$25.3 million more than the eligible clubs were required to contribute under the Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme. That clearly demonstrates the generosity of the club industry. In New South Wales the club industry is unique. It is at the heart of the lives of many people in our local communities, whether in Cabramatta, Campbelltown, Tweed Heads, Wagga Wagga or Goulburn.

Workers set up many of our clubs because people wanted somewhere social to go. I was associated with the famous Revesby Workers' Club—a great club. That club was set up by a group of workers. They wanted a place to go to enjoy a drink or some entertainment with their friends. The club supports many sporting groups. I was there with the then member for East Hills, Pat Rogan, who went on to become the President of ClubsNSW. When the Labor Government turned on the club industry and tried to tax clubs out of existence it broke Pat's heart. He was a great local member and we see the result now: the East Hills electorate is held by the Coalition.

In addition to the substantial financial and in-kind support provided by clubs, the clubs make a substantial contribution to local economies through employment and economic opportunities for local businesses. A ratio of about 5:1 local clubs buy from local suppliers. They support local plumbers, bricklayers and builders—everyone in local towns. New South Wales will be a terrible place if more clubs are lost. I was on the side of the clubs in their fight. I protested in front of Parliament House, in front of any Labor member I could see, about the gradual erosion and the tax increase. Labor members were not listening.

The amendments to the gaming machine tax in this bill will benefit registered clubs by about \$300 million over a four-year period to 2015. This is made up of more than \$200 million resulting from the tax rate changes and a further \$90 million associated with the ClubGRANTS scheme. Almost 500 registered clubs in New South Wales, which is approximately one-third of all clubs, will benefit from these taxation reforms. I have been fortunate to attend ClubsNSW conferences over the past few years with the Minister for Gaming and Racing. When the Premier and Minister signed the memorandum of understanding on the day before the election they were applauded. They received a standing ovation from club representatives from across the State. Finally, there was some recognition. Finally, the clubs had a partner.

The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts has a deep understanding of the club industry and he is a partner of ClubsNSW. It is a great organisation, overseen by chairman Peter Newell and Anthony Ball. I have known Anthony for many years. It is fine for Labor members not to oppose the bill. However, when they were in government they did not support our calls for them to pick up the phone and call the Federal Government. The precommitment on poker machines will be equally devastating for clubs. It is all quiet on the benches opposite. Members opposite should hang their heads in shame. I draw the attention of members to an article in today's *Blacktown Advocate* about poker machine tax cuts. The article states:

Mr Robertson has come under fire from the Blacktown club bosses for his comments last week and will meet with the largest club in the area, Blacktown Workers, on Friday.

Blacktown Workers Club is a sister club to the great Revesby Workers' Club. Blacktown Workers Club is the centre of Blacktown. It does a fabulous job. The board and staff work hard, and in turn they support their local community. The article further states:

Blacktown Workers' Club chief executive Neale Vaughan said he was "annoyed" by Mr Robertson's comments.

I think that is an understatement. When the Leader of the Opposition visits Blacktown Workers Club on Friday he will face a hostile reaction because of a lack of promise on the precommitment and Labor's lack of support for this bill. The Coalition supports the clubs time and time again. If the Leader of the Opposition and Labor members do not stand firm and say no to Julia Gillard and Federal Labor they will betray their local clubs. Members opposite know that they are traitors to their local clubs. According to ClubsNSW, modelling completed by KPMG shows that every \$1 of tax relief for clubs can generate \$2 worth of benefits to New South Wales. ClubsNSW modelling shows that tax relief will boost the social contribution of clubs by some \$272 million and the gross State product by \$261 million to 2015. In turn, that will create an extra 2,000 jobs.

Finally, with this important legislation the club industry can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It has some consistency. The Government has delivered on a promise that means so much to clubs, whether they be in Blacktown, Revesby or even Tweed Heads. My local area has some of the largest clubs in New South Wales—some 14 clubs employ 915 staff in casual, part-time and full-time positions. There are 631 club volunteers and 116,000 club members in the Tweed. Currently, clubs in the Tweed give \$2.1 million worth of support to local community groups and activities. Those clubs will pay \$1.9 million less in tax and contribute another \$568,000 to their local communities under the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme. I pay tribute to Rob Smith, the chief executive, and Mike Fraser, the chairman of the board of the Twin Towns Services Club, who work tirelessly for their club and for the community.

I was the general manager of the Tweed Heads Bowls Club for many years. The club has a membership of 16,000 and employs 135 people. Under this new policy the club will save \$281,000. In discussions with the club manager, Mr Ross Bailey, he told me point-blank that without this legislation and with the precommitment going ahead the future of the Tweed Heads Bowls Club is in doubt. I have worked in the club and watched thousands of seniors play bowls every day. It is hard to put a value on that. I am pleased with this legislation. I am pleased to be able to deliver something positive. As a club manager and a member of many clubs, I saw the erosion time and time again over the past 16 years.

Labor members know that clubs are hurting. Pat Rogan was broken hearted by the way the former Government treated clubs. The Labor Party was supposed to stand for workers and protecting workers rights. But the previous Government directly attacked clubs for 16 years. However, this Government is turning that back. The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, with his deep knowledge of clubs and openness and transparency, together with ClubsNSW, has brought forward a memorandum of understanding and a tax commitment. He should be applauded. Also, it is disgraceful that members opposite continually duck and weave on another big issue confronting our club industry: the precommitment on poker machines. Members opposite should visit their local clubs.

But I guess if I were a member of the Labor Party I would hang my head in shame. I would not visit my local club, which is part of the local community. Local clubs are so upset at the continual erosion of the club industry. As we know, clubs do many important things in local communities. As a club manager I looked after Meals on Wheels, children with disabilities and so on. Every time there is a natural disaster in this country, whether it be bushfires in Victoria or floods in Brisbane, club members are the first to start fundraising and putting their hands in their pockets. On the ground in the local community, if there is a disaster, if a family member needs cancer treatment or a local school needs a bus, the club is the first place to go for assistance.

This bill is about giving clubs the ability to help local communities. After 16 years, how hard is it? It is common sense. The Minister has held many discussions with the New South Wales club industry over the years. Members opposite buried their heads in the sand. They were not listening to the clubs; they were listening to a bureaucrat who was simply looking at the profit margin and did not care about the social contribution made by clubs. This Government is about openness and transparency. Privately, members opposite have told me that they support clubs. However, they do not have the gumption to stand up and be counted. They should tell their local clubs, "I'll write a letter to Julia Gillard and tell her that precommitment will destroy the club industry." They should support this valuable legislation.

This bill is the most dramatic and positive measure to be delivered to the club industry in more than 16 years, and it is the work of the previous Opposition and current Government. I congratulate the Minister,

members and staff. This bill will bring much joy to the community. My local clubs, the Blacktown Workers Club, Revesby Workers' Club and clubs throughout the State will celebrate this valuable legislation. All the clubs in my electorate will be saying, "Well done." I am sure that every member in this place would have a sporting field in his or her electorate. Those sporting fields, which are used by our kids to play netball, soccer, football and AFL, are supported by our local clubs and by volunteers who over the past 16 years have received no support from the former Labor Government. It did not care, did not focus, lost the plot and did not understand. I commend this important bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.01 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Gaming Machines Tax Amendment Bill 2001. This Government is guilty of using the oldest trick in the book. It told us that a horror budget is on its way—a horror budget that it will try to blame on someone else. Both the Premier and the Treasurer will tell us that it is not their fault. It might not be the fault of the Treasurer as his legs were chopped off by the Premier and handed on a platter to the Minister for Finance and Services. The Minister for Finance and Services will also tell us that it is not his fault, but as he is busy trying to flog off the desalination plant he does not have much time to examine this issue.

This Government is using the oldest trick in the book. It told us that a horror budget is on its way in an attempt to frighten the public into thinking it is all doom and gloom and that the dark clouds of devastation are looming. However, when the Treasurer presents his Budget Speech I am sure it will not be that bad and Premier O'Farrell, the messiah, will save the day like a white knight in shining armour. We will hear a lot of rhetoric about the budget being tough but fair in an attempt to pull the wool over the public's eyes. It will be shoved down our throats and down the throats of the public. How can the Government justify cutting billions of dollars from child protection services, education, health services and corrective services while handing the poker machine industry \$300 million in tax? There must be a better way of doing things rather than ripping funding from child protection services and handing it to the poker machine industry.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! Opposition members will listen to the member in silence.

Mr NICK LALICH: There has to be a better way of doing things rather than taking money from child protection services, education, health services and corrective services. Over a period of four years \$300 million could be used to employ an additional 2,250 police officers to pound the pavements and to protect our community. Regional members complain all the time about a lack of police numbers in their local area commands. They always criticised the former Government for not spending enough to ensure that there was an adequate number of police officers in the country. That \$300 million could be used to employ the additional officers that are needed. Regional members should talk to Premier Barry O'Farrell or Treasurer Mike Baird about that issue. It might not help them to talk to Mike Baird as he is a lame duck Treasurer. Perhaps they should talk to the Premier or to the Minister for Finance and Services, the Hon. Greg Pearce. Treasurer Mike Baird is one of the gentlemen on the government benches and I have a lot of time for him.

Over a period of four years \$300 million could be used to recruit 3,030 nurses. New South Wales has some of the finest service providers working in our health sector. Our world-class health system could be augmented with additional nursing staff to care for our sick and frail. Instead of spending money recruiting more professional nurses the Government chose to take a different course. I refer also to the hypocrisy of this Government. The current Minister for Health, while in opposition, criticised the New South Wales health system almost every day in question time. However, now that she is in government she cannot help but sing its praises. She should be referred to as "Jillian-come-lately." This Government is cutting the wages of teachers, police and nurses. It is ripping up Solar Bonus Scheme contracts and denying essential infrastructure, for example, it has failed to reopen Gulgong hospital.

The Government is blaming all these things on a \$5.2 billion black hole, but where is that black hole if \$300 million can be funded in tax cuts for poker machine operators? It is no big mystery; it is the worst kept secret in the State. Public service wages will end up paying for this tax break. The Premier, the worker's best friend, will make public sector workers fund this \$300 million tax break. The Government is crying poor but at the same time it is sneakily handing over millions of dollars to poker machine operators. I am a great supporter of the contribution that clubs make to the local community. I have no doubt at all about the leadership, spirit and generosity of those clubs that operate poker machines. In my electorate of Cabramatta some clubs generate some revenue through their poker machine operations, for example, Mt Pritchard Community Club, commonly referred to as the Mounties, Cabramatta Diggers and Cabramatta Rugby League where Jarryd Hayne played his junior football.

These clubs have always displayed a marvellous commitment to the local area of Cabramatta and its surrounding suburbs. They have poured a massive amount of funding into programs and projects and they have contributed to the old Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme. Let me give members some examples of the contributions that have been made by these clubs. Over the past three years Mounties donated \$1.1 million for the restoration of Green Valley Creek. An additional amount of \$400,000 was donated by Fairfield City Council and 400 metres of that creek have been restored to its original pristine beauty. The flora and fauna have returned to the creek because of the funds donated by the clubs in my electorate.

About two weeks ago the Mounties signed an agreement with Fairfield City Council and donated \$250,000 for a youth facility in Fairfield. That money will be used to analyse the project and to draw up plans for the Fairfield youth centre. In addition, the Mounties gave a commitment to provide ongoing funds to help build a facility that will be of great benefit to the youth of Fairfield. All the clubs in our electorates contribute generously to the community through in-kind grants—not through taxes that are imposed on them but through voluntary in-kind funding—by lending out their halls, playfields and other facilities, which contributes to their operations. They also contribute generously to schools and churches in the Cabramatta area.

I have a lot of time for clubs in my electorate. These are just a few examples of the good work of clubs in our local community. I publicly thank them and acknowledge the contributions that they have made. I am confident that they will use wisely any surplus funds that result from this bill for the benefit of the local community that they serve. The light of hypocrisy shines brightly on the Government today. We have been told that families in New South Wales will be subjected to a horror budget, but a quiet little \$300 million tax break backhander for poker machine operators does not appear to be a problem. The Government cannot have it both ways. The public can see through the games it is playing.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [1.08 p.m.]: I am absolutely thrilled to promote, on behalf of the Coalition Government, the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. At the outset I state, as a club director of the Castle Hill RSL Club, which recently acquired the Parramatta RSL Club, I have an in-depth knowledge of the club industry. I listened to the rhetoric from two Opposition members, but particularly the speech made by the member for Cabramatta. If members of the Labor Party are friends of the club movement, I would hate to encounter an enemy of the club movement. Anyone who opposes the bill is not a friend of the club movement. Anybody who criticises the intent of the bill is not a friend of the club movement.

Mr Nick Lalich: I have already said that the Opposition will not oppose the bill.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: The member for Cabramatta interjects and says that he does not oppose the bill. I would be interested to show parts of his speech to members of the club fraternity and ask them whether they think he supports the club movement. The speeches presented by the Opposition during debate on this legislation are nothing short of critical of the bill. I do not know why Labor hates the club movement. What has the club movement done to members of the Labor Party that makes them hate the club movement so much? Why is Federal Labor introducing mandatory precommitment? Members on the Government side of the Chamber are in tune with their community and know that mandatory precommitment will be devastating to the club movement. I will deal later with that issue in more detail.

For some strange reason, ever since Michael Egan got his hands on the Treasury benches, the Labor Party turned on the club movement. This is the very club movement that gave the Labor Party so many donations through the Revesby Workers Club, the Blacktown Worker's Club, the Randwick Labor Club, the Tradies, the Sutherland District Trade Union Club, and so many more clubs throughout New South Wales. So much was received by the Labor Party in donations from the club movement that criticism of and opposition to the club movement by Federal Labor and members of the New South Wales Labor Party is breathtaking. If they are friends of the club movement, I would hate to see what they would do to institutions in this great State to which they are opposed.

As I stated earlier, I am a club director. I am very proud to be a director of the Castle Hill RSL Club. The club services my electorate but it is situated across the electoral boundary on the northern side of Showground Road in the Castle Hill electorate. The Castle Hill RSL Club is a shining example of what a club should do for its community. It gives more than \$700,000 a year to the people of The Hills district. The club supports everything from Legacy to Meals on Wheels, from Scouts to Guides, from Hear the Children charities in my electorate to the Lancers Association, as well as war veterans and war widows. Each year the club provides a number of war widows with Christmas hampers. It is a shining example of what the club movement should be doing for its community. I know why the Labor Party hates that. The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts also knows.

Mr George Souris: Such a good Minister.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: He is a very good Minister. Long ago when the Minister first became involved in this portfolio, he worked out that the Labor Party hates the club movement because it represents the community giving support to its own people. Labor members want the community to receive only from Big Brother. They want the community to receive money only from the Government so that the Government can say, "Look at how gracious we are. We might be collecting taxes beyond what taxpayers can afford, but we give back funding to people who support us." Labor members hate the club movement because the club movement collects money from the community through gaming machines and other services it provides to the community, and then gives money back to the community. The club movement takes the Government out of the equation, and the Labor Party hates anything that takes the Government out of the equation.

In the Baulkham Hills electorate there are a number of very prominent clubs. Staff in my electorate office recently spoke to representatives of those clubs, and I am certainly in regular contact with them in my capacity as director of a club. What the Labor Party decries about this legislation is what will make a fantastic contribution to my electorate. For example, the Baulkham Hills Sports Club, which is strongly focused on junior sport, will increase the number of meeting rooms that are made available to the community and will service those meeting rooms. It certainly will be supporting Probus, which provides a great deal of support to individuals in my electorate. However, unfortunately in recent years it has had to knock back various requests for grants. With the introduction of this legislation, the Minister will be able to free up funds for clubs. The Minister has told clubs that they will not have to send as much taxation revenue to Macquarie Street. Instead they will be able to retain funds and increase accountability by supporting various community groups.

As I stated earlier, the Castle Hill RSL Club will be able to provide increased support to various sectors of the community as a result of a reduction in State taxation. As a director of the club, I assure the House of the club's belief that any additional support that can be obtained from the Government through tax relief should be channelled to the community. The club receives approximately 40 applications a month for funding, which amounts to a lot of money and equates to approximately 500 occasions on which the club's board has to decide whether or not an individual organisation or institution receives support. Unfortunately, up to 20 per cent of the applications are completely rejected—not necessarily because they lacked merit but because we simply do not have the money. The Minister has informed the club that as a result of this legislation, more funds will be released back to the club so that we will be able to support all those worthwhile organisations.

The Northmead Bowling Recreation and Sporting Club, which is situated on Windsor Road at Northmead, has been a fantastic institution. It provides assistance to two disabled bowlers. By the Government providing a tax break, the club will be able to increase its support to those disabled bowlers. They are club members who need to renovate their home to assist them with day-to-day activities since interruption to earning their livelihood has been forced upon them as a result of disability. The club would like to provide more support of that type, and this legislation—which Opposition members criticise because they seem to think that it is money that the Government should be collecting in taxes—will allow clubs such as the Northmead club to release funds and provide support to disabled people.

It will come as no surprise that many Government members are eager to participate in debate on the bill. The legislation is an election commitment to which I was privy on 10 October 2010 at the ClubsNSW Conference held in Tweed Heads. I assure the House that it was not an election commitment made on the run, unlike many commitments made by the Labor Party. I know that the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, the member for the Upper Hunter, discussed the proposal with the industry over a long period. Like so many Coalition members, he travelled throughout the State and saw how many small regional and suburban clubs were in crisis. Under the Labor Government the number of clubs forced either to close or to amalgamate was unprecedented. Over the past 100 years the unique nature of New South Wales clubs has built up a fantastic community institution from which the Government is excluded—and that is what the Labor Party hates.

Members of the Labor Party hate the Government being excluded from the clubs movement. The Minister recognised that the clubs were in absolute crisis. Without clubs, small country towns and suburban areas such as western Sydney are denied a viable employer and a viable business, and suppliers to the clubs are denied a good client. As I have stated previously, and as I am sure other members will endorse ad nauseam, without clubs, charities and community organisations would be denied funding. If members of the Labor Party are so opposed to this legislation, they should tell the Minister how they will fund the shortfall that will result from clubs being denied the tax breaks and how they will provide employment for the thousands of people who

probably will lose their jobs if the tax break is not provided. I am proud to be a club director. My wife and I are interdependent with the club movement in our electorate. Our sons play sport that is supported by the Castle Hill club. We are involved in various charities, such as St John Ambulance Australia and Life Education Australia, which rely on donations and grants from the club movement.

Mr Ryan Park: Hear! Hear!

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I am delighted that the member for Keira supports St John Ambulance Australia. I note he has agreed to be a member of the Parliamentary Friends of St John Ambulance, and I commend his support for that fine institution.

Mr Andrew Gee: What about the Liberals—is he going to join?

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I would love him to join the Liberals. He would make a fine contribution but I suspect that if he left the Opposition benches the average intellectual value of that organisation would drop significantly, so we had better leave him where he is—then at least there is one left. I commend the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 introduced by the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing. The Minister spent 16 years gaining a thorough appreciation of the club movement. He has been waiting a long time to introduce this legislation and to tell the club movement that the Government is its friend, particularly since the change of government in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. I commend the bill and the Minister to the House. I look forward to more good work from the club movement in New South Wales.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.20 p.m.]: I state at the outset that I will talk to the Whip at the conclusion of my contribution and give him a Nationals membership form to give to the member for Keira. I think the member for Keira might be interested. I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. Last financial year clubs allocated more than \$63 million to a wide and diverse range of community projects and services, including those for the disadvantaged, aged, youth, persons with a disability and volunteer emergency services. This was \$25.3 million more than eligible clubs were required to contribute under the existing Community Development Support Expenditure scheme. This clearly demonstrates the generosity of the club industry and the crucial role that clubs play in providing and supporting social infrastructure in New South Wales.

When we talk about clubs often their contribution to social life in our towns and cities in New South Wales is overlooked. Many of their members are retirees and for many people clubs provide a valuable social outlet in order for them to meet people, have a cheap meal and undertake activities—something that should not be overlooked in this debate. This investment supports social cohesion and community wellbeing for the millions of people that directly or indirectly benefit from the existence of the club industry. In addition to the substantial financial and in-kind support provided by clubs, they also make a significant contribution to local economies through employment and economic opportunities for local businesses. The Liberal-Nationals Government recognises that and that is why it has committed to a range of reforms to help secure the long-term financial viability and sustainability of New South Wales clubs.

The bill before the House delivers key elements of the Government's policy agenda for the registered club industry. The bill will reduce gaming machine taxation rates and it will expand the Community Development Support Expenditure scheme and rename it ClubGRANTS. This new name more accurately reflects the origin of contributions under the scheme. It will assist club members and the wider community to have a greater understanding of the origin of funds provided for development and support purposes. The amendments to gaming machine taxation in this bill will benefit registered clubs by approximately \$300 million over a four-year period to 2015. This is made up of more than \$200 million resulting from the tax rate changes and a further \$90 million associated with the ClubGRANTS scheme.

Almost 500 registered clubs, which is approximately one-third of all clubs in New South Wales, will benefit from these taxation reforms. Together the effect of these amendments is that amounts equalling 2.25 per cent of registered clubs' profits over \$1 million in every tax year are available as community support expenditure through ClubGRANTS. According to ClubsNSW modelling, completed by KPMG, it shows that every dollar of tax relief given to clubs can create \$2 worth of benefits to New South Wales. The ClubsNSW modelling shows that tax relief will help to boost the social contribution of clubs by \$272 million and gross State product by \$261 million through to 2015. And it will help to create an extra 2,000 jobs each year.

That is particularly important in regional New South Wales where clubs make an enormous contribution not only to employment but also to all aspects of life in those communities. This policy was announced in October last year by the current Deputy Premier who visited the Orange Ex-Services Club together with representatives from Lifeline and Legacy who support this initiative. Their presence highlighted how important this initiative is to clubs in regional New South Wales and, in particular, to the Orange electorate. Orange Ex-Services Club will contribute an extra \$80,000 each year to the economy of Orange as a result of this Liberal-Nationals Government initiative. That equates to more support for sporting teams, charities and groups such as Legacy and Lifeline. It supports the important work undertaken by clubs in our communities.

Recent examples in the Orange electorate go well beyond Orange and include supporting community organisations. For example, in June Club Mudgee made donations of \$20,000 to the Kanandah Retirement Village and \$20,000 to Mudgee's Men Shed. In addition, I understand in the coming weeks that Club Mudgee has plans to make a substantial cheque donation and presentation to Mudgee's Pioneer House aged care facility. These are clear examples of the support that many local clubs provide to the communities they serve throughout this State. I commend Club Mudgee for its valuable work and confirm that it has the support of the Liberal-Nationals Government in New South Wales.

A significant proportion of the clubs that will benefit from these taxation reforms are situated in the State's regional and rural areas, and many of these clubs already make a substantial contribution to their local communities not just in the Orange electorate but all over New South Wales including Dubbo, my neighbouring electorate. These amendments will provide further financial security to country clubs and allow them to enhance their social and economic contribution and increase contributions through ClubGRANTS. Clubs already provide funding for vital programs and volunteer services such as Meals on Wheels, disability networks, women's and men's shelters, camps for troubled or disadvantaged youth, Aboriginal cultural initiatives, medical research institutions, Rotary, Lions and Legacy clubs, bushfire services, State Emergency Services and other community education programs and enterprises—the list goes on.

Some of these programs would simply cease to exist if it were not for the goodwill, generous donations, sponsorships and ClubGRANTS contributions of country clubs. The impact of the loss of these programs and services would be devastating for regional and rural communities. The New South Wales Liberals-Nationals Government is committed to supporting clubs so that they can continue their community work. The action that this Government is taking in partnership with the registered club industry will ensure that these programs and volunteer services will continue to exist and provide for country communities and individuals well into the future. Registered clubs are also the backbone of many regional and rural communities in a social interaction sense. While it may be impossible to quantify precisely, the value is huge. Clubs foster community spirit and bring individuals and communities closer together thereby building social cohesion.

