

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 11 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.

## **CROWN LAW OFFICERS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RETIREMENT AGE) BILL 2011**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The object of the Crown Law Officers Legislation Amendment (Retirement Age) Bill 2011 is to increase the retirement age of the following statutory officers from 65 to 72: Deputy Directors of Public Prosecutions and Solicitor for Public Prosecutions, requiring amendment to the Director of Public Prosecutions Act 1986; Crown Prosecutors, Senior Crown Prosecutors and Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutors, requiring amendment to the Crown Prosecutors Act 1986; and Public Defenders, Senior Public Defenders and Deputy Senior Public Defenders, requiring amendment to the Public Defenders Act 1995.

The Crown Law Officers Legislation Amendment (Abolition of Life Tenure) Act 2007, hereinafter referred to as the 2007 amending Act, introduced fixed-term appointments and compulsory retirement for a range of statutory officers in New South Wales. These officers were the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, the Solicitor for Public Prosecutions, Crown Prosecutors, Senior Crown Prosecutors, Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutors, Public Defenders, Senior Public Defenders, Deputy Senior Public Defenders, and the Solicitor General. However, the 2007 amending Act introduced different retirement ages for different offices, imposing a retirement age of 72 for the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Solicitor General, and 65 for the others affected.

While it is recognised that there is some value in ensuring that the statutory officers in question be required to retire at a particular age, it is considered that this should be 72, to ensure consistency across all officers, including judicial officers, with judges and magistrates also required to retire at 72. A number of transitional issues have been identified and they need to be addressed by appropriate savings and transitional provisions to ensure that those who were appointed with life tenure before 1 November 2007 are not forced to retire at any particular age. The date 1 November 2007 was the date on which a retirement age of 65 was imposed on the affected officers by the 2007 amending Act.

The increase in retirement age to 72 will apply to anyone appointed to any of the affected offices since 1 November 2007 who would currently be forced to retire at 65 years of age. People appointed to any of the affected offices since 1 November 2007 will either have a seven-year term or a term of less than seven years if they were within seven years of 65 years of age at the time of appointment. These people will now be able to seek reappointment until 72. If any of these people have been appointed for a term of less than seven years, so as to ensure that their term did not extend beyond the date on which they reached 65, the amendments provide that they will now be taken to have been appointed for a full seven years.

The Director of Public Prosecutions was consulted on the proposed increase in compulsory retirement ages from 65 to 72, and supported the proposed amendments. An anomaly that was shown to have existed as a result of the passing of the 2007 amendment was that someone such as the Senior Public Defender, currently Mark Ierace, SC, a very distinguished and committed officer and lawyer, can be the Senior Public Defender until he is 65, but then he has to leave that position. However, he can go back to his original position of Public Defender forever, as it were, because he has tenure. Some Acting Crown Prosecutors who had acted for some years and who had the reasonable expectation of a permanent appointment as a Crown Prosecutor, as that had

been the procedure, were affected by that. They had given up their practice at the bar, sold their chambers and found that they could not continue to practice for as long as they had intended. At that age they are at the peak of their abilities.

Currently a crown prosecutor in his seventies is at the peak of his ability. Justices Gleeson, McHugh and Kirby in the High Court, for example, had to retire at 70 when they were also at the peak of their careers. This earlier change reflected, probably unintentionally, a form of age discrimination because that had been abolished in public sector areas in the late 1980s for virtually everybody else but for some reason it was brought in for this legislation. I will not go into what I think were the reasons for that; perhaps at a later time. The Director of Public Prosecutions and Senior Public Defender support the proposed amendments, as I am sure will those affected officers. I commend the bill to the House.

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

### **RESIDENTIAL PARKS AMENDMENT (REGISTER) BILL 2011**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts.**

#### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS** (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [10.09 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. Residential parks are an important part of the housing mix in New South Wales, particularly in regional and rural areas. Most members of electorates outside Sydney would have residential parks in their areas. There are also a small handful of residential parks operating in the Sydney metropolitan area. For instance, there is a tourist park in my electorate at Lane Cove that has a number of permanent residents. The residential park industry has changed significantly since caravan parks first began to operate up and down the coast many years ago. As the name implied, caravan parks were originally designed for people who towed their own caravans to a particular spot, stayed for a weekend or a short while, and then moved on.

However, some came to like the idea of park living so much that they decided to stay and rigged up a flexible or rigid annex to the side of their van. This led to the law being changed in the mid-1980s to recognise permanent living arrangements in residential parks. Today, the residential parks industry offers a broad range of options for tourists and holiday-makers as well as for those who want to live permanently in what are now known as residential parks. Residential parks provide an attractive and affordable lifestyle choice, especially for many retirees. Residents are able to purchase a dwelling in a residential park for much less than it would cost them to buy an equivalent type of home in, say, a retirement village.

The dwellings that people are able to buy now in a residential park are very different from those available in the early caravan days. They are more akin to one's average suburban home, the main difference being that they are manufactured off site. The close living environment in residential parks provides a sense of community that some people feel has been lost in the cities and suburbs. A lot of residents develop strong networks of support within their park that they value highly. It is important to recognise that some parks also rent out dwellings for itinerant workers, people who have been locked out of the rental market for various reasons and those who cannot afford to buy a home.

The Residential Parks Act was introduced by the previous Government in 1998 to regulate the residential park industry. Yet, for too many residential park operators and residents the current governance framework is confusing and cumbersome, and too often leads to conflict and disputes. In the lead-up to the March election the Liberals and The Nationals gave a strong commitment to improve the governance of residential parks. This included carrying out a thorough review of the Residential Parks Act, in particular, examining ways to license park operators, ensuring better education for new operators and providing options to improve the process for resolving excessive rent increase claims by residents.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to ensuring that the right balance is struck between park residents and operators, so that residents can feel secure within a viable and vibrant industry. Our aim is to provide greater certainty for residents and the industry by simplifying the legislation and ensuring that disputes

are resolved more quickly and with less acrimony. I take this opportunity to thank my colleague the member for Albury, who laid the groundwork for this important policy plan when he was the shadow Minister. Part of the election commitment we gave made reference to establishing and maintaining a register of all residential parks in New South Wales. This bill brings forward that commitment as the first step towards improving the governance of residential parks.

I will now outline the elements of the bill. It is a relatively simple and straightforward bill, with only a handful of provisions. It proposes to insert into the Residential Parks Act 1998 a new part 13A, dealing with the establishment and maintenance of a register. Proposed section 142A will require park owners or park managers to provide certain information about their park for entry in the register. The obligation to provide this information will apply once the owner or manager receives a written request from the Commissioner for Fair Trading along with the approved registration form. Park owners and managers will be given at least 30 days in which to register the required details. This is more than enough time for such a simple and straightforward task. The bill sets out the information that will be captured by the register. This includes the name, address and contact details of each park, as well as the names and contact details of park owners, managers and resident representatives.

Information will be requested regarding the usage of sites within each park, such as how many sites are being occupied by permanent residents, how many people live on those sites and whether they own or are renting the dwellings. Information on the experience, training and qualifications of the park owner or manager will also be particularly useful in considering the issues of licensing and mandatory education. The approved registration form will contain quite specific questions, to ensure park owners and managers are clear on the details being sought. It is intended that the option of registering online be made available to make it even easier for owners and managers.

Under proposed section 142B, either the park owners or managers will need to notify Fair Trading if they open a new residential park or if there is a significant change to the information they have previously registered. This will apply to events such as the change of name of a park, a change of park owner or when a park closes. Such notice will need to be given within 30 days. This will help to ensure that the register is kept up to date. Proposed section 142C will make it an offence for any person to knowingly provide false or misleading information in relation to the register. This is an important deterrent to the handful of rogue operators who may otherwise have been tempted to dishonestly complete the registration form. The offence and penalty are consistent with the existing offence under section 74A of the Act against any person who knowingly gives a resident or prospective resident false or misleading information.

Finally, proposed section 142D will require the Commissioner for Fair Trading to establish and maintain a register of residential parks recording the information supplied by park owners and managers. The provision also enables a public register of the names, addresses and contact details of all registered residential parks to be made available. This will most likely be in a searchable format on the Fair Trading website. Since becoming Minister for Fair Trading I have met with key representatives from within the residential park industry. I have also visited a number of parks to see firsthand how they operate. In my discussions with them, stakeholder groups representing both operators and residents have welcomed the initiative of a register. A draft of the bill was circulated to key stakeholders for feedback. Faye Urquhart from the Northern Alliance of Park Residents Association said:

I am very impressed that things are starting to happen and that changes are to be made. I have read the draft bill and I do not have any amendments.

Dr Gary Martin, President of the Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association, asserted that the bill is an excellent way forward. The Caravan and Camping Industry Association raised a small number of issues with the draft bill, most of which have been addressed in the final bill. Clearly there is across-the-board support from representatives of both residents and industry for the creation of a register. The introduction of a one-off, simple, low-cost registration system, as this bill proposes, will provide a range of benefits. It will, for the first time, provide accurate statistical data on the size and scale of the residential park industry. We know there are around 950 approved caravan parks and manufactured home estates operating in New South Wales. Many, but not all of these, would be residential parks. We do not know which are residential parks, who runs them, where they are or how many people live in them. The creation of a register will provide these answers. More importantly, the register will provide a comprehensive mailing list of those covered by the Residential Parks Act. This will help to ensure that the Government consults as widely as possible on its residential parks policy and that park owners and residents directly affected by the proposals are given every opportunity to have their say during the course of the review.

The register will play a vital role in disseminating information as part of the implementation of the reforms once the review has been completed. It will also play an ongoing role in assisting Fair Trading with its education and compliance programs well into the future. Public access to the names, locations and contact details of all residential parks will assist prospective residents to compile a short list of those parks in which they are interested. There would be few bills introduced in relation to which the benefits so clearly outweigh the costs. The proposal will result in a small, one-off administrative cost for park operators in the time taken to fill out and lodge the registration form. The form itself is expected to be no more than one page in length. This should take most operators all of five minutes to complete.

The Government is mindful that many residential parks are run by small family businesses. The last thing they need in this difficult economic climate is a new fee to pay. Consequently, the bill does not provide for a registration fee to be levied. The small cost associated with setting up and maintaining the register will be met from the existing Fair Trading budget. Overall, this bill will help develop accurate demographic data on the industry and facilitate government consultation with residents and operators on possible reforms to the laws. The establishment of a register is a simple and practical measure that will provide a range of other benefits, as I have outlined already. This is a further demonstration that the Liberal-Nationals Government honours its election commitments and is willing to take action to fix the problems left behind by those opposite. I commend the bill to the House.

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

### **ENVIRONMENTAL LAND COMPENSATION**

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [10.20 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Native Vegetation Act needs to be amended to provide just compensation to farmers for any land sequestered for environmental purposes; and
- (2) calls on the Government to pay farmers for their stewardship of that land to keep it free of weeds, pests and feral animals.

I gave notice of this motion on 4 May 2001, in the first sitting week of this Parliament, because this is a very important issue for farmers and, of course, for members who represent regional communities. The work of farmers has always been very important and it is valued across the State. Through their hard work farmers have been responsible for feeding the State and, indeed, the nation. Recently the value of retained native vegetation as a means to control greenhouse gases has been recognised and, as such, a new responsibility has been given to the State's farmers. Farmers understand this and accept that they need to take on some of the burden of maintaining native vegetation and reducing the country's greenhouse gas emissions.

Indeed, most farmers are supportive of responsible work practices and are working constructively towards a sustainable position. It is because of the hard work of farmers and their stewardship of native vegetation that Australia is meeting its greenhouse gas emissions targets since the Federal Government included in its strategy carbon that is sequestered in that vegetation. However, farmers are being asked to take on a disproportionate share of those burdens and without being offered fair compensation. In other situations such as when land is acquired to build a road or when water rights are acquired for the mining industry, the discussion is about public interest and compensation or structural adjustment packages. I believe that such compensation should also be offered to farmers who have their land sequestered for environmental purposes.

Farmers do not clear land for the joy of destroying native vegetation; they do so to improve their land and to deliver better economic returns. If they are not given that opportunity, or if they choose to retain native vegetation for environmental purposes, it is only fair that they be compensated in a similar fashion. Where land is used for environmental purposes, it still requires stewardship. This does not simply involve sitting back and watching plants grow. There is a lot of work involved, including removing noxious weeds, controlling feral animals and ensuring that fire risk is kept to a minimum. This is all done to protect the native vegetation and to ensure that it thrives and continues to offer environmental benefits. Again, fairness dictates that farmers are paid for this work, and that has benefits for the State and nation as a whole.

Like other members, I speak to landowners and they tell me that they have no objection to sensible environmental controls, but they regard the current laws as unwieldy, incomprehensible and unfair. Members

can all relate stories about the inconsistent information that is provided by the bureaucracy. A more consultative process would be beneficial whereby farmers could present their sustainable native vegetation plans to local catchment management authorities on an individual basis for assessment and ongoing oversight of the land. That would instil an attitude of willing stewardship on the part of farmers. It could also help to deal with the perception, correct or otherwise, that the implementation of the regulations is unnecessarily draconian. These incentives will encourage the retention of native vegetation and fairly compensate landowners who are using their land to help Australia to meet its emission targets.

Every time we do something in the public interest in most other areas we consider the impact and provide structural adjustment packages or compensation. I cannot believe that farmers are not properly compensated when they are doing something in the national interest. If the Government proposed constructing a four-lane highway through your property, Mr Acting-Speaker (Mr Provest), you would expect to be compensated. Any fair and reasonable person would expect that. However, that is not what happens when farmers are asked to lock up sections of their land. The fact that they are not fairly compensated is unjust and un-Australian, and that is why I have moved this motion.

This is not a new issue; it has been around for some time. I hope that the Government will support this motion. Members opposite have had 16 years in opposition hearing about these native vegetation issues since the introduction of State environmental planning policy 46 and the enactment of the Native Vegetation Act. I have attended about 30 forums, protests and public meetings at which these issues have been discussed and I do not believe it is reasonable to suggest that we do not know what should be done. There is plenty of information available on this topic. At a recent meeting in Inverell New South Wales Farmers representatives gave me a submission about this issue knowing that I would be moving this motion today. The association's proposal states:

Reviewing the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005 is not enough, the Act needs amending. If the Government is keen on adhering to their commitments then it is imperative that changes be made to the Native Vegetation Act 2003 and the operation of the CMAs.

NSW farmers are pursuing for an improved customer service focus, with clearer definitions and information set out and a balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental outcomes with greater biodiversity planning of rural lands that combines strategic planning processes.

The Act needs to be amended to construct the Landscape Plans and this can be established with the landholders and the 'Property Vegetation Plan Developer' known as the "Black Box" needs to be withdrawn.

This new planning technique is essential in delivering sound outcomes for the landholders and the plans should be developed with the assistance of the landholders.

The positions of the CMAs need more authority in their decision making and have their roles broadened and strengthened.

The definition of broadscale clearing within the Act needs to be amended to not mean clearing of single native plants. As well as this, the restrictions encroached on permitted activities by the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005 be cancelled which can be done immediately.

It is imperative that regrowth provisions are clearly defined and the date relating to this be changed to 1983 for the whole state.

The association states further:

We feel it is important that the offence is in proportion to the enforcement provisions.

The Native Vegetation Act should act solely as the authority figure in relation to native vegetation on land zoned 'rural'. The EP&A should also be amended to prevent Local Government enforcing environmental zones that will override the objectives of the Native Vegetation Act.

What the association has indicated highlights the roles of the respective agencies and authorities. It is confusing, and inconsistent information is being provided. We should have one authority and a process that will provide clarity to farmers who, more often than not, are seeking that information so that they can do the right thing. It is unacceptable that this sort of inconsistency is occurring and that conflicting information is being provided, given the potential punitive consequences.

Government members said a great deal about this issue when they were opposition and I hope that they will be consistent now that they are in government. I do not think I can count the number of times that Coalition members who attended the forums I attended indicated that upon winning government they would amend the legislation and ensure that these matters were addressed as soon as possible. If I heard that commitment made

once, I heard it made more than 30 times. I also have a number of pieces of correspondence about this issue. It is very important that members do not talk tough in opposition and then do nothing in government. Rural and regional communities have a clear expectation that the Government will take action. Failure to act would be a complete breach of trust with the farmers of New South Wales, given the expectation that has been created.

This is not about anything other than fixing an obvious problem and I am not doing anything other than reminding the Government of its commitment. That commitment was made by a number of Coalition members, including the Leader of The Nationals. He attended many rallies, including the Peter Spencer rally at which he said that a Coalition government would take corrective action in respect of this issue upon attaining government. I look forward to hearing the Government's response to this motion. This is an urgent matter. Corrective action is required and the farmers expect it.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Jai Rowell and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

### **PRISONER TRANSPORT**

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [10.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this House calls on the Government to fully transfer prisoner escort duties from the Police to Corrective Services NSW.

Prisoner escort services is a critical issue, and I welcome the good initiative of the new Minister for Police and Emergency Services to conduct a review of issues affecting police workload and other management issues within local area commands. However, after that announcement was made I stated publicly that an examination of workloads and demands on police must include prisoner escort duties. This service places a significant burden on front-line policing. I call on the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice to relieve local police from prisoner escort duties. In the Northern Tablelands prisoner escort services take up 24,000 hours each year in the New England Local Area Command alone. Police are travelling 120,000 kilometres each year at a cost of approximately \$1.6 million, with significant flow-on effects including, of course, lack of visible policing in the region.

The command is at stretching point, as I mentioned in debate on another motion in this place, through stress and sick leave, but those police are counted as being on duty. The Police Association continues to advocate for an additional 1,500 officers in New South Wales to meet the demand, and I support that effort. Acknowledging all the budgetary consequences, immediate relief could be provided by transferring prisoner escort responsibilities fully to Corrective Services NSW, which is the more appropriate agency as that service is identified in the duty statement. This would return more police officers to local duties, relieve the current pressure on police numbers and reduce the huge drain on police availability in the community. Last year a motion was moved at the Police Association biannual conference seeking a joint working party comprising New South Wales police, the Department of Attorney General and Justice, Corrective Services NSW, Juvenile Justice and the respective unions to resolve the problematic inconsistencies in the transportation and guarding of prisoners for court circuits.

It was a welcome initiative. A working party now operates in the western region. I hope that it is supported and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of its work. There is no better way to get information than directly from those who are doing the job and are affected. Currently, across the New England Local Area Command Corrective Services NSW supplies some support, though not adequate, to the once weekly court list day at Armidale, and one other day only if an inmate is attending court; a drop-off service only to Inverell; and support to Glen Innes and Tenterfield only in exceptional circumstances. The region's limited policing resources mean that some police stations are closed to undertake prisoner escort duty. A prisoner escort service from Tenterfield to Tamworth or Grafton involves two officers travelling overnight. A police station with only six or seven officers could close, especially if that station also has to respond to a single call-out, leaving no-one to carry out the daily services the community expects.

High visibility policing reduces crime, as noted by every expert. Transferring prisoner escort duties to Corrective Services would provide significant relief for local police. Managing prisoner escort duties is also an unacceptable drain on budgets already stretched by the many competing demands of police. Front-line police services have to do much more than the traditional policing required in the past. Police now are the front-line agency for many community and government services as they are accessible and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and this also raises a number of health and safety issues, including excessive working hours. I am

aware of some overtime issues as police try to cope with all the demands on them. Current technology would allow prisoners to attend court electronically via video links. However, I understand from officers in my local area command and others that this technology is not used to its full potential.

The Inverell police station has been upgraded and is a fantastic facility, but it does not have the technology to enable prisoners to attend court electronically. This places even more pressure on prisoner escorts and additional associated costs at every level of the service. Front-line police being used as prisoner escorts is an important issue. The Attorney General and the Government announced the closure of prison beds and a review of staffing arrangements within Corrective Services NSW. I asked the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice a question about that matter in this place. He indicated that the review would consider all the pressures on police. My concern is that the police have reached stretching point, and when distance and remoteness is involved, the stress is even greater on the individuals, the budget, the service and community expectation.

I do not know how the pressures on police will be relieved. The best thing would be to remove prisoner escort duties to enable police to get on with policing, particularly taking into account the significant impact of prisoner escort duties on police duties. I ask the Government to indicate how it intends to conduct the review of Corrective Services and relieve police of the burden of prisoner escort service. I hope that is the underlying principle behind the review of local area commands put in place by the police Minister. It would be unacceptable to remove some duties to attain efficiency but then say, "By the way, we're cutting prisoner escorts. So you will end up having more to do in that regard." That would defeat the purpose of conducting a review of police stations.

I have been careful to remain on topic during this debate, and I urge all members also to stay focused on the content of the motion. The fact is that police in regional areas can no longer cope with prisoner escort duties. In undertaking a review of police activities the Minister is seeking to relieve the increasing workload in country communities, and in policing generally, across the State. To then suggest that prison beds will be closed and Corrective Services staffing arrangements will be reviewed flies in the very face of the principle behind the reviews that would support police. The Minister's well-intentioned approach on the issue will be undermined completely if we do not ensure that massive workload burdens, such as prisoner escort duties, are taken into consideration in the front-line duties and the general workload of police officers in commands across New South Wales, particularly with respect to distance and remoteness in regional, rural and remote areas.

Therefore, in the review of Corrective Services, quite apart from cuts, I think there needs to be a strategic approach based on the feedback from working parties such as those that have been set up in the western region. We must consider the issue strategically. Rather than implementing punitive measures, a logical strategy must be adopted in the terms of the police duties required to meet people's high expectations as to the appropriate levels of service needed to protect the community. I commend this motion to the House.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.40 a.m.]: I welcome the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. For some years the prisoner escort task has been shared by the police and local Corrective Services NSW court escort units. The two most common types of escorts are, first, escorts from police stations to correctional centres or courts; and, secondly, escorts from correctional centres to courts and back, if necessary. Since 1991 court escort duties in many areas of the State have been shifted from the New South Wales Police Force to Corrective Services NSW, thereby enabling police to devote more resources to mainstream policing. In light of this, it is necessary to consider the motion carefully as it is about important operational practice. Therefore, I move:

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

"this House calls on the Government to fully consider transferring prisoner escort duties from the Police to Corrective Services NSW."

This has to be part of the review. The New South Wales Government has tasked former Deputy Commissioner Peter Parsons to conduct a complete review of police services, numbers and allocations across New South Wales. The review will also consider factors such as isolation and police workload, part of which is the prisoner escort duties that officers undertake in different areas. By adding the word "consider" to the motion, the Government is indicating that it supports the intent of the motion but is focused on how to advance the issue. The Government is prepared to continue to look for ways to enable police to devote even more resources to mainstream policing in a manner that ensures value for taxpayers' money. There are various regional locations

where there are no Corrective Services NSW employees, although it has been said that the Court Services (NSW) escorts should assume responsibility for transport in these locations. This may not always be in the best interests of New South Wales taxpayers.

Given limited court sitting days and the invariable demand for transport, it is often more cost-effective to use local police, rather than establishing a Corrective Services NSW workforce in those areas. At locations where escort work occurs for only a limited number of hours per week, as opposed to operating Monday to Friday, it is arguably more efficient for police to staff these locations owing to the fact that police can perform other duties when escorts are not required. In these situations, staff from Corrective Services NSW would experience downtime when not performing escort functions. Corrective Services NSW presently services 73 court police cell locations. Of these 73 locations, 60 are staffed by Corrective Services NSW, including the provision of transport services, of which 14 locations are staffed by Corrective Services NSW 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Transport services only are provided to the remaining 30 locations—that is, escorts from police stations to correctional centres and from correctional centres to courts and back.

The member for Northern Tablelands raised concerns regarding the use of police officers in the New England Local Area Command. These concerns relate to the impact of this practice on both the financial resources and the availability of police officers in the community. I empathise with him as I am sure that the same feeling exists in most communities where there are smaller stations and fewer police. I believe the review by Peter Parsons will have positive consequences for country policing. I am told that the review will be completed in the next couple of weeks, and the findings then presented to Parliament. It will be interesting to see the positive outcomes of Peter Parsons' review for country policing.

A collaborative arrangement exists between police and Corrective Services regarding escort services in the New England area and in other parts of the State. During the past 10 years there has been a significant reduction in both the number of police hours dedicated to escorting offenders in the areas serviced by the New England Local Area Command and the number of kilometres travelled by police carrying out escort duties. Figures obtained from NELAC—that is the New England Local Area Command; I am sure that the member for Northern Tablelands knows that but some uneducated city members may not—

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Don't call me that.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL:** Sorry. In 2009, 1,083 police hours were directed to escorting offenders. I think I have stirred up a hornet's nest—but I have the member for Northern Tablelands on my side. Some 45,790 kilometres were travelled by police performing escort duties. This compares with figures of 2,370 police hours and 91,020 kilometres travelled in 1999-2000. The transfer of offender escort duties from police to Corrective Services NSW in the area serviced by the New England Local Area Command could incur significant costs for Corrective Services. It is estimated that the recurrent costs to Corrective Services NSW of assuming escort duties in the New England Local Area Command would be \$2.16 million per year. This is well in excess of the current figure of \$1.6 million previously mentioned by Mr Torbay. The cost of assuming escort duties by Corrective Services NSW includes funding to enable the recruitment of officers and the takeover to take place with additional escort vehicles.

Corrective Services NSW supports the use of videolink technology. In 2009-10, 31,347 court matters were facilitated via videoconferencing. This represents approximately 44 per cent of all court appearances for that year. As of 31 May 2011, in the current financial year, 49 per cent of all court appearances were conducted using videolink technology, removing the need for court escorts. I have previously discussed this issue with Corrective Services personnel in my electorate, who expressed concern that their working hours would be reduced. That has not happened. Whereas escorting prisoners is common practice in some parts of New South Wales, in areas where there are no jails and no court escort services the police take up the slack and transfer prisoners to and from court. We have had 16 years of Labor Government—16 years when country cops had their positions downgraded and their numbers reduced. An extremely high number of police officers have taken stress leave in the past three or four years, and I believe that has a lot to do with the mortgage buster get-out-of-jail-free scheme. We need to provide better support for our police in order to retain them.