Clubs are often the focal point of a country town, providing support and developing vital infrastructure for recreational and other social purposes. Strengthening the ability of clubs to remain financially viable will protect this vital infrastructure and help to maintain the social wellbeing of country towns and the individuals and families that live there. Clubs are a central meeting point in times of celebration and of crisis. Whether it is celebrating Australia Day or extending comfort to those affected by severe floods, drought or bushfires, clubs are at the forefront in leading celebrations or responding to emergency situations in country towns. That conclusion is inescapable so they need our support. Let us not forget about Anzac Day or Remembrance Day, two of the most important days of the year.

The support of clubs for the memorials, parades and other remembrance events in country towns is unparalleled. This is fitting, given the significant number of ex-service and current serving defence force personnel and their families that call regional and rural New South Wales home. Clubs are also often one of the largest employers in country towns. The wide range and significant number of employment opportunities provided by clubs is vital to the growth and prosperity of local economies. Every job saved in a registered club through the assistance provided by this bill will result in more money spent in local businesses and more people choosing to live and raise their family in regional areas. A significant number of local businesses will continue to benefit from the club industry and the financial security that this bill provides.

Economic growth and prosperity of the club industry in country towns contributes to the growth and prosperity of other local businesses such as those in the catering, cleaning, health, trade, legal, consultancy, accounting, real estate, and entertainment industry. This is why it is vital to secure the financial viability and sustainability of the club industry, in particular, in regional and rural communities. Clubs have helped us forge a

meaningful and purposeful identity, a unique and caring identity, in regional and rural areas of the State—one that is shared among all communities across New South Wales. As our memorandum of understanding with the club industry states, "Strong clubs mean stronger communities". I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Ryan Park and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Sonia Hornery) left the chair at 1.31 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's gallery George Kalisa, lecturer at the Rwandan Institute of Legal Practice and Development, and Raoul Gasana, Principal State Attorney, Rwandan Revenue Authority, who are guests of the Parliamentary Counsel's office.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that in the absence of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles and Minister for Western New South Wales, the Deputy Premier will answer questions about Western New South Wales, and the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research will answer questions about mental health and healthy lifestyle issues.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.22 p.m.]

PAY EQUITY

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier join the Federal Government and the Premiers of every other State in committing to fund wage increases handed down in the equal pay test case currently before Fair Work Australia?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Government strongly supports the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal or comparable value. The New South Wales Government recognises that employees in the sector work tirelessly and in a dedicated fashion to deliver front-line services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. And the Government also recognises that the demand for those services, delivered to New South Wales residents most in need, is actually increasing. However, I think it is important for everyone to realise that the ability of the New South Wales Government to assist in this case has been hamstrung by the refusal of the Commonwealth to specify the actual level of funding it is willing to commit to.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Let us not forget that this whole case is the result of a memorandum of understanding between the Commonwealth and the Australian Services Union. Surely that means it is essential for the Commonwealth to make a submission that states explicitly what level of funding it is willing to support. It did not provide guidance to Fair Work Australia or, to our knowledge, to any other party.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This submission stems from an interim decision handed down by Fair Work Australia on 16 May this year. The tribunal concluded that community sector workers do not receive equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value in comparison with State and local government employees.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: However, the Full Bench of Fair Work Australia was not able to identify the extent to which gender had inhibited wage growth in the social and community services industry, or how best to remedy that situation.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As such, Fair Work Australia sought further submissions from each of the parties.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The New South Wales Government has adopted a cautious and careful approach in considering the impact of the Fair Work Australia interim decision. The latest New South Wales submission supports the achievement of equal remuneration for women and men whose work is of equal or comparable value, supports careful consideration of the impact of the case on the New South Wales budget, and seeks care in the implementation of any wages increase so that the process does not impose an overwhelming burden on employers. We have highlighted inconsistencies in the Australian Services Union's latest submission, and we have brought to the attention of Fair Work Australia a number of factors that we believe should be considered in the final determination.

We will not walk away from the simple premise that if the Federal Government is so supportive, it needs to specify the level of its support. While we are talking about wages, can I highlight to the House that the Leader of the Opposition has now asked 49 questions in Question Time. I do not want to offend the member for Auburn by inciting my side of the House, or at least three-quarters of the House, so I ask members Government members not to respond when I put the questions: How many questions has he asked on roads or trains? The answer is none.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: How many questions has he asked on schools, preschools or education? The answer is none. How many questions have been asked on disability services? The answer is none.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: How many questions has he asked on family and community services? The answer is none.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: How many questions has he asked of the Deputy Premier, or of the Minister for Western New South Wales, on regional and rural issues? The answer is none. I, and I think the public of New South Wales, want to know the answer to this question: Given that the Leader of the Opposition has had a significant increase over the past few months, what is he actually doing for his \$290,000 a year?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order. After what happened during yesterday's Question Time, I will not extend any tolerance or give any warnings today. The behaviour yesterday of members on both sides of the House was abhorrent. Today, any member who calls out and continually interjects will be removed from the Chamber. I will not tolerate a repeat of yesterday's behaviour.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr TONY ISSA: My question is directed to the Premier. What has been the response to the Government's reduction in public transport fares?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Granville for his question and I commend him for his interest in commuters, and for standing up for them, in particular rail commuters from his electorate and from the west.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Members will recall that from 1 July regular rail commuters have been able to take advantage of reductions in monthly, quarterly and annual ticket prices introduced by the Minister for Transport. Those reductions can save a commuter up to \$240 a year—a serious amount of money for people currently facing cost of living increases.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In introducing these reductions, we did not just honour our election commitment, we exceeded it. I understand that those opposite cannot understand that concept, because never once did they even honour an election commitment, let alone exceed an election commitment.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: There has been a massive increase in the number of periodic tickets purchased since the changes introduced by the Minister for Transport came into operation. In fact, sales of monthly, quarterly and annual rail tickets have increased by more than 100 per cent—by 103.18 per cent, to be precise. In July last year, 18,704 commuters bought a periodic ticket. In July this year—after the Minister for Transport's price cuts came into force—38,002 commuters bought a periodic ticket. For the benefit of the member for Mount Druitt, before he has to reach for his abacus, I advise that that is an increase of 19,298 commuters who are benefiting from these additional reductions in periodic tickets.

The member for Mulgoa will be interested to know that at St Marys station periodic ticket sales are up by 107 per cent—that is a lot of commuters saving money, and a lot fewer commuters on Monday morning buying tickets. I can inform the Leader of the Opposition that the people of Doonside, in his electorate of Blacktown, appreciate being offered lower ticket prices; sales there are up 153 per cent. It is the same at Rooty Hill, in the electorate of the member for Mt Druitt, where sales are up 178 per cent. At Glenfield, for the benefit of the member for Macquarie Fields, sales are up 91 per cent.

At Thornleigh, for the benefit of the Attorney General, sales are up 167 per cent. At Harris Park, for the benefit of the member for Granville, sales are up 130 per cent. At Como sales are up 200 per cent, and at Quakers Hill they are up 147 per cent. Commuters have given a ringing endorsement to the decision of the Minister for Transport to reduce the cost of periodic tickets—to give an incentive, a bonus, a benefit to those who day in and day out use the State's rail system. But the good news does not end there. The extension of the MyZone ticketing scheme to light rail has also been an outstanding success—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Who thought of MyZone?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Thank you for that interjection. I will get back to the member for Macquarie Fields in a moment.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The extension of the MyZone ticketing scheme to light rail has also been an outstanding success, with a huge increase in the number of transport users keen to make the most of this latest saving. The Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Transport for 309 days. Did he include light rail in MyZone on any one of those days? The answer is no. Our Minister for Transport was in the job for 72 days before she announced she was going to make this decision, which was implemented after 89 days. That is the sort of on-time running we get with our Minister for Transport. She achieved it in less than three months; the Leader of the Opposition could not achieve it in 309 days.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In July this year—in the first four months after the changes applied—more than 125,000 people travelled on the light rail line using their MyMulti, pensioner excursion or Family Funday Sunday tickets. The number of people using the light rail system in July this year was up by more than 25 per cent compared with last year—another endorsement of the Government's public transport priorities and improvements. For the first time we have a Minister for Transport in New South Wales who delivers, and for the first time in a long time we have a State Government that delivers on transport. The Government is bringing

people back to public transport as we continue, for instance, to deliver the North West and the South West rail links. The Government will give people a reason to leave their cars at home. The Government will finally give this city the world-class public transport services that a world-class city like Sydney deserves.

PAY EQUITY

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Will the Minister follow through on her pre-election commitment to support the outcome of the Australian Services Union pay equity case and commit to fund pay increases awarded by Fair Work Australia to employees delivering programs funded by the Minister's department?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Government would deliver if the Australian Services Union made its case. It failed to make its case.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Australian Services Union case did not provide any evidence of the extent of the so-called gender pay gap. I remind the House of the submission made by the previous Government. It was a joke of a submission.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: The submission said that, consistent with the Minister's earlier intentions, the Minister does not make submissions about the lay or expert evidence presented during the course of oral hearings, and it does not make any submissions about the relative merits of the application. So the previous Government went into that case and it did not make a case.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: It did not avail itself of all the economic modelling and all the other work that would have been available if it had seriously wanted to make a case. Instead, it sat there with its usual dumb, fat and happy approach to industrial relations and relied upon a whole lot of rubbish rhetoric to get what it thought somebody thought it should have. It did not make a case.

The SPEAKER: Order! An Opposition member asked the question. Opposition members will listen to the answer in silence.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I remind the House that when the findings were made the tribunal concluded that the issue was community sector workers versus public sector workers. The bench identified that it believed there was a gender pay gap but it could not quantify it because no evidence had been provided, including by the former Government with 133,000 working on the case—or whatever it was.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The Minister is not answering the question. This Minister made a commitment before the election to fund the case and that is what this question is about.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order; it is a point of argument. I again draw the distinction between answering a question and being relevant. The Minister is being relevant to the question.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I remind the House that the history of the case itself is enlightening. The quantum of the Australian Services Union claim changed twice: in its revised submission late last year and then in its submission in response to the latest interim decision of Fair Work Australia. On both occasions the union wanted an increase despite the fact that there was no change in the evidence. This Government committed to supporting the outcomes of the Australian Services Union case. The very many members of that union should be calling for the heads of the leadership of the union that failed them.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: They were the ones who did not make the case. As the Premier has already said, government funding of this will be based on a fair share with the Federal Government. The Federal Government was aware and it made original commitments to share the funding of the increase that would be required—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the third time. I warned members about their behaviour at the beginning of Question Time.

Ms PRU GOWARD:—and that remains the commitment. As members opposite well know—the New South Wales Treasury will have told those opposite during their 16 years in government, as it has told us—the extraordinary extent of the cost of this claim to the taxpayers of New South Wales: \$774 million over five years. That is not chickenfeed. If it is funded, that will be a significant inroad into services and this Government will require the Commonwealth's help in that regard. That is an absolutely reasonable position, and if those opposite cared at all about these workers, they would be lobbying their Federal compatriots to ensure that they meet their obligations to these workers.

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL FINANCE AND REGULATION

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I address my question to the Deputy Premier. What steps is the Government taking to strengthen Sydney's position as a financial and banking hub of the Asia-Pacific?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Vacluse, who, as part of the very large class of 2011 on the Government benches, had a very important role in the management of the University of New South Wales. Earlier this week the Premier confirmed the Government's commitment to the development of Barangaroo, a project that will generate jobs, boost our economy and attract new investment to New South Wales. The Government has one clear message for businesses, companies and investors around the world: New South Wales and Sydney are once again open for business.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. The Leader of the House will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I apologise to the students, parents and teachers of Dorrig Public School who are in the public gallery for the rude behaviour today of Opposition members in Question Time. In practical terms, the Barangaroo development will provide additional space for trading and finance that will allow Sydney's financial services sector to flourish and make an even greater contribution to our State's economic well-being. The Government knows that rebuilding the New South Wales economy and growing our financial services sector means much more than new buildings. It is my great pleasure to report to the House that Sydney will be the headquarters for Australia's new Centre for International Finance and Regulation. I made this announcement in July with the Federal Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation, Bill Shorten. Despite the former New South Wales Labor Government giving the Victorian Government a huge head start to bid for this global institution, since the March election this Government has put in the hard yards to make the case to the Federal Government that Sydney is the natural home for the Centre for International Finance and Regulation.

This will put Australia, particularly New South Wales and Sydney, at the forefront of regional and global research into financial sector issues and the development of regulatory responses to those issues. The Centre for International Finance and Regulation will contribute cutting-edge research, potential regulatory responses and leadership development across all aspects of the finance sector, particularly in relation to regulation and risk management. Members on this side of the House are thrilled that the top four Sydney financial universities have been brought together with the University of Melbourne, the Australian National University, New York University, the University of California, Los Angeles, and a number of banks and financial organisations to put forward our winning bid.

The successful bid, led by the University of New South Wales, is worth more than \$41 million, including \$12.1 million from the Federal Government, \$6 million from the New South Wales Government, a further \$6 million from corporate sources and universities and a \$17.5 million in-kind contribution. The New South Wales Innovation Council, under the outstanding leadership of its Chair, Steven Harker, played a key role in ensuring that a coordinated approach was taken by all the participating universities. Along with the help of the Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, Professor Fred Hilmer, we were able to work collaboratively and constructively with financial institutions, the university sector and the Federal Government—something that members opposite were unable to do for 16 years.

Ms Kristina Keneally: We know where Barangaroo is.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Heffron knows where France is—we know that much. The Centre for International Finance and Regulation will attract internationally prominent researchers to Sydney and

provide a strategic link between universities, financial regulators, government and the finance industry. From Barangaroo to the Centre for International Finance and Regulation, the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is determined to raise the profile of Sydney as a financial services centre as part of its plans to rebuild the New South Wales economy.

PAY EQUITY

Ms NOREEN HAY: My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. In light of the Minister's previous statements in the House that he strongly supports the principle of equal pay for workers in the social and community services sector, will he commit to fund pay increases awarded by Fair Work Australia to employees delivering programs funded by his department?

The SPEAKER: Order! I will accept the question although it was a little long. I warn members to be mindful of the length of their questions.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I note the answers given earlier by the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women, and the Premier. The Australian Services Union equal remuneration test case provides me with an opportunity to look at what the former Government did in relation to that case back on 2 March this year. I have the final submission of the former New South Wales Minister for Industrial Relations, which was signed on 2 March 2011. At that time the Minister was the member for Liverpool. Comrade Lynch—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Obviously comrade Lynch does not attend strategy meetings.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: If he had been at the Labor Party's strategy meeting this morning he might have raised the fact that on 2 March—

Mr Adrian Piccoli: They don't have strategy meetings.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Members opposite read the newspapers. On page two of the submission the former Minister stated:

The Minister does not make any submissions about the relative merits of the application.

That was the Labor Party in Government on 2 March. Labor did not make a commitment to its union mates or support workers back on 2 March. But now Labor is in Opposition—

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Members opposite are now prepared to sign up the State to \$750 million.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: In signing up the State to \$750 million, that brings us to the question of which services the Labor Party might cut in order to raise the funds.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: When Prime Minister Gillard signed the heads of agreement in relation to the test case, the Premier made it clear that the Federal Government has an obligation to fund the wage increase for those workers who do a fantastic job across this State.

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is directed to the Treasurer. What impact are recent reports on consumer confidence having on New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Hornsby for his great contribution to this Chamber and for his interest in economic matters. Important economic statistics were released today. The Westpac Melbourne Institute index of consumer sentiment shows that confidence has again fallen across the nation.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Confidence fell by 3.5 per cent in August, to 89.6 per cent. That is the lowest level for the index since May 2009. The latest 3.5 per cent decline follows a significant fall of 8.3 per cent in July, which means that over the past few months the indicator has fallen by a total of 11.8 per cent. Nearly three-quarters of the survey was conducted before the recent turmoil, which is further cause for concern. The fall in August was due to continued consumer caution, the impact on household finances of past interest rate increases, uncertainty of the economic outlook and the recent turmoil on global financial markets. Consumer sentiment has been below its decade average for the past eight months.

It is an indicator of household spending, and household spending has an impact on government revenues, most significantly through GST receipts. Indeed, in New South Wales this is critical because about one-quarter of total State Government revenues derive from GST. In the first few months of office the O'Farrell Government has already taken steps to address the slide in consumer confidence through its payroll tax rebate, the Jobs Action Plan and a rebate to consumers. We are telling businesses that we want to support them, and this will provide some confidence against the head winds.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Scrapping the homebuyers' tax put confidence back into the housing market when it was needed. Clearly, the best thing the O'Farrell Government can do to restore confidence in New South Wales, after 16 years of Labor, is to get the State budget back under control. We are determined to do that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We have already made progress in this regard. Some of these actions have already been recognised by those who pay attention to the details. For example, Access Economics business outlook observed:

... the Government has made some important early advances, including its decision to take legislative control of its own wage bill—an important step in turning around the State Budget.

While the Government is making progress, the Federal Government continues to undermine our efforts. The best thing the Gillard Labor Government can do to restore consumer confidence is to get rid of the carbon tax while there is no global action. Members opposite should not take my word for it.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The former Premier, Morris Iemma, said, "One thing is for sure: It won't change the world but it could change the government. Yes, we should take action but we should not get so far out in front that we injure ourselves." That is what we are seeing at the moment. Bill Evans, the economist who came out ahead of the market and was the first person to say that the current conditions could lead to a downgrade in interest rates, said:

While economic conditions and interest rates are usually the most recalled items, it is unusual for tax to register such interest ... it appears that despite steady interest rates and falling petrol prices concerns about the introduction of a price on carbon are **rattling households**.

At a time when we want to restore confidence to businesses and households across the State, we are getting the exact opposite from Canberra. We do not even know the view of the Leader of the Opposition on the carbon tax. I am more concerned that the shadow Treasurer is in another world on the carbon tax. Last week in this House, when asked about the carbon tax, the member for Maroubra said, "It's not even on the horizon." The Leader of

the Opposition does not want to talk about the carbon tax, and the shadow Treasurer does not even know about the carbon tax. The whole economic argument of members opposite is part of the reason there was no confidence on 26 March.

I am not sure whether the shadow Treasurer missed it, but the Federal Government is currently running a \$25 million advertising campaign about the carbon tax. He has had a national mail-out. The Prime Minister has changed since debate on the carbon tax commenced. We have had the Copenhagen summit. Members opposite are missing their media monitoring, but I would have thought they read newspapers and understand that the carbon tax is dominating the national debate. It is a reason we are determined to get control of the State budget and restore confidence in the New South Wales economy.

COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

Mr RYAN PARK: My question is to the Deputy Premier. In the light of the recent appointment of Richard Shields by coal seam gas company Metgasco, will he send a clear message that hiring Liberal insiders will not influence the Government's decisions by ruling out coal seam gas drilling on prime New South Wales farming land?

Mr ANDREW STONER: A little earlier the Minister for Education remarked that those opposite do not have a strategy. They actually do and that is to deflect the really stupid questions to their backbench. On this occasion the appropriately named Mr Park asked the question. I say "appropriately named" because there is plenty of vacant space up there.

The SPEAKER: I warn the Deputy Premier about making personal comments about other members.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I should speak to the substance of the question. I digress.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Premier has said it in this place before and I reiterate it for the member's benefit because clearly he was not listening: any company or business that employs a lobbyist to get access to this Government or to get favours from this Government is wasting its money. It does not matter whether it employs a member of the Labor Party, the Liberal Party, The Nationals or The Greens, or a journalist for that matter, it will not get any favourable decisions from this Government. This Government is taking lobbyists seriously and moving to reform a sector that was left wide open by the former Government for its mates.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The question had no relationship to and made no mention of the word "lobbyist" at any point.

The SPEAKER: The Deputy Premier is being entirely relevant to the question asked.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is directed to the Minister for Aging and Minister for Disability Services. What progress has the Minister had in his efforts to see the establishment of a National Disability Insurance Scheme?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Menai for her question. The House recognises that the member for Menai worked in the disability sector through technical aid for the disabled and recognises the enormous strain that people with families and people with disabilities in New South Wales are facing at this time. Today the Government welcomes the Productivity Commission inquiry into the long-term care and support needs for people with a disability. It also notes we are now on the starting blocks when it comes to the implementation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. Over the past four months the Government has worked tirelessly to argue the case for the implementation of the new model for people with disabilities in New South Wales.

We have made a submission to the Productivity Commission and I am pleased to note that some of the final recommendations in today's report reflect our submission, particularly community participation and involvement by people with disabilities, as well as using local area coordination in the non-government sector to

facilitate greater engagement, particularly for employment opportunities. I recognise that disability services across the nation are underfunded by some 50 per cent. All too often families are facing crises and people are going without vital support that enables them to live a good quality of life and manage their disability. The report has recommended an increase to funding in the order of \$6.5 billion per annum. This demonstrates very clearly the magnitude of the funding that is required.

However, if we consider that New South Wales is supporting some 55,000 people and this new model will support some 135,000 people—410,000 people across the nation—it is a massive injection of funding and support. We are only too happy to support the wider community in its efforts to argue their case. Earlier today I spoke with Jenny Macklin who outlined a number of important aspects in the Commonwealth's decision. She said that \$10 million would be put on the table to fund the technical work behind the model. She also said that in 2014 the country would have a number of launch sites. I again indicated to her the importance of the Hunter when considering sites in New South Wales. I also argued for the possibility of multiple sites across the State and that western Sydney should be considered as part of that process.

The Minister also said that a select group, which would involve State Treasurers and State Ministers for disability, would be formed under the Council of Australian Governments to work through the funding arrangements for the new model. According to the Productivity Commission and everything that was said by the Prime Minister at 11.30 this morning, the scheme will be up and running in 2018. The O'Farrell Government has already in place reforms to make us ready for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is why we are moving to the self-directed support model. Our model will be ready by July 2014 to enable the individualised funding and support that underpins the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the National Injury Insurance Scheme.

I note that the Government joins with National Disability Services, the peak body for service providers in this country, in wanting to see in the Commonwealth's forward estimates funding for the launch sites that are due to commence in 2014 and funding for the implementation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. One has to question the priorities of the leader of the nation if the Federal Government is prepared to roll out a carbon tax inside 18 months but it is not prepared to roll out a National Disability Insurance Scheme by 2018. We do not want people with disabilities, their carers and their families left behind.

SMART METERS

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is to the Minister for Resources and Energy. With more households being changed over to smart meters, what will the Government do to inform consumers that they have the option of reverting to their original tariff system and providing comparative information to inform their choice?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question and interest in electricity generally, which is relevant to all members of this House and especially to members representing electorates in the Hunter that are a great source of electricity. Smart meters enable electricity suppliers to collect more detailed information on energy use than is currently possible and consumers to see this information. The advantage of smart meters is that consumers as well as electricity distributors can see the reading, which will help consumers to determine whether they should change their electricity consumption patterns.

The introduction of smart meters opens up a range of new possibilities for reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gasses using the existing infrastructure more efficiently and reducing the cost of capital investment in the electricity network. Smart meters are being introduced into electricity systems throughout the world. In Australia smart meters are already provided to large electricity users, but there has been only a limited roll-out to residential users, which is the pertinent point for the member for Lake Macquarie.

Smart meters enable time-of-use pricing whereby electricity prices are cheaper in off-peak and shoulder periods, which includes weekends and public holidays. Approximately 80 per cent of the day is subject to off-peak or shoulder pricing. Data collected by Ausgrid show that customers on time-of-use pricing saved an average of \$270 a year in comparison with traditional rates. In addition, approximately 71 per cent of customers were paying less in comparison with traditional rates. It needs to be understood that installation of a smart meter does not necessarily mean the customer is subject to time-of-use pricing. Depending on the retailer, customers have the option of being supplied electricity under the traditional inclining block tariffs, which are determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is taking clear action on electricity prices to inform people of their choices. One of the ways in which that is being done is through the web page "Cut Your Power Bills"—a

one-stop shop at www.dtiris.nsw.gov.au/energy/cutyourpowerbills. For the information of the member for Lake Macquarie in particular, there is also a price comparison service at www.myenergyoffers.nsw.gov.au that is offered by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Authority. It provides information for all interested parties on costs and a range of alternative electricity deals and choices available to enable them to make an informed decision on whether they would benefit from the smart meter.

The whole idea of the O'Farrell Government in relation to electricity is to ensure that people have a reliable supply of electricity at an affordable price. The Government's policy is extremely relevant to the reliability task force and the merger task force, to which I referred yesterday. In relation to both, I have undertaken to report to the House when information on a whole range of rollouts becomes available. All the options referred to by the Government are designed to assist consumers to consider all the options that are available to them, which was the main point of the member's question.

The information will also assist consumers to overcome the enormous scourge of upwardly spiralling electricity prices, which affects small businesses as well as consumers and impacts right across New South Wales. In thanking the member for Lake Macquarie, I contrast the intelligent questions asked by him and his Independent colleagues compared with the paucity of intelligent questions from the Opposition. The list of questions read by the Premier earlier today reveals not so much questions that members of the Opposition ask, but what they do not ask. They do not ask questions about the impact of carbon pricing, upwardly spiralling electricity costs and the New South Wales budget deficit. All the real questions are ignored, but thank heavens there are some sensible people on the crossbench.

COASTAL VOICE COMMUNITY GROUP INCORPORATED

Mr DARREN WEBBER: My question is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading. What concerns, if any, does NSW Fair Trading have about the group Coastal Voice?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Wyong for his question and commend him for his strong interest in Central Coast issues. I am advised that Coastal Voice Community Group Incorporated was registered under the Associations Incorporation Act on 3 May 2006. The person who registered the group at that time, and who remains its public officer, is Mr Craig Thomson.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Murray-Darling to order.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The group's registration paperwork stated that its principal activity was to operate a volunteer aged care hotline. Under section 76 of the Associations Incorporation Act, the Director General of Fair Trading may cancel an association's registration in certain circumstances. The circumstances include when an association fails to lodge its annual financial statements for the past three financial years. Before cancelling an association's registration, the director general must notify the association of the proposed cancellation and must give the association and its members at least 28 days to respond.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: As part of routine reviews of registered associations, Fair Trading identified that Coastal Voice failed to lodge its annual financial statements for at least the last three financial years. It failed to lodge statements in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. Thus NSW Fair Trading commenced the process of cancelling the registration of Coastal Voice Community Group Incorporated. It is worth noting that this action could have been commenced in 2010, but the previous Government did not act. A formal notice was issued to the public officer on 2 August 2011 by post. My office was notified after Fair Trading had taken that course of action. The association has until 30 August to respond. If there is no response from the association, its registration may be cancelled forthwith.

The public officer of Coastal Voice, who was written to on 2 August, was Mr Craig Thomson, MHR, the Federal Labor member for Dobell. Fair Trading takes very seriously the responsibility of ensuring the continued integrity of associations in New South Wales. Members probably are aware, particularly from media reports today, that Coastal Voice is alleged to have been a front that was set up for the election of Mr Craig Thomson, who is now the Federal Labor member for Dobell. Coastal Voice had a website whose domain was registered to the national office of the Health Services Union—a union that was run by Mr Thomson.

As members would be aware, today's *Daily Telegraph* reports statements from Miss Criselee Stevens, who is "a former member of Federal Labor MP Craig Thomson's inner circle." The report confirms that union money was used both to establish Coastal Voice and to fund glossy Coastal Voice brochures for Craig Thomson. At this stage no account of Coastal Voice moneys has been provided to Fair Trading, as required by the Act. That is both unacceptable and unlawful. The people of New South Wales deserve to know that community groups and associations in their area are both real and responsible in their use of funds and in relation to their reporting responsibilities. I inform the House that Fair Trading will continue to monitor associations to ensure that they comply with the rules and legislative requirements.

Question time concluded at 3.08 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Oxford Street Traffic Arrangements

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

Pet Shops

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

Community Housing Mental Health Services

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

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

Queanbeyan Green Space Rezoning

Petition opposing Queanbeyan City Council's proposed rezoning of green spaces in Queanbeyan, received from **Mr John Barilaro**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Carbon Tax

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [3.10 p.m.]: The Liberal-Nationals Government believes this motion should be accorded priority because we believe the people of New South Wales need to know what the State Labor Party think about the carbon tax. We believe the people of the New South Wales deserve to know what the Leader of the Opposition thinks about this tax. Does he support his Federal counterpart's disastrous carbon tax? Does the Leader of the Opposition support the loss of 31,000 jobs as a result of the carbon tax? Does the Leader of the Opposition support a \$3.7 billion hit to the State's economy? Does the Leader of the Opposition support a \$498 spike in household power bills? Does the Leader of the Opposition support an increase in power bills for businesses of as much as \$4,000? We do not know.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who wish to have private conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

Mr TIM OWEN: We do not know, because the Leader of the Opposition has refused to comment on the carbon tax. I, like many, thought the Labor Party was there to support workers. Is that not its motto? Apparently not. The Leader of the Opposition does not appear to have the need to comment on a tax that will cost 18,500 jobs alone in my homeland, the Hunter region.

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

Mr TIM OWEN: We on this side will not take that.

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

Mr TIM OWEN: We believe the Leader of the Opposition should come clean on his thoughts on the carbon tax. He owes that to the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr TIM OWEN: And he certainly owes that to those people whose jobs may be one of those 31,000 that possibly will be lost. Frankly, if anyone should lose their jobs it should be the Prime Minister Julia Gillard for creating the tax and the Leader of the Opposition John Robertson for failing to stand up for the people of New South Wales and oppose it. The former Labor Government destroyed this State's economy. There is no question of that. But it is simply unfathomable that now from the benches of Opposition the State Labor Party is willing to sit back and let its Federal mates hurt our economy even more. But it is not just the Leader of the Opposition whom we want to hear from today.

As the member for Newcastle and a member of Parliament for the Hunter region, I want to know what the members of the Opposition in the Hunter region think about the carbon tax. I remind the House that the Hunter region stands to lose 18,500 jobs as a result of this tax. I repeat, 18,500 jobs. Does the member for Wallsend support that tax? Does the member for Cessnock support that tax? I do not see them here. I am sure their constituents, and indeed those across the Hunter, would be most interested to know their answer.

What about the Opposition members who represent the Illawarra? I do not see them. In fact, the mates of the Leader of the Opposition purportedly told the media that John Robertson said on Monday that they will never hear him publicly support a carbon tax and that Prime Minister Julia Gillard had completely mishandled the issue. This motion must be accorded priority because the Leader of the Opposition John Robertson must come forward once and for all and state his position on the carbon tax, not have his Labor colleagues trot out the normal tripe which supposedly reflects his thoughts. Let us hear from the man himself. He also said:

I think there is a general view that everybody wants some certainty around the price of carbon. We need a price on carbon to make gas competitive.

If he has said it once, why will the Leader of the Opposition not say it again? Is it because he has now done a backflip and does not want to be red-faced?

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

Mr TIM OWEN: Or is it the even more frightening prospect that the Leader of the Opposition still supports the disastrous, damaging carbon tax and is too frightened to admit it? Either way, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues—the members for Wollongong, Shellharbour, Keira, Wallsend and Cessnock—are all elected representatives of the people of New South Wales. They owe it to their constituents and to the people of this great State to come clean: Do they support the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax? That is why this motion should be accorded priority.

Pay Equity

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.15 p.m.]: My motion deserves priority because equal pay for equal work should be the bedrock of modern Australia and supported by both sides of this House. More in sorrow than in anger, I note that the O'Farrell Government, unlike other Liberal States, refuses to embrace that principle as it relates to 30,000 New South Wales workers in the community services sector, 90 per cent of whom are women. Today I urge the Premier to bring his Government back in step. I refer him to the case brought by the Australian Services Union on behalf of community sector workers. In May, Fair Work Australia made its preliminary ruling that community workers in the non-government sector suffer a structural wage disparity compared with those performing equivalent duties in government. It stated, "We consider gender has been important in creating a gap between pay..."

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The member for Canterbury is going into the substance of her motion. She is reading the submission in the Fair Wage case but that is an argument to put to the House if her priority motion is successful.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point of order. The member for Canterbury can refer to the substance of the motion briefly, but she has to convince the House of the priority of her motion.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am. This motion deserves priority because Fair Work Australia pointed out—

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: When a member takes a point of order the member speaking shall be seated.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury of that protocol.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: This case is mainly about women in the community sector who will not be fully and properly compensated because this Government refuses to do so. The Minister for Family and Community Services and the Minister for Disability Services said today quite clearly that they will not abide by the rulings of Fair Work Australia. Fair Work Australia has already pointed out—and this is why my motion deserves priority—that there is disparity between community workers and people in the government sector doing similar work. We know that they are mainly women. My motion deserves priority because before the election members of the Coalition committed themselves in government to fully fund this case. It deserves priority because today in this House the Ministers moved back and said, "...unless the Commonwealth commits itself". Every single one of the electorates of members of the Government has Neighbourhood Centres, community workers—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Family and Community Services will come to order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Members know the organisations that look after the vulnerable. There is at least one in all of our communities.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: The member for Canterbury is now canvassing your ruling. Madam Speaker, you indicated that the member for Canterbury could speak briefly to the substance of her motion. The member for Canterbury is now deliberately canvassing your ruling.

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the point of order the last time. The member for Canterbury will take care not to canvass my ruling.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My motion deserves priority because I am talking about people, mostly women, in this State who do work that would cost governments millions and millions of dollars to carry out. My motion deserves priority because the Australian Services Union and these workers deserve—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Family and Community Services to order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: It is clear that Government members have no intention at all—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Minister for Family and Community Services to order for the second time.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am talking about the Bathurst Information and Neighbourhood Centre, the Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre and the Monaro Northcott Disability Services.

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

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Members opposite know exactly what I am talking about. You are a joke.
[Time expired.]

The SPEAKER: Order! That was a disgraceful display while other members were speaking.

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

The House divided.

[In division]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that calls to order will stand for the rest of the day. Members who interject during any debate this afternoon should be aware of the number of times they have already been called to order.

Ayes, 67

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

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

CARBON TAX**Motion Accorded Priority**

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

That this House:

- (1) notes independent reports show the Hunter and Illawarra regions will be most adversely affected by the carbon tax;
- (2) notes the Leader of the Opposition's flip flopping position on the carbon tax; and
- (3) condemns the members for Wollongong, Shellharbour, Keira, Wallsend and Cessnock for failing to stand up for jobs in their region by opposing the carbon tax.

As the motion states, independent reports show that the Hunter and Illawarra regions will be most adversely affected by a carbon tax. Let me start with the facts. A New South Wales Treasury review has found this great State of New South Wales will be hit harder by the carbon tax than any mainland State—and the Hunter region, where many of us come from, will suffer the most. The Federal Labor Government's carbon tax will cost the New South Wales economy approximately \$3.7 billion. The review has found the carbon tax will cost New South Wales at least 31,000 jobs—I stress, at least 31,000 jobs.

The Hunter region, which generates around 20 per cent of the State's economy, will be worst hit. The carbon tax will cost around 18,500 jobs in that area alone. It will reduce the New South Wales mining industry's

growth to about 60 per cent of what it would have been without the Gillard Government's carbon tax. Coal-fired generators and aluminium smelters will be hardest hit—and these are key industries in our area. The output of those industries is expected to decline by nearly 50 per cent in those industries up to 2050. Treasury estimates that about 7,000 fewer jobs will be created in the Illawarra region as a result of the carbon tax and that a further 1,000 jobs will be lost in the State's Central West.

Power prices are expected to rise by at least 15 per cent under a carbon tax. That means household bills, which are already escalating beyond some families' control, will spike another \$498 a year. Power bills for business will also go up dramatically, depending on usage. That could mean anything from \$927 to as much as \$4,191 per annum. Further, dividends from the State's electricity generators would be slashed by about \$45 million this financial year, rising to \$290 million in 2014-15. And State government agencies will face power price hikes of up to \$71 million a year. These figures are truly frightening. They are frightening for the people of the Hunter, they are frightening for the people of the Illawarra, they are frightening for the people of the Central West and for communities right across New South Wales.

What more information do members opposite need to say enough is enough and for them to condemn this tax? How much more proof do they need to inspire them to protect their communities and oppose this tax? The New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals have got the message. It is a pity Labor members have not. We oppose the tax. It is in black and white. We oppose the Federal Government's carbon tax. We are standing up for this State. We are seeking compensation from the Federal Government for priority issues, such as the loss of dividends from electricity generators, so that we do not lose money that should be spent on our roads, our hospitals and our schools.

But what does the New South Wales Opposition think of the tax? All I hear is silence, and all the people of New South Wales hear is silence as well. As the motion also states, the Leader of the Opposition is flip-flopping his position on the carbon tax. Does he support it, or does he not support it? The people of New South Wales, particularly in the Hunter, the Illawarra and the Central West, deserve to know. They need to know. It emerged in the media this week that the Leader of the Opposition apparently has no intention of publicly stating his position on this tax. In fact, the *Daily Telegraph* reported:

Opposition Leader John Robertson told colleagues yesterday they will never hear him publicly support a carbon tax and that Prime Minister Julia Gillard had completely mishandled the issue.

Members on this side of the House think that is totally unacceptable. So, let us look back at what the Leader of the Opposition, who incidentally was the Minister for Energy in the previous State Government, has had to say about the carbon tax and the price on carbon in the past. In March 2010, when he was Minister for Energy, the *Australian Financial Review* reported that he told a Committee for Economic Development Australia event:

I think there is a general view that everybody wants some certainty around the price of carbon. And certainly from where I sit, looking at gas as a transitory fuel, we need a price on carbon to make gas competitive. At the moment with no price on carbon it just does not compete with coal.

I reiterate that we need a price on carbon, so the Leader of the Opposition said. But then, on 3 April this year, he had carefully toned down his position, telling *Insiders'* Barrie Cassidy in relation to the carbon tax:

The critical thing is the full package. I want to see the detail of the full package, including the compensation, because so far what I have heard is that people will be compensated. I will obviously as leader seek a detailed briefing from the Commonwealth.

And now, he will not say anything at all. It appears the stench of the arrogance from the previous Government lingers on. It beggars belief that with all these figures in front of him about the utter devastation the carbon tax would cause New South Wales, the Leader of the Opposition remains silent. The Labor Party's website lists its values by saying:

Labor has fought for more than a hundred years to ensure everyone can get a job.

Well, members opposite are apparently going to let those 100 years of work, a figure which is extremely debatable, go down the gurgler. The Leader of the Opposition is going to sit back and let 31,000 jobs disappear into thin air. That begs the question: What do the Labor members for Wallsend and Cessnock think of the carbon tax? Do they support it? There would be a great number of their constituents who will be directly and adversely affected by the carbon tax. But what about the members for Wallsend, Cessnock Wollongong, Shellharbour and Keira, who have been equally silent on this disastrous tax? Their electorates are not immune to the devastation of the carbon tax.

As I stated earlier, Treasury estimates that about 7,000 fewer jobs would be created in the Illawarra region as a result of the carbon tax. Are the members for Wallsend, Cessnock, Wollongong, Shellharbour and Keira shocked, appalled and outraged? No. In fact, most of them are not even in the Chamber to hear this debate. Their attitude is very worrying. Are they calling for the carbon tax to be scrapped to protect their constituents? No, they are not. They are sitting back, remaining silent. For that, as the motion states, they should be condemned. [*Time expired.*]

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

this House:

- (1) notes that the Federal Government's carbon pricing scheme legislation will never come before the New South Wales Parliament;
- (2) notes that this is the eighth occasion on which a motion dealing with this issue has been the subject of the New South Wales Government's motions accorded priority since it was elected;
- (3) notes that last week the New South Wales Legislative Council closed down due to there being no legislation to consider; and
- (4) condemns the O'Farrell Government for running out of puff after only 130 days in office.

I remind members that in the first four months after Morris Iemma became Premier he passed 54 bills. If my memory serves me correctly, when I was Premier I introduced 39 bills. Premier Keneally introduced more than 30 bills. Bob Carr introduced around 50 bills in his first four months. Barry O'Farrell has introduced a paltry 27 bills. So Barry O'Farrell's Government is less than half as busy as Morris Iemma's—after 16 years in opposition. I remind the people of New South Wales that after the Coalition had been in opposition for 16 years, this House spent many hours on the Library Amendment Bill 2011, which contained some 52 words; and that for 66 days the graffiti bill was before this Legislative Assembly, 52 members spoke to that bill, and it was debated on three days.

Earlier today, we spoke to the Restart NSW Bill, which essentially established a bank account as a line item for the Government to include in its budget, and every six months the Government gets a bank statement which it calls a report for the people of New South Wales. In 130 days the Government has run out of ideas. Each day during question time I look across at the Government benches. I watch the backbenchers, dripping with disillusionment—members, motivated by the right reasons I am sure, who arrived in this place full of hope and fervour to reform New South Wales. I genuinely believe that.

I watch the member for Rockdale as the frontbenchers try to narrow the gap between his expectations and their reality. The Minister for Sport and Recreation has told the House on any number of occasions about the dangers of exotic betting. Do we have legislation about exotic bets? No, we do not. We have nada; nothing at all. I have a tip for Government members: Your job is to bring in new legislation and repeal old legislation—in with the new stuff, out with the old stuff. The member for Ryde has spoken with some passion—and not a lot else—about closing the gap—

Ms Robyn Parker: Point of order: I am confused. The member for Toongabbie is speaking to his amendment but I am wondering when he is going to mention the Hunter and Illawarra regions, which will be most adversely affected by Labor's carbon tax. His comments are completely irrelevant to the motion. How can he move an amendment that does not mention Shellharbour, Keira, Wallsend and Cessnock and the Opposition's failure to stand up—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have listened to the member for Toongabbie for four minutes. He has been talking about his amendment. I am sure the member for Toongabbie is about to talk about the motion.

Mr NATHAN REES: With the greatest respect, Mr Deputy-Speaker, I will continue to speak to the amendment. We just heard from the Minister for the Environment. She should be busy working on a bill to re-establish her department so that she has one. I look along the Government frontbench. The Minister for Fair Trading is clearly at war with the Hon. Catherine Cusack in the other place, who has accused his department of incompetence. We are yet to have a response on that front. The Minister for Local Government has bravely set

out a plan that delivers in 2036. Leaving aside the end date of that plan, I would not mind hearing some of the time lines and the deliverables along the way—for the next 25 years. Regrettably, under this Government local government policy appears to have been set in aspic.

The Attorney-General told the House that he is going to rehabilitate prisoners across the State. I would not mind knowing—and I am sure Government backbenchers also want to know—exactly what jails are to be closed and when. I would certainly like to know—as would the Police Force—when he is going to let the criminals out. The dog's breakfast that is the allocation of Acts relating to Primary Industries should be fixed. We have dozens of Acts, jointly allocated, with no clear lines of accountability. This Government does not know how to govern. Legislation has to be brought in, the old stuff has to be repealed and you have to reform. That is the job of government. I cannot fathom it. This is the latest gem from Comrade Roberts of Lane Cove:

I give notice of motion to introduce the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011.

That is an earth shatterer. Here is another one from Comrade Smith:

I give notice of motion to introduce the Crown Law Officers Legislation Amendment (Retirement Age) Bill 2011.

Those opposite must be kidding. After 16 years in opposition and 130 days in office they have nothing—and I can tell by the looks on the backbenchers' faces that they know it. They have got to be in the ear of their Ministers and tell them the things they need for their electorates. Do not rely on the Ministers; they do not know what they are doing! They are not dragging those Cabinet minutes through. They think Cabinet minutes are a record of a meeting, but they are not. Cabinet minutes are a statement of intent. The Government has to begin to understand that.

Mr Charles Casuscelli: We have got 15½ years to do nothing—

Mr NATHAN REES: I have 15½ seconds, Charles, if that is alright. This is a serious reflection—

Mr Chris Spence: Point of order: I ask that the member for Toongabbie refer to other members by their correct titles.

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

[Time expired.]

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD [3.44 p.m.]: I support the motion. A carbon tax will be a disaster for the economy of this State, particularly for the Hunter and the Illawarra. I listened with interest to the contribution of the member for Toongabbie. We have now gone from Disneyland to La La Land. I suggest a few more of those opposite should have whatever the member for Toongabbie had for lunch. He said this is the eighth occasion that this matter has been raised. Why? It is because the people of New South Wales have a right to know what those opposite stand for. The carbon tax will be the biggest tax of this century and those opposite will not tell the people of this State what they stand for.

Those opposite should perform the role of an alternative government. Are those opposite offering any alternatives? Not a thing. Nothing is coming from them at all. The member for Toongabbie said something about the upper House having nothing to do last week. That is coming from a member of the former Government that prorogued Parliament for five months—from November until the election in March—thereby denying democracy to the people of New South Wales. Those opposite perpetrated the greatest attack on democracy yet they try to tell us how to run a government. What absolute hypocrisy.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Myall Lakes is doing well without support from the Government benches.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The member for Toongabbie spoke about disillusionment. No disillusionment exists on this side. But if one looks into the eyes of Opposition members one can see dead men walking. Members know the look. No-one over here has seen an angry man, but I see dead people. Those on the other side are dead men walking. The member for Toongabbie said we do not how to govern and have no plans.

But we do know how to govern, and our first plan is: Do not do what those opposite did for 16 years. And we are not going to. Those opposite seem unable to organise and plan. On 26 March the people of New South Wales said, "We want plans for this State." So we now have Infrastructure NSW and five-year and 20-year plans. The Government is introducing things.

What does the mob opposite have to say about the carbon tax? The New South Wales Treasury review has said that the Labor Party carbon tax, which the mob over there supports, will cost 31,000 jobs in New South Wales—18,500 jobs in Newcastle and Hunter regions—and be a \$3.7 billion kick to our economy. The member for Toongabbie will soon be the new leader of the Labor Party in opposition—it is like *Back to the Future*. This morning he spoke about cardinal sin. A cardinal sin is when workers and families struggle on a daily basis to survive on their budgets. A cardinal sin is when pensioners cannot afford to turn on the electricity to keep warm. A cardinal sin is to introduce another tax. A cardinal sin is a carbon tax. What does the Labor Party stand for? What does the Leader of the Labor Party stand for? Instead of another series of *MasterChef* we should have a show called "Master Flip-Flop", starring John Robertson. He leads the flip-flop party of New South Wales: the Labor Party. What has the Leader of the Opposition had to say about the carbon tax? On 24 March he was reported in the *Australian Financial Review* as saying:

I think there is a general view that everybody wants some certainty around the price on carbon ... And certainly, from where I sit, looking at gas as a transitional fuel we need a price on carbon to make gas competitive.

[Time expired.]

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.49 p.m.]: Once again, the Government has proven that it is chronically incapable of dealing with State issues. If Government members would rather be with Tony Abbott than the Premier, perhaps they should go to the head office of the Liberal Party or The Nationals, start counting the numbers and maybe seek Federal preselection, because they do not seem to be happy here. They do not want to discuss State issues but Labor members do. I urge members opposite to consider raising some State issues. Indeed, I cannot think of a time when a Government motion accorded priority fell within its area of responsibility. Why does the Government not consider State issues to be a priority?

This motion epitomises the Government's duplicity. How can Government members accuse State Labor members of being silent on Federal issues when none of them had the courage to fight for public sector workers? Where was the member for Newcastle when the Government was pushing its disastrous public sector wages bill—or the New South Wales WorkChoices bill, as it was known? Where were the member for Charlestown, the member for Kiama, the member for Maitland, the member for Swansea and the member for Myall Lakes?

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The motion has nothing to do with public sector wages.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I am speaking to the amendment.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The amendment does not refer to public sector wages. The member will return to the leave of the amendment.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The amendment states, "130 days in power and they have not done much".

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member will confine her comments to the amendment.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Unlike Government members, Labor members, such as the member for Keira, the member for Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong, the member for Cessnock and the member for Wallsend, care about their constituents and they regularly raise issues that matter to their constituencies.

[Interruption]

The Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage may not want me to raise this matter, but the member for Newcastle did not attend the rally outside his electorate office a couple of weeks ago. It is unfortunate that he did not attend. The member for Cessnock was there. Government members do not want to debate State issues, although they had many opportunities to do so last week. The member for Cessnock wanted to debate the potential loss of 650 jobs from prisons across the State but the Government did not want to do that.