Peter Parsons' review will, I am sure, address issues such as lack of police numbers, overworking of police and removing police from front-line services to perform duties such as court escorts. The issue is not so much that court escort duties have increased; it is more that over the past few years the police workload has increased while police numbers have decreased. The Government is very happy to debate the motion as



amended and consider a review. The amendment does not detract from the intent of the motion; if anything, it gives it more credence. I ask members to support the amendment, so that we can move forward with this very important debate.

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie) [10.45 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Opposition in support of the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. His contribution on this serious policy issue was typically thoughtful and well considered—in stark contrast to that of the member for Clarence, whose amendment is couched in weasel words that I thought he would never use. The member for Clarence is a gentleman who is straight up and down; his reputation in the Clarence electorate is one of a straight shooter and straight talker, a man of decency and integrity. Those weasel words do not befit him.

The notion that prisoners should be transferred by anyone other than highly trained and specialised corrections officers is a policy of yesteryear. Opposition members recognise that there may be occasions when, due to unforeseen circumstances, Corrective Services needs to use the men and women of the New South Wales Police Force to transfer prisoners, but that should not be a de facto service arrangement. This Government has a razor gang that is casting its shadow across service delivery throughout the State; nothing is sacred, nothing is quarantined. The razor gang seeks the transfer of prisoner transport arrangements from Corrective Services—whose officers and officials are very specialised and highly trained—to the Police Force, resulting in front-line police being taken off our streets and away from their core duties.

The member for Northern Tablelands mentioned this would result in the loss of some 24,000 police hours. On a back-of-the-envelope calculation, that is the equivalent of about 10 full-time police officers who could be on the beat in just that one local area command. This State has 30 jails and about 10,000 prisoners—at the moment at least; we will see whether the Attorney General gets his way and lets them all out. Community safety is compromised by altering arrangements for transporting prisoners between courts and prisons, and that is wrong on any number of fronts. It is wrong because the current arrangement whereby corrections officers perform that duty is in place for good reason: the officers are highly trained and highly specialised. Everyone knows that it is during prisoner transfer that the rate of escape is highest and there is most risk. That is why, historically, the practice has been to ensure the officers on those duties are highly trained.

Secondly, the notion that police should do court escorts, rather than front-line police work, does not pass the reasonable person in the street test; it certainly would not pass the test of the reasonable person in the streets of the Clarence electorate. The policy proposed by the member for Clarence is one of yesteryear. He now has the opportunity to update that policy. The member for Northern Tablelands made any number of very good points in this debate. Ultimately, the cuts made by the Government's razor gang will compromise community safety. When prisoners escape because of this arrangement, or when the Government outsources these transport services to its mates in Serco and prisoners start escaping, there will be no easy escape for the member for Clarence. Alteration of the existing arrangement will make it easier for prisoners to escape while being transported between courts and prisons.

The member for Northern Tablelands has canvassed all the relevant issues. As I said, there are some 30 correctional facilities across New South Wales, involving hundreds of prisoner movements each week. Those movements need to continue in as safe a fashion as is possible; they should not be subject to the deliberations and activities of a rabid razor gang that would willingly compromise the safety of the people of New South Wales in order to save a dollar because the Government is not prepared to do the hard work and drive real efficiencies and engage in the continuous improvement that was a linchpin of the previous Government of this State.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [10.50 a.m.]: I support the amendment to the motion regarding police escort duties that deletes all words after "That" with a view to inserting, "this House calls on the Government to fully consider transferring prisoner escort duties from the Police to Corrective Services NSW." The member for Northern Tablelands raised concerns about the use of police officers of the New England Local Area Command on escort duties. The concerns relate to the impact of the practice on both the financial resources and the availability of police officers in his community. A collaborative arrangement exists between Police and Corrective Services for escorts in the Tamworth and Oxley local area commands in the New England area. In the past 10 years there has been a significant reduction in both the number of police hours dedicated to escorting offenders in the area serviced by the New England Local Area Command and the Oxley Local Area Command and the number of kilometres travelled by police on escorts.

I want to take up a point made in this debate by the member for Toongabbie. He said that a Government razor gang was cutting services across the State. The Government is doing quite the opposite. It is

fixing 16 years of neglect and cuts to front-line services. We are fixing the problems resulting from 16 years of withdrawing services in regional New South Wales. For 16 years the previous Labor Government did not know where regional New South Wales was; it kept on withdrawing services, to the point where now the member for Northern Tablelands—the good member that he is—has to raise this issue. The Government seeks to amend his motion to allow it to fully consider his proposal.

Given the \$5.4 billion black hole that this Government inherited from Labor, we need to return New South Wales to being the number one State in this nation. To get New South Wales back on track, we need to take a sensible, balanced approach to delivering front-line services. We will do that by listening to respected consultants such as Peter Parsons. He is conducting an audit of police services right across the State. He will look at the load that is being placed on our hardworking police 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the Tamworth electorate, the Gunnedah, Werris Creek, Tamworth, Nundle and Barraba police stations, as the member for Northern Tablelands pointed out, are closed at times. Gunnedah police station is closed. That growing population is serviced by hardworking police, who must do the job though they do not have enough officers. What we will do, under the responsible budget to be delivered in September, is try to get the balance right.

Some of the decisions made will be on the back of recommendations from Peter Parsons' audit. I look forward to the outcomes of that review and to his report. I do not want to pre-empt the outcomes of the report, but we must find ways to assist police to do their job better and use more effectively the resources we have. We do not have a bucket of money—in fact, the bucket is empty, thanks to 16 years of Labor governments withdrawing services. We are well placed to get the balance right and look after our police and Corrective Services personnel. Let us start the process now by fully considering transport options and the impost on police and Corrective Services officers. In seeking to get the balance right, we will look at the police audit report by the well-respected Peter Parsons and make judgements based upon it. Police and Corrective Services officers have my full support. They are going through a tough time. I support the amendment to the motion.

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [10.55 a.m.]: I support this important motion of the member for Northern Tablelands relating to prisoner transport. Day in and day out, front-line police do a fantastic job of keeping our communities safe. This is done by intelligent and smart policing. The NSW Police Force prides itself on carrying out its job in the most resourceful manner. Prisoner transport is an important role but it is a role better suited to highly trained Corrective Service officers. Police are trained to be on the front line, and that is where they should be. The amendment to the motion moved by the member for Clarence is admirable but he indicated that the Government will consider making prisoner transport by Corrective Services officers mandatory only after reviewing Peter Parsons' report. If the amendment had stated that the Government will make prisoner transport mandatory for Corrective Services per se, the Opposition would support it. The Opposition will not support less than a 100 per cent commitment. The amendment needs to be positive, not wishy-washy.

The former Labor Government installed the largest police force that New South Wales has ever had. Each policeman and policewoman has a valuable role to play in ensuring the safety of our society. Similarly, the men and women who serve as Corrective Services officers play an integral role in ensuring the safety of our community. Corrective Services officers, who are highly trained in prisoner management, are best suited to manage and supervise prisoner transport. The community wants to see police pounding the pavement. They want to see the familiar shades of blue on the streets because that makes them feel safe. High-visibility policing is an effective deterrent against the occurrence of crime, as are the targeted policing strategies employed by the NSW Police Force. The community does not want to see our policemen and policewomen being taken off the front line to transport prisoners.

In regional areas sometimes only a handful of police officers are available to cover a geographical location. Those officers fulfil their duties capably and to the best of their ability, but to expect them to transport prisoners on top of those duties is a bridge too far. If police officers are taken away from the front line, taken away from the communities they are sworn to serve and protect, we endanger those very communities. Corrective Services officers are more than capable of handling prisoner transport assignments. The Department of Corrective Services always has been a shining beacon in the enforcement of law and order in New South Wales. The important role played by Corrective Service officers in supervising offenders and prisoners is often forgotten and overlooked. It is important that resources are directed to where they are most appropriately needed and this is the best solution. It appropriately directs resources to prisoner management while keeping our police officers on the front line. I commend the motion. It shows the commitment of the member for Northern Tablelands to his local community and his local police force.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [11.00 a.m.]: With great pleasure, I contribute to debate on the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands to state that prisoner transport is a burning issue for the Deniliquin Local Area Command. In my term as a member of this House I have seen four Deniliquin Local Area Commanders in succession. Each local area commander recognised the difficulty of providing prisoner transport, given the police numbers allocated to them. Local area commanders have the choice of providing prisoner transport by on-duty police officers or by those who are not on duty. Often an escort will involve a return trip between Junee and Deniliquin—a mind-numbing job for any police officer.

In recent times videoconferencing has been trialled in Griffith. Videoconferencing should be fast-tracked. In most cases police officers collect prisoners, transport them to a court hearing that perhaps lasts only minutes and then return them to prison. What a crazy situation. Money is being thrown away. A more effective way of relieving police officers of that job would be a great move. The Government has moved an amendment to this motion, which flags that the Government is prepared to consider this serious matter. Peter Parsons, as other members have noted, is carrying out a review and he is well qualified to do that. Peter served as a police officer in a lot of country areas and he knows exactly what the problem is. I have encouraged the shires of my electorate, which all have policing issues, to highlight prisoner transport as a major issue in maintaining police visibility on the street. If the status quo remains, those who are running local area commands with police numbers at the minimum rather than the maximum, while trying to provide all the required policing services for the area, will continue to be frustrated.

The Government is committed to finding a solution. Videoconferencing is a great move. Its trial period must be over and its use in Griffith was most effective. I do not know how prisoners feel about being driven from Junee to Deniliquin and back—if they are restrained properly it would probably be a fairly uncomfortable trip—but videoconferencing allows for a short court appearance to be conducted between a prisoner and a judge or magistrate. The issue of prisoner transport needs to be seriously considered. During my term as a member of this House, I have spoken at length about this burning issue to police Ministers. We show no respect for our police if we continue to require them to perform this crazy duty, which was set up by a memorandum of understanding involving the previous Government.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [11.05 a.m.], by leave: I support the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands and I commend him for always, irrespective of which major party is in government, raising issues that are important not only to his electorate but to other regional areas. This motion is an example of that. The issue of prisoner transport between police and Corrective Services is a longstanding one. In the 1970s I was a certified driver of a police prison van at the Parramatta Police Station. I drove prisoners from Parramatta jail to various courts in the metropolitan area, such as Parramatta, Liverpool, Fairfield and others. The issue at that time was that prisoner escort duties were taking up a lot of police time and stations such as Parramatta and other big divisions had to put police on the roster to undertake those duties.

Throughout the terms—there has been a bit of Labor-Liberal nonsense about who did what—and particularly during the Wran years and the 1990s under both Liberal and Labor governments, responsibility for transporting prisoners in some parts of the State, particularly in metropolitan areas, moved from police to Corrective Services. However, this motion is about what I would call the residue of that transfer of duties; it is the evolution of transferring responsibility for transporting prisoners in custody from police officers to Corrective Services officers. During the same time the responsibility of staffing courts was transferred from police officers to sheriff's officers. Security guards also take up many of these duties, and Corrective Services officers now run many holding cells in various major centres.

While visiting my family in Cootamundra, where my son-in-law was a serving police officer, I saw clearly the problem facing rural areas. This is what the member for Northern Tablelands is talking about. Cootamundra is not a 24-hour station; generally it has only one patrol car on every shift. Many times a patrol car is used to take prisoners to the Wagga Wagga holding cells or the Riverina Juvenile Justice Centre. Without making a political statement, my son-in-law told me that the journey involved two officers in a patrol car for more than three hours of a shift. Unless a highway patrol officer was available or another officer scrambled from another station, Cootamundra did not have police coverage during those three hours.

The situation was the same in Gundagai, Tumut, Young and Grenfell, where the only police car on duty was required to travel distances—sometimes hundreds of kilometres—to transport prisoners from police stations, many of which had decommissioned cells and charge rooms. Those stations could not provide police coverage to the community because the police officers were effectively doing a Corrective Services job. I hope that Mr Parsons' review comes down with a recommendation that Corrective Services should pick up prisoner

escort duties, perhaps one division at a time or one station at a time. The recent publicity about budget cuts in the public service is of concern. Because it is more difficult to reduce police numbers in regional areas, it is easier politically to cut back or reduce jobs in Corrective Services and transfer them to police.

The motion of the member for Northern Tablelands has merit and deserves support. The issue is not simply about the number of police officers or Corrective Services officers and so on. Corrective Services officers are specialists in keeping people in custody and transporting them. Although the latest police vehicles have air-conditioning, Corrective Services motor vehicles are equipped for long haul cartage of people in custody and are able to segregate prisoners in sensitive areas. They are better equipped than a local police paddy wagon. The member for Wagga Wagga, who is in the Chamber, should think about this issue because his electorate is the divisional area for people in custody, and police throughout south-western New South Wales travel long distances to do a job that should be done by Corrective Services. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [11.10 a.m.], in reply: I join in congratulating the students. I had a cupcake this morning.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** How many?

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** I had only one cupcake because there are 10 kilograms of me to which my wife is not legally married. I acknowledge that tremendous effort this morning. I thank all members who contributed to the debate: the member for Clarence, the member for Toongabbie, the member for Tamworth, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Murray-Darling and the member for Mount Druitt. At the outset it is clear, especially from the content of the debate, that people are aware that police undertaking prisoner escort duties is "a burning issue", to quote the member for Murray-Darling. The overwhelming need for reform over many years is not matched by the amendment, which states that "we will consider" that particular proposition.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** Fully consider.

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** I acknowledge the full terminology. In the past what "fully consider" has meant has not been—

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** Don't judge us.

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** Members should let me finish. In the past "fully consider" has not meant what the community expects it to mean. If those who spoke in support of the amendment had indicated what they would do, when they would bring the issue back to the House and what the details are, perhaps that would have gone down a little better. No doubt one agency needs to take responsibility for prisoner escort duties. For that agency not to be Corrective Services is illogical. It must be Corrective Services; that is the department's purpose in the system and it does the job very well, as pointed out by the member for Mount Druitt. The member for Clarence said that the \$2 million for New England is less than the current \$1.6 million that is spent on costs and overtime. I admire the member for Clarence, but obviously he was not listening.

The \$1.6 million currently being spent is not for police station closures and police burn out; it is being spent on police officers who are on sick or stress leave, police overtime and other difficulties that the Police Force is not dealing with. That is why we must ensure that Corrective Services takes on prisoner escort duties in a more meaningful way. The member for Tamworth referred to Gunnedah and said that prisoner escorts were causing problems with keeping the Gunnedah police station open. The member for Murray-Darling spoke in exactly the same way about Deniliquin, and I commented on Tenterfield. Failing to acknowledge the impact of prisoner escort duties on front-line policing and then saying that it might cost a bit more for Corrective Services to undertake those duties, when the current system is failing police and the community—

**Mr Steve Cansdell:** There is the Peter Parsons review.

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** I note the member for Clarence's interjection about Peter Parsons' review. Obviously expectations about that review are high. From that interjection I take it that prisoner escort duties will be a big part of the review of police duties. I am comforted by that. However, I would rather see a review that determines that prisoner escorts should be the responsibility of Corrective Services. If that does not happen we have the ridiculous proposition of giving police that responsibility in some cases and then giving the responsibility back to Corrective Services. Obviously the member for Clarence looked only at the Corrective Services budget when he commented on the costs; he did not look at the Police Service's budget and the impact of prisoner escort duties on front-line policing.

For goodness sake, why on earth would we not look at the overall cost to New South Wales and whether or not the service is being delivered? Otherwise, it is ridiculous to choose which budget to debit when the costs associated with prisoner escort duties flow on to police. The member for Clarence failed to mention that in the context of costs. I have a detailed list of every area command and all the prisoner escort travel that has been undertaken. Many members of this House should support my motion if they are interested in supporting the services, jobs and front-line police in their electorates for the people of New South Wales. I commend the motion to the House.

**Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 61**

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

**Noes, 23**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Order of Business**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.31 a.m.]: The House will now debate the third motion. I expect this

motion will take about 45 minutes. Yesterday I moved a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders that would preclude the member for Wallsend from completing her motion, as it would require the matter to cease at 12 o'clock. With the agreement of the House, I propose to allow the matter to proceed to its conclusion at 12.15 p.m.

**Mr Richard Amery:** It brought a tear to my eye.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** We are here to help the rump of the Opposition.

### **BIKE CITY FORUM**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [11.32 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that a recent bike forum featured discussions on solutions to transport problems in the Hunter;
- (2) notes one of the forum's focus points was how to integrate public transport with cycling; and
- (3) congratulates Bernard Hockings, Hunter Cycling Network, on organising this positive initiative.

I will address seven matters in this motion. First, on 13 April I attended the Bike City Forum at Fort Scratchley Function Centre, together with my colleague the member for Newcastle. The forum was organised by the Hunter Cycling Planning Network and various individuals in the area who are interested in cycling. Bernard Hockings, who convened the forum, did an excellent job. Prominent people from the bike fraternity spoke, for example, Miss Fiona Campbell, Mr Omar Khalifa, Dr Ben Ewald, Dr Steven Fleming and Scott Christie. The object of the forum was purely and simply to move away from looking at what cyclists want and instead to identify how cycling could benefit our city, which is fantastic.

The speakers made a number of key points, some of which are that cycling is a practical, efficient form of transport that reduces traffic congestion and can complement public transport, cycling has health advantages as part of exercise in daily life. It is quite scary that Australia has the second-highest rate of obesity in the world. I commend Bernard Hockings for this wonderful initiative. I was happy to be invited to this interesting night. Second, I refer to a meeting with my colleagues the member for Lake Macquarie and Mayor of Lake Macquarie City Council, and the Lord Mayor of Newcastle in which we discussed how to integrate and plan for regional cycleways between Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council boundaries. We also briefly touched upon the importance of urban planning and development, and building cycleways, walkways and pathways within developments in our communities.

Third, Lake Macquarie City Council is part of a wonderful initiative—the regional tracks and trails project—with Hunter councils. The project has three stages: to audit existing facilities within their areas, to identify and to prioritise key enhancement projects and implementation, comprising physical works and marketing activities. The regional councils are looking at incorporating both Wyong and the whole of the Hunter, as well as the Central Coast, in this regional trails project. I commend all of the councils for this wonderful initiative and for being part of such a visionary project. It is important to have all councils involved with these projects.

Fourth, I asked Newcastle City Council what it is doing. That council has a Cycles Transport Advisory Committee, and hopefully on 16 August it will endorse the committee plan. I am sure that members representing the electorates of Newcastle, Charlestown and Lake Macquarie look forward, as I do, to reading about the endorsement of that plan following the 16 August meeting. Fifth, the member for Cabramatta and Mayor of Fairfield City Council talked about that council's wonderful initiative called the Western Sydney Cycling Network, which has more than 100 kilometres of cycleways, most of which are off-road. The Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Hunter areas should consider such a network.

Fairfield City Council uses recycled bicycles to offer a bike loan program out of Fairfield Showground. Council was conscious of not buying new bikes but rather inviting the community to donate used bikes and thus look after the environment. On the weekend between 400 and 500 bikes are loaned out at a minimum of \$25, including a helmet, for up to three months. At the end of that time the bike must be returned for maintenance. The bikes are stored in a garage. I commend that wonderful initiative of Fairfield City Council, which the mayor was very keen to tell me about. Sixth, in relation to cycling, the Roads and Traffic Authority is a very important stakeholder.

Earlier this year prior to the election I asked Kevin Webster of the Roads and Traffic Authority how it would work with councils in the Hunter to build cycleways. I will seek an update from the Roads and Traffic Authority, but at the time it was keen to move towards consultation with councils, which also involved bike forums, to consider how we factor in cycling, both on and off road, when building road networks. I am sure the Roads and Traffic Authority will be equally as keen on progressing cycleways, particularly off-road, as are Hunter councils. Lake Macquarie and Newcastle city councils have many areas where off-road cycleways can be built. Seventh, I table an article written by Bernard Hockings published in the *Newcastle Herald* headed "As easy as riding a bike". The member for Newcastle will relate to this article. It talked about the importance of cycling in The Netherlands and how its city and country has integrated cycling into their daily lives. It states:

Cycling could complement our public transport—increasing the "catchment" of train stations and bus terminals. The CBD and inner suburbs in particular offer ideal conditions for short, easy trips by bike.

He compared Newcastle with The Netherlands. The article further states:

We have a great opportunity to make cycling a key part of the renewal of our city—good for tourism, business, our health, happiness and environment.

I am sure all members would agree with that. I cannot conclude my contribution without mentioning that last year the former Government released the New South Wales Bike Plan. It was a great initiative to which the Government committed \$150 million, including \$58 million to improve cycle networks in New South Wales. I look forward to this Government's matching, if not improving on, the former Government's commitment—I am sure it will. Bernard Hockings' initiative was wonderful and I hope we have more bike city forums. I also hope that the State Government, local governments and the Federal Government will implement the initiatives proposed by these groups that are willing to give up so much of their time.

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL** (Charlestown) [11.41 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving such an important motion. Cadel Evans arrives back in the country today. I can see Opposition members' bleary eyes, which are obviously the result of their sitting up watching the SBS coverage of the Tour de France until the early hours and not because they are enjoying the trappings of opposition. The Bike City Forum was held on Wednesday 14 April at Fort Scratchley, which is in the electorate of Newcastle. The guest speakers included Fiona Campbell, the Manager of Cycling Strategy at the City of Sydney. Ms Campbell provided some insight into how Sydney developed its cycling infrastructure. That is obviously a controversial topic, but she provided a great deal of information. Omar Khalifa, the Chief Executive Officer of Bicycle NSW, also spoke, as did my colleague the member for Newcastle.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** A great member.

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL:** Yes, he is. The forum was organised by Bernard Hockings of the Hunter Cycle Planning Network. The member for Wallsend asked for some information, and I can assist her by providing an update. The Roads and Traffic Authority has advised me that Lake Macquarie City Council resolved at the council meeting held on 9 May 2011 to advise Newcastle City Council that councillors were interested in attending a network evening subject to a clear agenda being provided and an agreement being reached about the venue. That followed a Newcastle City Council resolution passed in November 2010 to invite Lake Macquarie City Council to a network evening. It was obviously not a speed dating scenario given the time that elapsed between the two meetings. The meeting was planned for June and would not deal specifically with cycleway matters. It is positive that the two councils agreed to meet.

The Roads and Traffic Authority has advised me of a close working relationship between the councils in the past in relation to cycleways. The recent completion of the Fernleigh Track is an excellent example of close cooperation between the two councils and the New South Wales Government. The Fernleigh Track is a combined cycleway/walkway built in five stages on a disused railway line from Adamstown to Belmont, through the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie local government areas. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Lake Macquarie, who is also mayor of Lake Macquarie City Council. The council certainly took ownership of the project and worked hand in hand with the Newcastle City Council to drive it. Work has been completed on stages one through to five, with stage five being the final stage.

The New South Wales Government provided 50 per cent, or \$1.5 million, of the funding for stage five of the project and the City of Newcastle and the Lake Macquarie City Council each provided 25 per cent. Lake Macquarie City Council managed construction of stage five of the project. The completed track is about 15 kilometres of off-road cycleway and walkway. The Wallsend to Glendale cycleway is a further example of

cooperation. It is a 3.6-kilometre cycleway utilising a disused tramway corridor in Newcastle's western suburbs. It traverses the City of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie City Council areas. It has been more than five years in planning and development owing to several property issues.

The concrete pathway is being completed and the City of Newcastle is the construction manager. The cycleway is a joint project between the New South Wales Government, Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council. The Government has provided funding for the project with the residual being provided by Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council. Like the Fernleigh Track, the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway crosses the local government area boundaries, and has been funded by the two councils and the Roads and Traffic Authority. My electorate of Charlestown straddles a ridge between the two council areas. Riding the Fernleigh Track certainly increases one's heart rate because it involves a climb of about 150 metres.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** Did someone tell you?

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL:** For the benefit of the member for Cessnock, cyclists can avoid the hill by travelling via Glendale. Cycling on the track is a great family activity. The New South Wales Bike Plan notes that councils across New South Wales are supported by the Roads and Traffic Authority's local council cycleways program, which has provided an average of \$5 million in 50:50 funding each year for the past five years. In 2009-10, the program funded 92 cycle projects, delivered in partnership with 77 local councils across New South Wales. As demand for cycling facilities at the local community level continues to grow, the New South Wales Government will maintain existing funding for the Roads and Traffic Authority's local council cycleways program, leading to completion of community cycle infrastructure worth at least \$10 million a year.

When other 50:50 council programs are added, such as Department of Planning's support for the New South Wales Coastline Cycleway, the Government and councils will in partnership deliver active transport infrastructure for local communities to a total value of about \$150 million over the 10 years to 2020. The Government will support local councils in building and increasing the use of local cycleway networks. While the growing number bike trips to major centres may commence, finish or traverse a regional cycleway, most bike riding happens on local streets. Increasing cycling on streets managed by local councils requires well-signposted and connected routes that get people to everyday destinations such as shops, schools, beaches, parks or swimming pools. I am not sure about swimming pools because I would want to wear something more comfortable than a pair of sluggos on a bike.

In larger cities where short trips may take people through several council areas, local bike networks must link across council boundaries. The Roads and Traffic Authority advises me that Lake Macquarie City Council is undertaking preliminary investigations into the extension of the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway to Speers Point. The New South Wales Government would be pleased to receive a proposal for consideration should the project be feasible. The track traverses the electorates of Wallsend and Lake Macquarie and it abuts my electorate of Charlestown. It would be a terrific piece of community infrastructure. The Roads and Traffic Authority also advises me that Lake Macquarie City Council is reviewing its bike plan and that it is involved with both Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council in the Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy Internal Committee Steering Group. The authority also advises that both councils are looking at the potential for the Fernleigh Track. The Government is also interested in any proposals. This Government is getting on with the job of delivering important cycling infrastructure.

The Newcastle Cycleways Movement has a ride organised for this weekend starting at 7.00 a.m. on the corner of Parry and Steel streets, opposite the Roads and Traffic Authority office. It will then traverse the Fernleigh Track and will meet the coastal cycleway at 7.10 a.m. It will then cross Burwood Road at 7.30 a.m. and Whitebridge Road at 7.35 a.m., it will reach the end of the track at Redhead at 7.45 a.m. and the newly completed section at 7.45 a.m. The route goes through a magnificent piece of bushland. The route then goes back down the Fernleigh Track to the Adamstown rail crossing at 8.15 a.m. and it will reach the Energy Australia Stadium at 8.20 a.m. and the Throsby Cycleway at 8.30 a.m. It will finish with breakfast at Juicy Beans in Wheeler Place in the electorate of Newcastle at 8.55 a.m.