The Government did not want to debate public sector wages, and it does not want me to debate that issue now. Of course, Government members were herded into the Chamber to speak on the Library Amendment Bill 2011. We listened for hours—

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Point of order: Mr Deputy-Speaker, you directed the member for Bankstown to speak to the amendment but she is failing to do so. She should confine her remarks to the amendment.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Bankstown will confine her remarks to the amendment or to the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The amendment states that Labor condemns the O'Farrell Government for running out of puff after only 130 days in power. It is important to raise the issues. The Government is running out of puff when Liberal-Nationals members are herded into the Chamber to debate the Library Amendment Bill 2011. We listened to Government members reminisce about their childhood memories of visiting libraries and counting the number of books they had read. It is important to raise that matter.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Bankstown is talking about bills that have passed through the House. The member will confine her remarks to the amendment or to the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Listening to the speeches of members opposite on the Library Amendment Bill 2011 was a special time. It would be remiss of me not to mention the impact of those speeches, especially the counting of books, videos and so on. As a new member of the House, I am disappointed that time and time again members opposite fail to raise State issues, given that there are so many issues to raise. We could discuss the Solar Bonus Scheme, the Parliamentary Budget Office, industrial relations, public sector workers and Infrastructure NSW, as we did yesterday. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [3.54 p.m.], by leave: I speak against the motion. I note that there are probably some elements of truth in the amendment with which members should come to terms. This is the third consecutive day on which the motion accorded priority has dealt with the Commonwealth's carbon tax. I note also that the carbon tax is being approached in terms of its potential impact on the residents of New South Wales.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: The member for Strathfield led the charge on transport on Monday.

Mr GREG PIPER: I stand corrected. I put on record that I believe a market price on carbon is the appropriate way to address the issue, if we believe in global warming and the need to address it. I am amazed that the Liberal-Nationals Government is arguing against a mechanism that is within its free market philosophy. This principle has been endorsed by the weight of opinion of economists across Australia who are in favour of a market price on carbon as the mechanism to reduce carbon in our atmosphere. An alternative proposition has been put forward by the Federal Opposition leader, Tony Abbott, in the form of a direct action plan.

That proposition has been ridiculed as an inappropriate mechanism to deal with global warming not only by economists but by the one person in the Federal Opposition for whom I have the highest regard—I am sure he has a lot of weight in this arena as well—and that is Malcolm Turnbull. I am greatly concerned about the basis of the argument for the carbon tax. The report that is being used is heavily qualified. We should be arguing that this is not the time to introduce a carbon tax—that would be a genuine argument, but not against the carbon tax. We should be positioning ourselves to make the best use of the carbon tax and to reduce the impact on our residents. That would be supportable.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [3.54 p.m.], in reply: After 35 minutes of debate I am none the wiser as to the stance of the Leader of the Opposition and Labor members on the carbon tax. I can only assume that the people of New South Wales are figuring the same. As I said, it is extremely disappointing that Labor's Hunter representatives have not condemned the carbon tax or stated their opposition to it. I will be sure to let their constituents and everyone else in the Hunter know about that. My colleagues in the Illawarra region will be sure to relay to their communities that the member for Wollongong, the member for Shellharbour and the member for Keira do not seem to care about their constituents. Indeed, none of them is in the House; none of them was willing to speak on the motion. Only the member for Cessnock was in the Chamber. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 68

Mr Anderson
Mr Annesley
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Mr Bassett
Mr Baumann
Ms Berejikian
Mr Bromhead
Mr Brookes
Mr Casuscelli
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Cornwell
Mr Coure
Mrs Davies
Mr Dominello
Mr Doyle
Mr Edwards
Mr Elliott
Mr Evans
Mr Flowers

Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward
Mr Grant
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Holstein
Mr Issa
Mr Kean
Dr Lee
Ms Moore
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Owen
Mr Page
Ms Parker
Mr Patterson
Mr Perrottet
Mr Piccoli
Mr Piper

Mr Provest
Mr Roberts
Mr Rohan
Mr Rowell
Mrs Sage
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Speakman
Mr Spence
Mr Stokes
Mr Stoner
Mr Toole
Mr Torbay
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Webber
Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Williams
Tellers,
Mr Maguire
Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 20

Mr Barr
Ms Burney
Ms Burton
Mr Daley
Mr Furolo
Ms Hay
Ms Hornery

Ms Keneally
Mr Lalich
Mr Lynch
Dr McDonald
Ms Mihailuk
Mr Parker
Mrs Perry

Mr Rees
Mr Robertson
Ms Tebbutt
Ms Watson
Tellers,
Mr Amery
Mr Park

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 66

Mr Anderson
Mr Annesley
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Mr Bassett
Mr Baumann
Ms Berejikian
Mr Bromhead
Mr Brookes
Mr Casuscelli
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Cornwell
Mr Coure
Mrs Davies
Mr Dominello
Mr Doyle
Mr Edwards
Mr Elliott
Mr Evans
Mr Flowers

Mr Fraser
Mr Gee
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward
Mr Grant
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Holstein
Mr Issa
Mr Kean
Dr Lee
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mr O'Farrell
Mr Owen
Mr Page
Ms Parker
Mr Patterson
Mr Perrottet
Mr Piccoli
Mr Provest
Mr Roberts

Mr Rohan
Mr Rowell
Mrs Sage
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Speakman
Mr Spence
Mr Stokes
Mr Stoner
Mr Toole
Mr Torbay
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Webber
Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Williams

Tellers,
Mr Maguire
Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

MARINE PARKS AMENDMENT (MORATORIUM) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [4.13 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Marine Parks Amendment (Moratorium) Bill was introduced in the other place by the Hon. Robert Brown of the Shooters and Fishers Party. It has passed the upper House with Government amendments. The bill was first introduced in the previous Parliament when the former Government was, as I am advised, supportive of the bill. I am similarly advised that at various public meetings and elsewhere the former Opposition expressed support for the idea of placing a moratorium on the blind creation of new marine parks. The former shadow Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Duncan Gay, travelled throughout New South Wales and indicated his strong support for the Shooters and Fishers Party moratorium on marine parks. The amending bill provides for a moratorium on the declaration of additional marine parks or the expansion of existing sanctuary zones, pending an independent scientific audit of zoning in marine parks.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to engage in conversation will leave the Chamber.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: We could place a moratorium on conversations in the Chamber.

[Interruption]

No, I will not move an amendment. The independent audit will use scientific information as the basis for sound, evidence-based recommendations for marine parks, and will be overseen by an independent and highly qualified panel. During the audit, the Government will be unable to make a regulation that would extend the area within a marine park that comprises a sanctuary zone during the commencement period of the proposed Act. The Government moved an amendment in the other place that defines "moratorium period" in the Act as either five years from the commencement of the Marine Parks Amendment (Moratorium) Bill or another period that is linked to the completion of the audit. The Ministers responsible for marine parks will then recommend to the Governor the appropriate date for expiry of the moratorium period relating to the independent scientific audit, but only after the report of that audit and its recommendations have been properly considered, and the Government has provided a written response that is publicly available.

On receiving a recommendation from the Ministers, the Governor may then make an order ending the moratorium period. Much debate on marine parks occurred during the past couple of years. In the final term of the previous Parliament, the former Government released a review of two marine parks, the Jervis Bay Marine Park and the Solitary Islands Marine Park. Also in that period was the establishment and report of the Select Committee on Recreational Fishing. The Government's submission to the select committee contained a document entitled, "Marine Park Science in New South Wales: an Independent Review". This document made plain that zoning plan reviews should be informed by and carried out in accordance with recommendations of that paper. The Government adopted this suggestion and made 11 primary recommendations that were to be enacted. The scientific panel urged immediate changes to the research scope, methodologies and priority of the Marine Parks Authority research program and plan. Among the recommendations noted as being of secondary importance, recommendation 7 stated:

Test the key assumptions involved in using ecosystems and habitat features as a surrogate for biodiversity per se as a priority over the next five years.

Reviews of the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks were then undertaken, and changes were made to the zoning plans. While I am advised that stakeholders from the recreational fishing sector were not entirely happy with the Jervis Bay Marine Park zoning plan, generally there was broad agreement that the original marine park declaration had been carried out with a reasonable amount of public consultation. I am also informed that, out of all instances that witnesses brought to the attention of the select committee during the public hearings, Jervis Bay seemed to have the least number of problems, which was not the case with other declarations and reviews.

The current bill was introduced to the other place by the Hon. Robert Brown to take what was at that stage the political debate out of the marine parks issue and to allow a mechanism whereby the government of the day, regardless of its political persuasion, and the current Government now in relation to this bill, can put beyond all doubt that there needs to be a rest period in the creation of new marine parks and extension of sanctuary zones to allow proper scientific studies to take place. I am advised that the Government already has made its policy intentions clear regarding zoning in marine parks. As the Hon. Duncan Gay noted during debate on this bill in the other place, the intentions in relation to marine parks were set out in the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition recreational fishing policy. On being elected to Government, the Coalition immediately would commission an independent scientific audit of zoning in marine parks.

I am informed that the Government agrees a moratorium is necessary. However, the Government feels that the duration of the moratorium should fit the circumstances and that it would be counterproductive to provide for a moratorium for a set term only. A truly independent scientific audit is necessary to ensure that future decisions we make relating to marine parks are evidence based, and rely on the best possible information. In the introduction of the bill in the other place, members of the Shooters and Fishers Party stated that a moratorium would be a waste of time unless the Government makes significant amounts of money available to the bodies that have stewardship of those areas, which now come under Industry and Investment NSW, so that adequate research can be funded and carried out. They also stated that this work is now urgent.

I am similarly advised that the Government understands the gravity of the need for science in the review of all marine parks and certainty before the creation of any new marine parks. The representatives of the Shooters and Fishers Party also believe that fishers and fisheries management are important enough to have a stand-alone ministry, as was suggested by the Coalition before the last election. I would also support any moves for the Premier and the Government to include a Cabinet Minister for Fisheries. I am confident that they would have the support of the Shooters and Fishers Party and the Christian Democratic Party in the other place if they chose to take up that option. The bill similarly seeks to place a moratorium on the creation of new marine parks and an extension of sanctuary zones until the independent scientific audit has been undertaken. The bill is straightforward, and I commend it to the House.

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

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! General Business having concluded, the House will now consider Government Business.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 9 August 2011.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.21 p.m.]: I have had time to think about the absolute disastrous circumstances in which the former Government left us. It wasted money and poured it into advertising, promotion and endorsement of the Premier, the Ministers and other Labor members. The fact is the former Government was more than happy to run warm and fuzzy advertisements to make the people of New South Wales feel comfortable with the Labor Government that was in office for 16 years. Unfortunately, members of the Government found out what Coles was doing, but forgot to ask the people who had stopped listening to the advertisements; therefore the effectiveness of the advertisements was a waste of money.

Taxpayers paid for all those warm and fuzzy advertisements. I do not believe government advertising should be engaging advertising agencies that put forward that sort of promotion. We must send a message to the people of New South Wales about changes, new policy and government position on matters that are important to

them. We must recognise that a minimum amount of money should be spent on advertising. We must budget for the amount of money we will spend on advertising and ensure that it matches the style that is expected of government advertising. I would hate to know how much the former Government spent on advertising.

I saw an announcement on the television about rail infrastructure in the electorate of the member for Macquarie Fields. Former Premier Morris Iemma stood next to the member for Macquarie Fields, who looked like a guy who was about to be hanged. The member for Macquarie Fields knew the announcement would amount to nothing. On that occasion the former Government had banners made for the backdrop and made sure that all key stakeholders were present. They were provided with tea and scones. Rent a crowd was present to make sure that the announcement had all the pomp and ceremony that was typical of the former Government. An analysis of the amount of money that was wasted on those sorts of announcements and areas in which it could have been put to good use is shameful. The improvements to rail infrastructure never went ahead. The member for Macquarie Fields knew that would be the case when he was dragged into that entourage.

The failure of the Government to honour that announcement was reflected in the polls on 26 March when the member for Macquarie Fields suffered a big slide against him, driven primarily by the stunts in which the former Government was involved that were paid for by taxpayers. That will not occur again. This Government will get the job done. We will deliver on our promise. We will talk about the results of projects, not the possible results of future projects. We will inform people about the railway lines we build and provide commuters with information about timetables. We will not indulge in banner-waving. We will get on with business and get the job done. We will make important announcements about the new transport link, and the people will spread the word. We will not have to do all the promotion.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.26 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the debate on the Government Advertising Bill 2011, and lend my support to it. Over many years we have witnessed an almost obscene use of public funds for government advertising, typifying to many an inexorable slide in standards proportional to an increased confidence and a sense of entitlement of previous administrations generally not shared by the community. That has added to community cynicism about government and politicians generally. I note that in introducing this bill the Premier referenced how restrictions on government advertising will be applied following the proroguing of Parliament. This is a logical point of reference made by the Premier, and it will be interesting to see if there are any attempts to find a way around the restrictions.

The topic of the proroguing of Parliament aligned with this Government Advertising Bill brings me to reflect on why it is that we even need to legislate for a limitation when Parliament can be prorogued and to regulate government advertising to such a high degree. The short answer is, of course, that previous actions have been seen as an abuse of power and process. The proroguing of Parliament prior to the 2010 State election was clearly seen as an attempt to head off proper scrutiny of the previous Government's unpopular and unsuccessful power privatisation. If I have a concern about legislatively locking in restrictions on what a Government can do, it is based on the example of that proroguing of Parliament.

The public of New South Wales, aided by a vigilant media, had no problem in seeing through the wrongheaded and cynical manoeuvre of the previous Government, and apportioned additional punishment on the Labor Government at the March election. Who would have thought the previous Government would have used the rope it had to hang itself? The legislation takes away that opportunity and I think that is a little bit unfair. Returning to the issue of government advertising, we all know that there are benefits in certain public information messages. We also know that regardless of their benefit they are, to a degree, part of building the brand of the Government of the day. This Government will be no different. However, this subtle benefit to the Government is largely unavoidable, but should always be subordinate to the message.

As the number and concentration of advertisements are manipulated the benefit shifts from the message to the Government: the message becomes diminished. That is rightly unacceptable, and is hopefully corrected by this legislation. The bill appropriately gives the oversight of these new rules to the New South Wales Auditor-General; an institution that I believe has the respect of the community and the Parliament as a professional and objective scrutineer of public processes. It is a shame there is a need to legislate on such a matter when the principles should be automatically enshrined in the Government's behaviour. However, given past examples of how government advertising has been abused, I believe that this legislation is supportable and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.30 p.m.]: This Government promised the people of New South Wales at the March 2011 election that it would restore accountability, that it

would talk honestly to the community and that it would give people a say about the decisions that affect their lives. The Government Advertising Bill 2011 delivers on that promise by restoring integrity to taxpayer-funded government advertising. Sadly, New South Wales governments have used advertising campaigns to deliver important messages to the community with a political twist. That is not on. Government advertising campaigns should always benefit the community—which elects us—by encouraging people to be healthier and safer on our roads when they drive or when they are pedestrians, to protect our environment or to be civilly minded. They are the appropriate goals of government advertising.

The people of New South Wales who elected this Government should be confident that each dollar spent on an advertising campaign is being spent for their benefit, not for the benefit of politicians or political parties. When advertising features Ministers spruiking the achievements of their administration, the people of New South Wales have the right to feel misled, annoyed and, indeed, betrayed. This bill will provide certainty to the people of New South Wales that their taxes will be spent on the things that matter to them and that they elected this Government to do—that is, to provide quality services and long-awaited infrastructure such as hospitals, roads and public transport—not on look-good advertising campaigns that spruik the Government's so-called achievements. We have lived through a long period during which the previous Government insulted our intelligence with spurious messages about its activities paid for by each one of us as taxpayers. It was a double insult.

However, as I said, governments have a responsibility to the public to disseminate information about matters of government or public importance. This bill focuses on the government of the day, the public service and all associated services ensuring that funds from the public purse spent on advertising are dedicated to the public purpose only—first and foremost. This bill restores integrity to government advertising by prohibiting party political material in government advertising and advertising campaigns designed to benefit a political party, protecting the independence of heads of government agencies authorising advertising campaigns, ensuring that they are free from ministerial interference, providing a role for the Auditor-General to scrutinise government advertising campaigns and, crucially, giving teeth to the bill to make governing political parties liable to repay the cost of advertising campaigns that are in breach of the bill. That is a very important aspect of the bill; it gives it form and substance and it provides enforcement powers.

The tendency to politicise government advertising has coincided with a rise in the amount of public money spent on it. The Auditor-General estimates that in the decade from 1999 to 2009, the total annual expenditure on government advertising ranged from approximately \$80 million to approximately \$120 million. That is a massive amount of money that would have been better spent on schools, hospitals and other infrastructure—the things that matter to the people of New South Wales. That rate of advertising expenditure made the former New South Wales Government one of the largest advertising customers in the country, with an advertising budget larger than that of many listed companies. That was shameful. In contrast, the Coalition Government will ensure that its advertising budget is managed responsibly and for proper public purposes.

This bill is a key to achieving that with its real enforcement mechanisms. It will stop Ministers and government agencies from spending funds on advertising unless a campaign complies with certain requirements set out in the bill. The wide range of government agencies that must comply with the provisions of the bill is set out in part 1. They include public service departments, statutory bodies representing the Crown, the New South Wales Police Force, the teaching services and the health services. A key concept in the bill is the government advertising campaign, which is also dealt with in part 1. It provides that a government advertising campaign involves the public dissemination of information about matters of government or public importance distributed under a commercial advertising agreement and paid for on behalf of a government agency.

In practice that is the type of advertisement that is seen and heard every day on commercial radio or television, on commercial news programs, on entertainment websites and in newspapers. Government agencies purchase time or space on a commercial platform alongside other advertisers. The prohibition in clause 6 states that an advertising campaign must not be designed to influence support for a political party, it must not contain material that displays the name for or gives prominence to the voice or image of a Minister, a member of Parliament or a candidate nominated for election to Parliament, and it must not contain material that has a logo, name or slogan or any other reference relating to a political party.

Part 2 of the bill provides that the Premier, as the Minister responsible, may augment and detail the practices for government advertising through guidelines. The current guidelines in the Premier's memorandum of 2010 have been revised a number of times in recent years in response to shortcomings identified by the Auditor-General. While those revisions have improved the integrity standards in principle, they have not been

supported by the compliance machinery that this bill contains. Yes, we, the new Government of New South Wales, will be subject to these provisions. We are happy to subject ourselves to them because this bill is important in honouring the trust and the desire for accountability that led the people of this State to elect us on 26 March.

Governing political parties, this party, and this Government will need to be on guard to ensure that the provisions of the bill are not breached at the risk of having to repay the cost of an advertising campaign that is prohibited under this legislation. Because the design of any advertising campaign involves subjective opinions, the bill provides for the circumstances in which a campaign is taken to comply with those provisions. Those circumstances will be included in the regulations. The formal apolitical process for developing each and every government advertising campaign will be established under this bill. The heads of government agencies will be responsible for independently managing and vouching for the integrity of any campaign.

Clause 7 requires the head of a government agency to ensure that a cost-benefit analysis is carried out if the cost of a proposed government advertising campaign is likely to exceed \$1 million, and a peer review is required if the cost of any proposed campaign exceeds \$50,000. It is commonsense to conduct a cost-benefit analysis. It is the kind of discipline that this Government is now applying to all processes that have an impact on its delivering value to the people of New South Wales. The agency head must certify that those steps have been taken prior to the government advertising campaign going to air, into print, or live on the internet. In exceptional circumstances, such as civil emergencies or sudden health epidemics, the peer review or cost-benefit analysis may be undertaken and certified after the commencement of the campaign, but only in those exceptional circumstances.

Clause 10 provides that most types of government advertising campaigns must not be carried out after Australia Day before a general election. A limited number of non-contentious categories of advertisements are allowed, such as those relating to public health or safety, job vacancies and government tenders. As a further measure of independence of the machinery to be established by this bill, the Auditor-General will play a crucial role in monitoring government advertising campaigns and sounding the alert when its provisions are breached. The Auditor-General has been consulted in the design of these provisions. Clause 14 specifically provides that the Auditor-General must carry out an annual audit of the performance of the activities of one or more government agencies in relation to advertising campaigns.

The Auditor-General will also be required to determine whether agencies carried out the campaign economically, efficiently and in compliance with the provisions of the bill and the advertising guidelines. An adverse finding by the Auditor-General will result in repayment of the cost of the campaign. I will deal briefly with the enforcement provisions in the bill. If a government advertising campaign breaches the requirements of clause 6—which contains the prohibitions—the cost of the campaign is repayable by the governing political party from the time the campaign commenced. That is clearly a very serious enforcement measure that has real teeth. The cost of the campaign may be recovered as a debt due to the Crown. The enforcement provisions of the bill provide for a rigorous and transparent process around that.

Political parties have access to the courts to dispute their liability to pay back advertising campaign costs. But if a government breaches these guidelines, the governing political party will pay. In conclusion I note that transparency, accountability and integrity are the values that this Government brings to power. Indeed, it shows its force, its colour and its face in the bill before us today. In essence, the enforcement provisions of the bill provide for a rigorous and transparent process. They respect New South Wales taxpayers and honour their wishes for the Government not to conduct party politics with their tax-paying dollars. Advertising campaigns should benefit the whole community, and this bill ensures that they will. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.40 p.m.]: The New South Wales Auditor-General commented in his 2007 report:

Governments may legitimately use public funds for education or information campaigns to explain Government policies, programs or services. Yet there is much controversy and debate around Government advertising and its ability to promote the incumbent Government and influence voter behaviour.

How true. But this has not been healthy controversy. It is toxic. In New South Wales, government advertising is not regulated by statute but by guidelines. These guidelines have been amended on a number of occasions, most recently following the Auditor-General's 2007 report, and then again in 2010 to implement further recommendations made by the Auditor-General. But there is also a history of legislative failure across the nation when dealing with this thorny issue of political self-service.

In June 2007, our now Premier introduced the Government Publicity Control Bill 2007. This bill was defeated at the agreement in principle stage later that year. In 2009 it was South Australia's turn. The Regulating Government Publicity Bill 2009 was not even debated, and lapsed on prorogation. Last year the Government (Political Advertising) Bill 2010 passed through the Legislative Council of Victoria, before being defeated in the Assembly. Federally, Senator Bob Brown introduced the Preventing the Misuse of Government Advertising Bill 2010; this lapsed on prorogation but was re-introduced in September. It is a chequered history.

Clearly it remains a sensitive issue to the parliaments of this land. And people are tired of this game. They demand accountability for how their money is spent by their representatives. Late last month a series of cosmetics advertisements featuring Hollywood star Julia Roberts and model Christy Turlington were banned in Britain for being overly airbrushed. The ads, which were designed to be published in the print media, digitally enhanced the images of the two celebrities. According to the Advertising Standards Authority, the advertisements were misleading. Apparently there was no evidence that the particular cosmetics would achieve a look that relied upon digital enhancement by computer technology. The United Kingdom regulator is quoted as saying:

Excessive airbrushing and digital manipulation techniques have become the norm, but both Christy Turlington and Julia Roberts are naturally beautiful women who don't need retouching to look great.

This ban sends a powerful message to advertisers—let's get back to reality.

I now turn from Julia Roberts and Christy Turlington to those sitting in this Chamber today. The message is the same: let's get back to reality; let's stop the metaphorical air brushing of the deeds and image of government. Much political advertising can be characterised as misleading, particularly when it is presented under the guise of informing the public. This bill will help return a degree of credibility to government advertising. Section 4 (2) of the bill makes clear what is definitely not a proper government advertising campaign:

- (a) the publication of a report that is required to be published by or under an Act,
- (b) advertising for the purposes of a person or body (other than a political organisation) that is not a Government agency or other public authority and that is wholly or partly sponsored by a Government agency.

Section 6 specifically prohibits political advertising. This refers to government advertising campaigns which are designed so as to influence (directly or indirectly) support for a political party.

Subsection (2) goes on to identify signs of unacceptable political advertising:

Material that is part of a Government advertising campaign must not contain the name, or give prominence to the voice or any image, of a Minister, any other member of Parliament or a candidate nominated for election to Parliament under the *Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912*.