It would be rude of me not to mention former a member for Charlestown, the Hon. Richard Face, who was instrumental in the gazettal of that land so that this project could proceed. I am happy to give him the credit he deserves. I commend the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. Cycling has enormous health benefits. As I said, if members are feeling fit they can ride up and over the Fernleigh Track. However, if they are not fit they can go around the back of the hill on the Wallsend to Glendale route. I hope the Government can work in partnership with Lake Macquarie City Council to deliver the section to Speers Point. I thank the member for the opportunity to speak on such an important motion.



**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [11.50 a.m.]: I will not speak for too because I know that there is a time imperative in finishing this debate. I fully support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and acknowledge the contribution to the Hunter Valley Bike forum of the Government through the member for Charlestown. Those speakers have clearly articulated the facts surrounding what is happening in the local area around that part of the Lower Hunter. It is appropriate that this House recognises and appreciates the valuable information that can be obtained from events such as this forum and the practical benefits arising when information provided by the community is considered in planning infrastructure or making decisions on the future of cycling or any other matter for which Government has responsibility. The forum provided an insight into the issues that should become priorities.

Speaking from my experience as the mayor of Lake Macquarie, I can vouch for the great results that have been mentioned, such as the Fernleigh track, which resulted from the concerted efforts of residents and their elected representatives. I note that the plans for the Fernleigh track were driven largely by members of the community, many of whom are currently recognised and active in local organisations, such as the Hunter Cycling Network and the Newcastle Cycleways Movement. The great attributes and success of the Fernleigh track have been discussed—it is one of the wonderful cooperative partnerships between Newcastle City Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, the State Government and the Commonwealth. However, we have moved on and we have extended the cycleway network from Glendale to Wallsend. That facility, which is not just for local commuters, terminates at the Glendale TAFE. That is a very sensible and very useful location at which to terminate the cycleway.

It must be remembered that cycling, whether for recreation or commuting, does not exist in isolation. Consideration must be given to the way in which cyclists interact with pedestrians, with other vehicular traffic and with public transport. This forum has particular reference to integrating cycling with public transport and is timely and important. As developed areas spread further afield, as traffic congestion worsens and as the financial impact of peak oil looms closer, to consider cycling as an increasingly important mode of commuting. Just as the highly successful and popular Fernleigh track has sought to meld the somewhat diverse needs of pedestrians and cyclists, there is now an escalating need to integrate commuter cycling with public transport.

Quite rightly, this was a key point of the recent forum and it should be a key element of future planning. There should be an integrated process whereby the planners of cycle routes and the planners of public transport work in conjunction with the common goal of integrating these modes of transport. Work that is being done by Lower Hunter councils should be seen as a great example of the cooperative approach of councils and their willingness to work with other tiers of Government. This is perhaps something that will be discussed in more details next week in Dubbo at Destination 2036—a forum hosted by the Minister for Local Government. Many exciting things are happening.

The opportunity that has been discussed in this debate, including the extension of the cycleway from Glendale through to Speers Point, will provide that important link from the western side of Newcastle through to the lake foreshore, pick up the very popular lake cycleway and ultimately extend that through with logical links back to the Fernleigh track. We will have one of the best cycleway networks within the State and within the country. It is something we can all be proud of. What we are doing today, what the former Government did and what this Government will continue to do, is to leave a legacy for future generations. I commend the motion and thank the Government for their interest and continued support.

**Mr TIM OWEN** (Newcastle) [11.55 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. I will speak a little about the NSW BikePlan—a whole-of-Government plan—that was released in May 2010. The plan contains several commitments for the Hunter and Central Coast regions: first, funding to accelerate the completion of the Fernleigh track, which we have discussed this morning; secondly, starting the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway; thirdly, constructing a shared path around Brisbane Water and Gosford; fourthly, investigating the feasibility of a connection between Point Clare and Gosford along the railway line; fifthly, extending cycleways along the Central Coast Highway, Terrigal Drive, Avoca Drive and the Pacific Highway between Gosford and Ourimbah; and sixthly, extending and connecting shared paths such as the links between Tuggerah and Norah Head and the links to Warnervale.

The Roads and Traffic Authority advises me that Lake Macquarie City Council—we have heard from the mayor—is undertaking preliminary investigations into the extension of the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway to Speers Point, which we all welcome. The New South Wales Government would be pleased to receive a proposal for consideration, should that project be feasible. As the member for Wallsend stated, I attended the

Bike City Forum held in Newcastle on 30 April. It was attended by approximately 90 people and included representation from the Newcastle City Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, cycling groups, environmental groups and local members of Parliament.

The forum featured discussions on solutions to transport problems with one focus point being how to integrate public transport with cycling. The agenda covered a wide range of topics including experiences in developing cycleways in the City of Sydney, achieving action in relation to bikes and a panel forum on cycling and public health, public transport, architecture and urban design. I gave a brief on the melding of cycleways with private and public transport in Europe, primarily in Denmark and Copenhagen where I spend a lot of my time because my wife comes from that area. The melding of cycleways, public transport and vehicular transport in those two cities and those European countries is done outstandingly well.

**Mr Clayton Barr:** How many hills do they have?

**Mr TIM OWEN:** Not a great deal of hills but it is a very, very good way to bring them together. Cycling is a mode of transport and cycles are a way of life in those countries. It is something that we as Australians can learn a lot from. The Roads and Traffic Authority advises me that the main points raised were the need for good cycle facilities and transport nodes. This leads to the need for more space for bikes on trains and for bike racks on buses, which is something we are pursuing with Newcastle Buses. The Roads and Traffic Authority has also advised me that other points raised includes the large number of short trips undertaken in the Hunter that could be replaced with cycle trips. The average vehicular trip was reported as just over five kilometres and cycles would be a viable way for people to travel that distance.

The forum was arranged by the Hunter Cycle Planning, an alliance of cycling, planning and ecologically sustainable development professionals. It was a most enjoyable event. It was arranged by Mr Bernard Hockings. I also congratulate him and the speakers from Bicycle NSW, the City Cycle Strategy and the Hunter Cycle Planning Network. It was a great forum and I am pleased to advise that the Roads and Traffic Authority will convene further forums on cycling in both the Hunter and the Central Coast in July next year. Such forums are being conducted in the Roads and Traffic Authority's six regions across the State, as an initiative of the NSW BikePlan. I am happy to support the motion moved by member for Wallsend. It is a great initiative.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [11.59 a.m.]: My contribution will be brief as the topic has been well covered and I agree with so much of what has been said already. Of particular interest to me were the comments made by the member for Newcastle on the concept of integration and how well that is done in Europe, where cycling is just part of everyday life. Most trips around the metropolitan area are around the five-kilometre mark. We must provide both space and opportunity for people to take to cycling. It is part of the psyche that cycling is all about the lycra, but for many cyclists it is not. It is more about dressing in civilian clothing and wanting to get from point A to B quickly, effectively and cheaply—and cycling does that as well as any form of transport. We must provide a safe space for cyclists.

I spoke to a fellow yesterday in preparation for this debate. I bring to the attention of the House a fairly simple concept, but one that had not occurred to me. This fellow said that most streets are parallel to one other. On both sides of those parallel streets, certainly round Newcastle, is provision for parking. He said that where four streets are running parallel and vehicles are parked on both sides, effectively eight lanes of bitumen pavement are used for parking. He asked: What if we just took out parking on one side of the back streets and dedicated that space to cycling? That is good, logical thinking. It means we will not have to construct a cycleway or inconvenience people too much. Sure, it means that no-one can park on the side of the road dedicated for cycling, which might mean someone cannot park directly out the front of their house. But it is a way of getting round the problem and avoiding the big costs. These guys involved in cycling certainly know their stuff.

This fellow also spoke about the capacity for cycling in different environments, the width of bus shelters, and barriers and barricades that are put across paths. He spoke about the quality of the pavement that cyclists are expected to ride on. I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. NSW BikePlan is a fantastic document. Yesterday the member for Davidson went to great pains to tell us about opportunities missed in his electorate because, he said, the former Government—which he likes to speak ill of—had not provided for them. It is over to the Coalition Government now. It has this terrific plan, it has the budget and it has the money: make this happen.

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [12.01 p.m.], by leave: I commend the member for Wallsend for her motion, and I do so on behalf of all communities in the Hunter. I note that I share the member's endorsement of Bernard Hockings for his initiative in convening the forum to investigate possible solutions for the integration of cycleways with the various existing methods of transport. I note also that my council, Lake Macquarie City Council, was represented at the forum by our very capable Mr Peter McMurray, council's Coordinator of Transportation Planning. I acknowledge that the mayor, the member for Lake Macquarie, is sitting opposite.

Following on from the recent forum, Lake Macquarie City Council engaged a firm of consultants, GHD Consultants, to prepare a draft plan for the integration of cycleways with public transport. It is anticipated that this report will be completed by the end of this year. I should add at this point that should any member of the general public, or for that matter any government agency, wish to make a submission on this strategy, then that submission may be forwarded to Mr Peter McMurray of Lake Macquarie City Council. Mr McMurray's strategy is to increase the number of cycling trips into Lake Macquarie from 2 per cent to 5 per cent of all trips.

The people of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie are well aware of one of the largest and most successful initiatives in relation to shared cycle-walkways, that being the Fernleigh Track, a facility recently completed as a joint project between Newcastle and Lake Macquarie city councils that extends from Belmont in the south to Adamstown in the north. I was privileged earlier this year to be the official starter for the annual Loop the Lake bike ride, an initiative of Lake Macquarie Rotarians and an event that over the years has raised many thousands of dollars for various charities. This initiative also ties in with our Healthy Lifestyle Program. I note that, whilst I have clearly embraced this program, not all have, and I encourage my colleagues to do likewise. I commend this motion to the House.

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [12.04 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate—the members for Charlestown, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Cessnock and Swansea. It is nice that virtually all backbench members from the Hunter are involved in this issue. I thank the member for Charlestown for his contribution. I agree: Let's welcome home Cadel Evans, winner of the Tour de France. It is fantastic that as we are talking about cycling we have an Australian world champion. I thank also Fiona Campbell who, as was mentioned, was at the Bike City Forum. She made a wonderful contribution to the forum. I agree with the member for Charlestown: it is important that the Roads and Traffic Authority be closely involved with councils and that it network with the community about the future of cycleways. We all support the extension of the Fernleigh Track, and agree that it is a magnificent piece of landscape.

The Wallsend to Glendale cycleway was an initiative of my predecessor, John Mills, who worked really hard to get this project off the ground. It was John Mills who got the \$750,000 State Government contribution. He deserves the tributes given him, as does Richard Face, who also worked very hard to get the Fernleigh Track built. It is great that the New South Wales Government is on board and has provided funding. It is interesting that the member mentioned that the New South Wales Government will maintain existing funding for the cycleway. I hope the Government will consider increasing funding for cycleways in the future, because I think we will need more money, not less.

The member for Lake Macquarie spoke about cycleway links between Newcastle City and Lake Macquarie, and the great results that have been achieved with the Fernleigh Track. He also spoke about the termination of the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway at Glendale TAFE. Of course, we all want to extend it further, to Speers Point, and will work towards that. The member for Newcastle also spoke in favour of the extension of the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway to Speers Point. The next step is to make sure that we achieve that. The member enjoyed the very important Bike City Forum as much as I did. I look forward to the Roads and Traffic Authority's consultations and community meetings. I hope they are undertaken before July next year—which seems a long way off.

The member for Cessnock spoke about the integration of cycleways with public transport. He shared with us the interesting concept of parallel streets and the dedication of parking on one side of the street for cycling. For many of us who cycle, contending with parked cars is a real difficulty, so this concept is certainly worth considering. It was nice to see the member for Swansea join us on this issue, speaking about the importance of healthy lifestyles. In summary, I again congratulate the Hunter bike forum; it was a great initiative. We look forward to more of them, and hope for much more funding from the State Government for cycleways in the Hunter.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Pursuant to resolution Government Business proceeded with.**

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING BILL 2011****Agreement in Principle**

**Debate resumed from 10 August 2011.**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [12.08 p.m.]: Once again, I rise to advise the House about what appears to be the Government's latest political stunt contained in the Government Advertising Bill 2011. The Government Advertising Bill 2011 is right out of the O'Farrell playbook: say your predecessors did something really terrible, promise to fix the problem by introducing some fancy-sounding legislation, and hold a press conference. The bill seeks to formalise in legislation what already exists in guidelines and Cabinet procedures. State governments are already prohibited from engaging in political advertising using taxpayer funds, and those guidelines are readily available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

The former Department of Commerce, which is now part of the so-called "super" Department of Finance and Services, was charged with providing independent advice on the content of each government advertising campaign, particularly as to whether it was political in nature. For every advertising campaign a "peer review" was produced. This document contained advice, independent from the public sector, commenting on the content of the campaign. The Premier knows, as do all Coalition members, that this legislation is unnecessary. Each State government is expected to implement its own internal processes for keeping politics out of its advertising. So the question is: Why would we then not trust our Ministers to perform the job their predecessors were clearly capable of doing?

This bill is an admission by the Premier that his Ministers are perhaps incompetent. What is more, it places the directors general in a difficult position because they have to make the final comment about advertising. Assuming we accepted this proposal at face value, it would be even further evidence of mistrust regarding how Ministers will handle government advertising. In reality, few directors general will be willing to stand up to the person who ultimately decides whether they keep their job over an advertising campaign. The fact that such a requirement is now in legislation does not mean it is going to happen. Clause 10 of the bill proposes restrictions on government advertising campaigns during the pre-election period. That proposal sounded familiar and, sure enough, I found it on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website. It is suggested that banning advertising, with the exception of important health warnings and the like, two months before an election is a new idea, but that is not the case.

That specification is to be found in the New South Wales Government Advertising Guidelines, which were published in December 2010—just in time for this year's election. I am happy to provide members with the link, but it is available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website and I also have a hard copy. Contrary to the claim that there is no prevailing issue with government advertising, members will be familiar with previous campaigns advising people about the dangers of driving continuously without adequate rest, the dangers of drink driving and about covering one's mouth during the influenza season. This is yet another empty bill. The Government is running out of ideas. The provisions and guidelines exist already and are in place in New South Wales. Why introduce bills whose content is clearly a repetition of what is already available from the Department of Premier and Cabinet?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [12.12 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate, including the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blue Mountains, the member for Auburn, the member for Cronulla, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Riverstone, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Balmain, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Castle Hill, the member for Lake Macquarie, and the member for Bankstown. I note the support for the bill from Government members and the member for Balmain.

The member for Bankstown may be interested to know that, whilst the former Government over the past 16 years and before that made lots of promises about putting in place an independent process to assess government advertising, it never, ever delivered. Despite promise after promise, Auditor-General's report after Auditor-General's report showed—in 2007, 2003 and 1999—increases of up to 50 per cent in the amount of taxpayer-funded government advertising in the lead-up to the election campaigns simply designed to give the community a soft, warm feeling about the then Labor Government. Labor came to power in 1995 with a promise from then leader Bob Carr to put in place a process requiring the Auditor-General to audit expenditure on taxpayer-funded government advertising.

Almost 17 years after that commitment was made, the Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering it within its first four months in office. The bill is a cornerstone of the Government's program to restore the

integrity of advertising within the New South Wales Government. I address three issues raised by Opposition speakers and the member for Balmain: the role of the Auditor-General in auditing government advertising campaigns; the involvement of 'independent' voices in the peer review process for campaigns; and the arrangements for recovering the cost of a campaign from a political party when the prohibitions, or the guidelines, have been breached. The role of the Auditor-General is central to the effectiveness of the arrangements in this bill.

The Auditor-General's office will carry out an annual performance audit of at least one government agency to determine whether it is complying with the proposed Act. I remind all members that the Auditor-General was consulted extensively in the drafting of this legislation. What was agreed is an approach, set out in this legislation, to ensure integrity in the process whilst not compromising the ability of the Auditor-General to review independently the performance of a government agency as required under this bill and under the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983. The Auditor-General will audit expenditure by the State Government today and in the future, unless changed by legislation, on government advertising.

Questions were also raised as to why the bill does not contain provisions for the involvement of people who are 'independent' of the public service in the peer review of advertising campaigns. Again, nothing could display more the ignorance, the lack of research and lack of capacity of those opposite. Each year usually around 45 advertising campaigns valued at more than \$50,000 require peer review. Most of those campaigns are commissioned by a single agency because they concern targeted community issues such as road safety, smoking, cancer and the like. There may also be public awareness campaigns covering whole-of-government initiatives. When the Auditor-General reported on government advertising in 2009, he recommended that only whole-of-government campaigns required an independent person in the peer review stage.

Unlike those opposite who went to war with the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General and other independent watchdogs, the Government respects them; we listen to them and we take their advice. This recommendation was adopted in the guidelines and it will continue to apply under the proposed Act. To extend the requirement for external advertising experts to all peer reviews would effectively require a private sector advertising executive to be involved in a peer review of a government advertisement on a weekly basis. This would be inefficient and costly for the State. It was not recommended by the Auditor-General and it is therefore not included in the bill. Should the Auditor-General change his mind, the Government will take heed of his advice.

Finally, the Opposition and the member for Balmain have questioned the arrangements for recovering the costs of campaigns that breach the prohibitions in the bill. The provisions in the bill for debt recovery from a political party are flexible but robust. The question of who in the Government is responsible to recover the debt will depend on the particular circumstances of the alleged breach. It will not automatically fall to the head of an agency, as suggested by those opposite. Rather, proceedings for recovery of a debt can be initiated by a representative of the Crown. That may include a Minister, the head of a department or a governmental officer with a finance or debt recovery function. An agency can seek the recovery of a debt free from political interference. The bill provides that a head of an agency is not subject to the control or direction of a Minister in respect of any debt recovery action. I also remind members that heads of agencies are not appointed or removed by individual Ministers—we stopped that on 26 March. The appointments are made by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, under delegation from me, in consultation with the New South Wales Public Service Commission.

The Leader of the Opposition described as "ridiculous" the claim that heads of agencies would not be subject to ministerial control when it comes to government advertising. Whilst I not only suspect but know that this was the case under Labor, when public servants were treated as mere political puppets—in fact, one of those hand puppets was shoehorned into the job of Director General of Transport and then suddenly shoehorned into Parliament as the member for Keira—under my Government we respect the independence and ethical standards of the public service. In conclusion, the measures in this bill are evidence that the Government expects the highest standards of integrity from the executive and from government agencies regarding government advertising. These standards are also expected by the people of New South Wales, whose trust in government integrity is sorely tested when they see or hear party political advertising that is paid for by taxpayers. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

### Passing of the Bill

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

### GAMING MACHINE TAX AMENDMENT BILL 2011

#### Agreement in Principle

**Debate resumed from 10 August 2011.**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [12.19 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government recognises the substantial financial and in-kind support provided by clubs. The legislation commits to a range of reforms to help secure the long-term financial viability and sustainability of New South Wales clubs. Clubs play an extremely important role in communities throughout regional New South Wales and, I am sure, in metropolitan areas. In many regional places clubs are the centre of the town. Often they are the only place for social interaction; they are the only place where people can gather together in times of celebration and in times of trouble. I commend the Minister for introducing this legislation. He is the hardest working Minister in the history of New South Wales and he will be remembered that way in years to come.

There are 21 clubs in Myall Lakes. As members know, Myall Lakes is the number one holiday destination in New South Wales. It is a wonderful place to visit and stay. Those 21 clubs employ 590 staff, have 638 club volunteers and have a membership of 60,000 people. The clubs in Myall Lakes currently give \$8.5 million worth of support to local community groups and activities. Under this legislation, the clubs in Myall Lakes will pay \$377,000 less in tax and contribute \$143,000 more to local communities. Research has shown that for every \$1 less that clubs pay in poker machine tax, the community will receive the benefit of \$2. That is a phenomenal amount of money to go back into the Myall Lakes electorate, which is one of the poorest socioeconomic areas in Australia. Local community groups need the assistance of clubs.

For example, the tax saving for Club Forster will be \$167,000, \$15,000 for Club Old Bar, \$90,000 for Club Taree, and \$30,000 for Forster Bowling Club. Many clubs in my electorate and throughout regional New South Wales are struggling. Indeed, they have been struggling since the previous Government increased the poker machine tax. Many clubs are teetering on the brink, and this legislation will be of great assistance to them. What do clubs do with their money? Much of the money is given to community organisations. Club Forster gives \$3,000 to Camp Quality and it gives \$2,000 to Nova Employment, Manning Great Lakes Early Intervention, the Epilepsy Association of Great Lakes, the Manning Great Lakes branch of Multiple Sclerosis, the New South Wales branch of Alzheimer's Australia, Life Without Barriers and the Forster Neighbourhood Centre. And the list goes on.

Club Forster gives \$8 million a year in support of community organisations. A number of charities and worthwhile organisations receive funding. I did not mention the great Forster-Tuncurry Rugby League Club, which receives assistance from the clubs. As I said, this bill will assist clubs in supporting local organisations. Yesterday in debate on this bill the member for Liverpool and the member for Cabramatta referred to broken Government promises. It is unbelievable that the member for Liverpool referred to broken Government promises when Labor went to the electorate in 2007 saying that it would not sell New South Wales electricity assets.

However, as soon as Labor was returned to government it sold the electricity assets, and sold them for a song. Indeed, it sold the assets for such a small amount of money that if the previous Government had been a corporation it would have been referred for investigation. In conclusion, members representing regional New South Wales wholeheartedly support this bill. It will be a tremendous boost to the club industry, which employs so many people. This Government supports the workers. The club industry is important to regional New South Wales. The conveyancer from Liverpool would not understand that because he has not been outside Sydney.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** If I were a conveyancer from Liverpool that might be relevant. It just proves you are as dumb as I thought you were.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** For the member for Liverpool to talk about dumb is unbelievable. He was part of the Government that brought this State to its knees over 16 years.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Myall Lakes will address his comments through the Chair.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** I close with that comment. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [12.26 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. I commend the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts for his excellent and continuing support of New South Wales clubs, and for introducing a bill that will go a long way to securing the future of New South Wales clubs. As my colleagues have said, clubs do important work within our electorates. Nothing illustrates this better than during the election campaign when the then Leader of the Opposition and I visited Parramatta Leagues Club and he called the bingo numbers. The Premier was particularly good at calling out "legs eleven" and so on. There were perhaps 200 people in the room at 11 o'clock on a weekday morning.

Bingo is a wonderful community event that enables people to get together in a safe environment where they can have a drink and chat to friends. Bingo is a cost-effective source of entertainment, and acts as a hub for the community. Clubs play an important role in the community. Their role has changed over the past 10 to 20 years and they are professional now. We have a conglomeration of larger clubs. Clubs have imposts to meet the demands of members, such as extra costs to maintain infrastructure at a high level. If clubs do not keep infrastructure up to date they fail and close down. Clubs provide community support and assist local sports groups. They also run club programs.

In my area we have fishing clubs and all manner of different activities. Club programs enable people to engage with each other in the community. We also have the Community Grants Program. Parramatta is particularly proud to have a number of excellent clubs, including Parramatta Leagues Club, with its President and Chairman, Roy Spagnolo. Parramatta Leagues Club has a strong presence in the community and provides grants for community welfare and social services, community development and health services, and employment assistance. They also organise social events for their members. They have approximately 40,000 members, which signifies the importance of the club, and support activities such as senior rugby, wheelchair rugby, fishing and bowls.

The Parramatta RSL was the winner of the Outstanding Financial Management Award in the medium club category at the 2011 ClubsNSW Awards for Excellence. Warren Glenny is the president of that excellent club. During the last few years, it was taken over by the Castle Hill RSL group. The club has developed a great business model and now is a great success story, thanks to Warren Glenny. It raised more than \$10,000 to support the Ronald McDonald House at Westmead through the Australia Day Fun Fair. I was privileged to attend its Anzac commemoration. The club provides kits for all primary schools for Anzac Day, which is a great way to educate kids about Australia's history. It also hosts the Kokoda Youth leadership Challenge for 16 to 22-year-olds to trace the footsteps of Australian servicemen in memory of the 2,000 soldiers who died defending Papua New-Guinea in World War II.

In the Parramatta electorate, we also have the Rosehill Bowling Club. I was privileged to attend one of the events it hosted in May, the Thirty-second Annual Blind Bowls Championships. Parramatta also has the Dundas Sports and Recreation Club whose history dates back to 1792 and whose Victorian era clubhouse dates back to the early 1870s. The Wentworthville Leagues Club, which is located just outside my electorate and whose president is Ian McCann, recently donated \$2,500 to Sydney's Royal Rehabilitation Centre to assist those in the Parramatta area who are affected by injury, disability or illness to regain driving skills and confidence. Of course this year the Wentworthville club was involved in the World's Greatest Shave Day and raised almost \$20,000 to support the Queensland flood appeal.

While the Liberal-Nationals Government is in government, we will follow the lead shown by the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, the Hon. George Souris, and support the local New South Wales clubs as well as the great work they do whereas the Opposition is attempting to destroy the industry. At the Federal level, Labor is introducing poker machine mandatory precommitments, but is not trying to solve problem gambling; rather, that really is being done to appease a Tasmanian independent politician. The New South Wales Labor Opposition should tell their Federal colleagues to stop. I commend Minister Souris for his outstanding work. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [12.33 p.m.]: In expressing my support for the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011, I will refer to the impact of this legislation on regional and rural

communities, particularly in the Tamworth electorate. There are 24 clubs in Tamworth and they employ 424 staff in casual, part-time and full-time positions. There are 656 club volunteers in the Tamworth electorate and 43,425 members. Clubs in Tamworth currently give \$6,640,278 of community support to local community groups and activities, which is outstanding.

**Mr David Elliott:** Pretty impressive.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** Very impressive. Clubs in Tamworth would expect to pay \$335,000 less tax and contribute \$122,000 more to their local communities through the community development support expenditure [CDSE] program. Another taxpaying club in my electorate is the Gunnedah Golf Club. As a result of this amending bill, its tax saving under the Coalition Government's policy will be \$3,400 and with the extra community development support expenditure the club will be eligible to claim \$1,300. The Gunnedah Services and Bowling Club will benefit from a tax saving of \$39,000, and with the extra community development support expenditure rebate it will channel back to the community \$15,000. The Tamworth Services Club will receive a tax saving of \$51,000, and will channel extra community development support expenditure back to the community worth \$20,000.