Further detail is in subsection (3):

Material that is part of a Government advertising campaign must not contain the name, logo or any slogan of, or any other reference relating to, a political party.

The bill goes on to establish a mechanism for a cost-benefit analysis and for peer review of government advertising campaigns. Under section 11, breaches may result in a severe financial blow for the governing party or parties. The Auditor-General will also be required to undertake performance audits of one or more government agencies each financial year to give scrutiny to how the new protocols are being implemented, pursuant to section 14. These words, appearing in statute, will come as a surprise to many. Some thought they would never live to see such words. Some hoped they would never live to see such words. Still others are simply happy they will stop paying for such words used insolently by governments. Where so many other State and Federal parliaments have fallen, this Government will now succeed with this much-anticipated legislation. I support the bill.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [4.45 p.m.]: I will contribute but briefly to this excellent piece of legislation. Over my years in politics, especially in the 16 years spent on the Opposition benches, but even before the 1988 elections because of my interest in politics, I saw from the Labor Party an absolute waste of taxpayers' money on campaigns that were thinly disguised as government advertising. People recognised that advertising as a blatant attempt not only to promote the government of the day but also

the Australian Labor Party. Members and others would recall that prior to 1988 many road signs in New South Wales were emblazoned with a picture of Laurie Brereton. His picture was on every piece of roadwork that was being undertaken and partly or wholly funded by the New South Wales Government.

Mr Nathan Rees: A very good Minister.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: "A very good Minister," says the member. He was an exceptionally good Minister at promoting himself. He had visions of grandeur. I think the Brereton clan say him as one day being a Prime Minister, or at least Premier. Deirdre Grusovin, his sister, was a member of this Parliament for quite a long while. But I believe the culture of using government advertising was perfected by Laurie Brereton. Wherever one went, including down the expressway between Newcastle and Sydney, one saw Laurie's face. The unfortunate part is that the cost of making and putting up those signs—with his face emblazoned on them for his and the Labor Party's political purposes—was borne by the taxpayers of this State.

This legislation basically sets down criteria; it provides guidelines for government advertising. It sets a test as to whether government advertising is political or is of some import to the people of New South Wales. For instance, in the case of a measles epidemic, or more recently an outbreak of the Hendra virus, if a government had to advertise precautions for the purpose of public health, that will be legitimate government advertising if it occurs at a time when it is needed. Campaign blitzes such as those conducted by members opposite prior to the last elections and prior to the 1988 elections led to their being punished severely by the people of New South Wales, who recognised that as blatant campaigning using taxpayers' money to put their faces before the voters of this State. Those campaigns could only be described as political campaigns.

The bill before the House provides for access to the Supreme Court by any political party, conservative or Labor, which has been deemed to have used government advertising for a political purpose. If it is determined by the court that the advertising was political, the cost of the advertising will be paid by the political party, not by the people of New South Wales through Treasury. To me, that is the sort of system that should always have operated. That is how the people of New South Wales expected governments to act. Something like \$1 billion was spent by the Labor Party in the last 10 years it was in office. Imagine what that \$1,000 million could do for rural and regional New South Wales. That money could have been spent on improvements to the Pacific Highway at Coffs Harbour or it could have been spent on the court house or police station at Coffs Harbour or in other country areas.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Taree.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: Or in Taree. A report listing police stations found to contain asbestos in demountable buildings was released last week. Coffs Harbour Police Station was on that list. That \$1 billion could have been spent on amenities such as Coffs Harbour Courthouse, which was constructed around 1963 as a government office block. It has been utilised as a temporary courthouse ever since. It is unsafe for staff and the public and it does not serve well as a courthouse. That money would have been better spent on public utilities or infrastructure—dams, roads, health services, police stations or courthouses. The people of New South Wales would have appreciated that. If those opposite do not have the message by now then they should look at the results of the 1988 election under Mr Brereton and at this year's election result. Then perhaps they will begin to realise how cynical the people of New South Wales are about government advertising as government policy.

The Federal Government is currently spending money on government policy in its carbon tax advertisements. In fact, a power station located in Britain, not an Australian power station, is being shown in those advertisements. But I doubt that power station is emitting carbon; it is probably emitting other gases and things. More than 60 per cent of the Australian people do not support that policy. If the Federal Labor Government were to spend that money on carbon capture and storage instead, not only would carbon be removed from the atmosphere but more money could be used to remove other pollutants from the atmosphere.

Carbon is the element of life. The people who say it is dangerous should look at that rather than distributing advertising that promotes a government policy, which is untrue, unpopular, unwanted and unwarranted. I commend the Premier for introducing this legislation. It is part of a commitment given in our election campaign to cut back on waste in purported government advertising, which is nothing more than political advertising for the government in power—the Labor Party. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.52 p.m.]: I support the Government Advertising Bill 2011. The New South Wales Coalition Government will restore integrity to taxpayer-funded government advertising.

It should have been done years ago. Unlike the Federal Labor Government, this Government will not be changing the rules midstream to suit itself. Unlike the Federal Labor Government, this Government will not be using hard-earned taxpayer dollars to advertise something that has not even been before Parliament. The stance by the Federal Government on the carbon tax is inconceivable, and the taxpayer money being wasted to promote that tax through illicit advertising is even more inconceivable. The Australian public is being treated with contempt.

The management of responsible advertising spending has been a long time coming. In one decade the former Labor Government chose to spend upwards of \$1 billion on government advertising. The people of New South Wales did not have that money, but that never worried those on the other side. That wasted \$1 billion was a shameless attempt in self-promotion and a misuse of taxpayers' money for the sole purpose of getting re-elected. It was not spent in the interests of the people of New South Wales. Spending is a favourite past time of Labor governments. No consideration is given by them as to whose money is being spent or where it has come from, nor is any thought given to how that money could have better been spent. The money wasted by those opposite on shameless self-promotion is nothing short of abhorrent.

In my electorate that wasted spending could have been used to upgrade the 11 kilometres of Camden Valley Way—a very important road to the people who travel on it every day. It could have built the South West Rail Link, with change, as a \$688 million project—the estimated cost of the project when it was first announced and that has now blown out to an estimated \$2.1 billion. It could have put hundreds more police, nurses and teachers into communities where they are so badly needed. The people of New South Wales expect, and will be delivered, an honest and accountable government. The O'Farrell Government will responsibly spend taxpayers' hard-earned money in a way that advises them about government projects, not political party feather nesting.

Former Treasurer Eric Roozendaal, as part of the 2008 mini budget, promised to cut government advertising by 25 per cent to save some \$31million per year. He failed to keep up his end of the bargain. That \$31million-plus could have been spent on many neglected projects under the former Government. Those opposite wonder why they are in Opposition today. When Labor lost office those opposite even spent New South Wales taxpayers' money to prop up the failed Federal Building the Education Revolution program. The last election results show that the public had had enough and could see through the rort. The Coalition Government will ensure that the Auditor-General is able to scrutinise advertising campaigns. The Auditor-General will have the power to recommend that accounts for political advertising be sent to the political party concerned or, in the case of the Opposition, if the unions breach the rules.

Advertising should be used to inform people of a product or service. Governments have the responsibility to inform of changes to legislation or services provided to assist people in their day-to-day lives. Government advertising should be informative about what the government of the day has done, not what it might do, for the people of New South Wales. Those on the other side were masters of spin and no substance. The former Government got their money's worth of spin—\$1 billion worth. The Government will continue to monitor the advertising practices of State-owned corporations with a view to regulating them if needed.

The people of New South Wales want to know about matters of government or matters of public importance. Clause 6 of the bill sets out prohibitions on advertising campaigns. The first is that a government advertising campaign must not be designed to directly or indirectly influence support for a political party or, for those opposite, union mates. Under this bill the formal, apolitical process for developing each and every government advertising campaign will be established. New South Wales got its first taste of advertising in the *Sydney Gazette*. That was the only newspaper circulated in the colony until William Charles Wentworth's paper, the *Australian*, in 1824. The tone of the early issues of the *Sydney Gazette* has been described as:

... moral to the point of priggishness, patriotic to the point of servility, pompous in a stiff, eighteenth century fashion.

Government censorship was lifted in 1824 and two competing papers emerged within two years.

The bill is not about being censors in government advertising. It is about making sure taxpayers' money is spent wisely and informatively. Taxpayers' money is not to be spent for self-serving and self-promoting attempts at re-election of government. The Government recognises the benefits of advertising as a tool. It is a cost-effective way of raising awareness and improving behaviour in areas of public safety, health and the engagement with other public services if done properly. The people of New South Wales will no longer tolerate advertising that crosses into partisan politics or public money being used to promote party politics.

We all know that advertising has its advantages and disadvantages. We also know that a lot of untruths and misleading information can be used in advertising, for example, promising to do something and not following through, and hoping that the public will fall for it, as happened for many years under the Labor Government. The bill will give back to the people of New South Wales confidence that the government advertising they are seeing or hearing is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The people of New South Wales put their trust in our Government to get it right and do it right, and that is exactly what we will deliver with this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.00 p.m.]: I am delighted to support the Government Advertising Bill 2011, which will restore integrity to taxpayer-funded government advertising in this State. It is a great shame that this House has not previously considered similar legislation in such a favourable light. The previous Labor Government opposed the Premier's efforts to impose standards on government advertising when the Liberal-Nationals introduced the Government Publicity Control Bill 2007. For 16 years the Labor Government failed to deliver real reform in government advertising, despite promises dating back to former Premier Bob Carr in 1995, when he was elected with a commitment to do so. Yet another broken promise from members opposite.

I recall the "NSW Open for Business" commercials. One might reasonably understand that these commercials would be important to promote our State elsewhere, but Labor ran the commercials within New South Wales. That is hardly a reasonable or responsible use of taxpayer funds. As the Premier said in his agreement in principle speech, this historic legislation has been promised for two decades. Government members recognise that Government has a role to inform our constituents, and more broadly the people of New South Wales, on issues which affect our community. However, we also recognise that there is no place for government advertising that is blatant partisan politics and used for no reason other than to promote a political party, political leader, Minister or member of Parliament.

Whilst governments need to keep the public informed of important information, the public is deeply cynical of politicians who seek to use the mantle and resources of government to promote a partisan position using taxpayer funds. The Auditor-General estimates that the total annual expenditure on government advertising in the decade from 1999 to 2009 ranged from \$80 million to \$120 million. That amount of money could have gone towards upgrading the Princes Highway, improving important health services and mental health services in particular, and supporting young people in the regions. This is a chronic and outrageous waste of money which must come to an end. The bill prohibits Ministers and government departments from spending advertising funds unless it complies with strict conditions under these new laws.

If the bill is enacted, New South Wales will become only the second Australian jurisdiction, after the Australian Capital Territory, to have enacted laws to regulate government advertising. In recent years private members' bills have been introduced in some other jurisdictions, but they have not been passed. Outside Australia, at least one jurisdiction, namely, Ontario in Canada, has enacted such laws. A key difference between the bill and the legislative models adopted or proposed in other jurisdictions is that the other models require a person or a panel of persons, who are not public servants, to review government advertising campaigns prior to their launch to ensure that they comply with the relevant statutory standards or guidelines.

For example, legislation in the Australian Capital Territory provides for campaigns costing \$40,000 or more to be reviewed by a person who must not be a public servant and whose appointment must be approved by the Legislative Assembly. The reviewer must report to the Minister on the campaign's compliance with the Act. Legislation in Ontario, Canada, requires the Canadian Auditor-General to review campaigns, where there is no cost threshold to ensure that they meet the standards set out in the Act. The Auditor-General in Ontario engages external advisers to assist with this role. The Commonwealth guidelines on government advertising also provide for a prelaunch review of campaigns over \$250,000 by an independent communications committee, which comprises former public servants.

The committee is required to prepare a report to the head of the relevant government agency on compliance with the guidelines. Previously, the guidelines required the Auditor-General to review campaigns above the \$250,000 cost threshold. The review processes in the Government Advertising Bill 2011 can be compared to these other models. While the bill provides for a peer review to be conducted for campaigns costing more than \$50,000, it does not require the peer review to be conducted by persons who are not public servants; nor does the bill require the peer review process to attest that the proposed campaign complies with the Act or the guidelines. As noted, however, the bill requires the head of an agency to provide a compliance certificate, and the bill states that the head of an agency is not subject to ministerial control or direction.

In addition, the bill requires the Auditor-General to conduct an audit of the advertising activities of one or more government agencies in each financial year. There has been some debate about whether it is appropriate for the Auditor-General to be involved in the pre-launch review of government advertising. Some reports, including the 2009 report of the New South Wales Auditor-General, have expressed the view that the Auditor-General should not have this role. Other reports have taken a different view and, so it seems, the Commonwealth Auditor-General. I support the involvement of the Auditor-General to ensure the integrity of the process, as well as acting as a disincentive for those in Government to misuse public funds for inappropriate purposes.

A unique feature of the 2011 bill is the provision for recovery of the costs of a campaign that breaches a prohibition in clause 6. The costs may be recovered from the political party, or parties, in Government at the time the campaign commenced. The cost may be recovered as a debt due to the Crown and the Crown's claim may be supported by a finding or report by the Auditor-General. Clause 13 provides that a party can apply to the New South Wales Supreme Court to review its liability in relation to recovering advertising campaign expenses. Clause 14 outlines that the Auditor-General will carry out an annual performance audit of the advertising campaigns of one or more government agencies and determine if that agency has delivered the campaign economically, efficiently and in line with the bill and the revised advertising guidelines.

This bill protects the critical independence of government agencies and prohibits interference from Ministers whilst providing an important role for the Auditor-General to carefully scrutinise government advertising and require political parties to hand back advertising campaign expenses which are found to be in breach. This bill delivers on the O'Farrell Government's commitment to provide for the proper regulation of government advertising. Unlike the previous Labor Government, the O'Farrell Government is committed to lifting the standards of government integrity, and this bill delivers on that commitment. I do not believe that members want to see the type of advertising that has come from the Gillard Government in recent weeks in relation to the carbon tax.

Such advertising is blatant political propaganda for one purpose and one purpose only. Taxpayer funds should be used appropriately. Government advertising should not be used as a vehicle to curry favour with the electorate in the interests of one political party or for a political purpose. I am delighted to support this bill. I hope that members opposite find it within themselves to put behind them the years of spin, lies and misuse of taxpayer funds and support a bill that will return integrity, honesty and decency to the use of taxpayer funds for advertising in New South Wales.

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

GAMING MACHINE TAX AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.08 p.m.]: I am proud to speak in favour of the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 for the simple reason that I recognise, as do my colleagues, the valuable and important contributions that clubs make to the community. At present clubs face a situation of some peril because of what is being imposed on them by the Federal sphere. Clubs have had pre-commitment thrown at them by the Federal Government. However, the only pre-commitment that clubs in New South Wales are interested in is the commitment given by the Liberal-Nationals during the election campaign to introduce this bill as part of our Strong Clubs, Stronger Communities Memorandum of Understanding.

The bill amends the Gaming Machine Tax Act 2011 to provide for reductions in the club gaming tax rates and the introduction of the new ClubGRANTS scheme. The bill contains the first lot of amendments to flow from the very policy—the Strong Clubs, Stronger Communities Memorandum of Understanding—that the Liberal-Nationals signed with Clubs New South Wales in October last year. Excessive tax rates levied by the former Government have contributed to the closure of about 100 clubs, robbing local communities—particularly those in regional New South Wales—of valuable facilities, services, jobs and financial support. As I indicated, the clubs are now fighting hard against what is proposed to be imposed on them at a Federal level. The Opposition vehemently opposes that attack on the viability of clubs.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals made a key election commitment to ensure the sustainability of the clubs industry, to protect jobs, and to protect and enhance the valuable community support that it provides

across the State. I commend the Minister for introducing this bill as one step towards achieving that goal. Delivering on this commitment, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government will introduce new gaming machine tax rates that will benefit nearly 500 clubs, the majority of which are medium-sized organisations. This will result in an estimated injection of \$200 million over the next four years for these not-for-profit community assets.

These changes strike the right balance between the obligation on registered clubs to pay a fair amount of tax and ensuring their future financial viability. This is very much apparent in the electorate of Dubbo, which has the sorts of clubs targeted by this bill. Within my electorate we have 28 clubs, which employ 507 staff in casual, part-time and full-time positions. There are 845 club volunteers in the Dubbo electorate and more than 50,000 members. The clubs in my electorate currently give over \$7 million in support to local community groups and activities. Under this bill clubs will pay just short of \$400,000 less tax and will be able to contribute more than \$140,000 more to their local community.

One of the clubs to which these benefits will flow is the Forbes Services Memorial Club. Under this bill it will see a tax saving of \$41,000. That will give the club a huge opportunity to continue its great work in the Forbes community. The Narromine United Services Memorial Club currently employs 26 employees. The club is vital to the fabric of the Narromine community, to which it contributes a great deal. It will also enjoy a tax saving of \$40,000. The Canowindra Bowling Club employs eight people and provides a breadth of opportunities and services to the local community. The club was at the centre of the Anzac Day celebrations that I had the privilege of attending and at which I delivered the oration. They are just a few examples of how the bill introduced by a fine Minister will have tangible outcomes for our communities and will make a positive contribution to our response to the industry.

The Minister spoke at a social engagement last night and I was delighted to hear him say that he and the Premier are adopting a partnership approach. This bill is a great example of that approach. The previous Government failed to recognise the worth of communities and of those institutions that make up the fabric of communities. It failed to engage in, and reap the benefits of, those partnerships. This Government's mindset is welcomed by the Dubbo electorate and community. The chairman of Clubs New South Wales and Clubs Australia has expressed to me his delight with the assistance and the progress that this Government is making in its support of Clubs New South Wales. However, I did not need to be convinced of the value of the clubs in the Dubbo electorate. I benefit indirectly from their assistance as my daughter attends gymnastics, an activity which is supported by the RSL club. Without that club's funding she would not have that opportunity. That is a small example of the valuable contribution that clubs make. With this bill, clubs will have far greater capacity to continue to invest in community sporting groups and organisations. I welcome the legislation, and I commend the Minister for introducing it.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [5.16 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in support of the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. The bill is founded on the recognition that clubs play an integral part in our community, which is reflected in the Strong Clubs, Stronger Communities Memorandum of Understanding with Clubs New South Wales. The bill aims to reduce gaming machine tax rates, enabling clubs to increase their support for local communities. It will also result in the expanded and renamed Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme, more accurately called ClubGRANTS. Clubs play an integral role in our community. One of my first jobs was at the Bankstown Trotting Recreational Club. I started out as a humble bar assistant, cleaning ashtrays. I worked my way up to barman and tray man, and then to the illustrious position of change steward. I met my wife, Sharon, there. I am pleased to say that I still have her after 25 or 26 years, and she still loves me and looks after me. I could not have achieved the things I have without her support. And that all happened because of clubs. At Campbelltown—the opal of the south-west, that shining gem of Sydney—

Mr Jai Rowell: The shiny part is from Wollondilly.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: The best thing about Wollondilly is that you can see Campbelltown from there. The clubs of Campbelltown are some of the best in the south-west of Sydney. The Campbelltown Catholic Club, which now includes the Campbelltown Golf Club, is a great success story about which I informed the House earlier this week. We also have Wests Leagues Club, Ingleburn RSL, Campbelltown RSL—which had to merge with Cabravale Diggers because of hardships it faced under the previous regime—Campbelltown Bowling Club and Ingleburn Bowling Club. All these clubs play a huge role in the fabric of society in the opal of the south-west. Today I had the privilege to be present at a club grants presentation held at the Ingleburn Bowling and Recreation Club. The Federal member for Macarthur, Russell Matheson—

Mr Mark Coure: A great guy.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: He is. He and Campbelltown Mayor Paul Lake were also present. It was gratifying to see grants going to great organisations in the Campbelltown area. The Campbelltown Catholic Club grant of \$4,000 went to Robert Townson primary and high schools. A \$2,000 cheque went to the Drug and Alcohol Women's Network. A \$1,000 cheque went to the St Vincent de Paul Ozanam Community Centre and the Maryfields Day Recovery Centre received a cheque for \$3,000. Campbelltown RSL Club presented cheques to Families New South Wales for \$3,000, Autism Spectrum Australia for \$2,000, and Campbelltown UnitingCare for \$3,000. Campbelltown UnitingCare noted that its very successful preschool centre for underprivileged children was closed during the term of the previous Government. Workventures received a cheque for \$2,000.

Ingleburn RSL Club presented just two cheques. The first was to Campbelltown Police and Community Youth for \$5,000 to fund graffiti reduction programs. It was noted that the program deals with graffiti offenders who cause damage worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. The second cheque was to the Rainbow Club for \$5,000 to assist children with disabilities. Ingleburn Bowling and Recreation Club presented a cheque to Alzheimer's Australia for \$1,323. West Leagues presented cheques to Chisholm Care for \$4,780, the Ajuga School for \$1,500, the Campbell House School for \$1,500, the Glenfield Park School for \$1,500, and the Macarthur Mental Health Network for \$1,500. The bill will support clubs in their primary role, which is looking after local communities. I know from speaking with the management of each of the clubs that they are very pleased to have a Government that supports and understands the club industry. In Campbelltown—the opal of the south-west—we are fortunate to have community-based clubs that live and breathe the wonderful community of Campbelltown, and to have a great Government to support them.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.21 p.m.]: I participate on behalf of The Greens in debate on the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. Members know that the bill reduces gaming machine tax rates that are payable by registered clubs. It also renames the community development and support expenditure tax rebate scheme as ClubGRANTS—a scheme in which I was involved when I was mayor at Leichhardt Municipal Council. The bill increases the tax rebate available to a registered club under that scheme from 1.5 per cent to 1.85 per cent of the club's prescribed profits. Prescribed profits are a club's gaming machine profits that exceed \$1 million during any tax year.

The bill creates a new category of community development, support projects and services called category 3 for large-scale projects or services associated with sport, health or community infrastructure and provides for applying 0.4 per cent of registered clubs' prescribed profits towards a fund for those projects and services. We understand that the guidelines for management of category 3 funds are not yet available, but we take on board representations by the Government during a crossbench briefing that they will be in line with the general type of participation in the other two levels of grants. Based on my experience in local government and current experience as a member of Parliament, I recognise the important contributions that clubs make to local communities. I have attended a range of activities hosted by clubs, including commemoration of Anzac Day, but there are significant issues and great difficulties surrounding the income source of the vast majority of clubs.

Mr Assistant-Speaker, who is also the member for Coffs Harbour, knows as well as I do that the vast majority of income derived by clubs emanates from gambling losses incurred by members and visitors to clubs. We have heard a great deal about grants that clubs provide to the community, but where does that money come from? In the case of most clubs, more than 80 per cent of the revenue comes from gambling losses sustained by members and their guests. The Greens and I believe that matter must be addressed. I recently met a resident of my electorate who had lost more than \$100,000 in a local club. What is the source of funds that make possible the community grants given by clubs—grants of \$1,000 here or \$1,500 there? We know that the great proportion of those funds come from problem gamblers. I will discuss the issue in more detail at a later stage.

The most recent data from the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing on poker machine losses is for 2009. What do members think those losses were in New South Wales? Were they \$100 million, \$500 million, \$600 million or \$1 billion? The losses in one year from poker machines totalled \$3.256 billion. That is how the clubs are generating the vast majority of their income. Clubs do good work, but their funding comes from very significant losses sustained by gamblers. The question is: Where is the money from which the losses are derived coming from? Many of us will have gone to a local club and put a few dollars through the machine, and that is fine. But we know from last year's Productivity Commission report that up to 40 per cent of club revenue comes

from problem gamblers. We know that, of the billions of dollars that go through our local clubs, up to 40 per cent of it comes from problem gamblers. In April this year members may have seen the *Sydney Morning Herald* report under the headline, "Clubs hitting the jackpot and keeping most of the booty", which states:

Only about 2.7 per cent of the money clubs in NSW take from their poker machines is donated to the community, an analysis of the state's largest clubs by the Herald has found, while the cost of the industry's tax concessions [despite that 2.7 per cent] is \$6.5 billion since 1997 ...

Most clubs ... spent more on promoting themselves than they did on donations ...

A Productivity Commission report shows that powerful clubs do not necessarily foster sport, finding that in Western Australia, where there are no poker machines outside the casino, more people play organised sport than the national average.

It is important to examine the facts properly. The Productivity Commission's report is more than 1,000 pages long. It is a very serious report on problem gambling and it highlights the fact that poker machine losses are fuelling very significant social dislocation and destroying families. Problem gambling needs to be addressed. Of course the bill will do nothing to address that issue; nor will it assist in weaning clubs off their addiction to gambling losses. Clubs are addicted to gambling losses. I encourage members to study the balance sheet and cash flows of their local club. They will see that more than 80 per cent of revenue comes from poker machine losses, and we know that up to 40 per cent of that comes from problem gamblers. How do we wean our clubs off their addiction?

I realise that time is short and that some members are enthusiastic about making a contribution to the debate, so I will make just two more points. Specifically in relation to this bill, we have heard a great deal about the Government's concern regarding billions of dollars in cuts to community services, the budget black hole, and cuts to education and corrective services. The Greens believe this legislation does not address the issue of clubs' addiction to gambling losses. Hundreds of millions of dollars in funding has been proposed already by the Government—for example, there is the Regional Relocation Grant, which is worth \$280 million; approximately \$300 million will be spent in implementing this bill; and another \$300 million will be spent on a payroll tax rebate. We are getting up towards \$1 billion in funding already committed by the Government. In my view those allocations, which emanate from election commitments, should be taken into account when assessing the Government's overall budget position. I am concerned that that will not happen and that the Government is making commitments outside the budget process.

Obviously that concerns me in the light of all the warnings we have received about the next State budget being dire. As many members know, New South Wales has the highest number of gaming machines of any jurisdiction in Australia. Instead of slashing the clubs' taxes, the Government should be examining how we can reduce the number of poker machines in this State and lessen the impacts of problem gambling in the community. The Productivity Commission estimates that between 80,000 and 160,000 Australians suffer severe problems as a result of gambling. In addition, between 230,000 and 350,000 people are at moderate risk and may experience lower levels of harm, but later may progress to problem gambling. As recently as last year, Clubs New South Wales conceded that almost \$800 million in poker machine losses comes from problem gamblers. From my perspective, they are very significant statistics.

I recognise that Minister Souris, who is in the Chamber, announced Government expenditure of \$10.2 million on services to assist problem gamblers, which represents a significant increase on the amount allocated by the former Government. But let us remember that the Productivity Commission predicted that New South Wales gambling tax revenue in 2010-11 would be \$1.8 billion. We know that up to 40 per cent of that money comes from problem gamblers, yet only \$10.2 million is allocated to providing services to assist problem gamblers. Of the total revenue that this State will receive from gambling, 0.6 per cent will be allocated to provide support services for problem gamblers.

It is clear that the harm caused by poker machines is very significant. With gaming and wagering representing 9 per cent of the total State tax income, it is clear that the New South Wales Government is as addicted to gambling and wagering losses as the club industry. I say genuinely and very sincerely that I have heard some absolutely heart-wrenching stories from people who come to my electorate office and discuss their losses from gaming machines. As I have mentioned, our local clubs receive the vast majority of revenue from these gaming machines. It is clear that we need to help our clubs wean themselves off this addiction to gambling losses.

Finally, the Government contends that the clubs themselves are best placed to determine how the taxes from club revenue should be spent. We would all like to decide where our taxes are spent, but as a matter of

principle I think it is important the Government recognise that taxation should be decided by government. Those priorities should be part of the democratic process; it should not be left to individual organisations to determine where their taxes are spent. The Greens believe this State should be looking at ways to minimise problem gambling. This bill proposes a very significant tax cut for registered clubs, which rely on gaming tax revenue for more than 80 per cent of their revenue. We know that the Productivity Commission has highlighted that almost 40 per cent of the revenue that clubs use to fund their services comes from problem gamblers.

Let us look at ways to reduce the impact that problem gamblers are having on their communities and their families. This Government should look at ways to reduce the number of poker machines in our community and reduce the reliance of local registered clubs on gaming losses in order to fund the admittedly positive activities they undertake. There is much food for thought in addressing problem gambling in this State, and this is an opportunity for the Government to take action in relation to it. I encourage the Minister to consider ways in which to reduce the reliance of not only the State Government but also our clubs on gambling losses, particularly those from gaming machines.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.32 p.m.]: The Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 amends the Gaming Machine Tax Act 2001 to provide for reductions in the club gaming tax rates and the introduction of the new ClubGRANTS scheme. When the tax increase was introduced by the former Labor Government 9,000 jobs were lost and 97 clubs closed. In most cases those clubs were in Labor heartland and unfortunately we cannot fix the damage. But with this bill the O'Farrell Government will ensure the long-term viability of those clubs left standing. Clubs were formed to support the local community and the proposed new tax rates will allow them to continue to do so.

In regional New South Wales, where the club is almost always the largest employer and the centre of local community fundraising and support, the industry has struggled in recent years under the weight of the billion dollar increase in club tax rates. For some people in our community, their local club is a much-needed facility where they can mix with fellow locals and join in conversation and recreational activities. For those who live alone, their club may be their only contact with the outside world. They are happy to pop down to the club and have a cold one with their mates, or meet for a meal and chew over the local gossip or, more recently, the pressure on their daily lives from legislation being introduced by the Federal Labor Government. A couple of examples are the impact of the carbon tax on people's day-to-day expenditure and Federal Labor's lack of support for clubs in New South Wales.

I know that in my electorate of Camden clubs are the lifeblood of our community. The local RSL club provides much-needed support to our local veterans, their wives and children. Camden is surrounded by outreaching rural areas, where many older people still live on properties that they have owned for years. They are isolated from the community, and local clubs provide the contact that they would not normally receive. Camden also has a sports club, which epitomises clubs in semi-rural New South Wales. It struggled financially at times under the former Government's regime, but it has survived thanks to a group of dedicated, hardworking locals who have kept the doors open, the beer flowing and the meals served. That is another great meeting spot for our community.

The support that clubs offer my local community is immeasurable. When we travel to a country town we know that attending a local club for a meal gives us a feeling of welcome in a homey atmosphere. We cannot allow that to disappear. This bill will ensure that clubs will be better able to support their members, increase employment and spend more money on community, sporting and welfare groups. There are some 14,229 members of various clubs in Camden, and this bill will allow for a welcome injection of money back into the community. Clubs are facing the uncertainty of the Federal Labor Government's poker machine reforms, which could force them to scale back their financial support to the community. Unlike the Federal Labor Government, the O'Farrell Government has listened to the community—not just one person—and taken steps to alleviate the tax pressure on clubs to give them the opportunity to continue to provide the services that they were formed to offer. Clubs are not the baddies they are made out to be by the Federal Labor Government, and I know that if my local clubs were forced to close the long-term effects would be devastating.

This bill delivers on the commitment made by the O'Farrell Government during the election campaign to ensure that the sustainability of the club industry is maintained and to enhance their unique role in our local communities. The changes to gaming machine tax will return an estimated \$200 million to the club industry during the next four years. The current tax rate of 21 per cent has hit the industry hard, but the reduced rate of 19.9 per cent will benefit some 315 clubs. The club industry offers support to a wide range of areas. Sporting

and charitable organisations benefit from the generosity of our clubs. The elderly receive much-needed support for health and community care. By making clubs stronger we will only strengthen the resilience and vitality of our local communities.

Every job saved in a registered club through the assistance provided by this bill will result in more money being spent in local businesses and more people choosing to live and raise their families in regional areas. The new ClubGRANTS scheme will provide an estimated \$85 million in additional community support from registered clubs over the next four years. During that time it is estimated that 1,924 new jobs will be created annually, which can only benefit the entire community. Rallies are currently being staged by New South Wales clubs in opposition to the proposed Federal Government poker machine reforms that will see the club industry once again brought to its knees by a Labor Government that is not prepared to listen to constituents, and in most cases its own heartland.

Those on the other side of the House should be ashamed that their fellow Federal Labor members are going to do just what they managed to do in New South Wales. Clubs are not about gambling; they are about providing the community with the facilities and support that governments are not able to offer. The O'Farrell Government has no doubt about the importance of securing the future of clubs—unlike those on the other side who were more than happy to introduce taxes that ensured the downfall of many clubs. This bill will make amends in some way for the damage that the tax introduced by the former Labor Government caused to the entire industry. Clubs will be able to continue their good work enriching the lives of members and their guests, as well as helping the many thousands of people who rely on, or benefit from, the club industry.

We also have some bigger clubs that directly service my electorate and that of my colleagues the member for Wollondilly and the member for Campbelltown. The Campbelltown Catholic Club, Western Suburbs Leagues Club and Campbelltown RSL all do a fantastic job in providing much-needed services and facilities to my local community, whether it be as a meeting point, a place for a meal, a quiet place in which to share a beer with a few mates, the venue for a charity dinner or a slap-up black tie ball, the club is the backbone and social hub of our community. Our Premier is also the Minister for Western Sydney, and he is very much in touch with the communities in that area. He has listened to their concerns about their clubs and I urge members opposite to do likewise. The people of New South Wales deserve to have their much-loved clubs continue to provide the services and facilities they have provided for many years, and this bill will ensure that they can. 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

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [5.43 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business on Thursday 11 August 2011 prior to 2.00 p.m.:

- (1) at 10.00 a.m. Government Business;
- (2) at 10.30 a.m. General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices);
- (3) at 12.00 p.m. Government Business;
- (4) at the conclusion of Government Business, if prior to 2.00 p.m, Orders of the Day (Committee Reports); and
- (5) the Speaker to leave the chair at 2.00 p.m. or at the conclusion of Orders of the day (Committee Reports) if earlier.

The Government wishes to introduce two bills tomorrow morning—the Crown Law Officers Legislation Amendment (Retirement Age) Bill and the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill. To facilitate the introduction of those bills we propose to alter the normal order of business. It is not the Government's intention to stop all private members' business tomorrow. However, it is proposed that Ministers introduce the bills and make their agreement in principle speeches at 10.00 a.m. I anticipate that that will take between 20 minutes and 30 minutes. I propose that at 10.30 a.m. the House deal with general business so that members can speak to their

notices of motion and general notices. However, it will be necessary to interrupt the debate again to deal with government business at 12.00 p.m. It is anticipated that debate on the Government Advertising Bill and the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill, which have been debated today, will then be completed. At the conclusion of that business, and if time permits, it is proposed that the House deal with further notices of motion.

Mr Michael Daley: What debate is being displaced?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The proposal is that we delay private members' motions for half an hour between 10.00 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. and between 12.00 p.m. and 1.00 p.m. I regret that this is necessary, but as has been highlighted recently, we must ensure the passage of government business through this Chamber.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [5.45 p.m.]: I will not get hot under the collar, but I will oppose this motion on behalf of Opposition and Independent members in this place. For the past two weeks the Government has indulged its members who have wasted a great deal of time offering spurious contributions on insignificant bills. Opposition and Independent members have limited opportunities and time to raise issues of concern to their constituents, which is at the heart of our purpose in this place. The member for Coffs Harbour has spent the last two minutes shooting his mouth off. If he has no issue that he feels should be raised in this House on behalf of the residents of Coffs Harbour, that is fine, he is not required to do so.

However, unlike him, members on this side of the House do want to represent their constituents. If he were to look at the *Business Paper* he would see that Opposition and Independent members have been extraordinarily busy in giving notice of motions that are dear to the hearts of their constituents. We heard 52 Government members speak over three days on the Graffiti Bill. Given that, it is not open to the Leader of the House to say that we must suspend the standing and sessional orders to allow the Government to debate legislation so that it can be sent to the other place.

It was entirely the Government's fault that the upper House suspended its sitting for want of business last week. It is also the Government's fault that it had nothing to do and debated the Graffiti Bill for three days and that it has had us debate bills like the Restart NSW Bill to establish a bank account, which my 12-year-old son could do by simply walking into a bank. Opposition and Independent members who want to raise issues that are important to their constituents should not have to suffer because of the Government's lack of organisation. We oppose this motion.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following bill reported:

Summary Offences Amendment (Intoxicated and Disorderly Conduct) Bill 2011

CLEAN COAL ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PALLIATIVE CARE COMMUNITY SERVICES**Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons**

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [6.03 p.m.]: In politics one person can make a difference and this is one of those occasions. This discussion has been facilitated by the introduction of the people's petition by this Government, which gives people across this State the opportunity to ensure what is debated in this Chamber if they are able to attract the attention and support of at least 10,000 people. For some time now members of the community have been very concerned about access to palliative care services on the North Shore. The community has now presented me, and this Parliament, with a petition with more than 23,000 signatures calling for the restoration of funding for palliative care services in northern Sydney.

Why has the community done this? It is because, incredibly, Labor cut funding to palliative care services on the North Shore. Importantly, as the Minister for Health will say, of all the local area health services the only health service to have its palliative care budget cut was that servicing the North Shore. This says much about the political antics and the determination of those opposite to punish people for the way in which they vote. Labor made deep cuts to palliative care services to try to fix its mismanagement of the State's Health budget. I recognise Yvonne McMaster for her tireless efforts in advocating for palliative care services and for her role in organising this petition. Palliative care services play a critical role in the care of terminally ill people and in the comfort provided to their families.

Under Labor the management of this important service was deplorable. In 2007 NSW Health, under the former Government, identified a lack of integrated data in relation to palliative care services, and a lack of detailed information in relation to the way in which money was spent on those services. Four years later—when my Government inherited office—the situation was not much better. The Government has little transparency as to the way in which the resources are allocated. The Government also has little understanding of the palliative care services that are provided across the breadth of the State. That is clearly unacceptable and it is an unacceptable way to run such a critically important program.

Whilst in opposition, the current Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, uncovered that funding was cut to palliative care services in the Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service. On the North Shore our palliative care services are provided by HammondCare, which took over from Hope Healthcare. HammondCare provides in-patient palliative care services as well as services for non-admitted patients through Greenwich Hospital and Neringah Hospital. Northern Beaches Palliative Care Service provides palliative care service to non-admitted patients. The funding provided by the New South Wales Government is critical to the delivery of these important services to terminally ill people and their families.

Following representations from Dr McMaster to me and to other members representing northern Sydney, the Minister for Health requested a full review of the funding into palliative care across the northern Sydney area. That review confirmed the budget cut. That review confirmed the mismanagement of palliative care services by the previous Government. In 2009-10 less funding was allocated for in-patient palliative care services across the North Shore. This resulted in a reduction in the provision of community services and a reduction in access for those who need these services—people who are dying. That is completely unacceptable and that is why today I make this commitment.

Under my Government palliative care will not be disregarded in the same way as it has been in the past. My Government will work to address the inadequate access to palliative care services across the State. The first step in this process will be to fix the problems on the North Shore and across northern Sydney. I have asked that Labor's funding cuts be fixed. Funding for palliative care services in the Northern Sydney Local Health District for services delivered by HammondCare will be restored, with appropriate indexation for 2011-12. Regrettably, and unbelievably, I am advised that the former Government had no transparent service agreement with HammondCare setting out what services would be delivered and the funding base for those services. In restoring these funds, HammondCare will restore its services to our communities.

In restoring the funding for these services, the Minister for Health has asked the local health district to implement a transparent service agreement with HammondCare, to ensure that we have sustainable delivery of hospital and community-based palliative care services in the long term. This agreement will give all parties an understanding of the services to be provided and will ensure greater accountability and transparency. If cuts are made—I do not expect any cuts to be made, and I am determined that no cuts will be made—they will be obvious for all to see and the government of the day will suffer the obvious opprobrium. The new service agreement will ensure that the focus of our funding arrangements is firmly on delivering quality services to patients. This is essential in safeguarding the integrity of services provided by HammondCare and maintaining the strong local palliative care service network built up over the years.

It will also be important for work to be undertaken to carefully assess the demands for these services and HammondCare's involvement will be key in developing new models of care for the future. In keeping with the community's preferences, these new models will principally be community based wherever possible and wherever appropriate. The Minister for Health is undertaking an analysis of the demand for palliative care services across New South Wales to ensure that we are providing adequate services for those who need them. My Government was elected to fix the many messes inherited from the Labor Party. I am determined to restore the public's confidence in our health system. Today, through this action, we have taken one more step. I thank the members of the community who have taken time out to be here this evening. I appreciate the 23,000 people who signed this important petition. I acknowledge the efforts of Dr Yvonne McMaster in championing and achieving the results of this petition.

Across northern Sydney there have been many concerns about this issue, from those who are terminally ill and their families, those who work in the sector as professionals and people such as Dr Yvonne McMaster. It should not have had to come to this to get justice for people whose loved ones are dying and who simply seek from the State the adequacy of care that is offered elsewhere. They were punished apparently because they lived in a Liberal voting territory. We need to end that sort of political apartheid. We need to understand that the role of government is to provide services, regardless of the way people vote. We need to understand that we provide services according to need. There is no greater need, than providing people in their last days with palliative care. I am pleased to receive this petition, and I am pleased to make these commitments. I commend the people in the gallery who will never have to go through this again to get justice.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [6.10 p.m.]: I support this petition. I commend the Premier for his policy of having petitions signed by 10,000 people debated in this place. The full gallery reinforces the importance of palliative care to all of us. If I have learnt one thing in my professional life as a doctor, the one thing that matters most, the one thing that is often all we can and must do is to care for people

and their families when death is going to happen. We need to ensure that every death in New South Wales is as good as it can be. I too pay tribute to Dr McMaster for her advocacy on this issue. As she has said, what is needed is the immediate and direct provision of a level of funding to HammondCare sufficient to enable it to restore the delivery of community palliative care in northern Sydney to meet the present requirements.

The funding must also meet the true palliative care requirements of communities throughout New South Wales—funding that is isolated solely for this purpose and not subsumed in the general budgets of local health districts. Like the Royal North Shore Hospital petition, this petition could be answered with political will. I am pleased, as are the guests in the gallery and the readers of *Hansard*, that the Premier intends to increase the funding of the Northern Sydney Palliative Care service to the satisfaction of the petitioners, who are also keen to hear the Government's plans for palliative care services statewide. The management of ageing and dying is a major challenge for Health because we can now prolong life longer than at any time in history.

However, far too often after the death of a loved one, the fact that the surviving relatives were unable to prepare themselves for that death and the person who died was unable to say goodbye causes enormous sorrow that compounds the grief and loss that the death of their loved one has caused. Losing a loved one in bad circumstances has ramifications for families that last for generations. No government should be giving people cause for regret about the circumstances of their loss.

If possible, every person and their family need to be prepared for the death that will come to all of us. The relief of suffering, the provision of comfort, and the right for every person in the State to be able to have a death that gives them and their family peace are vital for every person in this State and core business for any health service. Death occurs in 5 per cent to 10 per cent of all hospitalised patients, and the cause in 95 per cent to 98 per cent of those deaths is the natural history of the disease. That is why death is core business for every hospital and the management of those deaths needs to continue to improve because it makes an enormous difference to the grief of those who have lost their loved one.

Palliative care is much more than cancer care. About 50 per cent of each palliative care service should be for non-malignant disease, such as heart failure and severe lung disease, and conditions such as motor neurone disease. These conditions may have unpredictable courses, with exacerbations, remissions, sudden death or prolonged illness. As Dr McMaster eloquently said, if palliative care is not provided, then that end-of-life care is increasingly being carried out in acute hospitals. As my friend Dr Ken Hillman from Liverpool said:

Dying safely in Hospital is a major challenge for the health system.

Most people wish to die at home but many will die in hospital. Approximately 20 per cent of all deaths in the United States of America occur in intensive care units, and about 90 per cent of those deaths are the result of withdrawing or withholding treatment. However, acute hospitals often lack the privacy or resources to allow families to be able to grieve in quiet and silence. Far too often hospitals are not designed with a space for dying. Logistically, for many families it is difficult for their loved one to die at home. Once-a-day visits may not be enough. In these days of double mortgages and long distances between relatives, the uncertainty of how long their loved one will live is also a major issue. That is why hospitals such as Neringah are so vital, not only for the care they provide, but also for their example and the knowledge they share with others.

Palliative care is also cost-effective. In fact, the New England Journal of Medicine reports that doctors use 20 per cent less health care on their families than the general population. One reason is that their insider knowledge understands when the prolongation of life is less appropriate than suitable end-of-life care. Indeed, the first thing that family members in the health professions say when their loved ones enter hospital near death is "no heroics". They know not to keep trying when further curative treatment is futile and often unpleasant. That knowledge needs to be more widely shared.

I used to volunteer at Neringah when I was at school in the late 1960s. HammondCare as a Christian not-for-profit service has provided magnificent service to the community around Neringah and statewide for many years. HammondCare also provides the services mentioned by the Premier to Greenwich and the Northern Beaches Palliative Care Service, and is vital for the future of palliative care in this State. Any cuts to funding will affect all facets of palliative care—medical, nursing and allied health. For example, in palliative care teams, therapists such as physiotherapists are vital to help patients with lung cancer with their breathing, occupational therapists visit homes and recommend modifications, and social workers are vital to everyone, the family and the staff, when death is approaching.

In my area in south-west Sydney the palliative care units at Camden and Braeside provide magnificent services, both in hospitals and at home. Mount Druitt has a magnificent unit that is highly valued. Ring fencing funding for palliative care is an interesting option that should be explored. However, area health services under budget stress will not use palliative care funds for other purposes if end-of-life care is seen as the priority it should be. We need to move palliative care out of the shadows and into the light. Good palliative care is the one thing that will change the lives of the surviving family members, and should never be a loser in a battle with so-called other health priorities.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [6.17 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Premier, as well as the people in the gallery who signed the petition about ensuring access to quality community-based palliative care services now and into the future. As the Premier noted, the Government will be restoring the funding for palliative care on the north shore—the north shore includes Hornsby, Ryde, the northern beaches and so on—that was cut by Labor in 2009. I say this to the shadow Minister for Health: it is a great shame that he did not make such a compassionate speech when he was the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health. It is fine to make compassionate speeches but they must be followed up with action. That is why the Premier has announced today that funding will be provided for palliative care.

Back in 2009 I joined the community and local members to fight against the funding cuts. Many of them are in the Chamber today: the member for Wakehurst, the member for Pittwater, the member for Davidson, the member for Ku-ring-gai and the member for Ryde. New members elected in March have also joined the fight. Indeed, the member for Willoughby raised the matter in Parliament. I am very pleased we were able to put our voice in supporting these very vulnerable people in the community because the cuts to HammondCare were about age respite care and about cuts to palliative care. The aged care was able to be restored to another funding source but not palliative care.

I place great importance on the provision of palliative care services to people with advanced diseases or terminal illness. I believe that palliative care not only helps those people but is of enormous benefit to their families and friends. I speak from some experience in this regard. My best friend died at Warringah Hospital in 1988. I had the great privilege and believe me it is a great privilege of being with her holding her hand when she died. She died calmly and peacefully through palliative care provided through Hope Healthcare which was the precursor to HammondCare.

It is extremely important that governments understand the importance of funding for this sort of care. Not only will we be restoring the funding that will enable HammondCare to continue with this important work in the northern Sydney district but, as I have indicated to some in the gallery already, I have asked the department to present an analysis of the demand for palliative care services in New South Wales to ensure we provide adequate services across the whole State. New local health districts and boards are learning about their local community needs as they assume their responsibilities and I will ask those boards to understand my priority in this area. All local health districts will provide funds to affiliated health organisations, such as HammondCare, and will be requested to implement transparent service agreements just as we are doing with HammondCare.

Over the coming year my department will map our current palliative care services against population needs and we will investigate appropriate palliative care population planning tools used in other jurisdictions to assist in future service planning. We will look at the current palliative care workforce and identify any current workforce gaps that can be addressed. We will examine current training and resources available to support volunteers. A very important part of the work in palliative care is that of our wonderful volunteers to support carers and health workers involved in palliative care. Strategies from these plans and this work will be incorporated into local health district palliative care service plans and will be incorporated into the service agreements with local health districts and affiliated health organisations.