The West Tamworth Leagues Club, which is one of the biggest clubs in the region, will obtain a tax saving under the Coalition's policy and legislation of \$211,582, which is extraordinary. That will put back into the community the grand sum of \$71,996. That funding can be channelled back into the sporting communities and community organisations right across the region that need funding from our clubs. The West Tamworth Leagues Club employs 93 people. The clubs industry provides a critical part of regional infrastructure and a critical part of our community social engagement. The clubs support the sporting organisations that enable our kids and our people to participate in sport. Lately all levels of government have been promoting ways to reduce obesity and promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging people to become involved in sport. There is a lot that clubs can do in that regard. We must support our clubs and push very hard to ensure that the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 is passed. Over many years the former Labor Government withdrew front-line services and closed regional facilities. That must stop. It will stop under a Coalition Government. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [12.37 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. The bill will ensure that local clubs remain viable and will be better able to support their local communities through a reduction in taxes over the next four years. The Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill will reduce taxes paid by registered clubs and will introduce beneficial changes to the Club Community Support Scheme, including a new name, ClubGRANTS. The Liberal-Nationals made a key election commitment to ensure the sustainability of the clubs industry, protect our local jobs, and protect and enhance the valuable community support that clubs provide across the State.

I will highlight the fantastic contributions that local clubs make to my local community. Clubs in the Port Macquarie electorate will be able to increase donations to the community by approximately \$950,000 over the next four years. The clubs already donate cash, vouchers and in-kind support of more than \$9.1 million a year. These are very significant contributions, which deliver very real benefits for so many groups—organisations, schools, social groups and sporting teams. The list of groups is almost endless and includes local rotary clubs, bridge clubs, woodworking groups, Probus clubs, Lions, fishing clubs, the RSL clubs, high schools and primary schools, the Cancer Council, the Hastings Cancer Trust, snooker clubs, bowling clubs, darts or football clubs.

I could go on, but time does not permit. Those groups would do it tough, if it was not for the support and ongoing commitment of our local club industry to improving our local communities. On top of support for individuals, a new ClubGRANTS scheme will increase support for community and sporting groups across the State by an estimated \$85 million over the next four years. Next Monday, under the former scheme, more than \$100,000 will be distributed to 30 local groups and organisations, and I will very happily attend the presentation at the Port City Bowling Club. With more than 59,000 local residents who are members of local clubs, I am sure our community will applaud the changes that will ensure their clubs remain open and in a far healthier position to assist local communities.

In my electorate there are 12 clubs, including Camden Haven Golf Club, Harrington Bowling Club, Kendall Services Club, Lake Cathie Bowling Club, Lansdowne Bowling Club, Laurieton United Services Club, North Haven Bowling Club, Port Macquarie City Bowling Club, Port Macquarie Golf Club, Port Macquarie



Panthers, Port Macquarie Panthers Sports Club and Westport Club. I am pleased to say I am a member of some of those clubs, and that happily I have visited all of them. Individually, they are all outstanding local community organisations, and as a group they bring so much to the lifestyle of our community.

The club industry in New South Wales is very generous and supports many local organisations and sporting groups. In State taxes alone, our local clubs will pay more than \$26.5 million over the next four years. In my electorate, local businesses derive a direct benefit from approximately \$6 million each year that is spent by clubs on local goods and services. From an employment perspective, 518 local people are employed by local clubs, which adds a further \$21 million to the economy. We all know how much business is hurting at the moment so any support from the club industry to assist our local economy is very welcome. This legislation is a great move on the part of the Liberal-Nationals Government that hopefully will prevent clubs from closing.

Excessive tax rates levied by the former Government contributed to the closure of approximately 100 clubs. This new bill will put an end to that. Registered clubs often are described as the backbone of many regional and rural communities in a social interaction sense, but for that to continue they have to remain viable. I am committed to ensuring that our local clubs continue to grow and remain viable. After all, strong clubs means stronger communities. I commend this bill to the House.

**Mr JOHN BARILARO** (Monaro) [12.40 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. The bill delivers on another election promise to support the club industry, which in real terms means supporting the many communities that are beneficiaries of a strong club industry. For regional and rural communities our clubs play an important role, not just as an economic driver through direct and indirect job creation and employment but as the centre point for many community groups to meet, a place of refuge during times of disaster or just a place to meet to build relationships and friendships. Our clubs are the foundation of our regional communities. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government recognises that and that is why it is committed to a range of reforms that will underpin the sustainability and long-term viability of our clubs. The Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill is part of that.

What does the bill deliver? The bill reduces the taxation rates and expands and renames the current development scheme as ClubGRANTS. The bill contains some important factors. For example, for every \$1 of tax relief given, it creates \$2 worth of benefits to New South Wales, it will boost the social contribution of clubs by \$272 million, it will boost gross State productivity by \$261 million and it will help to create an additional 2,000 jobs each year, which will be well received in regional communities. The Monaro electorate has 15 clubs that employ 232 staff in casual, part-time and full-time positions, with 497 club volunteers, 38,000-odd members, and the list goes on. For example, this tax cut will save the Queanbeyan Leagues Club \$550,000 and Cooma Ex-services Club will save \$31,000, which will provide more money for community groups that are the beneficiaries of a strong club industry.

The Queanbeyan Leagues Club supports a range of community groups, such as, SIDS and Kids, Barnardos Australia, the Queanbeyan Care and Support group, Men of League Foundation, Harris Park Preschool and the Australian Capital Territory Eden Monaro Cancer Support group, a not-for-profit organisation that provides a very unique financial service to families who are going through cancer treatment. If it were not for the sponsorship and financial support of the Queanbeyan Leagues Club, that group would not even have the building in which it is based; it was provided from poker machine revenue of the club. The Monaro Panthers Football Club, sponsored by the Kangaroo club in Queanbeyan, is also a beneficiary. That club has 1,000 kids with 300 parents and brings a team from Korea every year for the Kanga Cup—one of the biggest tournaments, which is possible only because of the generosity and support of the local club industry. That is why it is important to support the club industry.

In relation to regional and rural communities we need to talk about jobs in the bush. Guess what is often the most significant employer in the bush? That is right, it is our clubs. The number of employment opportunities provided by clubs is vital to the growth and prosperity of our local economies. Every job created and saved has a domino effect throughout the rest of the community, which means greater opportunity and employment. This bill can easily be seen as a social and fiscal stimulus for our regional communities—more for jobs, more for community groups, more for local businesses and more opportunities for our kids. In stark contrast to that, the Federal Government's pokies reform will destroy everything that we are doing in our regional communities. It is a reform under the Wilkie-Gillard agreement to keep the Federal Labor Party in government at the cost of regional communities and our junior sporting clubs.

The New South Wales Government is endeavouring to support the club industry. I take this opportunity to call on members of the Federal Government, especially the Federal member in my electorate, to think about

the damage of the Federal reforms, follow the lead of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in empowering, supporting and partnering with clubs in our communities, and oppose the Wilkie-Gillard pokies reforms. They need to do that. This reform by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government through the Minister is about supporting jobs, communities and community groups that are the beneficiaries of a strong and vibrant club industry. Clubs have helped us forge meaningful and purposeful identities, unique and caring identities in regional and rural communities. Strong clubs mean stronger communities, and that is exactly what this bill will achieve. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa) [12.45 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. By this bill the O'Farrell Government is yet again delivering on another election promise. I remind members of the House that this legislation originated from a memorandum of understanding signed with ClubsNSW last October. In the memorandum of understanding the Government outlined its commitment to the clubs industry that will strengthen the financial sustainability of clubs and enable clubs to increase their contribution to their local communities. Regrettably under the former Government's legislation, club workers, management and communities were abused and pillaged by the 52 per cent increase in taxation. Shame. That removed 9,000 jobs from the industry and closed 97 clubs—and Labor says it is for the people.

In stark contrast to that, the Liberal-Nationals Government understands the delicate balance between obtaining sufficient taxes to run the State and reducing taxes to free up investment and encourage growth. An analysis by KPMG of the Coalition's gaming tax rates has calculated huge benefits for New South Wales during the next four years including: 1,924 new jobs annually, a \$261 million increase in gross State product and a \$272 million increase in clubs' social contributions to their communities. When I spoke with local club presidents in my electorate of Mulgoa, the signing of the memorandum of understanding with ClubsNSW was a tremendous beacon of light and hope. They looked forward to the State election.

St Marys Rugby Leagues Club and St Marys Band Club excitedly discussed what additional community outcomes they would be able to provide. St Marys Band Club already has identified instruments that they will purchase to assist young children who are practising music with the provision of great instruments. St Marys Rugby Leagues Club—the best in the west—is a strong, popular and community-responsible icon in western Sydney. For example, just last year a constituent told me that he needed urgently to obtain \$20,000 to pay for a lifesaving operation. Within one month of the planned function to help raise the money, the club that he had liaised with cancelled on him. In absolute desperation he contacted me and asked for help. I immediately contacted the chief executive officer of St Marys Rugby Leagues Club, Rod Desborough, for assistance and he immediately came on board and offered its function centre free of charge. The money was raised, the man had his operation and he is now recovering. That is just one example of a multitude of thousands and thousands of input examples that the clubs in New South Wales deliver to our communities.

The Liberal-Nationals Government will stand side-by-side and support our clubs. The extra community support will be funded from proposed new tax rates that will result in clubs paying an estimated \$2.5 billion in total tax over the period, which represents a reduction of \$299 million in what they would have paid in tax under the rates of the former Government. But the challenge is still before us because under the Labor Federal Government, the imposition of the carbon tax and interference with mandatory pre-commitment are looming large and heavy on the clubs industry. For example, the carbon tax already is estimated to cost 31,000 jobs. The mandatory pre-commitment also is going to cost jobs and cost money for local communities.

It is shameful that a Labor Government is seeking to impose policies and legislation that will damage communities, and for one reason only—to stay in office. But at what expense? It is disgraceful. Clubs exist for their local communities and consist of members and workers from their local communities. Under this bill the Liberal-Nationals Government recognises, respects and now releases clubs to serve their communities in a stronger and more significant way. Under the O'Farrell Government, clubs will have a new lease on life, and so too will their communities. The next Goliath that we face bringing down is the Federal Labor Government, the policies of which, mandatory pre-commitment and carbon tax, will further destroy the clubs and our wonderful communities in Australia. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TONY ISSA** (Granville) [12.50 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011, which addresses the very basic necessity of supporting local clubs. Prior to the 2011 State election, I was honoured and privileged to be part of a delegation that signed a memorandum of understanding between the Premier and the good Minister and ClubsNSW. I recall that happened at the Merrylands RSL Club and that the Minister was walking on crutches at that time.

**Mr George Souris:** I was.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** The least members can do is support this legislation. I was surprised to hear members opposite say that they will oppose this legislation.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** No, we will not.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** The member for Cabramatta said that the bill should not be supported and that the money should be spent on policing and education.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** The Opposition is supporting the bill.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** The member for Liverpool probably did not listen to his colleague's contribution. If he spent more time in the Chamber, he would probably know what his colleagues have said.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** I have been in the Chamber more often than you have.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** The member does not know what his colleagues have said. They said that the money raised from this tax could be used to pay for police officers, nurses and teachers. The member for Liverpool should talk to the member for Cabramatta. My concern is that people believe that clubs are venues only for poker machines. That is not correct. Clubs are part of the social fabric of our society. The more we help clubs the more we help our communities, but members opposite know nothing about that and the former Labor Government failed to support our communities. The current Government is reforming the tax structure as it affects clubs to ensure that clubs can survive.

Clubs deserve to survive because they provide venues for social activities and meetings and serve affordable meals. My Labor opponent at the last election held a fundraising function at the RSL club in my area because it is a good venue that provides excellent and affordable food. Yet, unlike the Government, the Labor Party now ignores the services that clubs provide to communities in New South Wales.

**Mr David Elliott:** Labor ignored that.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** Labor totally ignored it. The clubs of New South Wales benefit our families and employ tens of thousands of people. When I was Mayor of Parramatta I had the privilege and honour of attending a club function at Epping. As a result of holding that small function, the club contributed more than \$250,000 to local community organisations. Without that support, that community organisation would not have survived.

**Mr David Elliott:** That's right. Labor doesn't like that.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** Labor does not like to support communities. Members opposite say they are the champions of the people, but the reality is that they do not want to know about our communities and working-class people, and they do not want to support a good cause or our clubs that contribute so much to our communities.

**Mr David Elliott:** But they took the donations, though.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** They certainly do, but that is a different issue.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** In the limited time available for my contribution to this debate, I want to express my support for the clubs in my electorate. Without the RSL clubs in my electorate, there would be no Anzac Day commemoration ceremonies held in the local area. I know that Anzac Day means a lot to the Australian people—it is the most important day on our national calendar—and I know how much time, money and effort clubs contribute to commemorate that important day. It is a shame that members opposite will not support this legislation.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr TONY ISSA:** I commend the bill to the House. It is a great move, it introduces much-needed reform of the taxes imposed on clubs, and it will help clubs to survive. If they do not survive, many families will suffer, many jobs will be lost and many New South Wales community organisations will no longer be supported.

**Mr JAI ROWELL** (Wollondilly) [12.54 p.m.]: Clubs are an integral part of our community. They shape our social make-up, and I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. I proclaim my support for this vital boost for registered clubs as well as community programs and services across the State. This much-needed support for our clubs is welcomed by Government members because it provides relief from the former Labor Government's uncompromising tax increases that put approximately 100 clubs out of business and resulted in more than 60 clubs being forced to amalgamate simply to stay afloat.

I remember meeting with the then Leader of the Opposition and now Premier, Barry O'Farrell, during the election campaign to discuss the memorandum of understanding with the chief executive officer of Western Suburbs Leagues Club, Tony Mathew. Also in attendance to support this initiative were local Wests stars Simon Dwyer and Junior Moors. During the visit I was told of the wonderful work the club does to support local sporting groups, including the Wests Tigers, Wests Juniors, Macarthur Rams Soccer Association, Campbelltown Netball Club, Ambarvale Little Athletics and St Gregory's College, to name but a few.

The Campbelltown Catholic Club's chief executive officer, Michael Lavorato, has ensured that the club has a community focus, first and foremost. In 2009-10 the club's donations totalled more than \$582,000. That represented more than 40 per cent of the club's operating profit for the year being donated to our local community. It exceeded the club's community development support expenditure obligations by 50 per cent for the year. Some of the beneficiaries during the year included a number of local schools to the value of approximately \$100,000. Other donations included \$40,000 for Mater Dei, \$40,000 for Youth Solutions, \$20,000 for Lifeline Macarthur, \$10,000 for the Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, \$10,000 for Youth Off The Streets and another \$24,000 for other local charities. With the addition of The Cube entertainment centre, the club regularly opens its doors in support of local community functions.

These fantastic organisations and the services they provide, like many others, would be under threat without support from clubs. Therefore, I was disappointed, but not surprised, when Labor's response was to impose a tax. It taxed them to the point of closure or forced amalgamation. It taxed them to such a point that it put pressure on the clubs that are so vital to our community. But that was just the start. Federal Labor—or should I say the Labor-Greens-Independents alliance—has decided it does not support the good work done by clubs and the assistance they provide to communities. It intends to introduce stricter measures and mandatory pre-commitment for poker machine use. There are serious potential implications should the mandatory pre-commitment measure be introduced. First, it will not be effective in tackling problem gambling. The Labor Party claims that it is the friend of the clubs. If that is true, I would hate to see how it treats its enemies.

Equally concerning is the effect of poor Labor policies on the communities that need our support the most. Members opposite have turned their backs on rural and regional areas of our State with forced closure of our local clubs, which is leaving many people jobless and without the high-quality services that clubs provide. Clubs are responsible for providing our communities with high-quality facilities. They work with communities to respond to the needs of those areas in which they are located. They also provide benefits to those most in need of help by fostering long-term relationships and community partnerships. They are responsible for providing the residents of Wollondilly with job opportunities and they sponsor local community groups through the Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme, which will soon be known as the ClubGRANTS scheme.

Over the next four years it is estimated that \$200 million will be injected into many not-for-profit organisations across the State. This bill is about striking a balance between the obligations of registered clubs to pay their fair share of tax while ensuring their future financial viability. Furthermore, this legislation will ensure that local community groups continue to be supported, and in many cases that support will be bolstered. By reducing the gaming tax payable by New South Wales clubs and by introducing the new ClubGRANTS scheme, this legislation not only will deliver on the Coalition's election commitment but also will provide opportunities for clubs to reinvest in their communities.

ClubsNSW makes a social contribution of approximately \$1.1 billion a year and provides ongoing assistance in the sponsorship of programs such as Father Riley's Youth Off The Streets, the Talent Development Project, the Parkinson's NSW Unity Walk and Fun Run, the Keep Australia Beautiful program and the annual Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge, to name but a few. In my electorate, the wonderful Warragamba Workers and Sporting Club annually offers a scholarship to a local year 6 student to assist with his or her secondary education. How will the New South Wales Government provide aid to clubs in the community? It will ensure that registered clubs retain the money they need to continue to advance and encourage community support

expenditure through the ClubGRANTS scheme. This bill will lead to further investment in our communities. It will strengthen the financial position of our local clubs to ensure that they continue to provide vital services to our communities. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Menai) [12.59 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. Registered clubs have always stood as community beacons. Clubs are places where families can enjoy an affordable meal, they are venues for live entertainment and they are meeting places for community groups and activities. Clubs host school presentation nights and play a special role for our returned service personnel. In regional areas they are often one of the only venues to cater for all age groups—from bingo, school dances, community theatre to a midweek meal with friends. However, despite their obvious value to our communities, clubs are under threat. The majority of members are now older and many clubs struggle to attract younger patrons.

In keeping with their community focus and a desire to remain accessible, clubs often aim to have affordable membership fees. When costs are not met by membership, clubs look to other sources of income. One of the largest sources of income is poker machines. Long the bane of society, undeniably they keep registered clubs alive and kicking. I do not particularly like poker machines, I have never understood how people can enjoy them, but there are people who do and as long as they are used responsibly, I have no real problem with that. In an effort to change the way clubs were perceived to be profiting from gambling patrons, the Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme was introduced in 1998. The scheme encourages clubs with gaming machine profits of over \$1 million to contribute to their local community, and gives clubs a tax rebate as an incentive for doing so.

Each year clubs donate millions of dollars. Last year \$63 million went to various community organisations across the State. As members may be aware, my previous job was as a fundraiser for Technical Aid to the Disabled NSW. As a small disability charity reliant on fundraising for more than 75 per cent of operating costs, the Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme had been a vital source of funding for projects. My role included applying to various clubs for a slice of the proverbial Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme pie and looking for projects that were needed in the relevant local government areas. The beauty of the Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme is that it supports all levels of community organisations. It returns money to the local community to address local needs.

This is most obvious when attending Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme recipient presentations. I attended them all over the State and saw grass-roots operations wanting to host dancing classes for the Italian community, youth organisations wanting to send children to a leadership camp and large charities hoping to launch a new service in the area. The Spastic Centre, now known as the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, is able to offer real localised programs and support because of this funding. The Cancer Council is also able to roll out similar programs, and there are many more. Club funding also assists small groups to make a big difference in people's lives. Groups of volunteers across the State apply for funding in order to pay for the running costs of mowing lawns for the elderly. These lovely, caring groups help the elderly to stay longer in their homes and to retain some form of independence. They help these people to continue to have pride in their homes, which is important to their wellbeing.

Club funding helps to run local men's sheds and homework clubs, as well as the running costs of providing meals to the homeless and people who are struggling financially. Last year Club Central Menai gave to the Enough is Enough Anti Violence Movement Inc. to assist it to develop an anti-bullying program in schools—one that incorporated teachers, students and their parents in order to attain a more integrated and coordinated approach. The money donated through the Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme is a vital source of funds for groups and organisations in need. I have become aware that the amounts being donated by clubs have noticeably reduced. The global financial crisis, which has caused people to tighten their belts and give up luxuries such as visiting their local clubs, has meant that when it comes time for grant allocations more organisations have missed out or have had to accept less than they requested.

The Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts and I announced the Clubs and Community Rescue Package at Moorebank Sports Club where we noted that Labor's clubs tax had hurt the economy and put at risk the support from clubs. We noted also that Federal Labor's precommitment proposal will also hurt. It is estimated that the rescue package will create nearly 2,000 jobs annually over four years and will see a great and much-needed increase in the social contributions of New South Wales clubs. The Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill will increase the tax rate for clubs, allowing them to

increase the amounts that can go towards the community and to enable them to continue to give a helping hand. The new system, to be tied to a ClubGRANTS scheme, will now feature three separate categories. This change is an attempt to reflect more accurately from where the funds have originated.

This bill recommends increasing the total tax rebate to 1.85 per cent for profits of over \$1 million. Category one funding still includes specific community, welfare or social service projects. Category two funding covers other community development initiatives that I have already mentioned. A new category three will incorporate 0.4 per cent into new ClubGRANTS funding for large-scale projects, primarily to suit statewide activities such as sports and health, and the building of community infrastructure. The beauty of having statewide funding is that ultimately more people will benefit from it. It is particularly beneficial for those without a participating club in the area. This bill will help to support our local clubs and community groups. I commend it to the House and thank the Minister for introducing it.

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [1.05 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 and I commend the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts for introducing it. This is a long overdue and desperately needed reduction in the taxes that are imposed on our local clubs. The amendments in this bill have been enthusiastically welcomed by the local clubs in my electorate and across the Central Coast. During the election campaign I signed three memorandums of understanding. As the candidate for the seat of The Entrance, the Premier, the Minister and I signed a memorandum of understanding with Mingara Recreation Club. The Minister and I also signed a memorandum of understanding at Ourimbah RSL and at Diggers at The Entrance. Clubs across New South Wales contribute more than \$63 million to their local communities.

In my electorate of The Entrance there are seven clubs: Diggers at The Entrance, Mingara Recreation Club, Ourimbah-Lisarow RSL Club, the Bay Sports Club, The Entrance Leagues Club and The Greens The Entrance. In my electorate of The Entrance there is also a non-taxpaying club—Shelley Beach Golf Club. Combined, those clubs employ 621 staff in casual, part-time and full-time positions. There are 363 club volunteers and 86,994 members. Clubs contribute over \$15.25 million in funding for support to local community groups and activities. Under this bill, clubs will pay \$1.2 million less in tax and contribute an additional \$354,869 to my local community. The two largest clubs in my electorate, the Diggers at The Entrance and Mingara Recreation Club, already contribute to over 331 local community and sporting groups and schools.

Diggers, financially and in kind, supports over 70 local organisations and Mingara, financially and in kind, provides support to 39 health and special needs organisation, 46 sporting organisations, 45 school and education groups, 59 welfare and service club groups, 17 subgroups and affiliated groups, and 55 school carnivals across the Central Coast. This bill provides the long-overdue reductions in gaming tax that clubs across the State so desperately need. While the New South Wales Coalition Government is providing a conduit for club survival, Federal Labor, with the support of New South Wales Labor, is showing nothing but contempt for our local clubs by imposing a carbon tax and the damaging precommitment proposal. I applaud the Minister for introducing this bill and for honouring our memorandum of understanding commitment to the clubs of New South Wales and my electorate. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.07 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 and commend the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, who has worked hard with the clubs industry, who cares about clubs across New South Wales, and who recognises the contribution that they make to their communities. Someone is now listening to the clubs and is doing the work that is required. Clubs were struggling under the former Labor Government. Clubs in regional areas were closing down and they were being neglected. This bill will ensure that people retain their jobs and that money is returned to local communities. This Government is listening to the people of New South Wales.

This Government, which was elected off the back of the worst government in the history of Australian politics, is trying to right the wrongs that have been committed against the people of this State. In the last financial year \$63 million was given to a wide range of community projects and services to assist the disadvantaged, the aged, youth, people with disabilities and volunteer emergency organisations. New South Wales Labor is gutless when it comes to standing up to the precommitment proposal of the Federal Labor Government. All it has done is talk about the creation of jobs when it should be standing up to the Federal Labor Government and talking about the jobs that will be lost across this State and the money that will be taken from clubs and will not be available for donation to community organisations.

During the election campaign we went to all regional and local clubs who welcomed this announcement. The Minister can hold his head high on this initiative; the clubs in my electorate—the Lithgow Workmen's Club and the Bathurst Panthers RSL Club—knew this bill was necessary for their survival. Only last week 24 community groups received up to \$80,000. Some might consider that a small amount of money, but such sums of money help the volunteer organisations provide valuable services and assistance to their communities. That money goes a long way towards supporting those organisations. I commend the Minister, and I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [1.10 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011, which will have a positive impact on the people of my electorate. In regional New South Wales we rely on the clubs to provide the type of infrastructure that otherwise can be very difficult to develop. The people of regional New South Wales understand that the way to achieve great things is to work cooperatively. In this sense the clubs are not just building the physical infrastructure of our communities; they are also building a social infrastructure. Clubs are often the places we meet, the hosts of sporting teams, the provider of inexpensive holiday opportunities and the source of much live entertainment. They are also a massive local employer.

Importantly, the clubs create employment opportunities that are flexible, from full-time to part-time and casual work, from mornings to all day or night-time shifts. They provide opportunities for young people to secure apprenticeships, as well as education and skills development in many other trainee positions. Money is not the sole driver of development in Albury. But income flows when a community puts in place the appropriate physical and social infrastructure. The Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 represents a longstanding commitment by the Liberal Party and The Nationals. Under Labor an estimated 100 clubs closed and a further 60 amalgamated.

Things had gone wrong and we want to improve the mechanisms surrounding the revenue, taxation and provision of community grants that derive from gaming machines. This situation was poorly managed by Labor but under a great Minister this bill will now improve these processes. These improvements will be felt both by the clubs and by their communities. In essence, the new regime implemented by this bill will mean that clubs will pay less poker machine tax and will turn the savings into support for charities, sports groups and the community. Clubs in the Albury electorate will pay over \$65 million in State tax over the next four years, a reduction of some \$7.2 million.