The shadow Minister talked about ring fencing the funding for palliative care. Because this area will have joint funding responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the State, our obligation will be to maintain performance indicators that indicate how we are spending the money and whether we are achieving what we set out to achieve. I believe this is a major step forward. I acknowledge everybody in the gallery. A number of our local members have given me your names so I could acknowledge you personally but I have run out of time. You are all wonderful. I congratulate you on the work you have done in this area and look forward to working with you.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [6.24 p.m.]: I did not anticipate speaking in the debate other than to recognise the fantastic effort of the residents of the North Shore in bringing this petition before the Parliament. I understand some 23,000 people signed it on an issue which is a specific area to do with health care and it is to be commended. In many debates in this place over the last number of months and years we get involved in some political cross-fighting in this House about which Government has done the best and which Government has done the worst and how things are going to be better under this team or the other. I have never heard those comments made in a debate about palliative care. That is outside the Labor versus Liberal area.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Mount Druitt has the call.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Generally, most people listen to issues like palliative care, mental health and disability services in silence.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I call the member for Keira to order.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Generally, the speakers are heard in silence. The issue of palliative care—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: The last Government was disgraceful.

The ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Garth Ward): Government members will come to order.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The Premier's interjection is very undignified on what is a very sensitive issue.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Mount Druitt will be heard in silence.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I give credit to the people who work in palliative care. Working in any sort of emergency services, as I have done, the difficulty of dealing with people who are facing death is probably the most difficult for people to confront. The nurses and the doctors who work in palliative care units are to be commended, not only in the stand-alone palliative care units but throughout the State as they deal with people in the last hours of their life. Not all palliative care, of course, clearly identified palliative care wards in hospitals as I have in Mount Druitt. Once we can get over the Labor/Liberal variation divide we can refer to this issue as a nice former Labor Government project. It is a stand-alone palliative care unit. Of all the compliments I hear about Mount Druitt Hospital, for the size of the ward and the number of people who go through it, the highest number of people come from those in the community who have been touched by the very excellent service of the doctors and nurses who work at the Mount Druitt palliative care unit.

Members should realise that the provision of palliative care is not restricted to bricks and mortar and stand-alone wards in hospital. In every hospital in this State doctors and nurses every day deal with the very sensitive issue of palliative care. My own parents died at hospitals at Lewisham and Liverpool in very different decades in wards which were not designated as palliative care but, of course, those people received the best palliative care treatment from the very professionally trained hospital doctors and nurses who were on duty at that time. They were treated in a very dignified way. I only make the comment because I thought the petition is fantastic. Any politician would recognise that to get 23,000 people to sign a petition is a major achievement. I wanted to comment about palliative care services, however, I feel very uncomfortable that the subject was brought into the general cut and thrust of debate in this place about Labor and Liberal.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Monaro will come to order. I call the member for Cabramatta to order.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I conclude by saying that all governments, Coalition and Labor, have always put palliative care to the top of their list. The Labor Government is no different. This petition talks about increasing palliative care.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order. Order! I call the member for Oatley to order for the second time.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I wish the people of North Sydney great success. I hope the increase in palliative care funding for North Sydney is part of a general increase in palliative care funding for all New South Wales and does not come at the expense of palliative care services in other parts of Sydney, such as those already mentioned in the south-west and in Mount Druitt. Congratulations to the residents. You have done a great job. I hope your increased funding does not result in decreased funding for palliative care in other parts of the State.

Mr ROB STOKES: [6.29 p.m.] I express on behalf of my northern beaches colleagues our gratitude to the Premier and the Minister for Health for this important announcement. If the member for Mount Druitt had been concentrating on the debate he would have realised that this is about correcting an imbalance where funding was reduced or taken away. This is a matter of justice for the residents of northern Sydney; not just for the residents of the North Shore. We on the northern beaches and from the North Shore are quite sensitive about this important distinction.

I acknowledge the English poet who noted that "death begins with life's first breath and life begins at touch of death". That is really the point of palliative care. In etymological terms, palliative care means to relieve without hope of cure. The principle is that when someone is facing death as a result of a terminal illness, life becomes extremely precious purely through consciousness of death. That is a reminder to all of us to value every single day we are on this earth because life will come to an end eventually for all of us. Palliative care is truly a mark of the civilisation that we in this place seek to shape. It is very important that adequate resources are made available to ensure that palliative care services are properly provided. That proposition should enjoy the support of every member of this House.

I thank the five members of the Opposition and members of the Government who are present in the Chamber to listen to this important discussion. In particular, I thank a couple of people from the Northern Beaches end of the equation, who have really gone above and beyond in their duty of service to people who have terminal illnesses. The work of the first person I mention was brought to my attention by the Hon. Brad Hazzard, who commended to me Dr Peter Moore for having served so faithfully at hospitals throughout the HammondCare network. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and member for Wakehurst informed me his mother was cared for very compassionately by Dr Moore in the last stages of her life. I also note the work of Gerry Lake, who does wonderful work on the Northern Beaches, and Dr John Doran who passed away, but who was a real leader in palliative care.

I also note the work of Eileen Gordon, who is President of the Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary. The auxiliary raised several hundred thousand dollars towards finally realising the construction of extensions to the Cora Adcock Palliative Care Day Hospital in the grounds of the Mona Vale Hospital. A commitment was made to build a hospice at Mona Vale Hospital by the former Greiner-Fahey Liberal Government. When Labor won office, it welshed on the deal. Approximately \$300,000 had been raised by the community as matching funding towards construction of the hospice.

Labor ensured that that money stayed in an account in the Department of Health. As a result, the account attracted a continuous administration fee until a former member for Pittwater and former Leader of the Opposition, John Brogden, successfully had the administration fee waived. The money was transferred later to the Commission of Dormant Funds and was not released to the community for the purpose of getting on with building the extension. It was an absolute disgrace that that money was held up by the Labor Government whose simply disgraceful conduct left the community's hundreds of thousands of dollars in no-man's-land for 16 years.

Fortunately the funds have been rescued and the Northern Beaches community is getting on with the important work of carrying out extensions to the palliative care day hospital. In conclusion, I make this observation: The way we treat people during their terminal illness is clearly a mark of our civilisation. I thank Dr McMaster and the 23,000 people who signed the petition as well as the Premier and the Minister for Health for their wonderful response.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CYCLING

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.33 p.m.]: Having just heard a valuable health-related debate centring on palliative care, it is particularly salient to note that smoking, poor nutrition, risky alcohol use and physical inactivity comprise the largest group of preventable risk factors for death and disease in Australia. These factors are attributed to the development of chronic diseases such as diabetes, stroke, obesity and the single greatest killer of Australians, cardiovascular disease. In many cases, these deaths are preventable. This is a matter of great importance to all Australians, as it was to me as a former non-executive director of a health insurer. Physical inactivity costs Australia \$10 billion a year.

That is one reason why the previous Labor Government's failure to deliver on its promise that was announced in 2000 under Bob Carr's Bike Plan 2010, and re-announced in the New South Wales BikePlan last year, was so disappointing. There was to be a cycling path along the North Shore rail track, including along Boundary Street, Roseville. While that may still be constructed in a future works program, the community's call for action as part of the current rail bridge upgrade project essentially was ignored. Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai councils were not even notified of details of the project until very late. Under Labor there was a lack of transparency and public consultation in the planning phase.

A shared cyclist-pedestrian bridge over Boundary Street could have been built simultaneously with the Roseville rail bridge upgrade, thus providing a critical link for cyclists to trails leading to and from the central business district and their workplaces. It would have eased congestion on one of the busiest roads on the border of Davidson, Willoughby and Ku-ring-gai electorates. Currently, the only alternatives for cyclists are to ride on the Pacific Highway, Archer Street or Hill Street, all of which involve busy intersections with Boundary Street. Unfortunately the current options do not promote cycling as a healthier approach to travel.

The recent success of Cadel Evans in the Tour de France has lifted the profile of cycling in Australia. Cycling is an excellent way to stay fit and has been proven to reduce the chance of developing lifestyle diseases—which is why bike infrastructure is essential in Davidson and more broadly. Unlike gym memberships and other exercise options, which risk a lack of interest and momentum after the novelty phase finishes, cycling to work every day, or daily routine biking, is a very sustainable method of regular physical activity. In many instances we are helping to facilitate a non-discretionary commute: the physical benefit is a by-product, albeit an important and often overlooked one.

Alongside health, economic benefits are becoming increasingly significant for cycling. Spiralling fuel costs and urban congestion have refocused attention towards less energy and space-intensive transport. Cycling offers an effective way to ease the pain of the petrol pump. An independent study by AECOM found that for every dollar spent on cycleways, there is an economic benefit of \$4. Cycling should also be safe and it is important that cyclists wear helmets, stay visible, obey traffic rules and respect drivers. As a community we should provide options and opportunities for cheaper, healthier and easier travel for our residents.

Cycling does not have to be just about commuting; it can also be about leisure. With an ageing population, encouraging active lifestyles is especially important and cycling ticks that box. It is socially inclusive—for all ages and levels and for individuals or groups, regardless of socioeconomic status. It is a great way to move around the neighbourhood or spend an active day with the kids, fostering the importance of an active and healthy lifestyle among future generations. Creating an environment where this is encouraged remains the challenge, as I have seen in my own community. Some recent developments in my community are more promising. I am pleased that the lobbying efforts of local community residents have ensured that the landfill site at Belrose is being planned to become an outdoor recreation area, including a mountain biking facility. Both Warringah Council and Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council have paid more attention to cycling initiatives in recent years, which is encouraging.

Although many argue it is an individual's responsibility to stay fit and healthy, it is also a community effort. By providing infrastructure and attractive options to head to the outdoors and stay active, we counter the economic, physical and emotional toll of physical inactivity. We do not want to see our family, friends or neighbours slip slowly downhill into a sedentary lifestyle. Providing infrastructure for mountain bike tracks, bike tracks or, more broadly, tennis courts or pools, supports our community to be happier and healthier. Health

is an issue of paramount importance. I want my community to have the environment and infrastructure that fosters and promotes a healthy lifestyle, reinforcing the active and sporting lifestyle that has been a cornerstone of Australia's heritage.

KOREAN WAR

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.38 p.m.]: Even though today is not a special time for remembering, every day is a special day for the people of the Wallsend electorate when it comes to paying tribute to our local heroes. Former Royal Australian Air Force pilot Ron Guthrie symbolises what is best about Australia. He not only fought in the Korean War, but was taken prisoner in North Korea. He later wrote about his experiences in a book entitled *Escape from North Korea*, which was published in 2002. The first edition of the book—1,070 copies—sold out. It received positive reviews, with Ron and his co-writer and publisher, Col King, undertaking a book tour around Taree and Port Macquarie in the north and down to the northern suburbs of Sydney. There was great interest from ladies auxiliaries and service clubs such as Lions and Probus. The book is still being sold through Fighter World at Williamstown. I admire Ron for his endurance, for surviving against the odds, and for being a mentor to our next generation. I am not alone in my admiration for Ron. President Ray Warry and Secretary Alan Proud of Lambton New Lambton RSL Sub-branch said:

Ron Guthrie to our Sub-branch members is an inspiration on life itself. Having endured the hardships and mental anguish during his period in enemy hands is testimony to the man's character. Given the magnitude of his experiences, those faced by modern generations seem rather insignificant.

This year is the first time that an Australian Prime Minister commemorated Anzac Day in Korea. It proved to be a meaningful gesture by the Prime Minister because it gave Korean veterans the credence they deserve. It was a courageous act, as tension on the thirty-eighth parallel is as heightened today as it was in 1950. Alan Hunter is President of Wallsend RSL Sub-branch, Chairman of Lingard Veteran's Board, and the Newcastle District Council of RSL Sub-branches delegate. He represents district councils on the management committee for Newcastle commemoration services. He assists in arranging RSL funerals and liaises with schools, hospitals and nursing homes regarding Anzac Day services. Alan served in the Royal Australian Navy during the Korean conflict and said that he was pleased to see the Prime Minister give recognition to the conflict. Alan said:

We have come a long way ... When we first came home not even the RSL accepted us as returned servicemen, apparently we were "peace keepers".

There was no counselling in those days and there are men who fought in that war who to this day suffer from the consequences of that conflict. Therefore, today I acknowledge the important contributions that our country made on the Korean peninsula for the sake of surviving veterans such as Ron and Alan and as a legacy for everyone. As for Ron Guthrie's experience of fighting in the Korean War, his plane was shot down on 29 August 1951, he ejected at 39,000 feet—a world record at the time—and was then captured as a prisoner of war. He remained a prisoner of war, despite a short escape, until the end of hostilities and was released on 3 September 1953.

On returning to Australia he refocused his attention on the future and became a successful writer. He retired from the Royal Australian Air Force in 1980. In his book *Escape from North Korea* Ron wrote of the fanaticism of the North Koreans. He believed the country was a basket case because of the relentless indoctrination of its citizens from a very early age. Alan and Ron concur with the view that the state of North Korea today is a clear vindication that it was right to resist the invasion during the 1950 to 1953 conflict. We are privileged that Ron Guthrie is still with us today, the last survivor of Camp 2. Every couple of months he meets up with serving and former members of 77 Squadron for lunch in Hamilton. Ron remains active in the community, and is patron of the Lambton-New Lambton RSL Sub-branch, of which I am a proud member. He is involved with the Uniting Church at New Lambton, and is enjoying retirement with his family. I congratulate Ron and Alan, and I encourage both of them to keep sharing their many stories because it is their legacy upon which our Australian identity is built.

HARDEN-MURRUMBURRAH STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [6.43 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the very substantial and highly valued efforts that are underway in the so-called twin towns of Harden-Murrumburrah in south-western New South Wales in my electorate of Burrinjuck. Even though they lie in the heart of some of the best agricultural lands in the State, the entire region has been through a long, hard drought, and the towns have suffered declining business—for example, the abattoir and local hotels have closed. However, both Harden and Murrumburrah are looking at

ways to re-energise and revitalise their local communities. I was delighted to meet recently with Harden Shire Council and others involved in an organisation called Team Harden that is determined to find ways to re-energise and revitalise these significant local communities. I am pleased that recently Harden Shire Council put on public exhibition a proposed plan for streetscape improvements for the town centres. I note that that public exhibition closed today.

It is most obvious that a lot of work and a lot of thought has gone into these plans. I expect that when the design concepts are put into place according to the staged implementation program they will deliver much-enhanced town centres that achieve the core objectives. While the plans have been tailored to the particular needs and current streetscapes of both Harden and Murrumburrah, it is pleasing to see that the designs utilise some of the proven principles from other renewal projects in other country towns within my electorate and across the State. These include traffic-calming devices such as roundabouts and nature strips, deciduous large tree plantings for shade and shelter, raised pedestrian crossings, strategic lighting of key landmarks such as church spires, improved town signage for visitors, upgraded parks and gardens, new parking arrangements, building facade enhancements, sculptures and artwork features, and events such as farmers markets.

Members of Parliament from rural and regional areas and those who represent city electorates and who travel through country areas will know that such developments put some verve back into the main streets of country towns. It is so important to slow down the traffic. In Harden-Murrumburrah the main street, Albury Street, is part of the Burley Griffin Way, which is a major regional highway that extends from Griffith to the Hume Highway, then on to Yass and to Sydney. It is a major thoroughfare that sees a lot of very heavy vehicle movements, particularly when agriculture produce is transported from key parts of the west to market. At the moment the street is dead straight with a long dip. It has often been said, jokingly perhaps, that if a speed camera were put at the bottom of the dip on the outskirts of Murrumburrah it would do very well indeed, as trucks speed up to climb the hill and leave town. A primary school is located in the middle of the main street.

It is important to be able to park in the shade, to cross the street safely and to simply enjoy the experience of either doing business in town or meeting up with friends. People want to go about their business in an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere. I am sure that the works in both Harden and Murrumburrah will also encourage a vibrant cafe culture—the use of comfortable, strategically placed outdoor furniture and dining facilities adds an extra element to streetscapes and communities. I sincerely congratulate Mayor Chris Manchester and Harden Shire Council on their work to date, and I also congratulate Team Harden and its Chairman Tony Flannery. Of course, to see the fruits of their labour will require ongoing commitment, expertise and good community liaison as the proposed works unfold. I am confident that the streetscape improvement proposals are in very good hands.

Construction of stage one is to be completed in 2012, subject to support funding and community approval of the proposed streetscape improvements. A key aspect is not only improving road safety and pleasing aesthetics but also reducing the extent of visible asphalt roadway wherever possible. The large amount of asphalt in the main street and the surrounding area is not necessary. Beautification will really enhance this community. As the member of Burrinjuck, I will maintain contact with the leaders and managers of the works in Harden and Murrumburrah, and I look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the public exhibition stage. I intend to assist where I can in order to see the community's preferred options swing into place and become a reality. All going to plan, we could see the commencement of construction stage 1 in March next year. Once again, congratulations to Team Harden on recognising that there is a way forward in beautifying a wonderful community that has had a rough time during the drought. I wish them all the very best of luck in their endeavours.

DEAN PARK COMMUNITY WATCH GROUP

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [6.48 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to inform the House about the role being played by the Dean Park Community Watch group in advancing the interests of residents of the suburb of Dean Park within my electorate of Riverstone. The suburb of Dean Park was developed in the 1980s. Despite its relatively short history, it has grown into an interesting community that reflects the history of the region. It is named after William Dean—not Sir William Deane, who was Governor-General in the 1990s, but an early landholder who was given a grant of 200 acres beside Eastern Creek early in the nineteenth century and who later ran a significant and well-known pub situated along the Great Western Highway. The suburb has just under 1,000 dwellings housing about 3,000 people. The area is underprivileged relative to the rest of the Riverstone electorate, it adjoins the greater Mount Druitt area and experiences all the challenges facing that region. For that reason, the role of Dean Park Community Watch is especially valuable.

The group was formed a couple of years ago, largely at the instigation of Karen Tyler, the local community development worker at the neighbourhood centre, and it now has 15 members. Karen says that the local people are down to earth, honest and hardworking and that they come to the centre as strangers and leave as friends. I can testify to that having visited the centre on a couple of occasions late last year. Ms Tyler has been working in community services for 25 years in various places, including Kings Cross. Her experiences equip her well to serve the people of Dean Park, and she does so with enormous enthusiasm. In establishing the community watch group she has pulled together a range of people who might not otherwise have participated in such a group but who are now enjoying the experience and making a valuable contribution to their community.

In its short life the group has organised the rejuvenation of the Dean Park shopping precinct, successfully petitioned Telstra to maintain the only pay phone in Dean Park, organised the removal of graffiti in the shopping centre area, worked with Constable Sue Carter from Quakers Hill Local Area Command to carry out a safety audit of the Dean Park shopping precinct, made recommendations to council and other stakeholders about safety upgrades, requested the council to make the shopping precinct an alcohol-free zone, and removed graffiti in local reserves.

The group's contribution is bringing people together in a way that they may not have experienced previously. I particularly compliment Des Duke, the chairperson of the group. Des is from Victoria and was an Army officer in a previous life and has been in the real estate industry. He is using his valuable life experiences to the benefit of his local community. Donna Burton, the secretary, also has a real estate background. Donna is a local resident and has four children and now one grandchild. She has been actively involved in the group since February 2010. The group facilitates a wide range of activities as part of the community development project, including walking groups, Tai Chi, Zumba, line dancing, Knit and Natter, Crochet and Chatter, creative cards sessions, TAFE beginners' computer classes and so on. Those activities involve a wide range of people and help to bring people together to build the bonds that make a community out of a suburb.

Before I conclude my contribution, I draw the attention of the House to Mr Frank Flores, a Dean Park resident who died in 2004. Frank typifies the spirit of the local people. At 71 years of age he went on a tour of the Philippines and while there his bus was hijacked by local terrorists. Frank died while protecting the more vulnerable people on the bus. A park is now named in his honour and a prize is awarded annually to a young resident who has excelled in a particular field and reflected a general level of excellence. It is a pleasure to be associated with the Dean Park Community Watch group and I wish its members all the very best in the years to come as they continue their valuable work.

WOLLONDILLY ANGLICAN COLLEGE MUSICAL PRODUCTION

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.53 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to an event I attended last Saturday evening hosted by that great school Wollondilly Anglican College, Tahmoor, namely, its annual musical. This year's musical was the great classic *Bye Bye Birdie*. My wife Belinda and I thoroughly enjoyed the musical, which involved the entire school. We were equally impressed with the performances, the back stage crew's professionalism, front-of-house hospitality, the hard work that went into the lighting and costumes and the great music performed by the school's band—which I must admit sounded like the original soundtrack.

Briefly, *Bye Bye Birdie* is about the biggest rock star—Conrad Birdie—to be drafted to the Army, which upset thousands of his teenage fans. Another person not happy about Conrad's draft was his struggling songwriter and manager, Albert Peterson—a mama's boy of a man who was finally going to hit the big time when one of his songs was to be featured in a Birdie movie. Albert's fiancée, Rosie DeLeon, pitches an idea to have Birdie appear on the *Ed Sullivan Show* kissing one of his fans as a symbolic goodbye while he sings a yet to be written song by Albert to be called *One Last Kiss*.

Rosie is hoping that this move will bring financial security to Albert, who will then be able to support his mother, Mae Peterson, who wants Albert to go into show business rather than become a schoolteacher and marry Rosie. The fan chosen is Kim McAfee of Sweet Apple, Ohio. Until being chosen as the recipient of Birdie's kiss, Kim's sole focus in life was being "pinned" by her boyfriend, Hugo Peabody. Birdie's presence in Sweet Apple brings up many issues that may thwart Rosie and Albert's plans, including a jealous Hugo, an exasperated Harry McAfee—Kim's father—and a punch-up on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. In the end everything works out well and Albert and Rosie get married and Conrad escapes the crowds by departing wearing a dress. The Wollondilly Anglican College version threw up a surprise twist from the original that was well incorporated into the script.

In 1963 Dick Van Dyke appeared in a production of *Bye Bye Birdie* and Jason Alexander—from *Seinfeld*—appeared in another version in 1995. However, I can say with complete confidence that 2011 saw the fabulous Jacob Fleming version. Jacob is a year 11 student from the school who told me before the show that he wanted to pursue a career in show business. With talents such as his, I know that he will succeed in his endeavours. The main characters were played by Tammy Nelson as Rosie Alvarez, Briony Roelands as Conrad Birdie, Genevieve Wood as Kim MacAfee, and Kathryn Clark as Albert Peterson's mother. These talented young actors were an absolute delight to watch on stage and their performances reflect the talent and quality of teaching staff at Wollondilly Anglican School.

I thank the headmaster, Dr Stuart Quarmby, for his invitation and for making Belinda and me feel welcome; Mr Simon Denley, the creative arts coordinator and conductor; Belinda Taylor, the backdrops coordinator; Mrs Sarah Talbott, the artistic and music director; Mrs Christie Lee Ferris, the choreographer; and Samantha Pool and Brandan Hay. Great performances like the one I witnessed on the weekend are the culmination of hard work and dedication on the part of many people. In particular, I acknowledge the cast and crew: Emily Baker, Angela Bates, Josefin Bauch, Marnie Brauer, Hannah Buick, Sarah Butt, Emily Clark, Kathryn Clark, Daisy Cooper, Brady Cooper, Amy Cox, Maxine Croft, Alexander Denley, Domenique Distefano, Emily Egan, Katie Flanagan, Jacob Fleming, Laura Fleming, Chantelle Holden, Mackenzie Hunt, Ethan Keable, Grayce Keen, Courtney Lange, Jasmin Law, Lilly Ma, Najette McManus, Crystal Meuleman, Kirralee Miller, Tammy Nelson, Tahlia Pfizner, Samuel Rigg, Briony Roelands, Eloise Roelands, Georgina Saint John-Viney, Ineke Schroder, Olivia Spinley, Beth Wadling and Genevieve Woods.