My take on the figures is that club donations in the Albury electorate should total more than \$6.5 million over the next four years, an anticipated increase of \$2.187 million. For example, over the 2009-10 financial year Albury's Commercial Club provided more than \$422,000 in donations. This is a figure significantly above the minimum required amount based on an annual profit of \$2.7 million. Albury's SS&A Club envisages that this new law will lead to a doubling of the money it provides to charities, sport and community groups. Clubs are already talking in these positive terms. More money will also become available for maintenance of facilities such as bowling greens, golf courses and so on. This, too, is vital. This bill aims to encourage this generosity rather than strangle clubs and threaten their continuing viability in difficult economic times.

There are 20 licensed clubs in my electorate with 131,000 members. I take this opportunity to thank their leadership for the massive support and involvement they provide to the community. From Bruce Duck at the Commercial Club to Tim Levesque at the SS&A Club and Caili Christian at the Albury Club, Michael Wighton who manages Corowa RSL, Terry Wild at Holbrook RSL and Mrs Veronica Brown at Culcairn Bowling and Recreation Club. I thank the general manager, Rod Maclean, at North Albury Sports Club and Penny Graham up the road at Lavington Panthers Sports Club. These clubs are hard at work in my community. I would also like to thank Tony Freeman, general manager of Corowa Golf Club, Colin Barrett at Henty Community Club, and Robert Heinecke at Tumbarumba Bowling Club. They are fulfilling important roles in their towns.

At Mulwala Water Ski Club the chief executive officer, Peter Duncan, and chief executive officer of Club Mulwala, Michael Mullarvey, are leading great clubs. So too, for golfers and their families, are William McClellan at Tumbarumba Golf Club, Rob Dick at the Yarrawonga and Border Golf Club, Chris Rebbeschi with Howlong Country Golf Club and Adam Fitzgerald, manager of Thurgoona Golf Club, and we also have the Rosewood Golf Club and Khancoban Country Golf club. I want to see a sustainable clubs industry across the length and breadth of New South Wales; a realistic, affordable tax regime for clubs; grants, which are derived from club revenue, being spent in local communities; locals determining how best to spend this money on

projects and facilities in their backyards, meaning decisions made locally rather than from Sydney by people who have never visited these regional communities. This bill delivers on all four fronts. I commend it to the House.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [1.13 p.m.]: I support the Government's Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011 and my local clubs, which continue to play such an important role in my community. Last night I had the pleasure of attending the cheque presentation evening of the Randwick Community Development Support Expenditure [CDSE] scheme. Those 49 local organisations, many run by dedicated volunteers and providing invaluable services to our community, were granted a total of \$338,000. Organisations to benefit last night included the Bondi Community Street Project, Eastern Suburbs Aftercare, the Prince of Wales Hospital Foundation Early Psychosis Program, the Ted Noffs Foundation, Randwick Waverley Community Transport, The Shack Youth Services, the War Widows Guild of Australia NSW Ltd, and many others.

I commend the work of the Randwick Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme executive committee—Tom Symonds and Peter Reid, from Maroubra Seals, Barry Collier from Coogee Diggers, Brendan Hauville and Keith McCraw from South Sydney Juniors Rugby Leagues Club—who for years have put in the difficult work to meet the requests for funding, and Susanna Susie from Randwick Council who convenes the committee. Over the past 12 years our local clubs have contributed over \$4 million to the Randwick local government area community through this scheme alone, not to mention the incalculable benefits our clubs provide our localities through in-kind support and other community-focused initiatives.

Clubs right across our State are struggling under a dark cloud of the looming threat of the disastrous precommitment legislation of the Gillard-Greens coalition government. Last night the chairman of the Randwick CDSE predicted that this precommitment will deplete the funds to be distributed next year by more than \$100,000. As a local councillor I know firsthand how much our clubs benefit our community. Were it not for the clubs, many programs, activities and facilities would not be available to our residents. If our clubs' capacity to provide these services continues to decline, local government will be turned to in order to make up the shortfall. Any councillor will tell us that filling that gap would be immensely difficult for most local councils.

The difficulties that so many clubs face are clearly illustrated by the fact that the venue for last night's Randwick Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme presentation evening was Juniors @ The Junction, formerly the Maroubra RSL Club. This club had to be rescued by South Sydney Juniors Rugby League Club from insolvency, not through any fault of its directors but because of the increasingly difficult environment under which the club has been forced to operate. Souths Juniors, the parent club, is a popular venue for so many of my constituents, although it is just across the border of my electorate. But Souths too is feeling the pinch. Recently it hosted Sydney's first Save Our Clubs rally to protest the introduction of precommitment technology. To the despair of so many who attended, its pleas to its local member, Peter Garrett, fell on deaf ears. The Labor Party yet again is abandoning our clubs.

These amendments are welcome news for our clubs and our communities. Yet again this Government is making good on an election commitment to reduce the gaming machine tax rates payable and increase the tax rebate available to registered clubs from 1.5 per cent to 1.85 per cent. I was pleased to be in attendance in October last year when the then New South Wales Opposition, represented by the member for Goulburn, signed the memorandum of understanding called Strong Clubs, Stronger Communities, with the Easts Leagues Club in Bondi Junction. The introduction of category three to the ClubGRANTS scheme will ensure larger infrastructure projects receive funding from club revenue. These amendments will see an extra \$90 million flow into much-valued community services and projects in our suburbs, cities and towns.

As the great Minister—a fellow old boy of Randwick Boys High School—has said, it is the clubs that are best placed to make the decisions as to where the greatest need exists and how this money should be spent, and the new ClubGRANTS scheme more accurately reflects the origins of the funds. Last night I gave my commitment to my local clubs that I was in their corner; that I will continue to fight to ensure their operations remain sustainable so that they can continue to provide those services, those amenities and activities, as well as the sense of community and camaraderie that we have all come to appreciate so much over the years from our clubs. This bill deserves the support of all members, and I commend it to the House.

**Mr BART BASSETT** (Londonderry) [1.19 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. Local clubs are important not-for-profit organisations and are the backbone of our community, from sport



to those organisations providing meals in the community. I am shocked that only one Opposition member is present in the Chamber. Those opposite have criticised some Government members who have been defending our clubs. Year in and year out the clubs have been calling on Coalition members to help them and we have tried to defend them. For many years I chaired the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme committee and I have witnessed the amount of money available to not-for-profit organisations decline. This legislation will give more funds to the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme to distribute to our not-for-profit organisations.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Do you want to remind the member about a quorum?

**Mr BART BASSETT:** I can hear the interjections. Opposition members do not like to be reminded of the mistakes that they have made. Those opposite think that the people in our communities will forgive but they will not forget. Government members will be reminding them often of how those opposite let down their constituents, let down the club industry and let down the community. The Government is here to fix all their problems. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY** (Northern Tablelands) [1.20 p.m.]: I support the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011. A number of members have contributed to debate on this bill. I simply add that the clubs in my electorate do a mighty job. This bill recognises that local support and seeks to reward clubs, in particular, those in rural and regional areas that often are run by volunteers, for these services which those communities otherwise would not have provided to them. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [1.21 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to debate on the Gaming Machine Tax Amendment Bill 2011: the member for Liverpool, as the acting shadow Minister, the member for Tweed, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Baulkham Hills, the member for Orange, the member for Dubbo, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Balmain, the member for Camden, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Tamworth, the member for Port Macquarie, the member for Monaro, the member for Mulgoa, the member for Granville, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Menai, the member for The Entrance, the member for Bathurst, the member for Albury, the member for Coogee, the member for Londonderry and the member for Northern Tablelands.

My heart is gladdened that so many members were prepared to speak in favour of their clubs, and it is more than gladdened to note that 21 members of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition have supported this bill. In making their contributions those members have supported their clubs, and more members would have made a contribution except for my intervention to close debate so that the bill can proceed to the upper House. That is 21 speakers from the Government benches compared with two speakers from the Opposition benches. The 21 speakers who have spoken on this bill exceed the entire strength of the Labor Party. It is a disgrace that only two Opposition members had enough interest in the clubs movement to participate in this debate.

The bill fulfils a key election commitment made by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition in our memorandum of understanding with ClubsNSW in October last year. At the heart of the memorandum of understanding is the principle of "Strong Clubs, Stronger Communities". The reforms in this bill will help to achieve that outcome by increasing the capacity of clubs to provide direct support to their members and to the communities they serve. The bill includes community benefits of approximately \$90 million associated with the new ClubGRANTS scheme. This is an important contribution to the sustainability of the club sector and will save many clubs from extinction. The new taxes will provide relief to the club sector from the unsustainable increases forced on clubs by the former Government. Since those tax increases were introduced by the Carr Government many clubs are being forced to shut their doors or amalgamate. Many of the most effective clubs were in regional and rural areas.

The New South Wales Government believes that the clubs themselves are best placed to determine how this funding, which is derived from club revenue, should be spent in local communities. This will allow clubs to increase their community contributions, which not only will have a positive effect on the clubs themselves but also will have substantial benefits for the New South Wales community. The club sector in this State has a long and proud history of community support in a wide range of areas. Clubs foster community spirit and official vital socialising facilities, often for people who have little other recreational opportunities. The New South Wales Government strongly believes that strengthening the clubs also strengthens the resilience and vitality of communities across the State.

The New South Wales Government has committed \$47 million towards regional sporting and welfare grants to help boost participation and improve the health of the community. The creation of a new category of funding under the ClubGRANTS scheme in this bill will result in increased contributions by the club sector for these important community infrastructure projects. The conversion of the existing Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme into the new ClubGRANTS scheme requires a revision of the existing scheme's guidelines. The new guidelines are being developed in consultation with ClubsNSW and will be tabled in Parliament once finalised. The new guidelines will build upon the existing Community Development and Support Expenditure scheme guidelines.

The New South Wales Government is also dedicated to reducing problem gambling. The Government funds a network of face-to-face telephone and internet problem gambling counselling and support services. These are complemented by some of the strictest in-venue gambling controls in Australia. The New South Wales Population Health Survey for 2008-09—the latest research on problem gambling—shows that 0.4 per cent of the adult population in New South Wales are problem gamblers. This is down from 0.8 per cent in the 2006 study. That is the lowest rate in Australia. Front-line problem gambling counselling and support services will receive a record \$10.2 million this financial year from the New South Wales Government. This funding supports around 150,000 counselling hours annually, delivered by 44 face-to-face services operating from more than 200 separate locations throughout the State.

In addition to that funding, this financial year \$780,000 has been allocated towards the 24-hour, seven-day a week Gambling Helpline, and \$218,000 has been allocated towards the national Gambling Help Online service, which provides live online and email counselling 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All these initiatives complement the strict in-venue controls that exist in New South Wales. There are also requirements for gaming venues to install clocks, and Gambling Helpline information must be provided on every gaming machine. The gaming machine laws also include mechanisms to reduce the total number of gaming machines in New South Wales. This reduction is achieved by the entitlement forfeiture arrangements under the entitlement trading system. New South Wales has had 6,400 fewer gaming machines since the introduction of the poker machine entitlement trading scheme. The law also caps the number of poker machine entitlements at 99,000—that remains unchanged.

To clarify a point made in the debate, the Government believes that clubs themselves are best placed to determine how their revenue is spent in supporting their local communities through direct engagement with those in need. The bill will give clubs that opportunity. As I have previously mentioned, the Government will soon be introducing further reforms to enhance the viability and sustainability of registered clubs as it implements the measures in the memorandum of understanding. Finally, I thank Mr Peter Cox of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and Mr Frank Marzic of my office for their assistance in the preparation of this bill and for seeing it through to finality. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill agreed to in principle.**

#### **Passing of the Bill**

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

**Pursuant to resolution Committee Reports proceeded with.**

#### **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

##### **Report: Legislation Review Digest 1/55**

**Debate called on and adjourned on motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead and set down as an order of the day for a future day.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Ms Sonia Horner) left the chair at 1.28 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

## QUESTION TIME

---

*[Question time commenced at 2.17 p.m.]*

### PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is addressed to the Premier. Why did the Premier deliberately mislead the people of New South Wales during the election campaign when he said he would not cut public sector jobs because he would "need more public servants, not less"?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I have worried this week that the Leader of the Opposition had a knock on the head on the weekend, given the amnesia he has clearly been exhibiting all week. We started the week with the Leader of the Opposition complaining about progress on the North West Rail Link, as if Labor had not been in office for 16 years and as if Labor had not been promising for all that time to deliver that rail project and to complete it last year. Then we heard the Leader of the Opposition complain that the Government was being run by lobbyists. This is a party—of which Joe and Eddie were members—accusing someone else of being run by lobbyists and sectional interests; a party that in government saw every dodgy deal entered into at great cost to the taxpayers of New South Wales.

Recovery from that injury to the head has been slow because we now have the amazing spectre of the Leader of the Opposition pretending to be the champion of jobs. Today on ABC radio—that esteemed media outlet—the Leader of the Opposition said with great gusto, "We're talking about 80,000 jobs being cut right across New South Wales. This is going to see families struggling."

*[Interruption]*

That is good to hear. The member who has returned from holiday in Hawaii said that it is true. It is fantastic to hear that. Amnesia or not, the Leader of the Opposition needs to understand that families across this State are struggling because of 16 years of mismanagement of the State's economy and its governance by members opposite. The Leader of the Opposition also needs to remember that on 26 March the people of New South Wales threw Labor out and elected Liberals and Nationals in record numbers to improve and fix that mess.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Time and time again during the election campaign I made the point that not only were we committed to additional nurses, teachers and police, and front-line services—

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** —but also because of population growth projected for the cities and the regions—and this Government intends to ensure that there is more balance in growth between the cities and the regions—more front-line jobs would be needed. That is why, for instance, the Minister for Transport has been up-front about her reforms for the integrated transport agency, Transport for New South Wales. Delivering more services to people across this State is the best way to help them. And that is what we intend to do. It is what we repeatedly said we would do. We will make the hard decisions to get the State back on track. We have already made tough decisions. We made a tough decision to ensure that the wages policy of those opposite in future would work. That is, if salary increases over and above 2.5 per cent were awarded against promised productivity savings, those productivity savings would have to be delivered—because if they were not, it would cost \$1.96 billion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Cessnock will come to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** That is money that we would prefer to see invested in providing better services to the people of New South Wales. We have taken tough decisions to ensure that Labor's policy of no forced redundancies is scrapped—

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** —and that people on the unattached list—those who do not have jobs in the public service, in some cases for up to 15 years—would not be continued. That is what other governments do, and it is what the Tasmanian Government does. If you do not have a job, you should not expect taxpayers to support you. The Labor Party tolerated that situation for 16 years at a cost of tens of millions of dollars to the State—and that is money that could and should have been better invested in services and essential infrastructure. It is no secret that the State's finances are in a mess, and they are in a mess because of what we inherited from those opposite. They are in a mess because of unclear national economic conditions.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** They are in a mess because of what is happening around the world as we speak.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** They are in a mess because of the \$5.2 million black hole that was left by those opposite.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Keira to order. I caution members against engaging in disruptive behaviour.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** We will not engage in budget speculation but we will take the tough decisions to get this State back on track and to restore opportunities.

## STANDING ORDERS

### Privilege or Contempt Suddenly Arising in the House

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I raise pursuant to Standing Order 91 a matter of contempt suddenly arising. This is a serious matter and it is not something that we have decided to do lightly. It is a considered decision and whilst I—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order so that I can hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** Whilst I acknowledge that we have a new Government and a new Premier, and I accept—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. I would like to hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I accept that we have a new Premier and a new Government and that they are still finding their feet and settling in. We saw plenty of evidence of that before the start of question time. They are struggling to find their way.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: The member has now been speaking for at least two minutes and he has yet to show under Standing Order 91 how this matter has suddenly arisen.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Leader of Opposition to return to his argument that a matter of contempt has suddenly arisen.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** It has suddenly arisen because we have a new government that is still finding its way. We are experiencing a set of global circumstances that are creating economic instability. Whilst it might have been appropriate—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** To the point of order: We are not all that much clearer but it appears that this suddenly arising issue relates not just to world financial situations but also to a report in today's *Daily Telegraph*. Can I remind the Leader of the Opposition that today's parliamentary proceedings commenced at 10.00 a.m. and that Standing Order 91 relates to a matter "suddenly arising". The Leader of the Opposition has failed to show that any matter has suddenly arisen. He has been lazy again and was not here at 10.00 a.m.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is limited to 10 minutes in which to convince me that a matter of contempt has suddenly arisen. Thus far he has failed to do so. I ask members to come to order to allow me to hear anything further that the Leader of the Opposition may wish to put.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** And I still have eight minutes, Madam Speaker. We have tolerated this Government misleading members in this House about a fictitious black hole. That the Government would mislead the House was predicted in an article written by Andrew Clennell in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the 20 October 2009. The article reported:

"expect O'Farrell and his new Treasurer Mike Baird to pull out a familiar refrain when they get in:  
"They lied to us about the books, look at Labor's black hole, that's why we have to be tougher than we said."

This is important because what we have is a fictitious claim of a black hole—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Point of order: The report from Mr Lambert on the state of the finances was published in May. A month later the *Daily Telegraph* had a great interview with the—

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I have not yet ruled on the point being taken by the Premier.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition is warned.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** I simply make the point again that Standing Order 91 refers to a matter "suddenly arising". A report that was tabled two months ago is not "suddenly arising", and a report that was confirmed in the pages of the *Daily Telegraph* is not "suddenly arising". Any other member on the Opposition could have handled this better than the Leader of the Opposition has. He is incapable of handling it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition may continue.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** This is important because we have tolerated this and this has suddenly arisen—

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am aware of the standing order and I will make a decision on the matter.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** He is not.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition has five minutes remaining in which to convince me.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** And if I am allowed to, I will do just that.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will come to order.

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Premier to order.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** This matter is suddenly arising because today we see that the Treasurer refuses to—

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** On a point of order—

[Interruption]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members of the Opposition should not tell the Chair what to do.

[Interruption]

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

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** The Leader of the Opposition is seeking to abuse the processes of this Parliament.

[Interruption]

So members opposite admit that they are seeking to abuse it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What is the point of order?

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Standing Order 91 has been used very infrequently over the history of this Parliament.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Toongabbie to order. Members are entitled to speak and I would like to hear what they have to say before ruling on the points of order.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** The Chair must decide whether the Leader of the Opposition is dealing with a matter that has suddenly arisen. There are few decisions on the point as there has been little reason to use the standing order over the past two decades. However, *Decisions from the Chair* provides that the issue must arise on the floor of the Parliament urgently. This matter has not arisen on the floor of the Parliament. In fact, it has been a broad-scale policy that has been out there. The Coalition and the community understand it and the Government has simply been trying to govern in a sensible and reasonable way. The Leader of the Opposition seeks to abuse the process. If he wants to bring on this matter, other avenues are available to allow him to do so. If he wants to give up his time in question time, that is a matter for him. He is cutting into question time and is seeking to abuse the processes of the Parliament.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough points of order. I have already ruled on those matters. The Leader of the Opposition has opportunity to convince me that this matter has suddenly arisen. So far he has failed to do that, but he has three minutes remaining to him to try to do so.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** The Premier just misled the House when he made reference to a black hole. The Parliamentary Budget Office clearly stated there was no black hole. The Government's own report by Treasury has said there is no black hole. The Premier came into this Chamber today and misled the House.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the third time. I call the member for Monaro to order.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** He misled the House trying to jeopardise business confidence. The Premier in this State is prepared to jeopardise business confidence for the purposes of political point scoring so that he can have his agenda, when he knows that there is no budget black hole. He has misled this House today. I immediately rose because this Government and this Premier seeks to mislead the House and the people of New South Wales and undermine business confidence.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition has 10 minutes to make his case. He has to make successive cases, not repeat the same case. He has one fact that he is alleging to be true and all he has done is repeat it for the past seven minutes. I ask you to rule the Leader of the Opposition out of order.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am aware of those arguments; the Leader of the House will resume his seat.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** Obviously the Leader of the House does not understand the standing orders either. I am entitled to 10 minutes. Today the Premier has misled the Parliament. The Premier made reference to a black hole and there is no black hole.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Point of order: This is a gross abuse of the parliamentary process.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is a ruling for me to make.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** He is not establishing any new facts. He is out of order.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I will make that ruling. I will not accept any more points of order.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** The Premier wants to point score and mislead this House, like he misled the people of New South Wales on 26 March. He does not like the fact that the Acting Secretary of Treasury, Michael Lambert, said very clearly that there is no black hole. Then we have a further report from the Parliamentary Budget Office that says there is no black hole.

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

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** In response to this fictitious claim the ratings agency Standard and Poor's said that there is no black hole and, in fact, that there is no threat to the triple-A credit rating—and the Premier and the Treasurer know it. The triple-A credit rating was delivered to them—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have heard enough.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** We have a Premier who will undermine business confidence in New South Wales for his own political gain to make sure that he outshines Nick Greiner when it comes to cutting jobs. The Premier misled the people, he misled public sector workers and he has misled this Parliament. He is in contempt of this Parliament and he should be dealt with accordingly. I seek to table a motion, which reads:

1. That this House notes:
  - (a) That all independent analysis of the NSW budgetary position discredits the Government's claims of a black hole.
  - (b) That the Premier and his Government continue to mislead the House and the people of New South Wales by suggesting that there is a budget black hole.
2. That this House holds the Premier in contempt of Parliament for his repeated misleading statements in relation to the NSW budgetary position.

*[Time expired.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have listened very carefully to the views of the Leader of the Opposition. He was entitled to speak for 10 minutes and this he has done. However, he has not established any case whatsoever pursuant to the provisions of the relevant standing order.

*[Interruption]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition to be careful about making such comments. He was given his entitlement of 10 minutes within which to establish his argument but he was not able to do so. Opposition members will come to order; their behaviour is an abuse of the standing orders.

## STATE BUDGET

**Mr BART BASSETT:** My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government's response to current speculation about the State budget?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for Londonderry for his question. At the outset I apologise to the people in the public gallery for what they have just witnessed, which was an attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to hold onto his job in the interests of key members of his faction.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Auburn to order. I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I am sure that members opposite agree that in challenging times the Government needs to make tough decisions in order to make taxpayer dollars go further. I am sure that is a matter of agreement everywhere.

*[Interruption]*

The member for Kogarah does not agree. Is that right? Does she not agree that in difficult and tough economic times we have to make tough decisions?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Kogarah to order. I call the member for Auburn to order for the second time.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I am fascinated by the reaction of the Opposition to what I said, because they were the very words used by the member for Blacktown when he was leading the debate on the privatisation of prisons. They were his comments when he was a member of the other place and he was arguing in favour of the privatisation of prisons. The big difference between the Leader of the Opposition and me is that he knows that tough decisions need to be taken but he has not got the ticker to take them.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** He knows that tough decisions are required but when a government is prepared to take tough decisions he prefers to run scare campaigns.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** When the Government is prepared to take tough decisions he prefers scare campaigns. Today he is all over the media claiming that we are going to cut 80,000 public sector jobs. I repeat: 80,000 jobs.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I have not checked the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but I know that not even the *Daily Telegraph* has reported that fact.

[Interruption]

I will not attack the *Sydney Morning Herald* in the way the member opposite just did. As I have said repeatedly, we are not going to engage in speculation about the budget. The budget will be revealed on 6 September and we are not ruling things in or out before then. But I am happy to make a deal with the Leader of the Opposition—

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** And I make this commitment looking directly into the camera. The deal is: If the Leader of the Opposition's prediction of 80,000 jobs cuts in this year's budget is correct, I will resign. But Madam Speaker, the deal is that if he is wrong, he must resign.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is a repeat of the behaviour of two days ago. I was pleased with the general behaviour during question time yesterday. All members who have been called to order once or twice are now deemed to be on three calls to order. Members who have been called to order will be ejected from the House if they continue to interject.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I will resign if the budget cuts 80,000 public sector jobs, but the Leader of the Opposition must agree to resign when it does not. That is the sort of ridiculous commentary that we have heard from him and that led to the rejection of the Labor Party on 26 March. I can reveal that one public sector job is under threat. As I have said time and again, taxpayers cannot afford to pay the salary of those who are not doing the job to which they have been appointed. The Leader of the Opposition had a 13 per cent pay increase on 26 March. His salary went from \$262,000 to \$296,000. However, he has done nothing to earn it. He has not been seen— [Time expired.]

**Mr BART BASSETT:** Because of the interruptions there was insufficient time for the Premier to answer the question. I ask him to expand on his answer.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier has an additional two minutes in which to answer the question.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The Leader of the Opposition was given a 13 per cent salary increase, which is much more than the 2.5 per cent increase being—



**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: As I understand it, the Leader of the Opposition is paid the same amount as a junior Minister.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I remind the member for Maroubra that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The non sequitur is that, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, my frontbench members are working. One member opposite is working extremely hard and he is doing that happily. That member did not enjoy the luxury of a pay increase on 26 March. The member for Toongabbie has been doing a bloody good job in recent times. However, I have some bad news for him: I will do everything I can to keep the member for Blacktown in the top job. I want Robbo in that position at the next election. New South Wales is facing tough times and this Government will need to make some tough decisions—we have made no bones about that. We have been examining every program to ensure that taxpayers can be satisfied that their money is being spent wisely.

This Government is committed to delivering on its election commitments. It will deliver the extra teachers, nurses and police officers who are needed across this State. However, it will not put up with the sorts of programs that members opposite ran that cost this State billions of dollars. Members opposite spent \$500 million on the Rozelle metro that will never be delivered and \$800 million on a solar bonus scheme that was designed by the Leader of the Opposition and that has created at least part of the black hole that he refuses to acknowledge. Members on this side of the House were elected to fix this State and we will do so. We understand that a government needs ticker to make the tough decisions, and we have it.

### RURAL AND REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** I direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Will he stand up for the people he claims to represent and stop the Premier from axing jobs in rural and regional areas?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The member for Cessnock has just proved what I said yesterday about the strategy implemented by members opposite: They give those dud questions to members of their backbench. We saw the Opposition's other strategy earlier; that is, the Leader of the Opposition misinterpreting and wrongly applying the standing orders in a desperate attempt to hang on to his leadership. Sadly, it was simply an abuse of the processes of this Parliament. I turn now to the member for Cessnock's question. The Opposition has run an irresponsible scare campaign about the upcoming budget. Members opposite are scaring hardworking public servants about this Government's wages policy. They are now trying to drum up another scare campaign about the budget. I will not speculate about the budget. As the Premier said, it will be handed down by the Treasurer on 6 September.

The *Daily Telegraph* is obviously the Opposition's preferred source of material for question time. I emphatically reject the assertions made in the article published in that newspaper today. The numbers reported are completely speculative and they have been promoted by members opposite. This Government is committed to delivering on its election commitment to rebuild the economy, to restore quality services, to renovate infrastructure, to restore accountability and to strengthen our local environment and communities. One of those commitments involves reducing travel expenses, consultancy fees and advertising expenditure by 25 per cent. That may be the source of that figure. The Government has made no secret of the fact that it intends to cut costs.

The Coalition Government is determined to fix up the mess left to the State by the worst government in its history. Only upon coming to government after the historic election on 26 March did the full extent of Labor's mismanagement of the budget and the New South Wales economy become clear. It should come as no surprise that we discovered the true situation when we came to office, given that the last Labor budget was thrown together in the Treasurer's office in a desperate attempt to paper over Labor's long list of disasters. They include the Solar Bonus Scheme blowout; the \$500 million wasted on the CBD Metro proposal—not one centimetre of line was delivered; and a no compulsory redundancies policy that resulted in more than 400 public servants without any job but still on the public payroll.

The long list of disasters further includes the failure to enforce wages deals struck with the public sector unions, which again resulted in a budget blowout. It was not a pretty picture; in fact, we faced a projected budget deficit of \$5.2 billion because of the former Government's failure to rein in expenses when State revenue growth was tracking downwards consistent with the global financial situation. The member for Cessnock is

interested in jobs. He very nearly lost his job on 26 March. If the Leader of the Opposition had not taken all of Sussex Street's resources to sandbag the electorate of Blacktown and his candidacy he would have lost his job. As the Premier pointed out—

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question was about rural and regional jobs. The Deputy Premier has now moved off the topic.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The member for Cessnock's job is in a regional area, but I note that the job the member for Macquarie Fields nearly lost is not quite regional. As the Premier has said, we must make some tough decisions to fix the foundation of the State's economy, and, as the Treasurer said yesterday, that foundation is the State budget, which will be delivered on 6 September.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL AUTONOMY**

**Mr LEE EVANS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Education. What is the Government doing to increase local decision-making in public schools?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I thank the member for Heathcote for his question and his interest in education, particularly public education, in New South Wales. What a breath of fresh air it is to get that sort of question from the Government benches as opposed to the questions we get from members opposite. What a week it has been for education. This Government is making decisions, making changes and introducing reforms to improve education across New South Wales. Last week it abolished the School Certificate exam and this week it has announced a strong and firm decision made in the best interests of students across New South Wales in government and non-government schools to defend the integrity of our curriculum. The Government has decided that it will delay the implementation of the national curriculum. Today the Government announced that it will move towards giving principals and school communities a greater say in the running of their schools.

Members know that every public school is different and we have high-quality principals and teachers who know what is in the best interests of their students better than anyone else. Today's announcement is the beginning of the process of giving those school communities a greater say in the way in which their schools are run. This educational reform process is designed to improve the results and behaviour of students in our public schools and to ensure that more students complete Year 12 so that we get the type of graduate we want from our schools. The reforms fall into five general themes. Decisions need to be made as close to students as possible. Principals are accountable for their results and need the authority to be able to influence those results. Therefore we will devolve decision-making to principals as much as possible. Schools will be able to manage resources more effectively. By having a greater say in the school budget they will be able to tailor decisions to suit their students.

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

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The reforms provide schools with an opportunity to determine their staffing mix. We will not impose a fixed formula on schools as to the teachers they employ. We will give them the flexibility to make those kinds of decisions. Schools will be encouraged to connect and integrate with other schools within their community in order to share resources and information; we will remove excess bureaucracy from schools.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** What about the teachers?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I am glad the member for Wollongong asked that question. When I visited Plumpton High School today to make this announcement, we released a consultation paper with five broad principles setting out the direction in which the New South Wales Government wants to go. We will not make announcements without consultation and we will not make unsupported decisions, as did members of the former Labor Government. We are already consulting and we will continue to consult with principal groups, the Teachers Federation, and parents and students about the kinds of reform they want that will give greater authority to principals. That is the kind of consultation those groups have been requesting for years and that is what they will get from this Government.

Today we also announced the review of the 47-school devolution pilot, which has been underway for about 18 months. We have engaged a company to review that pilot to tell us about the sorts of thing that worked

or did not work. The review of the trial and the consultation process will be completed by February 2013. The pilot, which was due to finish this year, will continue for another year. Teachers in those 47 schools love the fact that the schools have a greater say in the way they spend their resources. I will give some examples. First, Loftus Primary School, which is in the electorate of Heathcote, had only two male teachers.

The school employed a high school physical education teacher, which is not permitted under the rigid structure we have at the moment, but was permitted under the pilot. The teacher acted as a behavioural boys' coach and the discipline problems disappeared. Secondly, Liverpool Boys High School employed a primary school deputy principal who worked as an essay coach with boys who were about to sit the Higher School Certificate exam. Thirdly, Castle Hill High School ran a boys' mentor program and in one year tripled its Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of boys receiving a score over 90. These results are fantastic.

#### DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries. Will she rule out cutting jobs in the Primary Industries head office in Orange or in her department's regional offices—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier will come to order. In light of the interjections the question may be repeated.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries. Will she rule out cutting jobs in the Primary Industries head office in Orange or in her department's regional offices in places like Tamworth, Queanbeyan and elsewhere throughout New South Wales?

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I thank the member for her question. It is unbelievable that we have been here for five months and members opposite have not asked a single question about primary industries to date.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Explain to them what primary industries are.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I will take the time to explain it at some future time. To answer the member's question, our Government has been very forthright about the need for a tough budget. I am not going to engage in speculation, neither would any Minister. However, I find the claims in today's media reports about the budget extraordinary and I absolutely reject the numbers reported. Something else I reject is the suggestion that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals are at odds with each other when it comes to cleaning up the mess left after 16 years of Labor. We are the most cooperative Coalition in the history of Australia. We are working very closely with each other. Since 26 March my colleagues and I have been working very hard to turn around the fortunes of this State, with a clear focus on driving regional economic growth. We inherited a \$5.2 billion black hole from State Labor. We are determined to fix that mess.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 173, relevance. My question was quite clear. We want to know whether the Minister will rule out cutting jobs in the Primary Industries head office in Orange or in her department's regional offices.

**The SPEAKER:** I have heard the point of order. The Minister is being relevant at this stage.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I commenced my response, I have actually answered the question and I am continuing. Labor's waste and mismanagement, which helped to form the \$5.2 billion black hole, included a blowout of nearly \$800 million in the Solar Bonus Scheme. We remember it well—Captain Solar. More than \$500 million was also wasted on the CBD Metro, as highlighted many times by the Minister for Transport; one-way expenses growth and rising levels of debt.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** Second-chance Steve, the former Labor member for Monaro who slipped into the upper House through the backdoor, clearly read the *Daily Telegraph* this morning and started to make comments about our biosecurity capacity. It would appear that this member, who is now in another place, was asleep. He might have been in quarantine himself.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** It is the attack puppy.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What is the member's point of order?

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Standing Order 76 states that a member speaking shall be relevant to the subject of the debate. It is the standing order about imputations of improper motives.

**The SPEAKER:** I accept the point of order on personal comment and I uphold it. I have already ruled on relevance. The Minister is being relevant, but I warn her about personal comments or imputations.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** It would appear he may have been asleep at the wheel. A couple of weeks ago the Premier committed \$3 million to the task force to attack the Hendra virus. That commitment was matched by the Queensland Government and doubled by the Commonwealth Government. That is an injection of \$12 million into biosecurity in this State in the past couple of weeks. That speaks volumes. Once again, it puts paid to the lies circulated by certain members opposite to try to give them a media profile. Members opposite should not lie about biosecurity or joke about such serious issues. The community will not respond well to it, especially when the Government has proven so capable in making sure that particular areas like that are well funded.

*[Interruption]*

Again, I will not engage in Labor-fuelled budget speculation. The budget has been finalised. I know the Treasurer would hate me to steal his thunder and he will not reveal it before September 6. But when it comes to primary industries there will be things we will not do. We will not waste or mismanage funding by supporting 58 advisory committees or waste money on a Government committee. *[Time expired.]*

### VICTIMS COMPENSATION SCHEME

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My question is directed to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. What is the Government doing to improve the Victims Compensation Scheme?

**Mr GREG SMITH:** I thank the member for Bathurst for his question, and note his outstanding, record-breaking win in the election. Tomorrow I will visit Bathurst where, together with the member, I will launch Wills Week in conjunction with the New South Wales Law Society. I might come back to that. The member has taken a keen interest in victims compensation and understands what a vital role the Victims Compensation Scheme plays in providing financial support to victims of violent crimes in New South Wales. And he would appreciate that there needs to be a rethink, not only about how the scheme operates and whether it provides the best outcomes for the most possible victims, but how it is funded.

Victims are often in the greatest need of financial assistance shortly after the crime has been committed against them, when they are faced with medical and psychological treatment expenses and other expenses as a result of the crime. Victims groups feel that the scheme should provide prompt and practical financial support to victims, rather than being a drawn-out process that delivers lump-sum payments to people long after their injuries have been sustained and treated. Howard Brown of the Victims of Crime Assistance League has told me that victims often see the compensation as blood money and refuse to tarnish the reputation of their loved ones by applying. Mr Brown says the often drawn-out legal proceedings are also unhelpful. He believes the Government should identify a method by which already traumatised victims are not financially burdened through their experience.

In the past five years demand on the scheme has increased, with the number of claims growing from 5,054 in 2005-06 to 9,245 in 2009-10. Unfortunately, the backlog of claims has increased from 6,246 in 2005-06 to 18,030 at the end of 2009-10, and the contingent liability of the fund at the end of 2009-10 was more than \$220 million. It is estimated that by 2014-15 approximately 33,666 claims will be pending, equating to a contingent liability of \$414 million. Part of the funding comes from a court levy on convicted criminals and restitution paid by convicted offenders. In December 2008 laws commenced that doubled the amount of compensation levies. The 2010 amendments to the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 extended the victims compensation levy to cover all offences—except for classes of offences prescribed by regulation. It is projected that this will yield an additional \$2.91 million per annum for the Victims Compensation Fund.

To also cover the increase in claims, 50 per cent of proceeds obtained under the Criminal Assets Recovery regime will go to the Victims Compensation Fund. Despite this, the projections about future demands

raise serious concerns about the long-term financial viability of the Scheme. With this mind, I have ordered an assessment of the Victims Compensation Fund and the statutory compensation scheme. The review will consider the long-term financial viability and parameters of the Victims Compensation Scheme. A tender process will be undertaken to engage appropriate experts to assist with the review and provide independent advice. These experts will assist with the financial modelling of the current scheme, develop a profile of victims eligible for compensation and examine options for alternative ways to provide support and rehabilitation services to victims of violent crime, and undertake a comparative assessment of compensation schemes in other jurisdictions and consider recent reviews conducted in those jurisdictions.

The report prepared by the external consultants will be used by a steering group, consisting of members from the departments of Attorney General and Justice, Premier and Cabinet, and NSW Treasury to create the terms of reference and conduct the review. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is committed to ensuring that the best outcomes for the most victims of crime are possible. It is important that they receive adequate support and rehabilitation services, and that such services are provided at a reasonable cost to the community. I again thank the member for his question and take the opportunity to remind everyone, as we will do tomorrow, that it is important to make a will, and to get some legal advice when doing so. In fact, the Labor Party might consider getting such advice, because its prospects appear to be terminal.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES UNIT

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister rule out cutting the jobs of the people who work to prevent epidemics such as swine flu and whooping cough in the Infectious Diseases Unit of NSW Health?

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Here we go again! One of my colleagues called the member the attack puppy; I think he is really a Hush Puppy. The shadow Minister for Health has been telling people that he does not like being a mere lapdog for the Labor Party; I suppose that gave rise to his being called an attack puppy. But the reality is that he is a man who says one thing and does another. He is a man who recently asked a question in this place about emergency department reporting when he knew damn well what the answer was—because he had contacted the Bureau of Health Information in the morning and he had been told the answer. Yet he stood in this place and told an absolute lie.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Madam Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It is a bit early for a point of order, but I will hear it anyway. I warn the member about my ruling on taking spurious points of order.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** The Minister is misleading the House. I have had no contact with—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member knows that is not a point of order. Members who attempt to raise spurious points of order will not be heard.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** It is interesting that the shadow Minister called the Bureau of Health Information this morning seeking information about another report that is out, because the bureau got a call from the media within five minutes of the shadow Minister calling the bureau. What had he done? The reality is that in that case the shadow Minister showed that he lacks integrity; as well, he is unable to research the facts, because the Bureau of Health Information had the answer to the question he was asking on its website. He did not even bother to read the facts, just as he does not bother to explain to the people about cutting job numbers.

**Ms Carmel Tebbutt:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance, under Standing Order 129. The question was a serious question about an important issue, and the Minister is refusing to answer it. I ask you to draw the Minister back to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! So far, I do not think the Minister is refusing to answer. I will hear the Minister further. The Minister is entitled to make introductory remarks, as former Speakers have ruled.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I am pleased that it was the former Minister for Health who took the point of order, because I draw to the attention of the House the fact that when the member was Minister, and when the current shadow Minister was Parliamentary Secretary for Health, more than 400 nursing jobs were lost.

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** My colleagues from western Sydney should be quiet, as you have ruled, Madam Speaker, but I can tell them the reality is that 340 jobs were lost from western Sydney. The member for Penrith remembers this well, because we were out there during the by-election—

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

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** About 340 nursing jobs were lost in western Sydney hospitals.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will ensure her response to the question is relevant.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Some 100 jobs on the Central Coast were axed, never to return. My colleagues on the Central Coast well recall that. I assure the Parliamentary Secretary that there will be no job losses among front-line health workers, including those working in the public health sector. I suggest that the member for Macquarie Fields stop his mischief, that he stop going to the media with his spurious allegations, and that he stop going to the media and claiming that Wagga Wagga hospital has not reported and that there is some scandalous reason for that. He should look at the Bureau of Health Information website and find out for himself what the honest answer is, instead of trying to mislead everyone, including the media.

### COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. What steps is the Government taking to introduce more stringent environmental planning assessment of coal seam gas exploration and mining?

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** I thank the member for Camden for his question. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his 22.8 per cent swing—I feel humble when I mention a swing of that dimension—and I acknowledge the excellent work that the member for Camden, the member for Wollondilly and the member for Mulgoa are doing in the south-west. This is a serious question and one that has aroused a great deal of community interest, so I will give an appropriate and detailed answer. There are a number of exploration licences that cover coal seam and gas exploration or natural gas from coal extant in New South Wales. Not one has been granted by the O'Farrell Government. Not one has been extended by the O'Farrell Government.

Every exploration licence extant in New South Wales coal seam gas has been granted by the Labor Party. It is a serious issue. The Government has taken on board public concern about the issue of natural gas from coal or coal seam gas. As a result of that concern, the O'Farrell Government has introduced a number of measures. First, it placed a moratorium on the granting of any new licences. While that moratorium was in place the Government was able to develop a program to address the issue of coal seam gas. The first thing the Government did was ensure that any future exploration licence would require public consultation. Labor granted the existing licences—and in many cases it granted them for a high fee. Labor conducted no public consultation, but this Government will.

Secondly, the Government has introduced a ban on the use of benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylenes—referred to as BTEX—as additives during coal seam gas drilling and the Government stakeholder reference group is reviewing this process. Thirdly, the Government has introduced a ban until 31 December on hydraulic fracture stimulation, referred to as fracking. The issue of fracking arouses community concern. The Government will ensure that between now and 31 December this is addressed and appropriate protocols delivered. That means no concern about fracking, no concern about the granting of new licences, no concern about lack of public consultation and no concern about BTEX in future.

Further, in conjunction with my colleague the Minister for Primary Industries, the Government will require all future exploration licences or mining to have an agricultural impact statement. That will be rigorously policed by the Minister for Primary Industries and her department. Also, in conjunction with my colleague the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, strict environmental requirements are already in place, which will be enforced separately to the Office of Resources and Energy, to Primary Industries and to Planning, but through a separate department—the Office of Environment and Heritage. Again, through the Minister for Primary Industries, we have introduced further requirements in regard to water. Anybody who now wishes to draw water in excess of three megalitres per year will require a licence from the Office of Water. Compare that record now extant in New South Wales with the record of our predecessor.

The member for Balmain has raised this issue on a number of occasions in public meetings—which, like all of The Greens public meetings, are mass hysteria sessions. He now has before him, as does any other interested party, a whole extant program through which the Government is addressing the issue of protecting the environment, protecting our water and protecting our agricultural land. Further, in conjunction with my colleague the Minister for Planning, a stakeholder reference group has been established to assess appropriate areas in New South Wales for mining and petroleum exploration and petroleum development. That stakeholder reference group consists of representatives of industry, agriculture, Nature Conservation Council, Total Environment Centre, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and other interested bodies to ensure we get the program right. This Government, unlike our predecessor, will ensure that we have a future in natural gas and that that future will protect our agriculture, water and environment.

### SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. Will the Minister indicate whether there are any plans to cut back services and/or positions in the Soil Conservation Service of New South Wales, including in the Northern Tablelands and New England areas?

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I cannot speculate on what will be in the budget in relation to the Soil Conservation Service or any other agency. Members will have to wait until the Treasurer hands down the budget on 6 September. As I said a moment ago, the Government has been upfront about the need for a tough budget following the \$5.2 billion black hole that the lot opposite left us with. The New South Wales Government is set to deliver on the commitments that it made. Having answered the question, I now will expand on my answer. It is timely to remind the House about Labor's track record when it comes to managing the finances of the Department of Primary Industries.

Members opposite do not really have an interest in primary industries but it is timely to remind them of their performance over the past 16 years—16 years of absolute financial incompetence, best remembered for the flagrant waste of taxpayers' money while New South Wales farmers were struggling with the effects of the worst drought in the State's history. The Government will make responsible decisions to get the New South Wales budget back in the black so that it can deliver the infrastructure the community wants, provide the services that are valued and make a difference to the lives of people who work the land. I am reminded of the former Labor Minister for Primary Industries, known to many people in this place as "Sir Lunchalot". His misplaced priorities in the ministry of Primary Industries are unparalleled in recent history.

That Labor Minister for Primary Industries ceased drought support subsidies to farmers yet still managed to find \$46,000 to furnish his home and buy a brand-new flash television. Members can imagine how impressed the farmers were about that. How much drought support could have been funded with \$46,000 at a time of real need in the farming community? What about the 2006 Primary Industries budget that was handed down by Labor? The press release said that there would be \$400 million for Primary Industries. It turned out to be \$389 million. Some \$11 million mysteriously disappeared. When questioned about it, the former Labor Minister said, "We just thought we would round out the figure to make it easier for everybody to understand." That is the sort of arrogance and mistreatment that country people had to put up with under 16 years of Labor.

A couple of years ago New South Wales Labor cut 600 jobs from the Department of Primary Industries at Orange. That has not been forgotten. Country people were rightly upset with Labor in the bush, particularly in the lead-up to the most recent election. What about the number of advisory committees that Sir Lunchalot established. How many do you think he had? Was it one? No. Was it three, four or five? No. He had 58 advisory committees in the Department of Primary Industries. Labor's approach was not about fiscal management; it was 100 per cent about looking after Labor mates.

**Mr Richard Torbay:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. My question was specific. The Minister has not mentioned the Soil Conservation Service.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Wakehurst will come to order. I inform the member for Northern Tablelands that at the beginning of the answer the Minister did address that topic.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** I am reminding the House of some of the things that happened under Labor. We made freedom of information applications for documents. In response to the Deputy Premier, it turned out that the former Labor Minister for Primary Industries spent more than \$24,000 on a trip to Dareton. He took himself and a group from one of his 58 committees to lunch at an up-market restaurant in Mildura. How does one spend \$24,000 on one trip to Dareton? That is challenging. It is incredible.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** While farmers were struggling to earn a respectable living from their acreage, disgraced former lands Minister Tony Kelly flogged off 70 hectares in the Hunter Valley for \$1.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** Tony Kelly flogged off 70 hectares in the Hunter Valley for \$1. Talk about fiscal management.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE:** My question is directed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the Government doing to address domestic violence in regional communities?

**Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY:** I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his genuine interest in the vital role that sport can play in uniting and educating our communities. There can be no more appalling act of violence than a man physically assaulting a woman or a child. Today the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released the report entitled "Trends and Patterns in Domestic Violence Assaults 2001-2010". The purpose of the report is to identify current trends in domestic violence. I can inform the House that the bureau examined all incidents of domestic assault recorded by the New South Wales police during the 10-year period. I am certain that this valuable research will allow the O'Farrell-Stoner Government to better assess risk factors and assist in making informed decisions about the allocation of resources.

The report reveals that 19 of the top 20 local government areas for domestic assault are in regional or rural New South Wales. The over-representation of Indigenous Australians as both victims and offenders has not changed in the past decade. The rate of recorded domestic assaults against Indigenous women is more than six times higher than for non-Indigenous women. This brings me to the opportunity to use sport as a mechanism not only to address general community health issues but also to assist in dealing with many wider issues confronting society. On Saturday 6 August I was privileged to be invited by the Toronto-based Macquarie Scorpions to attend their round 16 match against the Western Suburbs Rosellas to officially launch the 2010 Tackling Domestic Violence Program.

The program is co-funded by the New South Wales and Australian governments and is aimed at using sport as a driver to reduce domestic violence in regional communities. Regional sporting teams are used to promote the need to change attitudes and behaviour towards domestic violence by way of educating the community on the importance of early intervention and prevention. The program originally commenced with six clubs in five communities. I am pleased to announce that 17 clubs and 14 communities are now committed to the program and, more importantly, to reducing domestic violence. The clubs participating in 2011 are the Dubbo CYMS and Dubbo Macquarie Raiders, the Tingha Tigers, the Lower Clarence Magpies, the Moree Boomerangs and the Moree Boars, the Warren Bulldogs, the Macksville Eagles, Northern Rivers United, the Wilcannia Boomerangs, the Menindee Yabbies, the Broken Hill Saints and the Broken Hill Geebungs, Wagga Brothers, the Macquarie Scorpions, the Walgett Dragons and the Wellington Cowboys.

In return for sponsorship of \$5,000, teams must include the Tackling Violence slogan on their jerseys and on signage at their home venue, and players must agree to become community role models and sign an anti domestic violence code of conduct. So far this year more than 750 players across New South Wales have signed the code of conduct. Players, coaches, officials and some juniors are also participating in anti domestic violence education workshops. The hour-long workshop is delivered by Tackling Violence educators and ambassadors. The program is fortunate to have a number of well-known former National Rugby League players as ambassadors, role models and educators. These include Nathan Blacklock, David Peachey, Joe Williams and Tony Butterfield. The workshops provide information about the impact of domestic violence on victims, the legal implications and, most importantly, how to help someone who is in a domestic violence situation.

There is also a school-based presentation delivered to local high school students from years 8 to 11 inclusive. In conjunction with the launch of the Tackling Violence Program, a series of community service announcements are being broadcast on regional television and radio featuring local team members to promote the message. Social media, including YouTube, club websites and Facebook, are also spreading the word. The National Rugby League is assisting the program through all-star fixtures and other NRL games. To further promote the program, tonight I will be appearing as a guest panellist on the NITV *Barefoot Rugby League*



program at 7.30 p.m. It should be compulsory viewing. Domestic violence is an important social and community issue. The New South Wales Government is committed to changing attitudes and behaviour towards domestic violence through initiatives such as the Tackling Domestic Violence Program.

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL AUTONOMY**

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** Earlier in question time the member for Heathcote asked me a question about empowering local schools. I have received a copy of a press release from the New South Wales Teachers Federation, which states:

Today's announcement by the Education Minister, Adrian Piccoli, to commence a consultation process on devolving additional decision making to local schools will provide principals, teachers, parents and school communities an opportunity to seek changes which can improve the delivery of education to students in our public schools.

I thank the Teachers Federation for its positive relationship with the New South Wales Coalition Government. We look forward to continuing in a constructive way to support students in New South Wales.

**Question time concluded at 3.26 p.m.**

### **STANDING ORDER 91**

**The SPEAKER:** Order! In relation to the use or misuse of Standing Order 91, I intend to issue a statement to all members at the beginning of the next session so it is clearly understood how Standing Order 91 should operate and so it is not abused.

### **ORICA PLANT INCIDENT**

#### **Ministerial Statement**

**Ms ROBYN PARKER** (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [3.27 p.m.]: I inform the House of a release of emissions into the atmosphere of a catalyst used in the production of ammonia at the Orica plant on Kooragang Island, Newcastle. The Orica plant is regulated by the Office of Environment and Heritage under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. Orica advised that an incident occurred at the Newcastle plant at approximately 6.00 p.m. on Monday 8 August 2011 and that it immediately shut down the plant and implemented emergency procedures. The Office of Environment and Heritage was notified of the incident by Orica at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 9 August. The Office of Environment and Heritage immediately dispatched staff from its Newcastle office to the site to inspect and collect samples on the same day. Samples were also collected at Stockton.

The incident resulted in the emission to the atmosphere of a catalyst used in the production of ammonia. The catalyst contains hexavalent chromium, which is a hazardous substance if inhaled. The Office of Environment and Heritage transferred samples to its Lidcombe laboratories for priority analysis on the morning of Wednesday 10 August 2011. Initial findings were provided in the afternoon of Wednesday 10 August 2011. These preliminary findings and sampling have confirmed that some fallout from the incident has reached the northern residential area of Stockton. The Department of Health, via Hunter New England Population Health, was notified by Orica at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday 10 August.

The Newcastle HAZMAT team received an anonymous call alerting it to the incident at 1.00 p.m. on Tuesday 9 August. The HAZMAT team contacted Orica and determined that the Office of Environment and Heritage was on site and that the release was contained. Detailed investigations to determine the specific chemical composition of the residue and the hazard level are currently underway. The Office of Environment and Heritage has issued a prevention notice to Orica today in relation to the incident. This means that the plant cannot reopen until appropriate action is completed. The Office of Environment and Heritage is also working closely with NSW Health—as am I with my colleague the Minister of Health—and NSW Fire Brigades (HAZMAT) to ensure that Orica implements an appropriate clean-up plan for the site and the Stockton properties impacted by the incident.