I also congratulate the orchestra on its fantastic performance. Its members include: Simon Denley, Jillian Bridge, Sara Glynn, Jonathan Bekes, Lloyd Grant, Michael Watkin, Emily-Kate Downie, Mathew Byers, Hannale Lombard, Joel Geist, Justin Holbeck and Dave Helmann. The stage production team included: Montana Walker, Hayden Alcorn, Amy Piper, Erin Grant, Alyssa Girvan, Scott Badger, Olivia Tinsley, Ling Ling Ma, Charles Fail, Amy Speakman, Cameron Elliot, Nathaniel Coen, Kaine Schroff, Stephanie Bailey, Elyse Bishenden, Isabella Grech and Carly Ison. The design team included: Lillian Cooper, Joyee Li, Danielle Vibert, Sean Auston, Azaena Blackmore, Seriya Blackmore, Deanna Conlan, Daisy Cooper, Joshua Corney, Georgie Creswick, Maxine Croft, Patrick Eaton, Elise Grice, Thomas Hart, Molly Hellyer, Mayom Keereerad, Rebekah Law, Liam Ma, Zoe Majstorovic, Tahlia Reid, Elyse Wood and Hayden Wood. It was such a great performance that I felt obliged to name everyone involved. I congratulate the school on such a great performance.

GOVERNOR LACHLAN MACQUARIE BICENTENARY

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [6.58 p.m.]: When a community comes together to celebrate a significant historical anniversary, that celebration becomes another historic moment in itself. That is what happened recently in the seat of Londonderry when Hawkesbury council, the community and many organisations, including local businesses, rose to the occasion and celebrated the 200th anniversary of Lieutenant General Lachlan Macquarie's swearing in as the fifth Governor of New South Wales and the naming of the five Macquarie towns—Windsor, Richmond, Pitt Town, Wilberforce and Castlereagh. Lachlan Macquarie came to New South Wales having had a distinguished military career. His leadership was marked by bringing together a divided community and using the skills available from convicts and free settlers to transform a colony that was struggling to feed itself into a strong and prosperous agricultural base that laid the foundations for our future wealth.

The Macquarie 2010 celebration was an appropriate and fitting way to acknowledge Lachlan Macquarie's contribution to our heritage and our development as a nation. What is even more significant about these celebrations is that they were not on a single weekend or during one month but were a year-long celebration of events to mark the legacy of Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie, focusing on their influence on the development and landscape of the Hawkesbury. The Hawkesbury Macquarie 2010 celebration was community based and run and, working in partnership with Hawkesbury City Council and neighbouring Penrith, 77 events were planned and delivered.

The council's principle role in the planning and development of the celebrations was to communicate with community groups to empower them to run successful events themselves by establishing a committee consisting of 18 community representatives, councillors and council staff to provide assistance and direction. I was proud to chair this committee for a period during the two years it met. The aim of this collaborative approach was to work with the community to deliver a decentralised program of events and activities across the Hawkesbury, rather than to organise a single large event, which had been the practice.

In the absence of State and Federal government assistance, the demand on council's budget meant that council by itself had limited capacity to fund a major events program for the celebrations. The financial constraints meant that council utilised and capitalised on the skills and expertise of staff from several different council areas at no additional cost and capitalised on the skills and knowledge of the community to ensure a successful and memorable year-long event. The celebrations provided the opportunity to increase the level of collaborative partnership between the community and council, and in turn built trust and allowed both sides of the partnership to further develop a better understanding of each other's capabilities and strengths.

My thanks and congratulations go to the many volunteers working in community organisations in the Hawkesbury and Penrith who made the event happen, often with little funding or assistance. They planned and staged excellent events for residents and visitors to enjoy and participate in. I acknowledge Jean Stephens, a member of the Hawkesbury 2010 Committee, from Castlereagh—the fifth Macquarie Town—and Penrith City Council, which participated in celebrations and hosted the Governor in November 2010 for a special commemorative service in the town's historic church to mark the town's proclamation. I would love to acknowledge the dozens of individual volunteers who put their time and effort into delivering a quality community-run event, but I would inadvertently miss someone. The Hawkesbury 2010 Committee involved a very eclectic range of people from our local social, cultural, sporting and community organisations. They organised and ran events that attracted more than 20,000 community members to celebrations throughout the year.

The Hawkesbury Macquarie 2010 Celebrations opened up tourism opportunities, with large numbers of visitors attending the celebrations. The majority of council's corporate initiatives and events received endorsement from the NSW Macquarie 2010 Bicentenary Commemorations Committee and events were included on the State Calendar. The Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, a strong supporter of the celebrations, attended many events, including the inaugural bicentenary in July 2009, the launch of the Governor Macquarie Rose in April 2010, the church service in Castlereagh in November 2010, and Proclamation Day in December 2010 for the Hawkesbury.

The Governor's strong support significantly raised the profile of the bicentenary celebrations. As a result of this dedicated service, Hawkesbury City Council received a Highly Commended Award in the Local Government and Shires Associations sponsored RH Dougherty Awards, Excellence in Communication Division B, for its Hawkesbury Macquarie 2010 Celebrations submission. The award was presented at the Local Government Week 2011 Awards ceremony in Woolwich on Wednesday 3 August 2011. The award recognises the great contribution of the community and Hawkesbury City Council working together. I congratulate everybody involved, and look forward to celebrations of a similar nature in the future.

BATTLE OF LONG TAN

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [7.03 p.m.]: Tonight I reflect on a very important event. Next Thursday marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the 18 August 1966 Battle of Long Tan. This was a very important event in the history of this nation. Australia's most intensive battle in the Vietnam conflict took place 45 years ago during the Battle of Long Tan in Phuoc Tuy Province. The Battle of Long Tan was costly for Australians. Eighteen Australians—the youngest aged 19 and the oldest 22—lost their lives. A further 21 soldiers were wounded. The battle saw the largest loss of Australian life in a single action in the war. The soldiers fought an enemy force of about 2,500 personnel; 245 enemy bodies were located after the battle. The total number of deaths will never be known.

There is a continuing debate about just what happened at Long Tan. With no enemy plans captured on the day, it is unclear just what they were trying to achieve. The Australians arrival in the province was a blow to the enemy. They were keen to drive the Australians out of Nui Dat. But how to do it? Some accounts suggested that the Australian soldiers were ambushed by the enemy at the village and rubber plantation at Long Tan. But the majority opinion is that the enemy made a mistake in its planning and that the battle was more of an accidental confrontation at Long Tan with Australian troops who were out on patrol. The Australian soldiers fought back very well against overwhelming odds. Their skill and determination stunned the enemy forces and drove them off. The enemy could not believe such a small force could inflict so much damage. The enemy tried to play down the extent of the loss—about 10 per cent of its soldiers.

In 1969 the Australian troops erected a Memorial Cross at Long Tan made of concrete and dedicated it on the third anniversary of the battle. In 1989 the provincial authorities, anxious to get foreign aid and tourist dollars, permitted the erection of a duplicate cross at Long Tan. The dedication ceremony took place on Anzac Day 1989. In 2008 I had the privilege of representing this Parliament and visiting the memorial in the rubber

plantation at Long Tan. It was a very intense and emotional day. I met a number of Vietnam veterans who had journeyed to Long Tan for the ceremony. My electorate has a large number of Vietnam veterans. Next Thursday, 18 August, I will attend a memorial function at that great club, the South Tweed Sports Club, to lay a wreath, as I have done for the past four years.

The club's chief executive officer, Mr Gordon Rhodes, the chairman of the board, Mr Charlie Tygesen, and Mr Dave Crockett and his crew do not constitute a formal association by any means, but these Vietnam veterans are very proud of their service. They suffered great losses. Many lost fellow soldiers during that battle. To stand in that rubber plantation and observe the physical and emotive effects was extraordinarily touching. All Australians are greatly indebted to the soldiers who took part in the events of that day. They showed bravery, dedication and commitment to their fellow soldiers. This was just another example of what we saw at Gallipoli and on Anzac Day—the true Australian spirit born of that day continues. We see it in our personnel in Afghanistan.

Recently I was honoured to represent the Premier at the funeral of a soldier from my area, Sapper Robinson, who was shot and killed in Afghanistan recently. I was very moved when his fellow patrol officers carried out the coffin as part of a ceremony conducted with true military precision; it was a credit to them. The ceremony was attended by Tony Abbott, the Leader of the Opposition, and Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister. On leaving that very moving ceremony, I observed a number of patrol officers weeping at the loss of their comrade and friend. One thing that stuck in my mind was that Sapper Robinson's father said, "Just let them finish the job." It behoves all politicians to fully support the brave men and women of our defence forces who defend this nation time and time again.

MENAI ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

SUTHERLAND SHIRE MAYORAL BALL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [7.08 p.m.]: I have previously spoken about some of the busy schools on the western side of my electorate but I will now share some of my experiences from the other side of my electorate. With 50 per cent of my electorate on the western side and 50 per cent of my electorate on the eastern side it is important to do so. Very shortly after the election one of my first ministerial visits was from Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli and the Premier. I joined them as they announced the statewide interactive whiteboard rollout at one of my local schools—Illawong Public School. It was the first opportunity I had had to witness these fantastic technological tools in action. I had the opportunity to meet some of the staff at the school and watch as the students deftly operated this brand new technology without hesitation.

My memory of school is of classrooms lined with blackboards, not standard whiteboards and interactive whiteboards. The interactive whiteboards have made such a difference to the way that teachers are able to interact with the class and help students of different learning levels. They really help to get students actively involved in answering questions via the touch screen. Interactive whiteboards even make maths look like fun. The excitement the school shared following that announcement was recently highlighted to me when I came across a "Community of Schools Between the Rivers" display at Menai Market Place. A photograph of the Premier, the Minister for Education and the school leaders was proudly displayed.

Before Parliament returned for the spring session, I was able to make time to plant some trees with students at Jannali Public School as part of National Tree Day. When I arrived I was ushered into the small school hall, which was packed with students, teachers and parents for the weekly assembly. It was also my first visit to the school, despite having a longstanding involvement with Sutherland Shire Council and helping to source funding for before and after school care. The school has only 110 students, but it is supported by a brilliant hands-on school community. During the assembly I watched many students receive awards for holding strong community values and for their hard work and participation.

For Schools Tree Day the school had plans to remediate a previously unused section of the school grounds, which had been revitalised into an outdoor seating area and garden bed with funds from the Building the Education Revolution program. However, the garden bed was well and truly in need of a few green thumbs. Faye Hillier, one of the parents, had organised the plants, which included some native bottle brush, for the students to plant. I was even treated to a pre-dug hole to start off my planting. But I quickly made up for that luxury by planting a whole lot more. Despite having an initial plan as to where each plant should go, the random digging from the kids managed to create a great looking garden.

It was great to see two students in wheelchairs getting involved in the planting. One girl had the most amazing wheelchair I have ever seen. With a few switches she was able to lower herself to the ground to help fill holes and to mulch the new garden. I always enjoy seeing new ways to help people with disabilities, especially children, to participate in regular activities. It was a privilege to get my hands dirty and earn my green thumb amongst such a lovely school community while supporting National Tree Day activities. I have promised to return to the school each year to see how my trees are going—hopefully they will last the distance.

On 4 June I attended the Sutherland Shire Mayoral Ball as the proud sponsor of Laura Barendregt as she made her debut. Laura is the Captain of Lucas Heights Community School. It was a pleasure to watch so many young ladies and their escorts, all dressed up for such a special occasion, make their official entrance into society. This year the event was a fundraiser for Civic Disability Services. Amongst other services, Civic offers day programs for people with disabilities. I got to know the staff quite well, as my campaign office was opposite their building. In the near future they are going to teach me, and lasagne is on the menu. I take this opportunity to thank Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, for his fast action in assisting Bangor Primary School with its heating trouble. It was fixed as soon as it came to the Minister's attention so that the students were able to learn in a warm environment. I am honoured to represent these schools and I look forward to further updating the House on their progress.

INDIAN NATIONAL DAY

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [7.13 p.m.]: It is no secret that New South Wales celebrates the most culturally diverse population in this nation. We celebrate cultures, traditions and religion in harmony. We celebrate festivals, national days and religious holidays worldwide. Indian Independence Day, which is celebrated on 15 August, is one such day. In Indian history 15 August is a watershed: 1947 saw India gain independence from Britain and the birth of India as a sovereign nation. The member for Baulkham Hills will shortly recount the geopolitical history of India, but I will speak about some of the wonderful things the Australian Indian community is doing.

India is growing as one of Australia's largest trading partners. The thirst for Australian resources to fuel the phenomenal growth of India continues without respite. New South Wales even has a trade Office in Mumbai. The 2006 census revealed that in the order of 100,000 residents in New South Wales had Indian ancestry, with some 57,000 born in India—a staggering 38 per cent increase since the 2001 census. I will be interested to follow the continued rise of residents with Indian ancestry from the 2011 census. Indian people make a huge contribution to New South Wales. Many are in the professions of medicine, engineering and teaching, and we also have many are students. In 2009 in the order of 120,000 Indian students were enrolled in courses in Australia, many of those in New South Wales. They make great citizens because they are educated and they integrate well into society.

My electorate is home to a strong Indian and South Asian community. Some 7,442 live in the area—Hindu, Sikh, Islamic and Christian—which demonstrates the cultural diversity of Parramatta. The Indian Australian community is an increasing part of the diverse cultural fabric of Parramatta. Parramatta has the highest proportion of voters born in South-East Asia—Indian, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi, at 10.2 per cent. Harris Park in my electorate is noted for its food, fashion and culture. Parramatta also hosts Parramasala, an Australia Festival of South Asian arts, which comprises music, dance, theatre performances and visual arts. It is one of a kind in Australia. This year Parramasala will be held between 30 October and 6 November, with more than 50,000 people expected to attend.

Last Sunday, 7 August, I attended an event to commemorate Indian Independence Day. Minister Dominello and other members also attended this event. The India Day Fair, held in Parramatta Park, was organised by the Council of Indian Australians. Some 5,000 people were exposed to a number of cultural performances and different activities. This Sunday, 14 August, I will attend the United Indian Associations Friendship Fair at Sydney Olympic Park. That event has been running for 17 years and the theme this year is "Experience India". Thousands of people are expected to attend this event.

I place on record my thanks to a number of the community organisations for those events, particularly the United Indian Association and its President Amarinder Bajwa, and the Council of Indian Australians and its president, Dr Yadu Singh. It also gives me great pleasure to co-host the Indian Multicultural Advisory Group with the member for Baulkham Hills. We look forward to working closely with the Indian Australian community. In conclusion, New South Wales does a great job in celebrating cultural diversity and in acknowledging the contribution of the Indian community to peace, harmony and wellbeing.

INDIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [7.18 p.m.]: I join with the member for Parramatta to commemorate and celebrate Indian National Day on 15 August this year. In the old days the Australian Indian national relationship could have been decreed under the three Cs: cricket, Commonwealth and commerce—or in my case, as members can see, curry, which I enjoy. Like the member for Parramatta, I am delighted and honoured to have been appointed by the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to co-chair with the member for Parramatta the Australian-Indian Ministerial Advisory Council. The council will be a lead body in Australian-Indian relations in New South Wales, particularly in the Parramatta and Baulkham Hills electorates, which is home to many major contributors to the Australian Indian community.

Indian National Day is a great celebration for Indians across the world, but I will focus on the relationship between New South Wales and India, and the contribution made by Indians in New South Wales. Two major organisations, the United India Associations and the Council of Indian Australians, have been established as the peak bodies and voices for Indian Australians. Indians have been migrating to Australia for well over 100 years, and we have a wonderful relationship with them in so many areas. As mentioned by the member for Parramatta and others, our sporting prowess with the Indian community is of great note and celebration. I could recite for hours the occasions on which we have enjoyed wonderful sporting matches between Australia and India.

We also share a great rivalry in the Commonwealth Games. A number of Indian Australians have made a massive contribution to both Australia and India at the Commonwealth Games. Being a fan of all things Indian, I vividly remember attending the Commonwealth Games in Manchester and watching the medal hockey game between India and Pakistan. I do not recall seeing a sporting event that created such energy than the traditional rivalry in the hockey match between Pakistan and India at the Commonwealth Games. Indian Australians have a wonderful heritage in our military.

Mrs Roza Sage: Hear, hear!

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: As does the member for Blue Mountains, I hasten to add. As a former military officer I know that Indian Australians have made a wonderful contribution to our defence forces. Last Friday the member for Parramatta and I attended an event at Parramatta Park to celebrate Indian National Day, and this Sunday the United India Associations will hold a similar event in Baulkham Hills to celebrate Indian National Day. Members of the Indian Australian community are happy for us to celebrate and commemorate the proud, shared history they have with our military. That shared heritage includes military events that can be dated back to the Boer War, when the Indians made a major contribution to the British forces attacking the Boers in South Africa between 1899 and 1901.

The military heritage dates back to World War I, when many Indian battalions fought so bravely with the rest of the then Empire forces on the Western Front. Military forces joined in battle in South-East Asia when Indian, Australian and British forces held back as much as possible the Japanese invasion down the Malay peninsula and particularly in Singapore. Indians have maintained a great presence throughout the Commonwealth and, indeed, the world. This weekend the member for Parramatta and I will be at Homebush Bay celebrating this massive contribution, as well as the deserved accolades for Indian Australians from the Australian community and the New South Wales community in particular. I am proud to celebrate the wonderful contribution made by Indian Australians and to celebrate Indian National Day in New South Wales.

SNOW MUCH MORE FUNDRAISING EVENT

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [7.23 p.m.]: I draw the attention of members to the excellent event organised by Snow Much More in Cooma in July to raise funds for the Snowy Hydro SouthCare rescue helicopter service and the Cooma Hospital emergency department. Snow Much More is the leading business, regional development and community website in the region. It is a real asset to my community to have such a great online presence and a real one-stop shop for everything to do within the Monaro region. Snow Much More did an excellent job in putting together a bachelor and bachelorette auction dinner, which was a great mixture of fun and fundraising. After I had spent so much time in Sydney for parliamentary sittings, it was refreshing to get back to my community and to attend such a great event, which showcased all that is good about the Monaro.

It was a great night for a couple of great causes. The money raised has gone to assist the Snowy Hydro SouthCare service and the Cooma Hospital emergency department. The Snowy Hydro SouthCare service is a

godsend to the people of my electorate. Since 1998 the SouthCare helicopter has been a lifesaver in the Monaro region and beyond. The SouthCare helicopter provides an invaluable 24-hour service to the region every day of the year. There is no institution held in higher regard in the Monaro than the Snowy Hydro SouthCare service. It brings great comfort to the community to hear and see the distinctive SouthCare helicopter flying overhead. The fundraising efforts by Snow Much More will help Snowy Hydro SouthCare provide so many in the region with a second chance at life.

The Cooma Hospital emergency department is second to none in terms of patient care. Just a few weeks before the event in July we had a clear demonstration of the great work done by the Cooma emergency department. In June a bus carrying 44 passengers rolled down an embankment in Jindabyne; 21 people were injured and they were taken to Cooma Hospital. This sort of influx would have brought many similar sized regional hospitals to their knees. But Cooma emergency department managed this serious situation with the excellence that has become its trademark. Due in no small part to the first-rate response of the Cooma emergency department, there were no fatalities and all patients have made a steady recovery.

This is just one example of the many incidents that the Cooma emergency department has successfully dealt with, not to mention the many individual emergency patients the emergency department responds to every day. As the local member I am committed to continue to lobby for further funding for Cooma Hospital. I thank all of those involved in making the night so special. I pay tribute to all the contestants on the night. They were all impressive and all worthy of winning; they should be commended for their efforts in the lead-up to the event. I give a special "well done" to Jillian Norris, who was crowned the Bachelorette of the Year, and Steve Tucker, who was crowned the Bachelor of the Year. I also thank all those who turned up and supported these two great services.

I thank also the sponsors of the evening, including; Alpine Oasis Therapies, Jindabyne; Snowy Flowers of Jindabyne; the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service; Aeropelican Air Services; Cottle House, Cooma; Rebel Sport, Phillip; Snowy Camping World, Cooma; Schoos Photography, Cooma; Cooma Health and Bulk Foods; Sports Business Consulting on behalf of the Cooma Squash and Golf Centre; Monaro Books and Music, Cooma; Never-ending Memories; BrumbyTracks; Estreich Jewellers, Cooma; the *Monaro Post*; Laurie Barber; The Good Guys, Tuggeranong; Better Music, Phillip; Classy Glass Designs, Canberra; Mainstreet Clothing, Cooma; Just Cuts, Queanbeyan, Jenni Warren; Big B's Diner; Harris Scarfe, Tuggeranong; and the Alpine Hotel, Cooma. Lastly, I thank Ange and Paul Hart of Snow Much More. Their efforts in putting the event together were massive; they did a fantastic job. More importantly, their efforts raised \$10,000 for the cause, and the community is incredibly grateful. It is great events such as this one that make towns like Cooma the tight-knit, vibrant communities they are, and make me proud to represent them in this place.

MOUNT TOMAH RURAL FIRE BRIGADE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [7.28 p.m.]: Today I inform the House of the fiftieth anniversary of the Mount Tomah bushfire brigade. I congratulate the brigade on its years of tireless, dedicated service. The Mount Tomah community is a small, close-knit community comprising residents and non-resident landowners. They are nestled in an isolated area surrounded by bush. The Rural Fire Service brigade is the backbone of the community and has been through many devastating bushfires. At the Mount Tomah Rural Fire Service function I attended, we celebrated not only its fiftieth anniversary but also the opening of the new shed extension, dedication of the new water tank and presentation of long service medals. Many dignitaries were present, including the Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner and Blue Mountains Acting District Manager, David Hoadley—a testament to the high regard in which the Mount Tomah brigade is held.

The brigade was formed in 1961 at a public meeting. The Blue Mountains City Council was approached and the brigade was accepted as part of the Blue Mountains brigade district command. Before a tanker or equipment could be supplied the council required a £100 monetary contribution. Then, as now, the community rallied and that amount was obtained as a result of many generous donations. A converted Blitz truck was obtained, which became the pride of the brigade until it was decommissioned in 1987. At that stage there was no permanent shed and the tanker and equipment, as is the practice, were kept in members' sheds. A few other places in the Blue Mountains like this will soon be getting sheds.

The land for the new shed was donated by Mr and Mrs Burnet who also bequeathed the land on which Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens is located. Blue Mountains council accepted the land and the legal transfer was finalised in 1968. The fire shed was officially opened on 9 May 1970. Since then the brigade has gone from strength to strength. There was a need for a facility to house crews and communication, so the community again

set out to raise the money for the shed extension. Over a period of years this tiny community raised over \$80,000 from donations, corporate sponsors and fundraising activities. This amazing effort demonstrates the single-mindedness of the Mount Tomah community.

At the brigade function we were welcomed by President John Mann and thanked by Brigade Captain Peter Ellison. An impressive 31 recipients were presented with long service medals ranging from 10 years of service to a staggering 41 years of service. The Blue Mountains is the most bushfire-prone area in New South Wales and the Mount Tomah brigade has been at the forefront of some of the worst bushfires in that area. It plays a crucial role in the whole network of brigades in the mountains. As far back as 1968 Mount Tomah brigade saw action when a disastrous fire raged through the Blue Mountains from Springwood to Mountain Lagoon. Mount Tomah was in a state of siege and at the end of the emergency 52 houses had been lost in Springwood, along with 14 lives. In December 1979 a deliberately lit fire again held Mount Tomah under siege.

Eighty-four brigades came from around Sydney to help with the firefighting effort, which demonstrates how severe the fire was. Then there was the fire of 1982 and the devastating fires in January 1994—some of the worst bushfires in New South Wales. Those bushfires extended from the top to the bottom of the mountains. I know that because I was trapped away from home and I was not allowed to enter the area as all the roads were blocked. Again Mount Tomah was in the line of fire with no electricity, all roads cut and no phone for 10 days.

The last major fire was in 2006 when for three weeks the fire burned from Blackheath to Mount Tomah and through the Grose Valley, devastating a staggeringly large area. Fortunately it was not in an area where there were any houses other than in the tiny communities to which I have referred. Mount Tomah is a remarkable, resilient and close community—a closeness that has been shaped by the communal good. At the centre of this sense of community is the Mount Tomah Rural Fire Brigade. I heartily congratulate the Mount Tomah brigade for 50 years of extraordinary service. I am sure that it will certainly come to the fore in the future.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.33 p.m. until
Thursday, 11 August 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