I know that my colleagues the member for Newcastle, Tim Owen, and the member for Port Stephens, Craig Baumann, will share in the concern locally. But, most importantly, we will all make sure that people, families and the community as a whole are able to take the necessary precautionary steps. I assure the House that the Office of Environment and Heritage, jointly with NSW Health, will comprehensively investigate this

incident and provide all relevant information to the community. The Office of Environment and Heritage will not permit the plant to restart until such time as Orica can demonstrate that the ammonia plant is safe to operate. I will be keeping the community and relevant stakeholders informed.

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [3.31 p.m.]: I note the important and serious incident at the Orica plant that the Minister for the Environment has brought to the attention of the House. This is the first that I have heard of it. Nonetheless, I note the advice that the Minister has provided to the House. The safety of people, families and the community is obviously paramount. There is a clean-up plan in place and an investigation underway. This needs to occur because we must understand why the incident happened and what can be done to prevent a similar incident in the future. Primarily, we need to ensure the safety of communities in the area; they must be protected. I ask that the Minister keep the Opposition informed of progress on this serious and significant matter.

## INDIAN NATIONAL DAY

### Ministerial Statement

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO** (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [3.32 p.m.]: On behalf of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, I wish to extend my warm regards to the Indian Australian community in New South Wales, which will celebrate Indian National Day on Monday 15 August. It is a key commemoration for people of Indian heritage who are our workmates, our neighbours and our friends, and it is an opportunity to remark on the excellent relationship between India and Australia, particularly in New South Wales. The people of India and Australia share a strong and unshakable bond. We are connected by those things we have in common; language, history, parliamentary government, the rule of law and, of course, as the Premier best knows, a great passion for cricket. We also share a mutual respect for the rights of citizens to freely express their religion and culture.

We have fought for common causes and stood together against threats to our democracies, and we share an important trade and economic relationship that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is working to nurture and develop to deliver prosperity for both our communities. These connections make us good friends and make our respective communities very welcome in each other's countries. The Indian community's presence in New South Wales is indeed characterised by its very positive and active approach to citizenship. It is a community that does much to celebrate its rich heritage and ancestry. It is a community that contributes in a valuable way to our State and to our country. Indian Australians play an important part in our successful multiculturalism, which provides the freedom to profess, practise and maintain one's heritage while also seeking a commitment to Australia, her values, her democracy and her laws.

The Government is committed to further harnessing the cultural and economic potential of our multicultural home. The Premier captured this approach when he talked about multiculturalism as not only a policy but a way of life and an asset. Through its culture and through its productive efforts, especially in business, the Indian community is increasing value to that asset. In this regard I wish to acknowledge the outstanding leadership of the Indian Consul-General, Mr Amit DasGupta, a man of great intellect and vision. I also acknowledge the many vibrant organisations that characterise Indian community life in New South Wales. Last Sunday the Council of Indian Australians held the India Fair Day at Parramatta Park. I was honoured to attend this fantastic event, along with a number of my parliamentary colleagues. Thank you to Dr Yadhu Singh, President of the Council of Indian Australians, for his leadership within the New South Wales Indian community.

This Sunday I am also pleased to be attending the United Indian Associations India Australia Friendship Fair at Sydney Olympic Park. Again, my thanks for community leadership go to Mr Amarinder Bajwa, President of the United Indian Associations. The strong activity of Indian community organisations, the rapid emergence of dynamic hubs of Indian community activity including in suburbs such as Harris Park in the electorate of Parramatta, shows the great strength and growth of the Indian community. The arrival of people from India in New South Wales has grown at a great rate in the past decade. Between 2001 and 2006 there was a 50 per cent increase. According to the last census, there are now more than 57,000 residents of Indian background who call New South Wales home, and of these 20,000 arrived between 2001 and 2006. No doubt data from the census currently being conducted will reveal that the Indian community in New South Wales has grown even larger in the past five years.

In New South Wales we warmly welcome thousands of Indian students to our educational institutions and communities every year. The international student sector not only is extremely valuable to the New South

Wales economy but also helps to build cultural understanding amongst our youth and communities in a global economy. We are honoured that students and their families from India see New South Wales as the right place in which to gain a high-quality education. The Government is committed to providing the Indian students we proudly host with the necessary supportive services to ensure that their experience is both positive and productive. Indeed, we need to do more—and we will do more—to ensure that New South Wales and Sydney are again the most attractive choice for Indian students and their parents.

This is vital because India's economic growth continues to occur at a tremendous pace. Notwithstanding the global downturn over the past decade, India has experienced annual gross domestic product growth of approximately 8 per cent. India is currently Australia's fifth largest trading partner. New South Wales exports to India are currently worth \$1.1 billion annually. This includes coal, metal ore and fresh produce such as fruit and vegetables. New South Wales currently imports \$609 million worth of goods and services from India, including mineral manufactures, pharmaceutical products, textiles and fabricated articles.

The Government recognises the importance of maintaining and enhancing cultural links and trade with India. Bodies such as the newly created Multicultural Business Advisory Panel will enable New South Wales to grow our State's share of the trade and investment pie with key trading partners such as India. We are pleased that Mr Nihal Gupta, a prominent Sydney businessman with long experience in Asia, will be chairing this body. Nihal is an example of the many outstandingly talented Indian Australians living in New South Wales. They know the culture and norms, they have business skills both here and there, and they have the networks. We need to tap into all this for the betterment of our State's economy.

As we celebrate Indian National Day on Monday with our friends in the Indian community, we stand at a pivotal point in the history of the relationship between our countries. As we strive once again to become the premier State of Australia, it is most important that we develop our relationship with India and tap the abilities of our hugely talented local Indian community. I know that all my friends in the Indian community will celebrate Indian National Day with enthusiasm and with pride. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I look forward to fostering our strong and ongoing bonds and continuing to work closely with you in harnessing all that is great about India and Australia's partnership and the Indian Australian community in New South Wales.

**Mr ROBERT FUROLO** (Lakemba) [3.40 p.m.]: On behalf of the Labor Opposition, I join with the Minister for Citizenship and Communities to acknowledge India's Independence Day on 15 August 2011. We cannot underestimate the importance to a nation's identity of the notion of self-determination and independence. The events of that momentous day in August 1947 are a source of pride for all Indians, including the more than 100,000 people with Indian ancestry who have chosen to make New South Wales their home. Organisations like the United Indian Association and its President Mr. Amarinder Bajwa and former President Mrs. Aruna Chandrala and the Council of Indian Australians work tirelessly to build a tolerant and harmonious community and to celebrate the incredible history and culture of India.

Many members in this place have strong and growing Indian communities in their electorates, and we all benefit from their commitment to building a stronger New South Wales through their hard work and community service. In my capacity as the Mayor of Canterbury, I have the pleasure of conferring Australian citizenship on a growing number of families from India settling in my local area. But as community leaders and legislators, we must do more than simply acknowledge the efforts of migrant communities who are working to build a better life for themselves and a better future for their children. We must be vocal and active in promoting respect and understanding of all people to ensure we have a safer, more tolerant and more generous society. There can be, and there must be, no place for bigotry and intolerance in Australia.

Supporting established as well as new and emerging communities is a responsibility of governments at all levels. That is why I am pleased that the former Labor Government—which recognised the great work by our migrant communities, including the Indian community, of imparting a passion for their language and culture to their children—doubled the funding for community language schools. That is a tangible example of the role of government to promote respect and harmony. On the occasion of India's Independence Day, the Opposition joins with the Minister and the Government to acknowledge and congratulate our strong Indian community. We thank them for their contribution to New South Wales as citizens, as business and community leaders and commit to standing with them against bigotry and racism.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.42 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to extend the sitting beyond 4.30 p.m. to permit the conclusion of Private Members' Statements.

As a result of the earlier shenanigans under the auspices of the Leader of the Opposition, if we were to proceed in the normal course, members who wish to make a private member's statement would be precluded because our program has extended beyond normal sitting times. It is anticipated that the House will sit beyond 4.30 p.m. I am very tempted to simply remove all of Labor's private members' statements after today's escapades, but I will not do so on this occasion.

**Motion agreed to.**

**PETITIONS**

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

**Australian National Flag Day**

Petition requesting that schools celebrate Australian National Flag Day, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

**Pet Shops**

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

**Woolloomooloo Homelessness**

Petition calling for certain actions to be taken by Housing NSW in Woolloomooloo, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

**Mental Health Services**

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

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Notices of Motions**

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

---

**FRED PHAM 500 CHARITY DINNER**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [3.55 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the life and legacy of the late and great Fred Pham. Mr Pham was a high school teacher and a family man. In contemporary society it seems that the media is all too often willing to label something or someone as inspirational. That is unfortunate because every so often somebody comes along who is truly extraordinary and who really should inspire us. Fred Pham was such a man. Mr Pham spent his life in service to the community. He worked as a mathematics teacher at Fairfield High School for 17 years. As I have said, he was also a family man and I acknowledge his wife Juliet and their children Francis, Terence, Vivienne, Michelle and Datrisha.

Last year Mr Pham was diagnosed with terminal cancer and was told that he had five months to live. Mr Pham took this tragic news and sought to make something out of his situation. He set a goal to raise

\$100,000 for cancer research. He attempted to raise these funds by organising and undertaking charity runs. That culminated in last year's City2Surf, in which he competed despite having 24 tumours in his lungs. He managed to raise \$40,000. Unfortunately, Mr Pham passed away on 30 October 2010. Even more tragically, he passed away before he could reach his fundraising goal.

Mr Pham received significant support from the Vietnamese Students Association. The association was founded in 1975 by Vietnamese students who arrived in Australia after the Vietnam War. The association aims to provide opportunities for Vietnamese Australians to meet other Vietnamese Australians and discuss and learn about traditional Vietnamese culture. It is members of that association, along with the other members of the foundation, who have kept Mr Pham's dream alive. Their fundraising efforts culminated with the Fred Pham 500 Charity Dinner held on 15 July. I attended the dinner, which was held in Mr Pham's memory. The night was an outstanding success both in terms of the patron's enjoyment and the funds raised. I thank the Bankstown Sports Club for hosting the dinner. The club is an institution in Bankstown and it is through events such as this that it really shows its true colours. The club supports our community on so many levels by putting well over \$1 million back into our community each year.

I acknowledge my State parliamentary colleagues who also attended the function: the member for Auburn, Barbara Perry, and the member for Fairfield, Guy Zangari. I also thank our Federal colleagues the member for Blaxland, Jason Clare, and the member for Fowler, Chris Hayes. Due to the charity dinner and, of course, Mr Pham's and his supporters' passion and commitment to the cause by participating in eight major competitive runs, the foundation has now reached its target of \$100,000. The members of the foundation have decided that they will continue their work and 40 members have registered to participate in the 2011 City2Surf this Sunday. I urge all members to consider supporting their efforts. The Vietnamese community members are well known in Bankstown for their tenacity and generosity. I hope that we can all learn something from Fred Pham's impressive example of selflessness and generosity.

### CYBERBULLYING

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly—Treasurer) [4.00 p.m.]: Cyberbullying is a problem of increasing concern not only in my electorate but also throughout New South Wales. In Manly it is at risk of becoming an epidemic. Like many parents I feel I am not equipped to understand the implications, work out a strategy, or play a constructive role in dealing with it. As part of ongoing interaction, students are submitting offensive posts on social media sites and sending offensive text messages. This problem is having a devastating impact on students in our schools. I have read tragic media stories about young lives lost as a consequence of cyberbullying campaigns, and they rip your heart out. The reports state that approximately a third of cyberbullying is unreported.

Children need more support to be able to maintain safe behaviour online and to understand some of the implications of text messaging. In this cyber age, messages that flow away in an instant can inflict damage that lasts for years. We also need more education for parents. As a parent of young children aged between 8 and 14 years, it is very clear that I will need a complete understanding of the world of social media in which my children participate. I need to learn, for example, about privacy controls that can be applied to Facebook to restrict access to communication with my children and about controls relating to other social media sites. My concerns as a father reflect the concerns of many in my constituents. Recently, after victims were identified online, five school principals in my electorate emailed every student's parents to highlight their school's zero tolerance policy against cyberbullying. A local school, Mackellar Girls High School, has developed an internet code of conduct to combat cyberbullying.

Cyber bullying is an issue that must be addressed. That is why I am delighted to convene a forum at Freshwater Senior Campus on 16 November at 7.00 p.m. for the assistance of parents and teachers of the Manly community. Internet bullying will be the main focus of the forum. Parents of students and teachers will hear from experts on dealing with cyberbullying. One of the speakers will be Chris Webster, who has conducted many seminars and has a full understanding of the information technology industry. He is a much sought-after expert and people are eager to share his insights. Other speakers will be a project officer from the Australian Federal Police, who will speak on crime prevention, and the chief executive officer of Inspire Foundation, Jonathan Nicholas, who will speak on interacting and engaging with children when they suffer from depression. Jonathan Nicholas will discuss a range of new information. I am delighted that he will be participating.

At the end of the forum an information pack will be given to parents and teachers to take home. To assist parents to understand the issues and implications, primarily the forum will commence a dialogue between

parents and kids about what happens online, what is acceptable behaviour online and what protections can be put in place. The forum also will deal with kids understanding the dangers of and taking responsibility for their actions. I have begun speaking with principals and soon I will be writing to them to encourage them to take part in the forum. Hopefully, by people coming together and listening to the experts, we will be much better equipped as a community to deal with the growing scourge of cyberbullying.

Interestingly cyberbullying affects both high schools and primary schools. I was amazed when experts told me that cyberbullying starts at the age of eight. It is incredible to think that my young eight-year-old could be subjected to cyberbullying. It is beyond my comprehension, but it happens. It is important that, as a community, we do not stick our heads in the sand. We must address this problem, which is increasingly damaging our youth. The forum will be a good opportunity for the community to hear from the experts and become equipped as parents and teachers to combat a phenomenon that must be stamped out.

### **TRIBUTE TO MR DEREK LARNACH**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.05 p.m.]: I acknowledge a local hero in the Bathurst electorate, Derek Larnach. Last weekend I had the privilege of attending a function held just outside of Bathurst to raise much-needed funds for cancer research. Derek Larnach is a very well-known local identity, a prominent businessman in the community and someone who, for much of his life, has had very strong connections with the community. Two years ago when Derek was putting some bulls into a cattle crush, they pushed up on him and he broke four ribs. He went to the hospital where some scans were carried out, and that is when a tumour the size of a grapefruit was discovered. Although his accident was unfortunate, it assisted in discovery of the tumour. The tumour was attached to his kidneys and had invaded his heart and lungs. It was a rare tumour which affects only one in a billion people.

Initially Derek was told that he may have had only a short time to live, so a journey began for Derek and his family. They received considerable support and treatment at the Royal North Shore Hospital. Last weekend's fundraising dinner was regarded by Derek and his family as an opportunity to thank the community, his family, friends, co-workers and medical staff for their support and assistance. Derek's cancer has gone into remission but he still undergoes tests. However, he considers himself fortunate to still be with us. I pay tribute to his wife, Heather, his sons, Wes and Harry, and his daughter, Estelle, who organised the magnificent event to raise much-needed funds.

When Derek received his diagnosis a number of years ago, he established a fund to support cancer research into the type of cancer from which he was suffering that was being conducted by the University of Sydney Cancer. The fund will be used to train doctors and facilitate further research into adrenal cancer so that more trained professionals will be ready to assist other sufferers. The fundraising dinner featured an incredible community turnout: 140 people were expected, but more than 270 people attended, including the research team. Professor Stan Sidhu, who is the Dean of Medicine at the University of Sydney, was the guest speaker. Professor Bruce Robinson was not able to attend, but I know he assisted during Derek's operation.

I pay tribute also to a number of Derek's close friends. Ian Macdougall stood by Derek during diagnosis and treatment. Ian also has been diagnosed with cancer. He and Derek formed a very strong friendship and were a strong support for one another during a difficult time. Derek's mate, Michael Burke, gave up many hours to be by Derek's side and to work with him during recovery. Cancer is a terrible disease. It will affect many people at some stage during their lifetime. Approximately \$30,000 was raised by auctioning a large number of donated items. A true testament to his family's love and support as well as to the strong support given by people in my electorate is that much-needed funds have been raised for cancer research. This type of research complements research on both prostate and breast cancer, and I congratulate all those involved on this wonderful evening.

### **CABRA-VALE VIETNAM WAR COMRADESHIP MEMORIAL**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.09 p.m.]: On Saturday 5 March I had the pleasure of being at the unveiling of the newly renovated Vietnam War Comradeship Memorial at Cabra-Vale Memorial Park. I had the honour of unveiling the monument with the President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Mr Thanh Nguyen. When the Vietnamese Community in Australia (NSW Chapter) proposed its idea for this monument, Fairfield City Council worked with the association in consultation with community groups to ensure that the final product reflected the vision of our community.

The Vietnamese Community in Australia (NSW Chapter) unveiled this monument to serve as a reminder to us all to never forget the past—a war that engaged Australians for 10 troubled and anxious years,

the longest conflict in Australian military history; a war that cost 521 brave Australians their lives and wounded another 2,400; a war that left lasting physical and mental scars on a generation of young Australians and their families; a war that divided a nation, while revealing the very best in our fighting forces, their gallantry and their professionalism; and a war that drew unstinting praise for Australian servicemen from our allies in arms, including this tribute from General Westmoreland, the commander of US forces in Vietnam, who said of Australian troops at an Anzac Day service:

I have never seen a finer group of men. I have never fought with a finer group of soldiers.

Of the South Vietnamese, Australian and American troops, General Westmoreland had this to say:

I do not believe that the men who served in uniform in Vietnam have been given the credit they deserve. It was a difficult war against an unorthodox enemy.

It was a war that cost the lives of more than one million Vietnamese people, and wreaked a terrible toll on Vietnam and the surrounding region. But it was during this war that the unbreakable bond between Australian and South Vietnamese soldiers was forged. The memorial was first unveiled on 31 August 1991, by the then Governor of New South Wales, His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, AO. The memorial was developed to commemorate the comradeship shared by the Australian and Vietnamese soldiers during the Vietnam War. It also stands as a testament to the friendship and affection that is shared between the Australian and Vietnamese people, many of whom live in my electorate of Cabramatta.

For 20 years this memorial remembering two soldiers—one Vietnamese and one Australian—sat overlooking the tranquil waters of Cabra-Vale Memorial Park as though reflecting on the futility of war. After 20 years of serving our city, we thought these two weary soldiers deserved a raise. To achieve this aim the statue was raised 1.5 metres, so that these two soldiers will now be seated high enough for people to see and remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. To ensure we remember them, the upgraded memorial will also feature 10 bronze plaques with the names of the 521 fallen Australian soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. Of course, none of this would be possible without the continued efforts of the Vietnamese Community in Australia (NSW Chapter). I thank the association for its hard work and dedication to this project and for organising the ceremony.

At this point I acknowledge other dignitaries who attended on the day to assist with the unveiling: the Hon. Tony Kelly, then Minister for Planning, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Lands, and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council; Thanh Nguyen, President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia (NSW Chapter); Tri Vo, Project Coordinator for the upgrading of the Vietnam War Comradeship Memorial; Tania Mihailuk MP, then Mayor of Bankstown City Council; presidents and representatives of RSL clubs that made this project possible; the many Australian and Vietnam Veterans who were with us on that day; and all my colleagues, who I thank for being there as well.

I also thank the Federal Government for helping to fund the upgrade through its Saluting Their Service commemorations grants and also the State Government, which helped fund the project through the Community Building Partnership Program. I know this memorial will serve as an everlasting reminder to us all to never forget the spirit and courage of those who fought for the good of our nation, and to keep strong the memory of that sacrifice in the memories of those who will pass through this place of contemplation. Lest we forget.

### **RAINBOW CLUB AUSTRALIA**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla) [4.13 p.m.]: I have recently become a patron of Rainbow Club Australia, and I draw to the attention of the House the great work being done by this charity. Rainbow Club Australia facilitates swimming lessons for children with disabilities. There are 16 Rainbow Clubs in New South Wales and two in Victoria. Each runs independently under a parent working committee, but collectively they operate under the umbrella of Rainbow Club Australia. Rainbow Club Australia started in 1969 in the almost entirely water-bound Sutherland shire. Ron Siddons, MBE, still a Cronulla constituent, recognised the significance and the prevalence of activities that occurred at the sprawling Cronulla beaches, on the sandbars of Port Hacking and in our backyard swimming pools.

Rainbow Club Australia began to engage a group of people who would otherwise be unable to participate in these commonplace events. Rainbow Clubs now have a staggering 470 participants every week. The Sutherland shire has the Cronulla and Sutherland clubs, where about 70 children participate in classes. Each club aims to provide a swimming program for children whose disabilities mean that they cannot attend

mainstream learn-to-swim schools. That could be for a number of reasons. It may be because, for example, their autism means that the noise and number of children in the pool during mainstream classes—where there are multiple classes and many children in each class—are distracting or overwhelming to them. Or it may be because their physical disability means they require more supervision in the water than is possible in mainstream classes and that they will not progress at the same rate as their peers.

Each Rainbow Club meets each week and provides half-hour lessons to the children. Most of those lessons are one-on-one, because most of the children who swim with a Rainbow Club require more supervision in the water than do other children. The lessons are free, although each family pays membership of \$50 per school term. The cost of lessons has been subsidised by fundraising by the board of Rainbow Club Australia, donations and community grants. In 2010 their great work was recognised through winning the New South Wales Minister's Award for Most Significant Contribution to Water Safety, with a Focus on an Under-represented Group.

But Rainbow Club Australia does more than provide swimming lessons. In addition to the swimming program, local Rainbow Clubs provide a support network for families of the children, allowing the parents and carers a short weekly respite and the opportunity to socialise with other parents in similar circumstances. Many parents struggle with their children's diagnoses. Through Rainbow Clubs they find other parents who are able to help them through that difficult time, with practical help about programs that can assist as well as a sympathetic ear. And siblings of the children swimming with Rainbow Clubs also benefit as they often meet other children in positions similar to theirs.

One story exemplifies the sorts of outcomes that Rainbow Clubs can achieve for individual children. Michael enrolled in Cronulla at two years old. Michael, who has Down syndrome, had previously attended private tuition without success. With the special care that the Rainbow Club provided, Michael was able to confidently learn new swimming strokes and eventually joined the local Nippers at Wanda Surf Life Saving Club. Growing up in a community that values its waterways, its beaches and its active lifestyle, I appreciate the importance of organisations like Rainbow Club Australia, which helps children with special needs, and their families, to explore and to extend their confidence and ability in all facets of life.

### CASINO AND MACLEAN POLICE NUMBERS

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.18 p.m.]: I recently made a submission to a very creditable person in ex-assistant commissioner Peter Parsons, who is undertaking a review of policing across New South Wales. I highlighted to Mr Parsons that Casino police station, in the mid-Richmond area, urgently needs seven more police officers. The police area covers Evans Head, Woodburn, Broadwater and Coraki, some of which are low socioeconomic areas. The police officers from those stations are often seconded to Casino due to its lack of officers, but those overstretched staff respond to calls from outlying areas, sometimes leaving no police at all at the station.

I will give some examples of the sorts of things dealt with by Casino police by reference to newspaper headlines, such as "Bandit raids credit union", "Knife-wielding man threatens staff before stealing cash at Casino", "Hotelier attacked after confronting ram raiders", "Bus route lobbed with projectiles from out of control youth", "Vehicles worth \$400k torched", and "Police lack numbers to battle crime". Those headlines deal with events just in Casino and the immediate surrounding area. My call is for 24-hour policing, not for the police station to be opened 24 hours a day. In my submission I referred to policing in the lower Clarence area of Maclean needing a minimum of seven more police, just to enable a 24-hour police presence in the lower Clarence. That covers the area of Yamba, which has a police station and a population of 8,000, swelling to 16,000 during holidays, but it also covers areas such as Iluka and Ashby.

These headlines from local newspapers tell the story: "Ready for action on police shortage", "Police resources at breaking point" and "Belted", which refers to a gentleman in Grafton who was belted. Another headline reads, "Tuk-tuk stolen and smashed", a crime committed by local youths at Yamba. Yet another reads, "House of Pain", a report on five bandits who raided a house, bashed an elderly gentleman and fled with the cash. These sorts of things should not happen in country New South Wales. The headline of the *Daily Examiner* of 9 August read, "System Failure". In that instance a lady from Maclean, Lynne Mowbray, spoke about an incident she had witnessed in which two men and a woman, obviously under the influence of drugs or alcohol, were arguing in a car park. The two men jumped into a car and drove off, swerving all over the road. The incident was reported to police out of fear that these people were a mobile time bomb.



The Maclean police station was unattended at the time and the communication machine on the wall was faulty. After several unsuccessful attempts to get through to police, a mobile phone was used. The police response was that the only car in the Clarence Valley had been diverted to a domestic violence incident in the lower Clarence. That left 50,000-odd residents without a police presence. Witnessing that incident reminded Lynne of something that had occurred about three years earlier. At that time she had observed a man asleep in a car in the middle of the road. She woke the man. He was very aggressive and drove off. She tried several times to contact police, but was unsuccessful. The next day the police asked her to make a statement because the man had crashed his motor vehicle into a tree and died. I place on record Lynne's plea in that article:

Give our police the control they need in their own area and enough police officers to staff our stations and reduce the work-related stress of our officers.

I can't help thinking that if we had our police station in Maclean staffed three years ago, that man would still be around today. It grieves me to think that while we play politics it is our community that suffers.

The Government is doing something. Peter Parsons, a country police officer, is to conduct a thorough review of policing numbers and allocation models so that police can be allocated where needed. I urge members to support his push for more police to be allocated in country areas where they are most needed.

### STUDENT LEADERS FORUM

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.23 p.m.]: On Tuesday 9 August I was honoured to host a delegation at Parliament House of 24 high school leaders from across the Shoalhaven and the Illawarra who were here to participate in the inaugural Student Leaders Forum for the electorate of Kiama. I extend my congratulations to the following participants on their contributions to that forum: Bomaderry High School—captains Jackson Payne and Veda Fitzsimons, vice captains Stephen Kendrick and Madison Cook and student representative coordinator Marc Azara; Albion Park High School—leaders Sarah Galvin, Trent Brownlee, Hayden Stokes, Sarah Higginbottom, Sheridan McGee, Hayden Stokes, Matthew Gonzalo, Adam Kruse and teacher Erin Gordon; Kiama High School—leaders James Malvin, Cameron Havasi, Stephanie Swain, Michael Swain, Lewis Mitchell, Declan Wall, Kate Sinclair, Jackson Calverley and student representative coordinator Penny Moorhead; and Smiths Hill High School—leaders Julian Nikolovski, Cihan Bagdatli Jared Ackerman and Paul Counsell.

I was impressed by the depth of ideas about and enthusiasm for local issues espoused by those students, particularly on mental health issues. When one considers all the issues that young people talk about, it was fantastic to hear them speak about such issues in a mature and considered way. The forum focused on listening to the concerns of student leaders from across our region and giving them a voice on issues important to them. The agenda included an education tour of the New South Wales Parliament and a mock debate in the Legislative Council—students debated the arguments for and against providing laptops to schools. A group brainstorming session identified the key issues of concern to young people in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, which included concern about mental health. Access to public transport was also discussed, an issue about which regional members are acutely aware.

Finally, the need for better life-saving skills to be taught in our schools was discussed. That issue was raised by students who know the coastline and its effects on people who swim without the necessary skills, and also about the need for skills to revive those who come asunder. The Speaker, the Hon. Shelley Hancock, gave a presentation in which she spoke about her journey from a former high school teacher into politics and her role now as the first female Speaker of this Parliament. Treasurer Mike Baird outlined his responsibilities in preparing the State Budget and stressed the importance of young people participating in our democratic process. Mr Matt Kean, the member for Hornsby, spoke about the involvement of young people in politics and in this Parliament.

The students then watched Question Time from the public gallery, and the acknowledgement from the Speaker of each participating high school was warmly welcomed. I trust this will be the first of many Kiama Student Leaders Forums. These students will one day be the leaders of our society, and may even be members of this place. I am, and always will be, a passionate supporter of public education, the opportunities it gives and the future it will continue to provide. As a former student of Bomaderry High School, I was proud to observe rigorous participation in that forum by Bomaderry High School, and I was particularly pleased to see their captains and vice captains here yesterday representing my old school. To continue the work of the forum my office is establishing a page on Facebook so not only those attending the forum but all young people from across my electorate can make a contribution.

Young people are passionate about their community and I want to ensure that they continue to have their say. I note the Speaker is now in the Chamber. I know, as a former high school teacher, she enjoyed participating in the forum. The zeal with which she engaged those students was apparent; they appreciated her attendance. I thank all the parliamentary staff who helped to ensure the success of the forum. I particularly thank Paul Ell and Ben Blackburn from my staff for their efforts in liaising with the schools and coordinating the event. The challenge to leaders is to create more leaders, not more followers. I hope this forum will serve as a reminder that members need to engage with the young people of their electorates to ensure they are heard. I have made this speech to ensure that the concerns of those young people are placed in *Hansard* and also so that the success of this forum is recorded for the benefit of all.

### TRIBUTE TO BROTHER KEVIN FRIEL

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn) [4.28 p.m.]: Today I honour the late Brother Kevin Patrick Friel who passed away on 25 June, aged 80. Kevin was born on 25 October 1930 as the youngest child of seven to Manus and Hannah Friel at Innisfail, North Queensland. Kevin and his siblings grew up on a large sugar cane farm in South Johnstone. His family was close knit and deeply religious, which planted the early seeds in Kevin's life of love and interest in the things of God and in the service of others. The intimacy that the family shared lasted a lifetime.

To the end Kevin remained deeply bonded and devoted to his last remaining sibling, May, and to his many nieces and nephews, and their children. When his late brother Jimmy died in 2008 Kevin wrote a book on his life, which was a profoundly moving tribute and further proof of how deep Kevin's love and affection for his family ran. Kevin attended Marist Brother's College, Innisfail, where he quickly gained a reputation as being an exceptionally brilliant and charismatic student. An excerpt from the annual college annual magazine of 1946, commenting on the final debate of the year, had this to say about Kevin:

Kevin Friel was highly commended for his debate and received the highest marks of the twelve debaters, and incidentally, the Oratory Prize of the year.

And what a year it was. Kevin ended the year being awarded the Ray Willett Prize for being dux of the school. Kevin was phenomenally intelligent and one could say he was somewhat of a genius. He was a member of Mensa, which is an organisation representing those in the top 2 per cent of the IQ range, and a member of the International Society for Philosophical Inquiry, where admission is restricted to those in the 99.9 percentile of cognitive ability. I emphasise Kevin's brilliance to illustrate the point that a person so phenomenally gifted could have chosen any pursuit. Kevin could have known the greatest of earthly rewards—money, prestige and success of the highest order in the corporate world, in the professions or in his own business—but instead he chose a life of teaching, mentoring and service to others.

Kevin's first contact with the Marist Brothers came in 1948, when he moved from Cairns to the Marist Juniorate in Mittagong in the Southern Highlands to complete his final year of high school. Once again he excelled tremendously, particularly in the areas of mathematics and physics, of which he was later to become renowned as a teacher. In fact, a number of his students gained first place in the State in mathematics. By 2 July 1950 Kevin had completed his novitiate and on that day he made his first profession of vows. He spent the remainder of the year teaching at St Anne's High School, Bondi Beach, and so began an incredible journey that was to span 57 years.

During his lifetime as a teacher, Kevin educated, nurtured and inspired innumerable students from schools across the State, reaching from Drummoyne, Parramatta, Kogarah, North Sydney, Hunters Hill and Eastwood to places as far removed from Sydney as Lismore and Maitland. Kevin's last teaching appointment commenced in 1994 at Trinity Catholic College, Auburn, where he remained until his retirement at age 76 at the end of 2006. I quote a few words from Principal Paul Fensom, which encapsulate the effect that Kevin had on the students he taught:

Br. Kevin was much loved and respected by his students at Trinity Catholic College. Many of his students kept contact with him after they left Trinity and sought his advice. When he was admitted to hospital they visited him and frequently asked about him. He was a kind and sensitive teacher and his students responded well to his approach and his interest in them. He is one of those people whom you always remember and who help you to be a better person.

Our education system also owes Kevin a debt of gratitude for his efforts to advance the cause of learning. In 1997 Kevin received the Professor B. H. Neumann Award from the Australian Mathematics Trust for his outstanding contributions to mathematics education. For nearly 30 years he was a member of the New South

Wales Higher School Certificate Mathematics Syllabus Committee. For a number of those years he was involved in setting the New South Wales School Certificate maths exam. Kevin was also a member of the Australian Mathematics Competition Committee and a moderator for the Mathematics Challenge for Young Australians.

Kevin was not only a deeply loved and endlessly talented and devoted teacher; he was also a Marist brother who exemplified the love of Christ and the Christian spirit of charity, selflessness and compassion for others, particularly the less fortunate and those in need. Stories abound of his endless acts of kindness and the genuine interest and care he showed to all those who knew him. He felt bonded to his fellow Marist brothers and considered them an extension of his family to whom he gave everything without a thought for himself, particularly when they were ill.

For example, when Eugene Nolan from Kogarah Marist fell sick and eventually was taken to the Little Sisters of the Poor at Drummoyne in his final months, Kevin was by his side and made many trips each week to comfort and nurture him. The same went for another dear friend of his, Kevin Lampard, for whom he had special affection. Kevin also appointed himself as personal guardian of Brother Othmar during the last few years of his life and would often take him out for a haircut and a meal. In this respect and others, Kevin powerfully embodied the life and spirit of Marist founder Saint Marcellin Champagnat, who said:

Let there be among you just one heart and one mind. Let it always be said of the Little Brothers of Mary as it was of the early Christians: See how they love one another!

Kevin was an exceptionally simple man who spent very little on himself; instead, he chose to give all he had and was to those in need. It must also be said that Kevin was a larger than life character. He lived with rare passion and was renowned for his love of exercise, wine, food, sport, especially cricket, soccer and rugby, and entertaining. He was a brilliant cook and always a delightful and abundantly generous host. When the end came calling Kevin remained as gracious and loving as ever. Kevin will remain forever in the hearts of the many whose lives he touched and irrevocably changed. Aloha, Kevin.

#### ULLADULLA PUBLIC SCHOOL 150TH ANNIVERSARY

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.33 p.m.]: I am pleased to inform the House of an extremely important celebration in the Ulladulla community. Appropriately celebrated during Education Week, Ulladulla Public School has commenced its 150th anniversary festivities. On Monday 1 August I was pleased to join with the Ulladulla Public School community for a special and beautiful assembly, in which students donned heritage dress to acknowledge the history and tradition of Ulladulla Public School. The students looked absolutely beautiful, and it was a wonderful ceremony. It was one of the biggest assemblies ever held at the school, where students entertained parents, family members and other guests, capped off by a special heritage lunch within the school grounds.

A book was launched commemorating the celebration of Ulladulla Public School and its 150th anniversary. The book details the history of the school and the heritage of the grounds. I understand that the book is now on the display table in the Parliamentary Library. Over the coming year of celebrations past and present students are expected to join in commemorating this special and important milestone. Indeed, celebrations have been continuing since the special assembly last week, with a ye old market day, including a display of vintage cars, a special daytime fireworks show, and an open day allowing the entire school community to view the school grounds and celebrate the tradition of the school. This will also give past students a chance to see what has changed and what has remained the same. There will also be a special gala birthday event at the Ulladulla Ex Servos Club.

The organising committee has worked long and hard over the past 12 months to put in place these special events to celebrate Ulladulla Public School's 150th anniversary. I offer congratulations to Angel Keegan, head of the 150th committee, who is also a past student and current teacher at Ulladulla Public School. Indeed, she is a former student of mine. There is no doubting Mrs Keegan's commitment and passion for the students at Ulladulla Public School. I sincerely acknowledge the School Principal, Mr Paul Woodcock, for his continued hard work and dedication to the entire Ulladulla Public School community. Established in 1861, Ulladulla Public School has educated and guided thousands of students, offering education and instilling values and qualities in students that remain valid to this day.

Ulladulla Public School's motto is "Learn to Live, Live to Learn", educating 600 students in the southern Shoalhaven. The school has 22 permanent classrooms and five demountables. It has a huge library with

a mini computer laboratory and a computer room that houses 30 computers. All classes have two to four computers in their rooms and are directly connected to the internet. All classes have interactive whiteboards installed, including special education and learning support rooms. As Ulladulla Public School celebrates its 150th anniversary, new classrooms and school facilities are being opened in order to create for the future—which is the motto of Education Week 2011.

The school is an absolute asset to the local community and I am extremely proud of the school and its sister school across the road, Ulladulla High School, where I taught for 27 years. I congratulate all the staff on their continued hard work and their dedication to our local students. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of so many teachers and students across the South Coast electorate. I know many of them; I have worked with many of them. I congratulate all of them on their wonderful work. Many schools across the South Coast took part in Education Week celebrations last week, allowing the local community the opportunity to visit our public schools and see firsthand the great things achieved day in and day out by our students and teachers.

Education Week is an opportunity for schools to exhibit their academic strengths and outstanding results, quality arts, sports, gifted and talented programs, extracurricular activities, and the focus on teaching strong values. Since the first school opened its doors in 1848, the public schools of New South Wales have nurtured the talents of young people and shaped the lives of millions of Australians. Many have excelled in their chosen fields and have helped to build this State and nation. Students and teachers of South Coast public schools are creating the future and will continue to do so.

Across the South Coast during Education Week public schools held a wide variety of events, activities and performances—everything from readathons to cook-offs, bands to barbecues. We did the lot. The O'Farrell Government has a strong agenda to build and sustain great education results and lifelong learning in New South Wales. As a former high school teacher for 27 years, I know all too well the efforts our teachers make to the students in our public schools. I congratulate all involved in Ulladulla Public School's 150th anniversary celebrations.

### INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S GAMES

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [4.38 p.m.]: Team Lake Macquarie, consisting of eight young athletes, recently returned from competing in the forty-fifth International Children's Games held in Lanarkshire, Scotland. The International Children's Games is the world's biggest youth sporting event, and the 2011 event attracted a total of 1,300 competitors and coaches, along with administrators and delegates representing 77 cities from 33 countries. Lanarkshire was acclaimed as a great success, living up to the ideals of friendly competition. From humble beginnings in 1968 in Slovenia behind the Iron Curtain the Games have become the world's largest youth multi-sport competition.

The aim of using sport to promote peace and friendship among the world's youth has seen them sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee and attracted more 35,200 participants representing 332 cities from 74 countries over four continents. The Games provide an invaluable opportunity for youth to meet people from other cultures in the spirit of friendly competition. They have been described as a global village, where spirited competition thrives and peace, tolerance, fairness and integrity live. It is a wonderful opportunity for young people from ages 12 to 15 years to come together not just to compete but also to make friends with others from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

For those in their formative years of adolescence, this international sporting competition leads to greater levels of understanding and acceptance of other cultures. It is an enriching and maturing experience that shapes participants' views of the world. Lake Macquarie first competed in the International Children's Games in 2008, and in 2010, as mayor, I had the pleasure of accompanying Team Lake Macquarie to the forty-fourth games in the city of Manama in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Team Lake Macquarie has again proudly represented the city in 2011. Team Lake Macquarie comprises: Harry Morton, 13, of Hunter Sports High, who competed in sailing; Beynon Telford, 15, of Belmont High, who competed in sailing; Blake Smylie, 15, of Hunter Sports High, who competed in golf; Isaiah Melia, 13, of Hunter Sports High, who competed in golf; Daniel Mazzantini, 14, of Belmont Christian College, who competed in the high jump and the 100-metre sprint; Samuel Hitchcock, 14, of Belmont Christian College, who completed in the 100-metre sprint and 1500-metre run; Jordan Pagett, 14, of Hunter Sports High, who competed in 100-metre sprint and 800-metre run; and Alex McCloughlan, 14, of Hunter Sports High, who competed in 400-metre and 800-metre run.

I am certain that the members for Swansea, Charlestown and Port Stephens are proud of the fine young representatives from their electorates who participated in the games. Particular mention must be made of Harry Morton for winning a silver medal in sailing. This great achievement brings credit not only to Harry but also to his family, his school and to the City of Lake Macquarie. The International Children's Games is an alliance of cities, organisations and individuals who pursue the common goal of forming nation-linking friendship through sports competition. The host cities are decided four years in advance by a competitive bidding process. Last year Lake Macquarie won hosting rights for the 2014 games—a first for Australia—which are anticipated to attract up to 3,000 international visitors, including some 1,800 athletes.

The cost of running the games is estimated to be about \$2 million but, with the city providing sporting facilities and other in-kind contributions, the outlay should be much less. Lake Macquarie has great resources for athletics, sailing and a range of other sports. Council will provide the venues at Speers Point and the Hunter Sports Centre at Glendale, and specialised facilities will be used at the Forum Sports and Aquatic Centre at the University of Newcastle, Belmont 16 Foot Sailing Club and Belmont Golf Club. The University of Newcastle has generously undertaken to accommodate participants in the four residential colleges at its Callaghan campus. The support of organisations and businesses such as the university, the Hunter Institute of Sport, NBN Television, the *Newcastle Herald*, Newcastle Knights and many others gives us confidence that the community will support us in running a great event.

In addition, I am confident that the organisers have the resourcefulness and ability to host a successful games. There will also be opportunities and justification for the New South Wales Government to supplement existing commitments and ensure that Lake Macquarie and New South Wales achieve maximum benefit from this exposure to the rest of the world. To that end, I will seek to further brief the Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Sport and Recreation on this event. I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House this year's success in the International Children's Games, to congratulate all the participants and to foreshadow this opportunity to support Lake Macquarie's hosting of the 2014 games.

#### **MACQUARIE FIELDS ELECTORATE BUILDING THE EDUCATION REVOLUTION PROJECTS**

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [4.43 p.m.]: Last week I attended the opening of a new classroom at Campbell House School in Glenfield. As this was a Building the Education Revolution project, Laurie Ferguson, the Federal member for Werriwa, did the honours. This new classroom will make an enormous difference to the teaching at Campbell House School and it is being used for a very successful parents retreat. I have also been present at the opening of the wonderful hall at Prestons Public School, the excellent hall and library at Unity Grammar, and the new multifunction hall at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School. The Building the Education Revolution program has revolutionised Education in south-west Sydney.

For the record, the projects in the electorate of Macquarie Fields that were funded by the Federal Government under the program are: Ingleburn North Public School received \$850,000 for a new library; William Cary Christian School, \$3 million for a new multipurpose hall and an early learning centre; James Meehan High School, \$821,000 for a language centre; Guise Public School, \$2 million for a multipurpose hall; Glenfield Park School, \$300,000 for a refurbishment; Glenwood Public School, \$2 million for new classrooms and refurbishment of the toilets; Curran Public School, just over \$2 million for a multipurpose hall; Dalmeny Public School, \$2,850,000 for new classrooms; Austral Public School, \$2.5 million for new classrooms; and Greenway Park Public School, more than \$3 million for new classrooms.

Holy Spirit Primary School received \$5,700,000 for a multipurpose hall and new classrooms; Glenfield Public School, \$2 million for new classrooms and a library; and Lurnea Public School, \$3 million for a library and general refurbishment. Lurnea Public School has also received a magnificent hall and a complete refurbishment in the past few years, and has never looked better. St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School received \$2,200,000 for the multipurpose hall where I attended the opening. All Saints Catholic Senior College received nearly \$2 million for a new science centre. I also attended the opening of this truly magnificent centre. Unity Grammar College received \$2.5 million for a library and construction of a multipurpose hall. I am very proud of the achievements of Unity Grammar and its students.

Prestons Public School received \$3 million for new classrooms and construction of a covered outdoor learning area. Campbell House School received \$250,000 for new classrooms. Macquarie Fields Public School received \$3 million for new classrooms; Good Shepherd Primary School, \$2,200,000 for a new covered outdoor learning area and multipurpose hall; Sule College, \$3 million for the construction of a new multipurpose hall; St Francis Xavier's School at Lurnea, \$2,250,000 for a multipurpose hall and a library; Ajuga School,

\$300,000 for new classrooms; and Hoxton Park Public School, \$3 million for new classrooms and a covered outdoor learning area. This is a new school that has received a substantial upgrade and has never looked better. Al Amanah College received \$3 million for a multipurpose hall; Macarthur Adventist College, \$2,600,000 for a multipurpose hall; and, finally, Casula Public School, \$3 million for a new library and refurbishments. That is a total of \$62,366,668.

**Mr Lee Evans:** It could have been done for a quarter of that.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** The Building the Education Revolution program has been absolutely vital for the economic wellbeing of our area. It should never be forgotten that this program was undertaken against the wishes of the Federal Coalition and those in this place—I note the interjection from those opposite who still oppose this project. I note also that the Building the Education Revolution was, and is, persistently opposed by the Murdoch press. For the record, in my electorate there were only two complaints about the program. One was from Glenwood Public School that needed "short throw"-projectors for the new classrooms and the other from Greenway Park Public School, which had already paid for its electronic whiteboards and needed to be reimbursed. Of all the school projects in the electorate of Macquarie Fields—\$62 million worth of work—there were only two minor complaints, both of which were sorted. Those opposite should hang their heads in shame at their persistent attempts to criticise the Building the Education Revolution program and for their hypocrisy at then claiming credit for these wonderful projects once they were instituted.

### TEEYAN MELA

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa) [4.48 p.m.]: I inform the House of a spectacular, colourful Indian women's cultural event, Teeyan Mela 2011. I support the earlier ministerial statement by the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Victor Dominello, and echo his congratulations to the Indian community on the impending celebration of their Independence Day on 15 August. Teeyan Mela 2011 was held on 7 August at the campus of the University of Western Sydney at Parramatta. Teeyan is a celebration of Punjabi culture. I was honoured to be the invited guest and was pleased to join more than 500 Indian women, girls and children in attendance to celebrate Indian women and their rich, vibrant culture.

The Indian Women's Cultural Association of Australia hosted Teeyan Mela, a visual, musical and gastronomic feast. The traditional attire was vibrant, beautiful, feminine and extraordinarily detailed. The music was traditional Bollywood style—that is, it was loud and pumping, just the way I like it. The atmosphere was alive and joyful. The program included solo and group dances, an audience, quiz, songs and competitions. One such competition was the Mrs Teeyan Australia 2011. I was involved in calling onto the stage the most recently married Indian women and asking them a series of cultural and historic questions. However, the best category of competition was a dance-off. At the drop of a hat the Indian dance music began and the recently married young Indian women simultaneously erupted in traditional Bollywood dance, to the loud applause of the audience. It was inspiring to see a group of women boldly and confidently performing their cultural dance in front of hundreds of cheering women, such is the depth of their love and knowledge of their Indian culture—it really is in their DNA.

Another category was a photographic competition. Members of the audience were asked to come on stage if they had a photograph of their mother-in-law with them. Three out of 500 women walked onto the stage. That proves there are many subjects on which we are united. Women aged more than 60 years were called on stage to spontaneously celebrate their culture in song and dance. At one stage the emcee had a challenge on her hands removing the microphone from an elderly songster. I congratulate all those involved in the organisation, performance and staging of this event. Teeyan Mela was the most joyful, vibrant, exciting, funny, culturally rich and generationally embracing community event I have witnessed, and I will most certainly be back again.

### CODE GREEN WEEK

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [4.52 p.m.]: Last Saturday I attended a regeneration planting project at Callan Park in my electorate of Balmain. The planting of trees and shrubs at Callan Park coincided with the start of Code Green Week, a national initiative of student members of Doctors for the Environment Australia and the Australian Medical Students' Association. The campaign aimed to educate health professionals and the public about the health threats resulting from climate change. The students organised this event to highlight the need for urgent action on climate change and to show support for the introduction of measures to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions. As part of Code Green Week, hundreds of medical students participated in a variety of events and activities at medical schools across the country, including public lectures, film screenings, letter-writing and meetings with members of Parliament.

Doctors for the Environment Australia is a voluntary organisation of medical doctors that works to address the diseases caused by damage to the earth's environment. The World Health Organization estimates that one-quarter of global disease and one-third of disease in children is due to modifiable environmental factors. Doctors for the Environment Australia aims to utilise the skills of members of the medical profession to address the ill health resulting from damage to the natural environment at local, national and global levels. The organisation is concerned with issues including the health aspects of climate change, the environmental aspects of children's health and the local cardio-respiratory effects of transport pollution. Doctors for the Environment Australia has noted that climate change will bring to Australia the increased burden of heat stroke, injury from fire and storm, infectious diseases, social disruption and mental illness.

I note the excellent work of medical professionals in my electorate who serve my local community, and encourage the involvement of medical professionals in global issues that threaten the future of humanity and that of our planet. Organisations such as Doctors for the Environment Australia, and of course the student members with whom I met last week, do great work in educating governments, industry and the general public, and raising awareness of the medical importance of our natural environment. As doctors, they are uniquely placed to speak up for people in the environment. Members of Doctors for the Environment Australia have expressed disappointment that the recent discourse on climate change in this country has not had any significant focus on the health problems associated with global warming. A joint report released by the Australian Medical Association and the Australian Conservation Foundation stated that, if no action is taken, deaths in Australia due to climate change could total 2,500 per year by 2030.

Doctors for the Environment Australia has also campaigned on and raised awareness about a number of important issues in our local communities. Recently I hosted a public meeting at Leichhardt Town Hall about coal seam gas mining, which the Minister mentioned today in question time. Dr Helen Redmond of Doctors for the Environment Australia joined the panel. Dr Redmond spoke eloquently about the potential health impacts on people living in coal seam gas mining areas, in particular the impacts on human health from coal seam gas water contaminants. A founding member of the New South Wales Committee of Doctors for the Environment Australia, Dr Redmond has a special interest in fossil fuel extractive industries and their direct and indirect impacts on human health.

I take this opportunity to thank the following medical students and supporters who took part in the planting project at Callan Park: Zoe Wood, Alice Wong, Catherine O'Carroll, Melissa Franks, Colin Tuft, Kirby Campbell-Wood, Tom Morley, Laurie Harrisberg, James Sterrey, Kitty Soutar, Jenny Hellsing, Sarah Cohn, Aaron Tracey, Nicholas Scali, Hang Le, Sarah Zardawi, Joanna Hetzistergos, Yasmin Gilbert, Matt Rubic, Meredith Moodie, Madeline Max, Toni Tracey, Benjamin Ticehurst—New South Wales representative for Doctors for the Environment Australia—Annabel Wood, Abby Dawson and Chris Liggins. I commend the work of those medical students in raising awareness about climate change and health, as well as the importance of preserving natural environments such as Callan Park for local residents and all the people of Sydney to enjoy. I wish them the best of luck in their studies and in their efforts to support the health, the environment and the wellbeing of the local community and the wider community in Australia.

### TRIBUTE TO JUNE MOORE

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [4.56 p.m.]: I inform the House of the passing last week of June Moore, at the age of 93 years. I am reliably informed that June has held every office in the Randwick and District Historical Society. June was the daughter of Nell Pillars, who founded the Randwick Historical Society—as it was then known—in 1957 after she purchased a grand old home in Randwick, known as Nuge Hall, which had been built in 1853. As a consequence of buying the mansion, June and her mother became interested in its history. June devoted the greater part of her life to the Randwick and District Historical Society. June moved and thought at such speed one could be forgiven for thinking she drank too much caffeine.

I first fell under June's spell in 1979 when I joined the society as a schoolboy. I was immediately co-opted by June into working in the office of the society on a Saturday morning as a volunteer. At that time the office was located in a couple of small rooms at the very front of her home in Avoca Street, Randwick. June spent the best part of more than 50 years working for the society. June Moore's tireless work and dedication to the preservation of our built and natural heritage in Sydney's eastern suburbs is incalculable. When June set out

more than 50 years ago to raise awareness of the threat to the dwindling numbers of buildings of historical merit few people were interested. Thankfully, due to people like June, we have all learned to appreciate, respect and hopefully protect these precious items from our past. Randwick and all those who appreciate history and historical buildings in New South Wales will be sadder for the loss of June Moore.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 4.58 p.m. until  
Tuesday 23 August 2011 at 1.00 p.m.**

---